

seven  
reasons  
Jesus  
came  
to die.



A RED DOOR SERMON SERIES

## INTRODUCTION

### WHY, OH WHY, DID JESUS DIE?

My first assignment in theology class at Ridley College was to answer that question. Up to that point, I had been finding college incredibly difficult. I didn't have a great foundational understanding of the Bible when I first started attending - which is a problem when you're attending *Bible College*.

So I was relieved to be set such an easy assignment. *Why did Jesus die?* What kind of a Sunday School question is that?

It didn't take long for me to realise, however, that this is a far more complex question than it first appears.

*How would you answer?*

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I think most of us would say the obvious: *Jesus died to save me*. But how? And why? And saved from what?

That's what we're going to discover in this series.

Over the course of seven sermons, culminating in the greatest day on the church calendar - Easter Sunday - we'll look at seven reasons Jesus died on the cross.

The Cross! In Latin the word is *Crux*. My dictionary defines *Crux* as:

*heart, essence, most important point, central point, essential part, core, centre, nucleus; the bottom line.*

Christians have always agreed. The cross is at the *literal crux* of our faith, so I can't think of a better topic to study between now and Easter.

I want to encourage you to attend each service and join a Small Group so you can fully immerse yourself in reflection and contemplation. You can also follow along at [reddoorchurch.com.au/seven-reasons](http://reddoorchurch.com.au/seven-reasons)

Inside this book, you'll notice there is a discussion page for each sermon topic (except Maundy Thursday and Good Friday). Please use these during the week between sermons.

Love you,

JONATHAN

## SERIES OUTLINE: 7 REASONS JESUS CAME TO DIE

PLEASE READ AHEAD & PRAY FOR YOUR RED DOOR FAMILY

### WHY DID JESUS DIE?

- |    |                          |                 |  |
|----|--------------------------|-----------------|--|
| 1. | TO ABSORB GOD'S WRATH    | MARCH 3RD       | ROMANS 3:21-26; 1 JOHN 2:1-2           |
| 2. | TO DEFEAT THE DEVIL      | MARCH 10TH      | COLOSSIANS 2:11-15; GALATIANS 1:3-5    |
| 3. | TO LIFT THE CURSE        | MARCH 17TH      | GALATIANS 3:1-14; ISAIAH 53:3-6        |
| 4. | TO KILL RACIAL HOSTILITY | MARCH 24TH      | EPHESIANS 2:13-22; GALATIANS 2:9-14    |
| 5. | TO SET AN EXAMPLE        | MAUNDY THURSDAY | JOHN 13:1-17, 31-35; PHILIPPIANS 2:1-8 |
| 6. | TO SHOW GOD'S LOVE       | GOOD FRIDAY     | ROMANS 5:5-10; 1 JOHN 4:7-14           |
| 7. | TO OPEN THE WAY          | EASTER SUNDAY   | GENESIS 3; JOHN 3:1-17                 |

## REASON ONE: TO ABSORB GOD'S WRATH

READINGS: 1 JOHN 2:1-2; ROMANS 3:21-26

**THE BIG IDEA:** THE BIGGEST THREAT TO OUR ETERNAL EXISTENCE IS GOD'S JUST WRATH AGAINST SIN. JESUS DIED TO ABSORB IT.

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW:

#### ***God Must Punish Sin***

If God is worth worshipping, he must punish sin. To simply overlook evil would be both unjust and unloving. God's good law commanded, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength." (Deut. 6:4). But none of us obeys. Add to this innumerable acts of defiance against God's nature throughout human history, and we have a big problem.

God is very clear about the consequences for sin. "For the wages of sin is death..." (Rom. 6:23); and "The person who sins is the one who will die." (Ezek. 18:4.)

All this amounts to an eternal death sentence for every human being, from Julius Caesar to John the Baptist; from Adolf Hitler to Mahatma Gandhi.

#### ***God Chooses to Save us from Wrath***

In spite of the right-ness of this judgement, God isn't content to let it play out that way. His love moves him to act in a way that only God could - taking the initiative and sending his Son to save us.

#### ***Only the God Man Can Save Us***

But how? How can someone, even someone as great as Jesus, spare humanity from a perfectly deserved fate? Jesus can do it because he is God in human flesh.

Here's the thing, only a human being could suffer in the place of condemned humanity. Someone needed to bear the penalty, and it needed to be a person.

The theologians call this substitution *Propitiation*. It means Jesus absorbed God's wrath on our behalf. God

remains just, because sin is punished, but Jesus is the one who suffers instead of you and I.

But in order for us to trade places - the just for the unjust - and so be spared from God's wrath and rewarded for righteousness, we needed our substitute to be completely righteous.

That's why only Jesus can save us. He's the one who lived a perfect life (that we could never live) and willingly died a sinner's death (the fate we deserved) so we could receive eternal life (the reward for righteousness).

Paul says it best, "God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21).

## GROUP DISCUSSION

### TRENDING TOPICS:

#WRATH #SIN #JUDGEMENT #SACRIFICE

**1. We started with the assumption that sin angers God and that he must punish it. Think about the people you know who don't believe this doctrine.**

What are some good arguments they would employ to challenge this belief?

How would you answer them?

**2. Discuss this quote from the late Tim Keller:**

Grace is humbling and restorative. It pulls you down because Christ had to die for you, but also lifts you up because he wanted to die for you.

**3. The doctrine of Propitiation means Jesus satisfied the requirement for justice and turned God's wrath away from us onto himself.**

How would you explain this foundational doctrine to:

A) a child; or

B) someone unfamiliar with Christian belief?

NOTES:

## REASON TWO: TO DEFEAT THE DEVIL

READINGS: COLOSSIANS 2:11-15; GALATIANS 1:3-5

**THE BIG IDEA:** THE CROSS WAS GOD'S COSMIC JUDO MOVE, TAKING THE POWER OF EVIL AND TURNING IT BACK ON ITSELF.

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW:

#### ***The World is Overcast***

In many ways the world is a beautiful place. Creation reveals God's glory, relationships of love can flourish, there's such a thing as *steak!* But the world is also bleak.

I think of it like an overcast day. We know the beauty of a cloudless sky, but in this age, the heavens are cloaked by darkness.

This is because the powers of evil have not yet been extinguished. Satan and his demons are active, and the book of Revelation has taught us that, under the surface, the unjust governing powers of the world are animated by Satan himself.

#### ***Jesus' Death Disarmed Evil Powers***

The crucifixion of Jesus was the most evil, most sinful act ever committed - and yet - through it God used the

power of evil *to overcome evil.*

The power of Satan is fundamentally in *condemnation* (his name means Accuser). But, as we learnt last week, Jesus' death on the cross dealt with our guilt by satisfying the justice of God. So how can Satan accuse God's people? He can't! That power was stripped from him as Jesus died. The most evil act was used to overcome evil.

That's why Paul can say, in Romans chapter 8, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus"; and "If God is for us, who is against us?"; and "Who can bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies."

#### ***Evil Powers are Both Defeated and Dangered***

So Satan's major weapon has been

destroyed at the cross. Revelation 12 says, "...the accuser of our brothers and sisters... has been thrown down." But Rev. 12 also says, "the devil has come down to you with great fury, because he knows his time is short. "

Satan knows he is a defeated power. But like an enormous dragon whose head has been cut off, he can still do great damage while he writhes around on the earth. This should make us both joyful and careful.

Paul says in Ephesians 6, "...our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness..."

On the Last Day, all evil will be finally destroyed, but in the meantime, we must stay close to the One whose death put Satan to shame.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

### TRENDING TOPICS:

#SATAN #POWERS #DELIVERANCE #VICTORY

***1. Christians in western countries tend to doubt the existence of Satan and demons much more than our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world.***

Do you believe in the existence of Satan and demons? What does the Bible say about them? Does this differ from your own conception of them?

***2. In 2 Corinthians 4:4, Paul calls Satan “the god of this world”.***

How much power does Satan have to achieve his will in this present age?

***3. I often feel condemned by my ongoing sin - failing to live righteously like Christ. Imagine I come to you for help to overcome feelings of shame:***

If Satan can no longer accuse and condemn Christians, why do I feel shame and condemnation?

How would you encourage me with what we've been learning in this study?

### NOTES:

## REASON THREE: TO LIFT THE CURSE

READINGS: GALATIANS 3:1-14; ISAIAH 53:3-6

**THE BIG IDEA:** OUR FAILURE TO KEEP THE LAW MEANS WE ARE UNDER A CURSE, UNABLE TO SAVE OURSELVES. JESUS' DEATH LIFTS THE CURSE.

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW:

#### ***The Law is Good, But We Aren't***

God's Law in the Old Testament was given by a loving Father who desired for his people to be blessed, and be a blessing, "All the nations will be blessed through you." (v.8).

But read five pages of the OT and you can see that not one of God's people were able to keep it.

This is a huge problem, because along with blessings for obedience, came curses for disobedience. Paul mentioned one in v.10, "Everyone who does not do everything written in the book of the law is cursed."

#### ***The Law Can't Save You***

In Galatians 3, Paul is addressing Christians who have been saved by grace, but have switched gears and are 'relying on works of the Law' to justify

them. Today, many believe if they avoid the 'big' sins, go to church, and behave in a generally decent fashion, they'll pass the test.

My first car was the love of my life. I kept it in immaculate condition. So when a policeman pulled me over and started looking for signs of un-roadworthiness I said, 'You won't find anything wrong with this girl.' He replied, 'We always find something.'

When it comes to Law obedience, there isn't anyone in immaculate condition. Every day we all do things we shouldn't, and fail to do things we should - and that's not even our biggest problem!

We fail from the start, because we don't love God fully, and we don't love our neighbours as ourselves - which Jesus said was the foundation of the entire Law (Matt. 22:37-40).

#### ***The Cross Lifts the Curse***

This all sounds pretty bleak, but there's good news for people who are cursed by their decision to rely on obedience to save them: Jesus was cursed so we don't have to be.

Galatians 3:13-14 is an incredible offer: Jesus willingly shouldered the curse of the Law, so that people who can't keep the Law can be blessed.

Blessed with forgiveness for self-righteous self-reliance; pardon for sin of every kind. But there's more! Those who follow Jesus are also given "the promised Spirit through faith", which means that the presence of the living God is with them also.

This living presence enables believers to live by faith, relying on the finished work of Christ to save them as they seek to live lives of genuine obedience.



## GROUP DISCUSSION

### TRENDING TOPICS:

#LAW #OBEDIENCE #BLESSINGS #CURSES

***1. Galatians 3 illustrates the fact that we are unacceptable to God because of our failure to keep his Law. The promise of the Cross is that Jesus traded his acceptability as a Law keeper for our unacceptability - his blessing, for our curse.***

In spite of this, do you ever feel that God's acceptance of you is conditional on keeping his Law or doing his will?

What are some things you fail to do that make you question your place as God's beloved?

***2. I once had a conversation with a guy about Jesus being my righteousness (I didn't use those terms). He replied: 'So you can just do whatever you want because God sees you as perfect?'***

This is a fair question to ask. Can Christians do whatever they want because Jesus traded his blessing for our curse?

How would you respond to my friend?

What passages of Scripture help us engage with this issue?

### NOTES:

## REASON FOUR: TO KILL RACIAL HOSTILITY

READINGS: EPHESIANS 2:13-22; GALATIANS 2:9-14

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW:

#### ***Build That Wall! Build That Wall!***

Long before Donald Trump led the campaign to build a new border wall between the U.S. and Mexico, God's people had similar feelings about keeping Gentiles out of the Temple.

There was an inscription on the wall of the outer courtyard warning Gentiles that they would bring death upon themselves if they passed beyond it to the inner-temple courts.

In Ephesians 2, it appears Paul is using this 'dividing wall of hostility' as a metaphor for the idea that God favoured Jews and that non-Jews weren't worthy of salvation.

#### ***The Death of (Christian) Racism***

Christian racism?? That there could ever be such a thing is bonkers. This teaching series is built on the fact that

the death of Jesus is the *Crux* of our faith. So to be a Christian is to delight in all that Jesus achieved on the cross.

But Jesus' death did more than achieve salvation - Ephesians 2 says the death of Jesus reconciled us to God and was the death of racism and ethnic and hostility between people.

"He did this so that he might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death." (Eph. 2:16)

If this is true, then hostility towards, and segregation of, racial, ethnic, and national identities ought to seem like heresy for Christians. Where it does exist, it must be repented of and put to death as sin.

#### ***Speaking Truth to Power***

The account of Paul's public rebuke of

**THE BIG IDEA:** HOSTILITY TOWARDS RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES IS A GOSPEL ISSUE. JESUS DIED TO PUT THESE THINGS TO DEATH.

Peter in Galatians 2 is a fascinating insight into early church power dynamics. (Read it now if you're unfamiliar). Even the best of us can compromise gospel values to save face or keep peace.

But Christians ought to set an example for the rest of the world when it comes to loving our ethnically diverse neighbours.

Secular attempts at racial reconciliation have their place, but only Jesus' death on the cross - applied in everyday life - is powerful enough to destroy this ancient and pernicious evil.

*To learn more about the cross and racial reconciliation, check out Neville Naden's Red Door sermon:*  
Indigenous Reconciliation  
[reddoorchurch.com.au/issues](http://reddoorchurch.com.au/issues)

## GROUP DISCUSSION

### TRENDING TOPICS:

#RACE #ETHNICITY #HOSTILITY #UNITY

***1. The prejudiced attitudes that existed between Jews and non-Jews in the first century were as serious and pervasive as the ethnic hostilities we see in our own day.***

What can the gospel teach us about overcoming the sin of racism today?

Should we expect more from Christians than non-believers when it comes to living at peace in a multi-ethnic society?

***2. The incident between Paul and Peter in Antioch (see Gal. 2) proves that partiality based on race and ethnicity is a gospel issue.***

What does this account teach us about the importance of rejecting cultural norms when it comes to Christian living? Have you ever experienced ostracism on the basis of race in the Christian community? If you're willing, share with the group and discuss how we can ensure this never happens at Red Door.

*Conclude with prayers for reconciliation.*

### NOTES:

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

### REASON FIVE: TO SET AN EXAMPLE

READINGS: JOHN 13:1-17, 31-35; PHILIPPIANS 2:1-8

**THE BIG IDEA:** CHRIST'S ONCE-FOR-ALL DEATH FREES US TO IMITATE HIM IN LIVING SACRIFICIALLY FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW:

#### ***Imitation Isn't Salvation***

You might wonder, *how can Jesus' death set us an example to follow in life?* His death was an utterly unique act, unable to be repeated, and never needing to be replicated.

It's true that Jesus' death alone saves us, but it also sets an example of self-sacrificial love that we are called to emulate as his followers.

Tonight is Maundy Thursday - the evening we remember Jesus' command to his disciples to spend their lives following his example of love.

#### ***A New Commandment***

Jesus' life was a demonstration of self-sacrifice. It began with his incarnation - the eternal Son humbling himself and becoming flesh.

From that point he lived a life of service: healing the sick, delivering from demonic oppression, befriending outcasts, and forgiving sin.

One of the most powerful demonstrations of his humility was seen on the night we celebrate as Maundy Thursday. Jesus: the glorious Son of God, stooped to wash the feet of his disciples. This profound act of love was a foreshadowing of his impending death. A demonstration of love through self-sacrifice.

After this, he told his disciples: "I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another."

#### ***Following Jesus Means Death***

I sometimes wonder if we know what we mean when we say we 'follow

Jesus'. For his disciples it meant preaching the gospel, serving others, healing the sick, and ultimately, being killed.

Jesus himself said, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." (Matt. 16:24).

Paul saw the entirety of Jesus' life (from Christmas to Easter) as something to be imitated. In Philippians 2 he appeals to believers to emulate Jesus' humility in their attitude towards others, denying self, and loving sacrificially.

All of this is only possible when we have found salvation in the cross of Jesus. Only then can we seek to imitate his life of meekness, humility, and most of all, love.

## GOOD FRIDAY

### REASON SIX: TO SHOW GOD'S LOVE

READINGS: ROMANS 5:5-10; & 1 JOHN 4:7-14

**THE BIG IDEA:** THE BROKENNESS OF THE WORLD GIVES US CAUSE TO QUESTION GOD'S LOVE, BUT THE CROSS STANDS AS TIMELESS PROOF.

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW:

#### ***The Good Friday Life***

The final hours of Jesus' life were characterised by darkness. He was betrayed, unjustly accused, physically abused, humiliated, and suffered unimaginable pain.

Our lives are often coloured by a similar darkness. We are acquainted with suffering from the moment we emerge from the womb, and echoes of those things that Jesus suffered are never far away from us.

In light of this, even strong Christians sometimes question God. But the Cross demonstrates the depth of his love for us in (at least) a couple of ways...

#### ***We're Not Worthy***

You'll never comprehend the depth of God's love revealed at the cross if you don't first come to grips with your

unworthiness of it.

To put it another way, if you think it was your great value that compelled Christ to die for you, you won't understand what makes grace so amazing.

Paul makes this clear in Romans 5, "...for a good person perhaps someone might even dare to die. But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

John Newton put it this way, "Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch; like me!"

The depth of God's love is revealed by the fact that Jesus died *in spite* of our unloveliness, not because of it.

#### ***Horror and Humiliation***

The cross demonstrates God's love, not

just because Jesus was willing to die for unworthy people, but because of the manner in which he was willing to die.

Crucifixion was uniquely designed by the Romans to be the most humiliating, the most horrific, death. Indeed, the word excruciating comes from the Latin word *crux* - the cross.

The night before Good Friday, as Jesus wrestled with his impending death, he submitted to his Father's plan for redemption through death, "Not my will but yours be done" (Luke 22:42).

The will of God to effect the death of Jesus was moved by his love for unworthy rebels like you and me. This is the unshakable proof of God's love for us.

## EASTER SUNDAY

### REASON SEVEN: TO OPEN THE WAY

READINGS: GENESIS 3; JOHN 3:1-17

**THE BIG IDEA:** DEATH IS THE TRAGIC DESTINY OF EVERY HUMAN EVER BORN. BUT THROUGH DEATH, JESUS MAKES A WAY FOR US TO LIVE FOREVER.

### THREE THINGS TO KNOW:

#### ***Two Trees***

The account in Genesis 2 reveals God planting two trees that represent two options: life or death.

Eating from the tree of life means trusting God and living forever with him under his wise rule.

Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil means trusting in human wisdom and rejecting life as God intended it. Eat from that tree, God says, and “you will surely die”.

According to the Bible, humans die because, from the very beginning, we have rejected God’s offer of life.

#### ***Doomed to Die***

In response to this fundamental choice, God expels humans from Eden, and (crucially) places two cherubim and a “flaming, whirling sword” at the

gate to keep them from coming back. He does this to ensure that sinful humans won’t eat of the tree of life and live forever in a fallen state. (Gen. 3:22)

It appears, at this point, that God is cutting ties with humanity altogether. The outcome of their choice is the greatest tragedy of all time - forsaking everlasting life with God for a short life of self-rule before death.

However, the rest of the Bible is the story of God refusing to abandon the creatures he made in his image. A story that climaxes in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

#### ***Jesus Makes a Way***

Jesus’ death was the cure for death. It was God’s reconciliation plan come to fruition. Doomed humanity were substituted for glorious divinity.

Jesus died so that we don’t have to.

In Jerusalem, at the time of Jesus’ death, a huge curtain separated the people from the holy place of God’s presence. This curtain was representative of the flaming sword which guarded the way to Eden. On the curtain, cherubim were embroidered to remind people of the fact.

But when Jesus was crucified, right at the point of death, the great curtain in the temple was torn in two. His death had opened the way for life with God!

Today we celebrate the bodily resurrection of Jesus. This event proves to us that death is not the ultimate end of human life. For those that believe in him (John 3:16), death is the open gateway to eternal life in a better-than-Eden restored creation, with the God who loves us.

## GROUP DISCUSSION

### TRENDING TOPICS:

#DEATH #SALVATION-STORY #LIFE

**1. As a culture, we don't like talking about death, and when we have to, we tend to soften our language, using phrases like, "He passed away", or "She departed this life."**

If the Bible sees death as a tragic consequence of sin, and an enemy to be finally defeated, why do we use this softened language?

Do you ever contemplate death? If you do, what prompts you?

**2. One French philosopher said that every religion is an attempt to deal with humanity's biggest problem: The inevitability of death. From one perspective, the whole Bible is a story about God overcoming the curse of death.**

How important is the gospel-offer of eternal life to you? Would you still be a Christian if the gift of eternal life wasn't 'part of the deal'?

**3. Christians believe that through his death and resurrection, Jesus opened the only way to eternal life.**

How motivated are you to share this news with others?

NOTES:



[REDDOORCHURCH.COM.AU/SEVEN-REASONS](https://reddoorchurch.com.au/seven-reasons)