

It was not Jesus' intent that He would be the only one dying.

Jesus was a Jew and remained a member of the Hebrew faith until His death. He did not come to replace Judaism with a new religion, but instead to reform it and usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Jesus described the coming Kingdom in both physical and spiritual terms. The spiritual part begins right away. As the movement grows, it will increasingly manifest itself physically. Jesus asked us to pray for God's Kingdom to come. He equated this with God's will being done on earth as it is already being done in Heaven. He likened the Kingdom of God to a tiny seed, a pearl of great price, and a field of wheat waiting for the harvest, a sheep fold waiting for the lost sheep to return, a wedding feast to which all the outsiders are invited.

Jesus taught that the Kingdom was expensive and a price would have to be paid before it could be fully realized on earth. The seeds from which it would spring must first be planted in the ground and die. Death precedes life. In order to be born again into the Kingdom, one must first die. From death springs new life, and each seed that dies will be reproducing itself a hundredfold, until all the people of the earth eventually find their way back to God.

You can find this theme repeated over and over again in the teachings of the Hebrew Prophets, Jesus Himself, and the Apostle Paul.

It was not Jesus' intent that He would be the only one dying. His intent was that all of His followers would be dying, many of them physically, repenting of their sins, dying to their old way of life, and working in partnership with Him to restore all of lost humanity to right relationship with God. Jesus did not intend for His teachings to develop into a religion that repudiated Judaism, substituted Christ's dying for their own dying, and developed theological barriers which would exclude the mass of humanity from inclusion in God's Kingdom.

The Apostle Paul clearly spelled out that we are "saved" and given entrance into God's Kingdom as we identify with Christ, share in a death like His, and are raised to a new way of living. Entering God's Kingdom is not an instantaneous event. The dying to sin happens anew each day, as we strive to emulate the life of Christ and as Christ assists us in this growth process. The realization of God's Kingdom on earth is an ages-long process which will not be complete until all of the lost sheep have returned safely to the fold.

As Christians, we have not been saved to the exclusion of all others. Instead, we have been saved for the benefit of all others. We are like the seed, which is planted in fertile soil and dies, and then reproduces itself a hundredfold.