

# THE APOSTLE'S CREED

# I BELIEVE - CREDO

*WEEK THREE: ...suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.*

**This study series is based on the Apostles' Creed, a creed of the Christian Church. A creed is a statement of the beliefs or aims which guide someone's actions.**

Many of us have recently read and studied Stephen Cottrell's book *The Things He Carried* and I'm sure, as for me, it has had a profound impact. It brought home the depth of pain and suffering that Jesus went through on our behalf. Sometimes we need to be 'shocked' into giving more serious attention, and the descriptions were indeed, shocking in every sense.

## I BELIEVE (HE) SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE

### *John 18:1-14, 19-24 and 28-38*

In a short period of time Jesus had gone from sharing the Passover with his disciples to being arrested, bound, physically attacked and brought before the High Priest. After that, he was sent to the Roman procurator, Pilate.

- In Luke 22:30-46 we read of the prayer, and agony, of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from me; nevertheless, not My will but Yours, be done."
- Have you every been in a place of great loss, stress or pain that you have felt the need to call out to God to deliver from your situation? Many of the martyrs may have felt this agony before they were stoned to death, crucified or flayed alive. Almost all the disciples of Jesus were cruelly murdered. To the present, none of us have faced such horrors but most of us have faced anguish.
- How easy, or how difficult, do we find it to do God's will? Write down situations you have experienced. What enabled you to come through them?

### *Luke 23:1-12*

Not one of the people involved wanted to take the decision to put Jesus to death. He had come before the chief priests, captains of the temple, the Sanhedrin, then Pilate, and Herod. Each feared the consequences of making such a decision even though (with perhaps the exception of Pilate), it was what they wanted. In the end it was Pilate who said he "could find no fault with this man", and quite literally washed his hands of Jesus (Matthew 27:24) saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person", who told others to see to it.

- Did Pilate choose the cowardly way of not taking the decision.

Read Matthew 27:15-31. Do you think Pilate was afraid of those who were refusing to have Barabbas instead of Jesus, or were other factors at play?

- History is not always kind to cowards. Pilate will forever be remembered as the one who sent Jesus to the cross.
- By washing his hands, Pilate had given the Roman soldiers carte blanche to deal with Jesus as they wished. Write down the things they did to Jesus even before he got to the cross. As you look at your words, pray that God will give you a deeper understanding of all that Jesus suffered on our behalf because he loved us.

## ...WAS CRUCIFIED, DIED, AND WAS BURIED

“Was crucified” - stark words for the terrible suffering of Jesus. Psalm 22 This wonderful, prophetic psalm could have been written by someone witnessing the crucifixion that day but was written by David around one thousand years before the event.

For the Romans, crucifixion was an efficient form of death. They used it to cause the maximum suffering at the same times as giving them power to control both suffering and death. It made a statement to the people over whom they ruled.

When Jesus was placed on the cross with the crown of thorns on his head and the nails hammered home, they placed at the top, an inscription written by Pilate which read: ‘The King of the Jews’. The chief priests of the Jews objected and said he must change it to read, ‘He said, “I am the King of the Jews”’. Pilate’s reply: “What I have written, I have written”.

- Do you think Pilate thought this might be so, or was it a way of goading the Jewish religious establishment?

It can take anything from five to twenty-four hours for someone to die. Most experts agree, though, that what ultimately kills a crucified person is suffocation. Either the body loses so much oxygen that the person smothers, or the carbon dioxide level in the body goes up so much that the body tissues turn acidic and destroy their own cells. When the Romans finally wanted their crucified victims to die, they broke the prisoner’s legs so they could no longer push themselves up and all the body weight would be hanging by the arms.

However, when the Roman soldiers came to Jesus to break his legs they found he was already dead, but to make absolutely certain, they pierced a sword through his side and into his heart, so that out flowed blood and water.

### *“What’s Important about Jesus Not Breaking Any Bones?”*

**When God gave Moses and Aaron the rules for the Passover, some might have sounded unconventional—for example, the clear prohibition against breaking any bones of the lamb that was sacrificed and eaten by each household. Why did God insist on this?**

**This command—that the Passover lamb not have its legs broken—carries symbolic weight. When Jesus, whom John the Baptist proclaimed to be “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), was crucified, not one of his bones was broken. John 19:31-34 tells us that when the soldiers came to Jesus to break his legs to hasten his death, they found that he was already dead, so they pierced his side with a spear but did not break his legs.**

As John testifies, "These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken'" (John 19:36). The Exodus 12:46 rule is also echoed prophetically in Psalms 34:20: "He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken." To the last detail of his death, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies concerning the Messiah, verifying that he was, as John the Baptist claimed, the sacrificial Lamb of God." (NIV Case for Christ Study Bible).

**The earth shakes with the force of the conflict**  
**And the sun refuses to shine**  
**For there hangs God's son, in the balance**  
**And then through the darkness he cries**  
**It is finished, the battle is over**  
**It is finished, there'll be no more war**  
**It is finished, the end of the conflict**  
**It is finished and Jesus is**  
**(Bill and Gloria Gaither)**

- When Jesus cried "It is finished", it was not a moment of defeat but one of great triumph. Does it encourage you to know that whatever battle we are going through, Jesus has already won for the victory for us.
- Give thanks to God that all scripture lines up from the Old Testament and through the New. It should give us faith and confidence so that we can truly say: I BELIEVE

### **Romans 8:18**

**"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."**

This was written by Paul who probably suffered more than any of the followers of Jesus.

- God doesn't say we will not experience problems but he does say: "My grace is all you need." 2 Corinthians 12:9

Following his death, Jesus was laid in the tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea, who, with Nicodemus, embalmed the body, preparing it for burial. John 19:39–42 A large stone was placed in the entrance and the Romans sealed it to show it was done under their authority.

### **Acts 2:31, Ephesians 4:8-10, 1 Peter 4:6**

All these Scriptures speak of Jesus descending to Hell or Hades. This is not easy to understand or explain. However, as believers, we accept what the Bible tells us. It is one those 'mysteries' that one day we will understand.

The first two verses of this wonderful hymn which has become a great favourite at the Minster sums up this study:

O Praise The Name (Anástasis) Hillsong Worship

I cast my mind to Calvary  
Where Jesus bled and died for me.  
I see His wounds, His hands, His feet.  
My Saviour on that cursed tree  
His body bound and drenched in tears  
They laid Him down in Joseph's tomb.  
The entrance sealed by heavy stone  
Messiah still and all alone  
O praise the name of the Lord our God  
O praise His name forever more  
For endless days we will sing Your praise  
Oh Lord, oh Lord our God

