



Belong

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can belong.

- If you feel comfortable, share one thing that God is teaching you right now.
- What's the best fictional story you ever read? What made it so excellent?

Believe

Acts 2:22-23

22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—23 this Jesus, ^{he} delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

Jesus Literally Died

Whenever we begin to consider the life of Jesus Christ it's tempting to think about His story as just another kind of fictional tale. It's a beautiful story, a tragedy even, but something that never really happened.

Christians can not settle for this kind of thought. When we hear the story of Jesus Christ we realize that it is the most beautiful story ever told, the best tale ever written, and IT IS TRUE.

That's what the next section of the creed is aimed at communicating to us. This stuff actually happened! Particularly, the crucifixion of Christ and his death actually happened. Thus, the creed reads:

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and buried, he descended to the dead,

The creed is trying to show us the historical reality of Christ's death. It happened under the rule of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Jerusalem. It happened in this way, he was crucified, died, and was buried. This is not a fictional story. It is a historical reality.

This historical reality forms the foundation of Christian preaching. This is the case from the very beginning. Peter at Pentecost says, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."

The crux of Peter's message is this: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God the Son lived and he ultimately died on a cross! This is a historical reality. JESUS ACTUALLY DIED.

Jesus Died For a Reason

It's also important to understand that this historical reality had a purpose in God's plan.

Peter makes clear: Jesus's death on the cross was not an accident. It was the plan of God! The question is why did God plan it this way? Why did God plan for Jesus to die on a cross? The answer is relatively simple biblically. God planned for Jesus to die as a payment for sin:

Romans 3:23-25

²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

Jesus was put forth by God as a payment for the sins that had been overlooked. You see, we often miss this simple truth: we are saved because God chooses to overlook or sin. He puts away our sin!

However, a good God cannot simply ignore our sin. Someone must pay for it! So God, in his infinite grace and compassion, put forth Jesus Christ as a plan from the beginning of time to make a payment for the sins of the world.

Discuss: Can you think of an Old Testament example of God putting away someone's sin? How does Jesus' death impact the Old Testament characters?

BECOME

This becomes personal when we realize that Jesus didn't just die for any sin. He died for our sin. This realization changes our approach to Jesus because it makes us appreciative of what Christ has done for us. In fact, it makes us realize that we owe everything we are to Christ.

We are not our own. We are Christ's because Christ gave it all to pay for our sins.

Discuss: How do we live in continual recognition and appreciation of what Christ has done for us.