  
**Short Course on Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection**  
**Good Friday: Jesus' Passion and Death**  
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## Apostles Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, **suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried;** he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

([http://www.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_docman&Itemid=464](http://www.catholic.org.au/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=464))

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## Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. **For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,** he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

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**Tonight...** 

- Context: why does Jesus accept crucifixion and death?
- Crucifixion.
- Saviour Figure: comparing ancient stories.
- Understanding the theological significance.

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**Why does Jesus die on the Cross?** 

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**Questions to Begin...** 

- What is the purpose of human life?
- Is love the answer?
- How do we know this?
- How can we know what a life of love looks like?
- Love demands complete self-giving for the other.
- Human lives and communities are characterised by violence, hurt and division.

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If our human communities are  characterised by death and violence – if no one is living a full human life...

***then in order for us to know love (and change), someone had to live a life of complete love.***

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### **Crucifixion & Covenant**

- The New Covenant in the heart.
  - Fulfilment of the old Covenant foreshadowed in the prophets.
  - Living God’s Kingdom as loving, self-giving victim.

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### **The confrontation...**

- God’s way of living = forgiving victim.
- The distorted human way of living
  - = violence and domination.

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**The new covenant represents a new vision of God. It is not ratified and celebrated with blood of sacrifice or with any special religious act. It is ratified by what is simply an act of love. An act of love as bloody and horrible as any sacrifice, but first of all simply an act of ordinary love. The new covenant is ratified because Jesus accepted his dreadful death. And he accepted it because he loved us, loved us enough to be close to us, to be close enough to be our victim, close enough to suffer the fate that we impose on love that threatens our world, our world based on lies and domination and fear, on anything except love. Jesus died because when we meet love, although we fool ourselves that we will like it, we in fact kill it.**



From: Herbert McCabe, *God, Christ, and Us*, ed. Brian Davies (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 86.

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## The Crucifixion



**He “suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried”.**

**“For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried”.**



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## Crucifixion



- Roman form of execution.
- Hang on a wooden cross until death.
- Reserved for the worst criminals.
- Slow, painful, humiliating and public death.
- Symbol of fear and punishment.
- Jesus dies on the Cross like a criminal.
- What kind of saviour/Messiah is this?



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### Apollonius of Tyana

“Take courage, for I will today put a stop to the course of the disease.” And with these words he led the population entire to the theatre, where the image of the Averting god has been set up. [The Averting god in this case is Hercules, as will become clear later.] And there he saw what seemed an old mendicant artfully blinking his eyes as if blind, and he carried a wallet and a crust of bread in it; and he was clad in rags and was very squalid of countenance. Apollonius therefore ranged the Epheseians around him and said: “Pick up as many stones as you can and hurl them at this enemy of the gods.” Now the Ephesians wondered what he meant, and were shocked at the idea of murdering a stranger so manifestly miserable; for he was begging and praying them to take mercy upon him. Nevertheless Apollonius insisted and egged on the Ephesians

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as some of them began to take shots and hit him with their stones, the beggar who had seemed to blink and be blind, gave them all a sudden glance and showed that his eyes were full of fire. Then the Ephesians recognized that he was a demon, and they stoned him so thoroughly that their stones were heaped into a great cairn around him. After a little pause Apollonius bade them remove the stones and acquaint themselves with the wild animal which they had slain. When therefore they had exposed the object which they thought they had thrown their missiles at, they found that he had disappeared and instead of him there was a hound who resembled in form and look a Molosian dog, but was in size the equal of the largest lion; there he lay before their eyes, pounded to a pulp by their stones and vomiting foam as mad dogs do. Accordingly the statue of the Averting god, namely Hercules, has been set up over the spot where the ghost was slain.<sup>1</sup>

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### René Girard on Myth & Ritual

- 1) A **crisis** within the community that results in a generalised loss of distinctions or differentiation between the members of that community;
- 2) The identifying and **accusing of a victim**;
- 3) The presence of **certain characteristic traits** in the accused (such as being from a minority, high/low position, or having some illness, deformity or other unusual mark); and,
- 4) **The climax** with collective violence/persecution occurring against the victim to restore order (usually veiled or symbolic)
- 5) **Peace is restored** and order is regenerated.

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### Apollonius of Tyana

- 1) A crisis: disease encompassing the community;
- 2) The victim: old, blind beggar;
- 3) Certain characteristic traits: old, blind, dirty & poor
- 4) The climax with collective violence/persecution: Apollonius leads a stoning against a guilty demon-monster
- 5) Peace is restored and order is regenerated after the stoning.

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### The Gospels on Mythic Violence

- 1) **The crisis is false** = motivated by envy & rivalry;
- 2) The victim is **accused arbitrarily**;
- 3) The presence of **certain characteristic traits** in the accused are excuses to cover-up the envy and distorted desires of the mob;
- 4) **The climax** with unanimous violence/persecution occurs against **an innocent victim**;
- 5) **Peace is restored** and order is regenerated... BUT Jesus' death does not give the desired peace.

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> There are some who protest after Jesus' death.

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### Key Parts of the Gospel Passion

- Crisis is false
  - ‘But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "**You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.**"’ (Jn 11:49-50)
  - “**They hated me without a cause.**” (Jn 15:25)
  - For I tell you, this scripture must be fulfilled in me, '**And he was counted among the lawless**'; and indeed what is written about me is being fulfilled.” (Lk 22:37; Mk 15:28)

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**Gospel Passion** 

• False Accusations

– “Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for **false testimony against Jesus so that they might put him to death**, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward.” (Mt 26:59-60)

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**Gospel Passion** 

Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" **For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over.** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead. Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "**Crucify him!**" Pilate asked them, "**Why, what evil has he done?**" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified. (Mk 15:9-15)

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**Gospel Passion** 

Traits of the Victim

– “Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "**He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe.**" Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.” (Mk 15:29-32)

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**Gospel Passion** 

- Climax of Victimisation
  - Then Jesus said to them, "**Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit?** Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled." (Mk 14:48-49)
  - **So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing**, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am **innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.**" (Mt 27:24)

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**Gospel Passion** 

*Climax of Victimisation (continued)...*

- Pilate & Herod are united: "That same day **Herod and Pilate became friends with each other; before this they had been enemies.**" (Lk 23:12)
- "For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, **gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed...**" (Acts 4:27)

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**Gospel Passion** 

- Innocence of the Victim
  - When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he repented and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders. He said, "**I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.**" But they said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." Throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. (Mt 27:3-5)

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**Gospel Passion** 

- ‘At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"' (Mk 15:34)
- "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Lk 23:34)

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**Gospel Passion** 

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. ...When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "**Certainly this man was innocent.**" And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, **beating their breasts.** But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. (Lk 23:44-45, 47-49)

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**Gospel Passion** 

But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and **at once blood and water came out.** (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "**None of his bones shall be broken.**" And again another passage of scripture says, "**They will look on the one whom they have pierced.**" (Jn 19:33-37)

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This Jesus is **'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.'** (Acts 4:11)

See also: Ps 118:22; Mt 21:42; Mk 12:10; Lk 20:17



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## Crucifixion as Atonement



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## Crucifixion as Atonement

- What is Christ atoning/reconciling for?
- Modern understandings of atonement.
  - Wrathful God and Jesus as sacrifice.
- Messiah: Warrior or Victim?
- God as victim liberating humans from death and violence.
  - From distorted and evil ways of being.



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This picture is as false as it is widespread. In the Bible the cross does not appear as part of a mechanism of injured right; on the contrary, in the Bible the cross is quite the reverse: **it is the expression of the radical nature of the love which gives itself completely**, of the process in which one is what one does, and does what one is; **it is the expression of a life that is completely being for others.** ... This is truly something new, something unheard of - the starting-point of Christian existence and the centre of New Testament theology of the cross: **God does not wait until the guilty come to be reconciled; he goes to meet them and reconciles them.** Here we can see the true direction of the incarnation, of the cross. ... Christian sacrifice does not consist in a giving of what God would not have without us but in our becoming totally receptive and letting ourselves be completely taken over by him. **Letting God act on us - that is Christian sacrifice.**

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Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, p.214-5).

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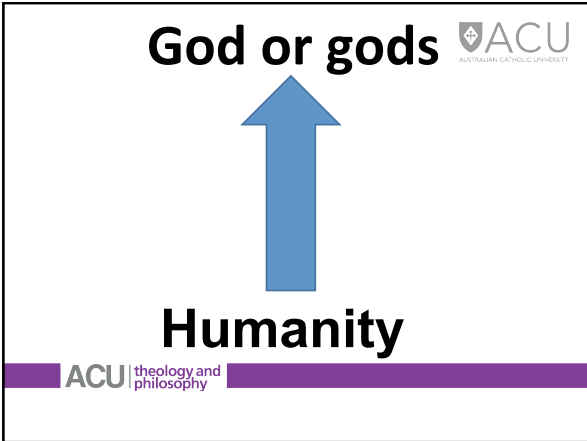
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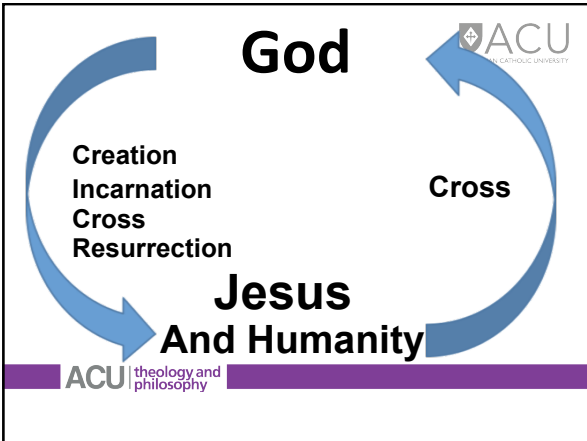
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### Christ and Atonement

- Not us going to God but God coming to us.
  - Jesus is purposefully coming to us.
  - In love = to cleanse and liberate.
- Atonement as liturgy, not theory.
  - Day of Atonement.
  - Passover.
- Priest and Victim = offering His own Body as reconciliation.

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### Christ and Atonement

- The meaning of history and creation.
  - Cosmic Reconciliation.
- Offering our “yes” to God.
  - Goes to the depths of evil, alienation and abandonment.
  - Offering liberation and forgiveness.

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**Imagine what it is like to be approached by your forgiving victim.** *It is actually very difficult indeed to spend time thinking about our being approached by our forgiving victim! What is it like to actually undergo being forgiven? We tend to try to resolve this by saying, “Oh, it’s not being forgiven that matters. It’s forgiving: I must forgive!” So we work ourselves up into a moral stupor, straining ourselves to “forgive the bastard!” This then becomes very, very complicated. But in fact the Christian understanding is quite the reverse: it’s because we are undergoing being forgiven that we can forgive; and we need to forgive in order to continue undergoing being forgiven.* But remember: it’s because we are approached by our victim, that we start to be undone. Or in Paul’s language: ‘even though you were dead in your sins he has made you alive together in Christ.’ Someone was approaching you even when you didn’t realise there was a problem, so that you begin to discover, ‘Oh! So that’s what I’ve been involved in.’

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From: James Alison, *Undergoing God: Dispatches from the Scene of a Break-in* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006), 64-5.

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