

The Bible and Capital Punishment

Written and compiled by Gary Kukis

These studies are designed for believers in Jesus Christ only. If you have exercised faith in Christ, then you are in the right place. If you have not, then you need to heed the words of our Lord, Who said, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son, so that every [one] believing [or, trusting] in Him shall not perish, but shall be have eternal life! For God did not send His Son into the world so that He should judge the world, but so that the world shall be saved through Him. The one believing [or, trusting] in Him is not judged, but the one not believing has already been judged, because he has not believed in the Name of the only-begotten [or, uniquely-born] Son of God." (John 3:16–18). "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life! No one comes to the Father except through [or, by means of] Me!" (John 14:6).

Every study of the Word of God ought to be preceded by a naming of your sins to God. This restores you to fellowship with God (1John 1:8–10). If we acknowledge our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:9). If there are people around, you would name these sins silently. If there is no one around, then it does not matter if you name them silently or whether you speak aloud.

Charts, Graphics and Short Doctrines

What does the Bible say about capital punishment?	Capital Crimes in the Old Testament	The Bible and Capital Punishment
	CAPITAL PUNISHMENT What Does the Bible Teach on this Vital Subject?	

Preface: The Bible has a great deal to say about crime and punishment; particularly about capital punishment.

This is taken out of the Book of **Exodus**, ([HTML](#)) ([PDF](#)) ([WPD](#)) (chapter 21).

From the website <http://www.gotquestions.org/>

What does the Bible say about capital punishment?

Question: "What does the Bible say about the death penalty / capital punishment?"

Answer: The Old Testament law commanded the death penalty for various acts: murder (Exodus 21:12), kidnaping (Exodus 21:16), bestiality (Exodus 22:19), adultery (Leviticus 20:10), homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13), being a false prophet (Deuteronomy 13:5), prostitution and rape (Deuteronomy 22:24), and several other crimes. However, God often showed mercy when the death penalty was due. David committed adultery and murder, yet God did not demand his life be taken (2 Samuel 11:1-5, 14-17; 2 Samuel 12:13). Ultimately, every sin we commit should result in the death penalty because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Thankfully, God demonstrates His love for us in not condemning us (Romans 5:8).

What does the Bible say about capital punishment?

When the Pharisees brought a woman who was caught in the act of adultery to Jesus and asked Him if she should be stoned, Jesus replied, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). This should not be used to indicate that Jesus rejected capital punishment in all instances. Jesus was simply exposing the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into breaking the Old Testament law; they did not truly care about the woman being stoned (where was the man who was caught in adultery?) God is the One who instituted capital punishment: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man" (Genesis 9:6). Jesus would support capital punishment in some instances. Jesus also demonstrated grace when capital punishment was due (John 8:1-11). The apostle Paul definitely recognized the power of the government to institute capital punishment where appropriate (Romans 13:1-7).

How should a Christian view the death penalty? First, we must remember that God has instituted capital punishment in His Word; therefore, it would be presumptuous of us to think that we could institute a higher standard. God has the highest standard of any being; He is perfect. This standard applies not only to us but to Himself. Therefore, He loves to an infinite degree, and He has mercy to an infinite degree. We also see that He has wrath to an infinite degree, and it is all maintained in a perfect balance.

Second, we must recognize that God has given government the authority to determine when capital punishment is due (Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-7). It is unbiblical to claim that God opposes the death penalty in all instances. Christians should never rejoice when the death penalty is employed, but at the same time, Christians should not fight against the government's right to execute the perpetrators of the most evil of crimes.

From <http://www.gotquestions.org/death-penalty.html> accessed June 15, 2010. This is a pretty good site, by the way, with a great many answers to Biblical questions.

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This is from the website <http://www.apologeticspress.org/>

Capital Crimes in the Old Testament

Very early in human history, God decreed that murderers were to forfeit their own lives: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he the man" (Genesis 9:6). This standard continued into the Mosaic period (cf. Numbers 35:33). As a matter of fact, the law God gave to Moses to regulate the Israelite nation made provision for at least sixteen capital crimes. In sixteen instances, the death penalty was to be invoked. The first four may be categorized as pertaining to civil matters.

1. Under the law of Moses, the death penalty was required in cases of premeditated murder (Exodus 21:12-14,22-23; Leviticus 24:17; Numbers 35:16-21). This regulation even included the situation in which two men might be fighting and, in the process, cause the death of an innocent bystander or her unborn infant. It did not include accidental homicide, which we call "manslaughter."

2. Kidnaping was a capital crime under the Old Testament (Exodus 21:16; Deuteronomy 24:7). One movie, which was based on an actual incident, depicted the kidnaping of a seven-year-old boy as he was walking home from school. The man who stole him kept him for some seven years, putting the child through emotional and sexual abuse, before the boy, at age fifteen, was finally returned to his parents. He was a different child, and never again would be the same. God would not tolerate such a thing in the Old Testament, and much of the same would be stopped in America if such crimes were taken more seriously.

3. A person could be put to death for striking or cursing his parents (Exodus 21:15,17; Leviticus 20:9). Jesus alluded to this point in Matthew 15:4 and Mark 7:10.

Capital Crimes in the Old Testament

4. Incurable rebelliousness was punishable by death (Deuteronomy 17:12). For example, a stubborn, disobedient, rebellious son who would not submit to parents or civil authorities was to be stoned to death (Deuteronomy 21:18-21).

The next six capital crimes can be identified as more specifically pertaining to religious matters.

5. Sacrificing to false gods was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Exodus 22:20).

6. Violating the Sabbath brought the death penalty (Exodus 35:2; Numbers 15:32-36).

7. Blasphemy, or cursing God, warranted the death penalty (Leviticus 24:10-16,23).

8. The false prophet, specifically one who tried to entice the people to idolatry, was to be executed (Deuteronomy 13:1-11), as were the people who were so influenced (Deuteronomy 13:12-18).

9. Human sacrifice was a capital crime (Leviticus 20:2). The Israelites were tempted to offer their children to false pagan deities, like Molech. But such was despicable to God.

10. Divination, or the dabbling in the magical arts, was a capital crime. Consequently, under Mosaic law, witches, sorcerers, wizards, mediums, charmers, soothsayers, diviners, spiritists, and enchanters were to be put to death (Exodus 22:18; Leviticus 19:26,31; 20:27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14).

The next six crimes pertain to sexual matters.

11. Adultery was punishable by death under the Old Testament (Leviticus 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 22:22). Can you imagine what would happen in our own country if adultery brought the death penalty? Most of Hollywood would be wiped out, as well as a sizeable portion of the rest of our population!

12. Bestiality, i.e., having sexual relations with an animal, was punishable by death (Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:15-16).

13. Incest was a capital offense in the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:6-17; 20:11-12,14).

14. Homosexuality was a capital crime (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13).

15. Premarital sex brought the death penalty (Leviticus 21:9; Deuteronomy 22:20-21).

16. Rape of an engaged or married woman was a capital crime in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 22:25-27). Again, imagine what would happen in this country if rape brought the death penalty! Much of the unconscionable treatment of women now taking place would be terminated.

Capital punishment was written into God's will for the Jewish nation in the Old Testament. The death penalty was a viable form of punishment for at least sixteen separate offenses. Some people have misunderstood one of the Ten Commandments which says, "You shall not kill" (Exodus 20:13). They have assumed that the law forbade taking human life under any circumstances. But God required the death penalty for some sixteen crimes. Therefore, the commandment would have been better translated, "You shall not murder." In other words, the command was a prohibition against an individual taking the law into his own hands and exercising personal vengeance. But God wanted the execution of law breakers to be carried out by duly constituted legal authorities.

From <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/1974> accessed June 15, 2010.

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I don't necessarily need to redo what has already done. This is an article by Gregory Koukl

The Bible and Capital Punishment

I. The Bible and Capital Punishment

- A. Capital punishment was commanded by God in the Old Testament.
1. It preceded the Mosaic Law. Gen 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.
 2. It was based on the dignity of man, i.e. man's transcendent value. Gen 9:6 Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man.
 3. It was commanded in the Mosaic Law.
 - a. Twenty-one different offenses called for the death penalty in the Old Testament.
 - b. Only three include an actual or potential capital offense, by our standards.
 - c. Six are for religious offenses.
 - d. Ten are for various moral issues.
 - e. Two relate to ceremonial issues.
 4. "But King David wasn't put to death for his capital crimes."
 - a. David understood what justice demanded in this case: "As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die." 2 Sam 12:5
 - b. If God chose to set aside punishment, that doesn't mean the punishment is unjust when it is executed. God was the one who required capital punishment in many instances.
- B. Capital punishment was assumed in the New Testament.
1. God ordains governing authorities:
 - a. Jn 19:11 Jesus answered [to Pilate], "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above."
 - b. Rom 13:1-2 Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.
 - c. 1 Pet 2:13-14 Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.
 2. Those governments may practice capital punishment.
 - a. Rom 13:3-4 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.
 - b. Acts 25:11 If then I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar.

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- C. Jesus' ethic of love and forgiveness doesn't disallow capital punishment.
1. "But Jesus would forgive."
 - a. This argument proves too much.
 - (1) It becomes an argument against any punishment what-so-ever.
 - (2) What should we do with the criminal we've forgiven?
 - (3) Life in prison instead of capital punishment?
 - (4) But Jesus would forgive.
 - b. Jesus never challenged the validity of the death penalty.
 - (1) In Jn 8:3-11, for example, there were no witnesses left to testify against the woman caught in adultery (the Law required at least two witnesses).
 - (2) Jesus actually upheld the Law here, He didn't abrogate it, but He did so in a way that wouldn't allow the evil designs of the Scribes and Pharisees to be accomplished.
 - c. Jesus asked God to forgive, not Caesar; He didn't suggest civil punishment or capital punishment was inappropriate.
 - d. We must argue for the coherence and consistency of both Testaments.
 - (1) The question is not, "Was Jesus right or was Moses right?"
 - (2) We must also factor in Paul and Peter.
 2. "Jesus was crucified."
 - a. I'm not sure what the point is here? Yes, Jesus was the victim of capital punishment, but what follows from that?
 - b. The real issue regarding Jesus was not capital punishment, but His innocence.
 - (1) Peter assails the act of handing over an innocent man to godless executioners.
 - (2) Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know--this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:22-23)
 3. But what about forgiveness?
 - a. God's mercy is always available in His court.
 - b. Man's court is another matter, governed by different biblical responsibilities.

- D. One simply can't say that capital punishment is patently immoral on biblical grounds.
1. Jesus did not "abolish the Law," He fulfilled it, but not in the sense that all laws are wiped from the books. Then we would have no punishment for any biblical crimes.
 2. Matt 5:17-19: Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

II. Retributionism vs. Rehabilitationism

- A. Each position is based on a particular view of man.
1. Rehabilitationism
 - a. Man is man sick, needing healing.
 - b. Man is a machine needing fixing.
 2. Retributionism
 - a. Man is a free moral agent who makes choices for which he can be held responsible for.
 - b. Man is worthy of praise, resulting in reward, or blame, deserving punishment.

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B. The case for retributionism

1. Man a free moral agent.
 - a. He is capable of choosing good or bad behavior.
 - b. He may be influenced by his environment, but not ultimately controlled by it.
 - c. We have an immediate awareness of our moral natures, that we freely make moral choices.
 - d. It seems to make sense to praise and reward good behavior. If we're not responsible for our choices neither blame nor praise make any sense.
 - e. If we are not free agents, then we are determined and therefore not responsible for our behavior, either good or bad. B.F. Skinner was right; we've got to bite the bullet and realize that we're "beyond freedom and dignity."
2. Crime is not pathological, deserving rehabilitation, but moral, deserving punishment.
 - a. The goal of justice is penal, not remedial, moral, not therapeutic.
 - b. Two purposes of capital punishment:
 - (1) Justice demands punishment of the guilty.
 - (2) Goodness demands protecting the innocent in society.
 - (a) "Capital punishment is to the whole society what self-defense is to the individual." *The Ethics of Life and Death* J.P. Moreland, p. 115.
 - (b) Dennis Prager: "We have a war going on here between murderers and society, but only one side is allowed to kill."
3. The punishment should fit the crime (*lex talionis*).
4. Capital punishment fits capital crimes (crimes that involve the loss of life).

C. Objections to retributionism

1. Arguments that prove too much.
 - a. Many arguments against capital punishment prove too much because they apply with equal force against any punishment at all.
 - b. "Capital punishment is applied unfairly."
 - (1) Even if this were true, the injustice here applies to those that got away, not to those that got punished. It's never unjust to punish a guilty man if the punishment itself fits the crime (*lex talionis*). The injustice is remedied by applying it more often, not less.
 - (2) Better unequal justice than no justice at all.
 - (3) If one man is paid for a job (he gets what he deserves) and another isn't, how do you rectify the inequity? You don't take away what the first man deserves, withholding his pay because the second man didn't get paid. That would double the injustice.
 - c. "Innocent people get condemned."
 - (1) This is a criticism of any system of justice, not a particular type of punishment. Life is flawed, not capital punishment.
 - (2) Why must we accept a philosophy that says it's better for 100 guilty people to go free than for one innocent person to be condemned?
 - (3) Guilty people repeat crimes that injure and even kill other innocent people.
 - (4) "But death can't be undone." No punishment can be undone.
 - (5) Our attempts at improving justice here must be at the level of the process of adjudication making any determination of guilt more trustworthy.

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2. Other objections:
 - a. "How can you be for capital punishment but against abortion" (the "seamless garment" argument)?
 - (1) The term "Pro-life" is actually a misnomer. Our case is not for every one's life or every form of life. Pro-lifer's are against the unjust taking of innocent human life, particularly the life of the unborn child.
 - (2) The right to life is not an absolute; it can be forfeited. This moral right is only prima facie; it stands only until challenged by some greater law, like justice or protecting the lives of the innocent.
 - (3) We also have a right to freedom, but it can be properly overridden with incarceration when certain conditions are met.
 - (4) An unborn child has committed no crime that forfeits its life.

 - b. "Capital punishment is cruel and unusual."
 - (1) It's not cruel and unusual, but rather the exact punishment that fits the crime.
 - (2) This is an appeal to the language of the Bill of Rights, but the ones who wrote those words believed in capital punishment. If one wants to redefine the term for modern times, then he cannot argue from the Bill of Rights itself, because that has the old definition.
 - c. "Capital punishment doesn't work; it doesn't deter crime."
 - (1) It always deters the offender. Dead people don't commit more crimes.
 - (2) If it lacks in deterrence, it might be because it is not widely exercised or not done speedily enough to be a threat.
 - (3) The principal goal of capital punishment is not deterrence, but punishment. In that way it works every time.
 - d. "Why not a life sentence?"
 - (1) Confuses a life sentence with a death sentence.
 - (2) It's unjust (doesn't fit the crime) because the criminal only loses liberty, not life.

 - e. "This kind of death is undignified."
 - (1) In one sense, all death is undignified.
 - (2) Argues only against certain aggravated forms of capital punishment and not capital punishment itself.
 - (3) In the final analysis, the question is not the dignity of death, but its equity or justice.
 - f. "There's no opportunity of to reform the criminal." Justice is the goal of punishment, not reform.

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- g. "Capital punishment violates human dignity."
 - (1) It is specifically because of man's value and dignity that we punish his moral wrongdoing. We don't punish animals for stealing or killing (we don't punish them, we remove them for our safety).
 - (2) We hold men morally responsible because of dignity.
 - (3) "It is based on the assumption that normal adult beings are rational and moral beings who knew better, who could have done otherwise, but yet who chose to do evil anyway, and who therefore deserve to be punished." JPM p. 118
 - (4) Arguably it is undignified to force rehabilitation on free moral agents who don't want it.
- h. Roman Catholic objections
 - (1) The Catholic position against capital punishment is somewhat ironic given their position on purgatory, in which even when God forgives a sinner, still he must suffer for his own sins.
 - (2) What of the practice of penance?

Taken from: <http://www.str.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=5164> accessed June 15, 2010.

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Here is an article written by George Zeller:

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

What Does the Bible Teach on this Vital Subject?

1. Instituted by God Himself

Capital punishment was instituted by God Himself after the worldwide flood. We learn of this in Genesis 9:6--"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man."

This verse speaks of a murderer, one who knowingly and violently sheds another man's blood, resulting in death. God here gives man the authority and the right and the duty to put to death the murderer: "by man shall his blood be shed." The reason given for this is based upon the value and sacredness of human life: "for in the image of God made he man." In this case we have justice being carried out according to the rule: "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (Exodus 21:23-24). The penalty should fit the crime. In this case the crime is murder and the penalty is death. Notice that Genesis 9:6 was given to man even before the law of Moses was given.

2. "Thou Shalt Not Kill"?

Capital punishment is not a violation of the sixth commandment which says, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). The proper translation of this verb is "Thou shalt not murder." See modern translations (such as the NASB, the NIV and the NKJV) and also see Matthew 19:18 in the KJV. All murder is killing but not all killing is murder. Some examples of killing that would not be considered as murder are as follows: a) killing the enemy in war (Bible examples: David killing Goliath, Joshua and the Israelites when they conquered the land); b) a husband, discovering a man about to kill his wife and/or children, protects and defends his family by having to kill the attacker; c) a policeman who kills in the line of duty in order to protect innocent life; d) the person carrying out capital punishment, such as the man who must pull the switch for the electric chair; e) accidental killing, when the killer never intended to take someone's life. We should also note that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will "judge and make war" at His second coming resulting in countless numbers of deaths (Rev. 19:11-20).

3. Crimes Punishable By Death

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What Does the Bible Teach on this Vital Subject?

We are assured that capital punishment is not a violation of the Ten Commandments. This is evident when one studies the chapter which immediately follows the ten commandments: Exodus chapter 21 (the Ten Commandments are found in chapter 20). In chapter 21 we learn that God in His law demanded the death penalty for a number of crimes such as murder, kidnapping, cursing parents, etc. See Exodus 21:12,15,16,17. See also Leviticus 20:10-17 for other crimes punishable by death in the law of Moses.

4. The Executioner As God's Servant

In New Testament times capital punishment was still being practiced. Romans 13:4 says that God has given human governments the authority to execute wrath upon evildoers by means of a sword (a common instrument of capital punishment in New Testament days). The Apostle Paul was living in a day when capital punishment was commonly practiced in the Roman empire (quite unlike our day), and yet he did not condemn this practice. On the contrary he described the person who bears the sword as being God's servant. Thus the one punishing the evildoer does so in the exercise of God's delegated authority.

5. An Effective Deterrent

Capital punishment, when consistently practiced, is a very effective deterrent to crime because the fear of death is the greatest fear that man has (see Hebrews 2:14-15). Since death is the king of fears, a man will think twice about committing a crime if he knows it will cost him his life. He will be less reluctant to murder someone if he knows that the worst that could happen to him is to stay in jail the rest of his life with meals provided, television to watch, etc. When swift justice is carried out then "those who remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil" (Deut. 19:20). When the right penalty is not executed speedily, then this is an encouragement to crime (see Eccles. 8:11).

6. Cruel and Inhumane?

Is capital punishment cruel and inhumane? Death is usually not pleasant to witness, and certainly those responsible for putting a criminal to death do not have an enviable task. Nevertheless we need to be careful that we do not focus on the criminal and forget about the victim of the crime. Cold-blooded murder is very cruel and inhumane. Forcible rape is very cruel and inhumane. Hijacking an airplane and endangering the lives of many innocent people is very cruel and inhumane. Pushing life-destroying drugs is very cruel and inhumane. In our zeal to protect the criminal we can lose sight of the terribleness of the crime. Regardless of a person's position on capital punishment, all would have to agree that if a murderer is put to death, he will never murder again. It is remarkable that those people who decry capital punishment as being a cruel and inhumane method of destroying people's lives are often the same people who are strongly in favor of abortion rights. Why does a guilty murderer have a greater right to life than an unborn child?

7. Paul's Own Testimony

What did the Apostle Paul think of capital punishment? Did he consider it to be unfair and cruel and inhumane? We have already considered Paul's teaching in Romans 13, but we should also make note of what the Apostle said in Acts 25:11: "If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die." Paul knew that there were certain crimes that were worthy of death, and he knew that those guilty of such crimes must be executed. If he was guilty of such, then he would not refuse to die. He would submit to capital punishment if he had done deeds worthy of such. Of course, Paul was innocent of any such crimes, and yet he was eventually executed under Nero. For what crime? For preaching the gospel of the grace of God!

8. Bright Barbarians

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

What Does the Bible Teach on this Vital Subject?

Even uncultured men know deep down in their hearts that certain crimes demand the death penalty. This is illustrated in Acts 28 when Paul was shipwrecked upon the island of Melita (Malta) where he met a group of kindly barbarians (v.1-2). As Paul was gathering sticks for the fire, a deadly venomous snake bit him on the hand. Normally such a bite would be fatal in a matter of minutes. When the natives saw this they said, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet justice alloweth not to live" (v.4). These natives saw what they thought was the penalty (death) and thus they assumed the crime (he must be a murderer). They soon learned that they were mistaken, but the point is that these barbarians had a built in sense of justice and they knew that murderers should pay for their crime by death.

9. The Testimony of a Thief (Robber)

In Luke chapter 23 we have the honest testimony of a man who was being put to death for crimes he had done. This was capital punishment by means of Roman crucifixion. This man was an evildoer, he was arrested, and he was found guilty of crimes worthy of death. Modern methods of execution are generally very mild and painless as compared to Roman crucifixion. What did this man think of capital punishment? Was he opposed to it? Did he consider it to be cruel and inhumane? Did he think it to be unfair and unjust? Here is his testimony (his words to the other condemned criminal): "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds" (Luke 23:40-41). In other words, he was saying, "We are getting exactly what we deserve: death by crucifixion. What we have done is worthy of death!" Before men and before human government most of us are not guilty of crimes worthy of death. However, before a Holy God every one of us needs to recognize that we have done certain things that are worthy of death (see Romans 1:29-32; 6:23a). As the Old Testament says, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). How thankful we should be that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered the death penalty for us: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

10. The Death of an Innocent Man

If capital punishment is practiced, are there not times when an innocent man is pronounced guilty and put to death? Yes, sadly this is true. Our judicial system is far from perfect and there are times when the guilty are justified and the innocent are condemned (compare Deut. 25:1). Even without the death penalty, it is true that occasionally some innocent men are sent to prison even for life. We must remember that there is in heaven a true and righteous Judge who sees all and who knows all and who someday will make right all that is wrong and will straighten out all that is crooked. In eternity, all will be corrected (see Luke 16:25 for an example of this). The greatest example of an innocent man being put to death is that of the Lord Jesus Himself, "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22). The only sinless Man who ever lived was condemned to death by crucifixion! As we think about Christ's death, we must remember that it was for our sins that He suffered and bled and died (1 Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:8). "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just (the Righteous One) for the unjust (the unrighteous ones), that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). We are the guilty ones who deserved the death penalty (Rom. 6:23), but Jesus paid it all! He died so that we might live (John 5:24)!

From: <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/doctrine/capitalp.htm> accessed June 15, 2010.

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