

The Apostles' Creed: Week 5

...Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified...

In the Scriptures:

1. I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.
My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth;
you lay me in the dust of death.
Dogs surround me,
a pack of villains encircles me;
they pierce my hands and my feet.
All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.
They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.
But you, Lord, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me.
(*Psalm 22:14-19*)

2. “Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?” asked Pilate, knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

“What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?” Pilate asked them.

“Crucify him!” they shouted.

“Why? What crime has he committed?” asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, “Crucify him!”

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, “Hail, king of the Jews!” Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

(*Mark 15:9-20*)

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3. ...if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.

“He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. “He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” For “you were like sheep going astray,” but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

(1 Peter 2:19-25)

**Quotes are from Isaiah 53*

As described by Christian writers:

4. When this one came from heaven to earth for the sake of the one who suffers, and had clothed himself with that very one through the womb of a virgin, and having come forth as man, he accepted the sufferings of the sufferer through his body which was capable of suffering. And he destroyed those human sufferings by his spirit which was incapable of dying. He killed death which had put man to death.

For this one, who was led away as a lamb, and who was sacrificed as a sheep, by himself delivered us from servitude to the world as from the land of Egypt, and released us from bondage to the devil as from the hand of Pharaoh, and sealed our souls by his own spirit and the members of our bodies by his own blood.

- Melito of Sardis, *On the Passover*

5. O sacred Head, now wounded,
with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded
with thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred Head, what glory,
what bliss till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory,
I joy to call Thee mine.

- “O Sacred Head,” Orig. Arnulf of Leuven (Latin), Paul Gerhardt (German), J. W. Alexander (English).

6. ... for whatever reason, God chose to make man as he is—limited and suffering and subject to sorrows and death—he [God] had the honesty and the courage to take his own medicine. Whatever game he is playing with his creation, he has kept his own rules and played fair. He can exact nothing from man that he has not exacted from himself. He has himself gone through the whole of human experience, from the trivial irritations of family life and the cramping restrictions of hard work and lack of money to the worst horrors of pain and humiliation, defeat, despair, and death. When he was a man, he played the man. He was born in poverty and died in disgrace, and thought it was worthwhile.

... in most theologies, the god is supposed to have suffered and died in some remote and mythical period of prehistory. The Christian story, on the other hand, starts off briskly in St. Matthew's account with a place and a date: "When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King." ...About thirty-three years later (we are informed), God was executed, for being a political nuisance, "under Pontius Pilate"—much as we might say, "when Mr. Johnson-Hicks was Home Secretary." It is as definite and concrete as all that.

-Dorothy Sayers, *The Greatest Drama Ever Staged*

Why we believe in Christ's Passion:

- Almost all of the early documents that mention Jesus, including writings by non-Christians, allude to his execution. Because of this, all reputable historians, including secular ones, agree Christ was crucified. It is about as certain as a historical fact can be. (It is controversial only in the Muslim world, since Mohammad taught that God deceived people into thinking Jesus was crucified.)
- In the Roman world, crucifixion was regarded as an extremely shameful and disgraceful way to die, suitable only for slaves and rebels. People made fun of the early Christians for worshipping as their Lord and King a man who wasn't able to escape this horrible torture. So it is unthinkable that the Christians would have invented such a story about their beloved leader, if it hadn't really happened! In fact, the Crucifixion would have caused them to give up on Jesus entirely, if it were not for what happened next...