

# Christ Offered

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're visiting tonight, we're supposed to come in towards the end of a series that we've been going through for a while on the personal work of Jesus. And tonight, the title is Christ Offered.

Christ Offered. So tonight we're focusing on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Well, I want you to think first of all about royal portraits.

One of the interesting things about recent royal portraits is how ordinary they look. Painting was painted of our queen, relatively recently.

And in that painting, if you didn't know she was a queen, you wouldn't think she was a queen because it looks like an ordinary woman, because she is, obviously. But that's the point, isn't it? Because royal portraits always used to make kings or queens look like kings or queens.

They were extravagantly dressed, they were dressed in all their finery. They usually had a crown either on their head or resting on something somewhere.

[ 0 : 59 ] And they were portrayed often as surveying their territory or looking important, basically. A royal portrait made you know that person was a king or a queen.

And so it's interesting that more recent ones, we have this trend towards making our royalty look like just ordinary people and being more familiar to us. Now, the Bible tells us about Jesus, our king. And the Bible portrays Jesus as glorious. You know, we saw that snapshot as it were of the pre-incarnate Jesus that Derek Priest on last week in James did this morning from Daniel chapter 10.

Where Christ is displayed in astounding glory. And the question that we're asked when we're presented with an image like this is, how on earth could we stand before such a person?

Of course, we can on our own. And so Christ is absolutely glorious and kingly. He is now, as our Savior, as our exalted and risen Savior, on the throne.

[ 2 : 05 ] But, I want you to think just for a minute as we start about a very important image that were given from the Book of Revelation. I think it might come up on the screens a couple of verses.

Because this image, this verse portrays Jesus this way. It's an alternative picture in a sense of our exalted king.

When I saw a lamb, Jesus, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne. So Jesus is portrayed to us rightly as all glorious and all powerful and awesome figure.

And yet, we as Christians have this concept, this reality of Jesus now at the center of heaven, looking as if he had been slain.

Referring us back, of course, to that incredible point, focal point of history where he appeared so helpless and so weak and where he was killed.

[ 3 : 09 ] And so now we have that reference. He looks as if he's been slain. I want you to bear that image in mind. And we should have that as a really kind of central, important, visual almost picture for us as Christians.

It means so much to us. And we'll kind of come back to that as we go through. And I want in some ways the sermon tonight, as I said, it's about Christ offered, Christ's sacrifice. We'll kind of explore and go into the significance of where that comes from, what's going on with that.

We're going to look at Jesus, the Redeemer. We've been spending weeks now looking at what Jesus did, what was the work of Jesus as he went to the cross, why he's sufficient to be our saviour, why his work is completed, but at the core of that work and all that he does and how sufficient it is, is the shocking fact that Jesus is sacrificed.

Jesus is slain. And we have to look at that, that dramatic and troubling reality tonight for a little while.

Now we're going to spend our initial period in 1 Corinthians 15 as we read from. But that chapter, that few verses actually takes us back into the Old Testament, which is why I looked at Leviticus. [ 4 : 27 ] So we'll go there for a little bit as well. First of all, though, if your Bibles are open at 1 Corinthians 15, we're going to focus particularly on verse 3 and verse 4, two verses.

But the way I want you to think about these verses is that within these few verses there are five words that shake the world. Okay, I have all the history of ideas of the world, I have all the political and religious and philosophical theories flying around at the moment that you could go and delve into and find out about.

There are five words here that maybe have transformed you as a person, or if they haven't tonight, they should. And they should transform the realities of all your friends and all your neighbours and everybody you come across.

And those words are in 1 Corinthians 15 verse 3. Paul's writing about the Gospel and he's establishing the fact that he wants them to hold on to the Gospel.

And he outlines that Gospel in verse 3 by saying, What I received I passed on to you as a first importance, Christ died for our sins.

[ 5 : 41 ] Those are five words that absolutely shake the world. Now we cannot get too used to those words, even if you come to church every week. And even if you hear Gospel preaching every week, those are the foundational words for what we believe.

Christ died for our sins. And we say hallelujah to that. So let's think about that for a little while, because that reality, if you went out and told your friends about that tonight, that is a shockingly offensive thing to say to them.

Or you might well get that reaction. Christ didn't die for my sins. I didn't ask him to die for my sins, if people say that to me before. But even that very notion, Christ died?

That's brutal, that's barbaric. What kind of person are you to believe in that ancient primal falsity? Christ died? What kind of God would sacrifice his son for other people's sins is an argument that you might have heard?

It's an argument that a lot of people will give you. But saying that, what does that do? Well that ignores the fundamental problem of sin.

[ 6 : 57 ] To say that Christ died is offensive, and I won't hear any more about that, and that's just wrong, God shouldn't have done anything about that, is to fundamentally underestimate the horror of sin.

It's so difficult, unfashionable, unpleasant for people to hear nowadays. But sin is so offensive to God, sin is so offensive to a pure and holy God.

You remember what God said in the beginning chapters of the Bible, that if they were not to follow his ways, the penalty was surely death. Death inevitably follows as a consequence of sin.

In many ways it's the great adversary, it's the great enemy, it's a great anomaly. We experienced life, our experience right now is of life, and yet death is this great anomaly, and mystery this great enemy, and it comes out of the fact that we all experience, and we all commit, sin which is such a great offence to God.

Please don't forget how a holy God cannot be in the presence of sin. And I suppose that is in many ways the foundation of what so many people nowadays just don't understand.

[ 8 : 21 ] And of course the difficult question for us is how do we move them towards seeing that? Very often the church is described as just judgmental, like people are going to just preach, and be judgmental about other people.

But of course the reality for us, even if we're believers, that we too identify ourselves as sinners, but saved by grace. So the first thing is to always understand that this always comes from the reality, and the horror of our sin. Christ died because of that reality.

It's offensive, and it's offensive, it should even be offensive to us, shouldn't it? Because who is this person? We'll come back to this, but who is this person that died? The Christ of God, the Son of God, how could he die for our sins?

As I say, we'll come back to that. So this statement is immediately offensive, unless of course we've become dull to it. Unless of course we've just let ourselves become so used to hearing these words. But it's also completely remarkable when you think about that thing. I just mentioned, who is this person that died? Jesus Christ died. Doesn't that strike you?

[ 9 : 34 ] He made the tree upon which he hung. He was there in the beginning. He's the author of creation. He made the people who crucified him.

Those people who shouted, crucify him, he knew every one of them. He knew who they were. He knew their motivations. He knew their destiny.

He was over their lives, he was in control of their lives. He held their lives in the palm of his hands, and yet he was crucified by them. He had 12 legions of angels at his disposal.

He was able to call down power from heaven as he and his human weakness hung upon the cross to save himself. And yet he didn't, because as we've seen over the weeks, he was so committed to this work of going to the cross.

He was so committed to the fact that he would die. Christ died for our sins. And you know that sense of mystery and awesomeness about the fact that it was him who died on the cross.

[ 10 : 43 ] Sometimes I love listening to Donald MacLeod or reading him on this subject, because he brings out, again, the anomaly of that. The sense of how wrong it seems that Jesus died on the cross.

He would describe it as if there was a scene of those watching what was going on in the crucifixion. And I remember this particular line he wrote where he said, what's he doing here?

Can you imagine looking at the cross and seeing Jesus crucified? What's he doing here? Not as in what job is he doing? The answer to that is, as we're looking at, well, he's making atonement for sin because of the sin of the world.

Somebody has to pay for the sin of the world. Not that question. The question is, what's he doing here? What's Jesus doing making atonement for sin? Because he never sinned.

He didn't cause all the sin. He didn't rebel against the Father. He spent all of his life, again, as we've seen, deliberately obeying the Father, living in complete harmony with the Father, agreeing with the Father, living in the power of the Father and the Spirit as he worked out this perfect existence as a human, because he was the only one who could have done it.

[ 11 : 58 ] What's he doing there on the cross? It's remarkable, absolutely remarkable. Christ died for our sins.

And it's further remarkable when you think about it, that it was for us. Christ died for our sins. Those watching, his early followers could say that they were completely devoted to him because they recognized that he went to the cross, and they came to learn that he went to the cross for them. And you know that truth still holds for you tonight. Please think that that is outside of you if you're struggling with the idea of faith tonight. You think that it can't be for you because you've done too much bad, or if you think it can't be for you because you don't feel assurance.

Christ died for our sins. He is able, again, Derek Priest and this is one of our previous sermons, his work is finished. It's done. He did it there.

He died for our sins. And you must take that and apply it to you tonight. For the first time, or you must take it to you and apply it to you and rejoice again in that truth, that Christ died for your sins.

[ 13 : 18 ] The Holy Son of God, who lived a perfect life and who was committed to that in order to go to the cross as the spotless, sinless sacrifice did that for you.

And so we think about that as the great act of grace, the great act of self-sacrifice, the great motivation for us then as we go on to live our lives.

In these few words, in these five words that shake the world, I don't say shook the world, because that event was the defining event of world history and it utterly shook world history.

But it still shakes us now, it still shakes your life now, it still has the power to change and to shake the lives of everybody you know. And we shouldn't ever forget that.

We shouldn't drift into feeling that our friends are so far away, that this word doesn't have the power or the application for them.

[ 14 : 19 ] It's the same gospel, it's the same truth. And so just in thinking about that and applying it to our context, that is, this is a powerful word for ourselves as Christians.

So what does it say to our context? Not many people believe this nowadays, do they? I think if you think about the people that you know and the media that you read and the TV that you watch and everything like that.

This truth, you have to believe that this truth is still relevant and you have to believe that it's still what people need to hear, so that we don't retreat. Because if you would describe, if we describe our culture broadly as a kind of humanistic culture, this truth gives humanism in many ways its

missing link.

Many people today would say, your friends, your colleagues and whoever would say, human beings are very important. I think I'm important, I think you're important as my friend.

Look at all the things that we can achieve, look at the great skills that we have, look at the dignity that we have as human beings. It's important to fight injustice, it's important to end war, it's important to care for the starving and the homeless and the disenfranchised and the needy.

[ 15 : 35 ] Absolutely. But it's very difficult to argue for that if you believe that we have no ultimate meaning and no ultimate purpose. If you believe that ultimately human beings are random, then what we say is you're not random, you're not here for no purpose.

You're here because you're made in the image of God, you're made to reflect and to give glory to God and he is so committed to that in you that Christ died for your sins.

So that you could know forgiveness, so that you could be totally transformed in who you are, so that your life could be turned around. Instead of looking at yourself all the time and glorifying yourself, you're able to give glory to God and you're able to see him as the most worthy of all your attention, the most worthy of all your praise.

And so it really still speaks into our communities, into our media, into our friends, into all the people that you know. Christ died for our sins.

And we mustn't think that Edinburgh is too sophisticated for that. Remember, who is this letter written to? Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians. What was Corinth like when he wrote this letter?

[ 17 : 00 ] Well, it wasn't full of Christians. These people became Christians. They were pagans and all kinds of things. They were people who didn't accept God, the God of the Bible, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob as their God. They were people who didn't follow Jesus and who weren't there at the crucifixion and who followed him afterwards.

They were people whose lives were miles away, but they heard the gospel and they were transformed. So Paul writes to them, of course, look at what he says in the first couple of verses.

I want to remind you of the gospel. He goes back to them and says, you must remember this gospel. It's what you need to keep on thinking about. It's what you need to keep at the heart of your fellowship. And he also says, I preach to you which you received by this gospel you're saved if you hold firmly to the word.

Not because their salvation is found in how well they perform religiously, but because the danger for them, of course, was to just veer off and go back to their old ways and forget and give in on this Jesus.

Amongst all the pressure of their society, he's saying, no, don't go that way again. There's nothing there but death. Hold firmly to the gospel. Hold firmly to the Jesus who died for you and that is the way that you need to go.

[ 18 : 15 ] And so it's relevant for our culture. And so we need to believe that the people that we know who we struggle to witness to and we struggle to think, how do I explain the gospel to them?

We'll just go on thinking about that, go on praying about that, go on caring about those people because it's the same gospel that they need to hear. And it's the same gospel that will transform their lives.

So these are five words that shake the world. This is that Christ was a sacrifice for sins, that he died according to the Scriptures.

But I just want to follow that, as it were, follow on statement there just for a minute, because in some senses this shouldn't be a surprise. It's remarkable. It's offensive in the right sense. It's surprising that Christ was the one who died, but we read there at the end of that verse, Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

According to the Scriptures. So in some senses it's already been there, hasn't it? And Paul's referring back to many parts of the Bible that were pointing forward to this great event.

[ 19 : 25 ] So I just want to follow that just for a few minutes now. What is meant by according to the Scriptures? Well, we're going to turn back first of all. We're going to go to two passages briefly.

So the first one to turn back to, and it will come up on the screens, is where we read from the Leviticus. What is being referred to here according to the Scriptures? And how can we now go back into the Old Testament and start to see some of the things, some of the sacrifices, some of the way they dealt with things in the Old Testament that makes sense fully when we come to the New Testament and we read of all that Jesus has done?

Well, when we read in Leviticus chapter 16, that described the day of atonement. That described a particular sacrifice that happened that was given to the Israelite community as a way by which they could deal with, a way in which they were instructed to deal with sin in their persons and in their community.

And we read these words in particular when Aaron had finished making atonement for the most holy place, the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He's to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites.

All their sins and put them on the goat's head. Now, I don't know whether you've read that before, you maybe have never come to that before and you're thinking, what on earth has that got to do with anything?

[ 20 : 55 ] I have no idea why that's come up on the screen and I'll be interested to see how he makes any sense of this. But it's good for us to go back and to see how we can read this and why it's there. Why is this there? What sense can we make of it?

This is something that God gave to the Israelite community who had to be reminded time and time again of the sin and the problems that they had in their community because of their own hearts, because of how rebellious they were.

And God wanted them to know how he wanted them to deal with that sin. He wanted them to know that it was important, the sin wasn't just to be brushed under the carpet, that they couldn't live any old way they felt like.

But in dealing with sin as a holy God, he gave them this, if you like, this picture, this image.

Because really, this action of confessing over the head of this goat their sin didn't by itself save them because there wasn't anything particularly special about the goat that if they confess sins onto the goat, this goat would somehow magically deal with their sin.

But this, as we particularly with the privilege that we have of having the message of Jesus in the New Testament, as we see back, this points forward to the ultimate sacrifice, the one who was to come, the one who would be the real sacrifice and who would deal with sin.

[ 22 : 20 ] And that is Jesus Christ. You see what happens here? The action that the priest has to do, they have these two goats, and this one in particular, the scapegoat, what happens to this goat?

Look at what I've thought about this. He's to lay hands on the head of the goat and to confess the sins of the community onto the goat.

And the goat is then led by somebody else out into the desert, outside the camp of the people, outside the camp of the people.

And that goat bears the sin of the people and removes it. And then the other goat is killed and the blood is shed to deal again with the sin of the people.

Now that is a powerful image, and it's a powerful image that isn't just kind of floating or hovering here in the Old Testament as some weird ritual that they went through, and by doing that, they somehow satisfied God by that action alone.

[ 23 : 24 ] But what we need to see is that that, when you think about what happened to that goat and that it became the sin better and symbolically took the sins of the people outside the camp, dealt with their sins so that they could then be ones who came before God.

We apply that to Jesus. And when we start to think about the significance of that as applied to Jesus, it's really mind-blowing. What happened to Jesus on the cross?

We read that Christ died according to our sins. We know that Christ was crucified. He didn't just die though. He wasn't just killed on the cross, but on the cross, he was sacrificed. He was offered. Christ was offered for our sins.

And so he took on himself, on the tree, at that moment in history, the sins of the community, the sins of all the communities, the sins of you and the sins of me, and the sinless one, the spotless one who had lived all of his life in agreement with the Father, in communion with the Father.

He became sin. Doesn't mean he became a sinner. He didn't change and become a sinner, but he became sin. He became the one who took upon himself all the guilt, all of the consequences of everything that you and I have ever done that has offended a holy and a pure God.

[ 24 : 52 ] That was put on Jesus. And Jesus took that and dealt with it. The wrath of God, the anger of God, God's holy justice and his ability to deal with and the rightness of him dealing with sin, he dealt with it there.

Jesus became the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice. So when we go back into the Old Testament and we read about sacrifices and we struggle to understand them, then we need to see that.

These sacrifices and that these things are a shadow of the reality. They point us forward into the New Testament to Jesus coming as the ultimate fulfillment. And when your friends say, what earth is this brutal thing going on in the Old Testament? All these things that are so irrelevant and so confusing, this helps us to understand, doesn't it?

It helps us to understand how we can speak to them of the importance of dealing with sin, of the rightness for God to deal with sin and of the way he dealt with sin. But of course, the great truth that comes out of this is that Jesus himself became the one who dealt with sin.

God himself is the one who dealt with sin. It goes back to that question, doesn't it? What is he doing there? Isn't it so remarkable that God decided to take on himself the punishment for our sins?

[ 26 : 23 ] So that's very briefly something to do with this sacrifice, this great symbolic sacrifice in the Old Testament. But I want briefly to refer to Isaiah chapter 53. So again, this will come up on the screens. You may wish to turn here.

Because in all these sacrifices, all this talk about animals, with the blood being shed of the animals. Of course, the animals, again, never by themselves could deal with our sins.

And so one who is a representative of us had to come. And in Isaiah chapter 53, we get reference to one man who would come.

And again, this is just to see something of the way in which the Bible builds up to. We get these references coming throughout the Bible, building up to the ultimate sacrifice who was Jesus. What does Isaiah 53 tell us? Well, it speaks of the one who was to come, who would become the sacrifice.

Verse 5, he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was on him.

[ 27 : 28 ] He took it, he bore it on the cross, and by his wounds were healed. So that means that Jesus, in that great exchange as it were, he became the substitute.

That was due to you, the punishment that was due to you, Jesus dealt with it. He took your sin, the punishment for your sins. And so you have peace. If you've come before God tonight and you've said, Lord, I recognize that my life is so far from what it should be.

And I have struggled so much to meet your requirements. And I just get it wrong so many times, and I need your forgiveness. Then you have peace with God because your sins have been dealt with.

Because Jesus took the punishment for your sins. Christ was offered. Christ was offered for your sins.

And so we have these just two of many passages that point us forward to the ultimate sacrifice, who is Jesus?

[ 28 : 35 ] Who is the one who was to come? But think, remember that, and think about that as an illustration, that they're shadows. A shadow isn't the reality, isn't it? My shadow there right now isn't me, I'm me. These sacrifices are shadows of the one who is to come.

And the one, remember as well, who had been decreed eternally from beforehand that he would become the sacrifice for sins. So this is the great, in some sense, the great anomaly, the great tension that we have.

The Holy One, the good one, was sacrificed, was offered, became sin, took the punishment on himself when he didn't deserve it. That we might go free.

And this is the gospel that we hold to, that we still hold to. Two things in just applying that very briefly as we finish. This helps us deal with spiritual indifference.

And I think if we're honest, even as Christians, we sometimes grow cold and we can grow indifferent. We feel like we've heard a thousand sermons, you feel like you've opened the Bible many times, and you don't feel like it's taken you anywhere, and anyway life's so busy.

[ 29 : 39 ] Well, this helps us deal with that. I want you to think for a minute, go into that thought, how would it have been for Jesus on the cross?

All his life, he was in perfect harmony with the Father. All the sins that we've committed were anathema to him. Sin is hated by God.

Jesus lived a perfect and holy life, but on the cross he became sin. He took our guilt. How must that have been for him? You know what it feels like if you're wrongly accused of something.

Somebody assumes you've done something and you say, I didn't do that, I would never do that. And you hate the feeling that somebody would think that you did that. And in a tiny, very tiny way, that moves us, edges us closer to understanding maybe what happened here.

Christ did not sin. Christ did not agree with sin. He did not adhere to it in any way, and yet he became sin for the joy that was set before him.

[ 30 : 45 ] Because in doing that, he would win a people to himself. That tells you something about how much he loves you, that he was willing to do that, because it meant that he would purchase you to be his children.

Just remembering that, it helps us deal with spiritual indifference. And secondly, to help you live a life of praise despite your circumstances.

So sometimes life is very difficult. And sometimes we're genuinely tempted to wonder about God.

The providence that he brings into our lives, why has he done this? Doesn't seem fair.

But remember the picture that we thought about at the start. Remember the image of the lamb slain at the center of the throne. Looking like it had been slain at the center of the throne.

Because what this passage that we were in in 1 Corinthians goes on to describe, he's described the importance of standing firm, of holding on to the Gospel. He outlines that Gospel briefly, but so crucially in those five words, Christ died for our sins.

[ 31 : 51 ] But then he goes on to describe how he was buried and how he was raised on the third day. So we don't worship a dead savior. We don't remember a Christ who just went to the cross and was sacrificed.

We don't remember a Christ who was sacrificed and who was raised again and who now is in glory. In verse 4 here, he was raised according to the Scriptures. And so this image that we started with, it shows us the true glory, doesn't it, of our King.

Because we see pictures in the Bible of our great exalted risen Lord Jesus. But we also see him in our times of difficulty, in our times when we wonder whether or not he loves us and whether he remembers us.

We see him as the lamb looking as if it had been slain and he was slain for us. Again, that's a personal application that you need to hold on to. And you need to remember and take to heart and apply it to yourself when things are difficult.

Because he was slain for you. And he knows the trouble that you face and the difficulties that you go through. But he did that so that one day he will call you to be with him for eternity.

[ 33 : 01 ] Because that to him is joy to have you in his presence and that you might live a life now. While you deal with all the ups and downs and the difficulties, you might know that truth that he did that for you.

And that you might live in the light of that. And we pray that the Lord will help us to hold on to these things. Not to compromise, not to forget, but to remember.

And of course remembering is such an important part of our ongoing Christian lives. Amen. Let's pray. God, we praise you for this great mystery and how remarkable I think this is that you dealt with our sin by taking upon your son Jesus Christ.

Or Jesus, we just thank you for what you've done for us. And we pray that we'd be able to get time to meditate on this and that it would fill our hearts with joy.

And we also pray that tonight if we haven't bowed the knee before you, that we would see you as the one who is over all things and yet who gave up your life. Please help us not to grow cold to that reality.

[ 34 : 09 ] Please make us alive to it by your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.