

Dori Sear and Dr. Jerry Nelson

## LEADER'S GUIDE

For discussion *following* the sermon on February 8, 2009

### Plot to Kill Jesus

Death is all around us and we experience its results in many different ways. The deaths of our loved ones are hard to bear; the effects linger for our lifetimes. But the death of someone who lived a hundred years ago, much less the death of someone who lived 2000 years ago, has little impact on us. Although there are incidents throughout history where someone died in the place of someone else, eventually they both died. Never has there been a death that resulted in eternal life, until the atoning death of Jesus. In this passage we will consider:

- Christ's voluntary, substitutionary death
- Christ's atoning sacrifice (payment for our sin)
- Christ, making us one by his death and resurrection

The discussion among the chief priests and the Sanhedrin is centered on death. They recognized that truly one man must die in order to preserve the nation. Little did they know that the power they sought in a political Messiah would pale in comparison to the power of redemption in a cross through the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

What does the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ mean to us? Consider for a moment our indebtedness to God. We know that our sin is wrong. Our consciences (and the consequences of sin) remind us of what is holy and what is not. When we become aware of the broad chasm that exists between unrighteousness and holiness, we know that there is nothing we humanly can do to atone for our sin. We stand guilty and condemned. We may try to remedy the situation by feeling guilty for a long time, filling the

and the sad and often infuriating consequences of sin on us and on the people we love. Sin's destructive power leaves us feeling separated from God and one another.

How do you respond to the guilt of your sin?

How do you respond to God's grace and forgiveness?

Do you ever feel unworthy for so great a gift?

Do you still feel guilty?

How does God remedy our unworthiness and guilt?

6. How does the world respond to the concept of sin? Knowing what we know about the eternal consequences of sin, and knowing what they know about the temporal consequences of sin, why does the world (and sometimes, we) treat it so lightly?
7. In verse 53 John says that Jesus would die not only "for the Jewish nation but also for the scattered children of God." Who are the scattered children of God? Why does John call them "children of God," even before they have heard of Jesus and believed in him?
8. When John says that Jesus' intention is to "bring them (Jews and the scattered children of God) together and make them one," what does he mean? (Cf. Ephesians 2:11-22) What is God's desire for oneness in the body of Christ and what should that look like in our church today?

emptiness with some type of sacrificial penance, or choosing to engage in good works to make up for our sin, but everything we do will fall short. Atonement apart from Christ is impossible. Forgiveness is a gift of God, both unearned and undeserved.

The violations of sin cannot simply be dismissed. Sin must be atoned for; either we pay or God does in our place. Jesus took the penalty for us and died in our place. His is the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus said “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus wasn’t killed by the will of angry, fearful men. In the most profound and intimate display of love known to mankind, the Father sent the Son, and the Son willingly laid down his life for his own, both for the Jew and the Gentile, making us one people in him. How do we respond to such amazing love?

<sup>1</sup> *John 15:13*

## **Leader’s Guide**

### Personal Preparation

- Sometimes the events in our lives lose significance over time. If you have been a believer for a long time and understand the theological truths discussed in this lesson, it can be easy to gloss over them.
- As you examine your life over the past day or week, ask God to reveal any un-confessed sin to you. As you consider how you might respond to that sin if you were not a believer, take time to thank God for his amazing grace! After you confess your sin, pause for a few moments to simply enjoy this great gift, and enjoy the presence of God himself!

### Group Preparation

Sometimes it is difficult to completely understand the meaning of Jesus’ substitutionary death and the resulting atonement for our sin. Once we cognitively and experientially grasp the definitions and theology, we find the most amazing, life-changing truth in the universe, and we are led to a sense of awe and worship. We must consider the depth of our sin in order to grasp

the amazing reality of Christ’s atonement for our sin. The discussion should *not* center on specific sins of the group members, but should lead to the hope and inexpressible joy we have in Christ Jesus as we consider the consequences of sin for which there has not been acquittal or atonement. Pray especially that these concepts will be readily understood in your group.

### Discussion Questions

1. Some of those who witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus put their faith in Jesus and others apparently did not. What factors has John already mentioned that account for this difference in response? (Cf. 10:2,14; 6:37,44; 3:3,16)
2. What did the Jewish leaders fear if Jesus were widely accepted? What reasons do people today give for not trusting Jesus? What fears do I have that keep me from trusting Jesus fully?
3. Throughout biblical history God used an assortment of instruments to make his truth known (e.g., Balaam’s donkey, Nebuchadnezzar, etc). Apparently Caiaphas didn’t realize the truth he was speaking. What did he mean by his reference to one man dying for the whole nation and what did the Spirit of God through him mean?
4. What does it mean to us personally that Jesus died for us, in our place, as our substitute? Compare Romans 5:6-8, 2 Cor. 5:17-21, Isaiah 53:5-6.
5. Sin is difficult to discuss and even harder to face. Ours is a constant battle with temptation, guilt (once we have sinned),