

Explaining the Death of Jesus

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March 18, 2014

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Session Titles

- New Testament Evidence
- Irenaeus of Lyons (late Second Century)
- Origen of Alexandria (first half of Third Century)
- Alexandrian and Cappadocian Schools (325-451)
- West Syrian and African Schools (325-451)
- Augustine's Influence in Medieval Latin Theology

New Testament

- Greek version of Hebrew Bible: The Old Testament
- Letters of Paul of Tarsus
 - Thessalonians
 - Philippians
 - Corinthians
 - Galatians
 - Romans
- Gospels
 - Mark
 - Matthew
 - Luke & Acts of the Apostles
 - John
- Letter to the Hebrews

The Synoptic Gospels

- Mark, Matthew, Luke & Acts
- Divine Plan for Salvation
 - The death of Jesus was part of a divine plan.
 - That was already revealed in the “Old Testament.”
 - Jesus was faithful in carrying out that plan.
 - The death of Jesus was the result of a religious conflict with the Jewish leaders and the Pharisees.
 - The death of Jesus was a demonic attack on a good man.
 - The death of Jesus was the way he acquired the power to forgive and save.
- Individual Gospels vary in the presentation of the plan and its working out.

Gospel of Mark

- Jesus' power over demons identifies him as God's agent 3.22-27
- As soon as his disciples recognize Jesus as the Christ—through his exorcisms and healings—he begins to warn them of his rejection and execution. 8.27-9.1
 - Disciples will suffer the same rejection
 - Jesus' status as the Christ is reaffirmed in the Transfiguration and his future rejection is reasserted. 9.2-13, 10.32-34
- The consequences of Jesus' rejection are predicted.
 - The parable of the vineyard; destruction of Jerusalem 12.1-12
 - The eschatological discourse: disciples will be persecuted; he will return to gather them 13.1-37
- Jewish leaders begin to plan Jesus' death; he is anointed for burial; Judas agrees to betray him 14.1-11
- At Supper, Jesus announces Judas' betrayal, again predicts his death and resurrection 14.17-28

Gospel of Mark 2

- In the Garden, Jesus is troubled and prays for deliverance but then submits and is calm 14.32-52
- In the Jewish and Roman trials, Jesus claims his identity as the Messiah who will return in power 14.62, 15.2
- On the Cross, Jesus is identified as King of the Jews
 - Jesus is mocked as claiming to be able destroy and rebuild the temple, as saving others, as King of Israel. 5.22-32
- Jesus prays Psalm 21(22), loudly cries out, and dies. 15.33-41
- Roman officer confesses him, “Son of God.” 15.38
- He is raised and goes to Galilee to meet disciples 16.1-8

Gospel of Matthew

- As an infant, Jesus is rejected by Herod 2.16-18
- Jesus enters into conflict with Satan
 - Tempted in desert and on the cross 4.1-11, 27.39-44
 - Expels demons by power of Holy Spirit 8.28-34, 9.32-33, 10.1, 12.22-32
- At Supper says his blood is poured out for “the forgiveness of sins” 26.28
- At arrest, he declines available rescue; says his death is “to fulfill scripture” 26.53-54
- On the cross, he is mocked as Son of God 27.40
- The cosmos reacts to his death, saints are resurrected 27.51-53
- In Galilee, claims all authority in heaven and on earth; commands to make disciples of all nations 28.18-19

Gospel of Luke

- Jesus begins his ministry predicting and provoking opposition by claiming to be fulfillment of God's promises to Israel 4.16-30
- Transition from Israel to Gentiles written into the Gospel 13.28-30, 14.23-24, 19.41-44, 20.14-18
- Found innocent by Roman official 23.22
- Forgives his opponents; dies in control of himself 23.34,46
- Recognized as innocent
 - By criminal and Roman officer 23.41,47
 - Onlookers are shaken by his death 23.48

Gospel of Luke and Acts

- Jesus explains the scriptures: this was the necessary way to his glory 24.26-27,44-46
 - Promises the gift of power to disciples 24.49
 - Ascends to heaven whence he will return 24.51, Acts 1.9
- The Holy Spirit descends on the disciples with gift of languages
 - They preach; Jews join the movement A 2-4
 - Conflict between Christians and other Jews 6-7
 - Disciples scatter and message spreads 8
 - Roman officer is converted; Paul is called 9-10
 - Gentile Christians freed from Judaism 11
- Paul spreads the message and preaches in Rome

Gospel of John

- Jesus identified as light and life, rejected by, but overcoming darkness 1.4-5
 - Light comes into the world 1.6-10
 - Light is rejected by most but accepted by some, who become children of God 1.11-16
- The signs that Jesus performs shows him divine 2-12
 - Offering truth and life
 - His presence forces people to judge themselves
 - His presence opens some minds; closes others
- Jesus establishes a community of disciples 13-17
- Jesus arrest and execution 18-19
 - Jesus demonstrates his power over human opponents
 - Jesus is glorified
 - The power of death and darkness is defeated
 - Jesus is raised from the dead
- He appears to and empowers his disciples; 20-21
 - He does not leave but is unseen 21-24-25
 - He is the source of life for all who believe in him 20.31

Paul: Resurrection

- The Resurrection of Christ will bring resurrection to Christians
 - The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ cannot be separated from the resurrection of Christians, who are his “members.” 1 Thes 4.14-18; 1 Cor 6.14-17; 1 Cor 15.12-19
 - In Adam all die, in Christ all shall be made alive.
 - Christ first; then those who belong to Christ. 1 Cor 15.20-23
 - Living being vs. Life-giving Spirit 1 Cor 15.45
 - Man of Dust vs. Man of Heaven 1 Cor 15.49
 - Death is the last enemy to be destroyed.
 - God has put all things in subjection to Christ. 1 Cor 15.26-27
 - The sting of death is sin; the power of sin is the law. God gives us victory through Christ. 1 Cor 15.56-57

Letters of Paul: Wisdom of God

- Christ became Lord through his death
 - Christ's self-emptying and obedience unto death have brought him to be Lord of heaven, earth, and hades. Phil 2.6-11
- The Death of Christ manifests God's Wisdom
 - Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles but the power and wisdom of God. 1 Cor 1.23-24
- The Death of Christ is a redemption
 - You were bought with a price and are not your own. 1 Cor 6.20, 7.23

Letters of Paul: Covenant of Faith

- The Faith of Christ restored the covenant of the promise made to Abraham Gal. 3-4
- God made a promise to Abraham to bless all humanity; Abraham believed and acted on the promise.
- Violation of that faith by his descendants brought the Mosaic Law that required ritual works and punished violators with a curse.
- Acting in a faith like that of Abraham, Christ became the curse and destroyed it by his faithful death.
- By his faith, Christ restored the covenant of Abraham and removed the Mosaic Law for the faithful.
- Those placing faith in Christ are freed of the Mosaic Law, its requirements (rituals) and its curse.
- Christ makes the faithful children of God.
- The gift of the Holy Spirit makes Christians heirs of the promise with Christ.

Paul, Romans: Covenant

- God justifies those who have faith in Christ. 3.21-28
 - All humanity is under sin (moral, not legal, violations);
 - God accomplished an expiation by the blood of Christ;
 - That expiation is received by faith in Christ, without the works of the Law.
- The Covenant of Abraham: Faith vs. Legal Works
 - Covenant preceded the Law: circumcision
 - All who share Abraham's faith are heirs to the promises.
 - That faith is now in Christ, put to death for trespasses (of Law) and raised for justification. 4.1-25
 - Reconciled by Christ's death; Saved by his resurrected life 5.1-11

Paul, Romans: Sin & Death

- Sin entered world through Adam's transgression
 - Transgression brought death
 - Sin and death spread to all Adam's offspring
- Obedience of Christ brought righteousness
 - Righteousness of Christ brought acquittal from sin
 - Righteousness given through faith in Christ
 - Life is restored and abounds through Christ. 5.12-21
- Christians must die to sin with Christ to gain life
 - God destroyed sin in the (mortal) flesh of Christ
 - The law of sin is binding only until death; by being joined into Christ, faithful have died and risen
 - Death to sin with Christ in baptism; life free of sin to God
 - By gift of Spirit, Christians live in freedom as children of God
 - Romans 6-8

Letter to the Hebrews

- Jesus' suffering in faithful obedience unto death brought him the honor of being eternal priest 2.9-10, 5.7-10
 - Jesus became compassionate to those tempted and suffering. 2.14-18
- Melchizedek's priesthood is greater than that of Aaron, who was blessed by him (in Abraham)
 - Jesus designated high priest after order of Melchizedek. 5.10
 - Priest is immortal and provides salvation forever by a single sacrifice 7.4-28
 - Serves in the heavenly tabernacle on which the earthly one (of Aaron) was modeled. 8.1-13
 - Christ entered heavenly tabernacle, once for all, with his own blood that purifies the conscience 9.11-28
 - Christians will follow Christ into heavenly tabernacle 10.19-25

Summary

- Mark: Son of God will return in power
- Matthew: Jesus fulfills scripture and acquires all power on earth and in heaven
- Luke: Jesus fulfills scripture; sends Holy Spirit; message to Gentiles
- John: Light and Life manifests itself; overcomes Death and Darkness
- Paul: Christ is New Adam; Christ restores Covenant of Faith
- Hebrews: Christ became eternal Priest, offering and interceding in heavenly sanctuary