Explaining the Death of Jesus

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New Testament

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

- Jesus’ Death was integral to the divine plan for the salvation of humans; it was announced in the Bible.
- Jesus’ teaching, healing, and control over demons demonstrated that he was the one chosen by God to bring salvation and was given the power necessary.
- Jesus accepted his rejection by the religious leaders and his execution. He did not respond with power—as he had to the demons and to illness.
- He fulfilled the scripture, completing the divine mandate announced in the Bible.
- As a result, he was given full authority over the world.
- He began to exercise this power by sending disciples to announce salvation to all nations. He will return to judge everyone.
Gospel of John

- Jesus is identified as Light and Life; rejected by, but overcoming Darkness. 1.4-5
  - Light coming into the world 1.6-10
  - Light is rejected by most but accepted by children of God. 1.11-16

- Jesus actions are signs showing him to be divine. 2-12
  - He offers truth and life.
  - His presence forces people to pass judgment on themselves.
  - His presence opens some minds; closes others.

- Jesus establishes a community of disciples. 13-17
Gospel of John

- Jesus is arrested and executed. 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.

- Jesus appears to and empowers his disciples; 20-21
  - He does not leave but becomes an unseen presence. 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 Christians victory through Christ. 1 Cor 15.56-57
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 of humans.
  • You were bought with a price and are not your own. 1 Cor 6.20, 7.23
Galatians 3-4: Covenant of Faith

• The Faith of Christ restored the covenant of the promise made to Abraham
• God made a promise to Abraham to bless all humanity through him; 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 took on and destroyed the curse by his faithful death.
• By his faith, Christ restored the covenant of Abraham and removed the Mosaic Law for the faithful.
• Those accepting the covenant of faith through Christ are freed of the Mosaic Law, its 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.
Romans: Expiation & Faith

• 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 Mosaic Law.

• The Covenant of Abraham: Faith vs. Legal Works
  • Covenant preceded circumcision and Mosaic Law
  • 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 (moral). 4.1-25
  • Reconciled by Christ’s death; Saved by his resurrected life. 5.1-11
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 to others placing 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 to sin and risen to life.
  • Death to sin with Christ in baptism; Life to God free of sin.
  • By gift of Spirit, Christians live 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

• Meichizedek’s priesthood (Gen 14.17-20) 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
  • Christ serves as priest 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

• John:
  • Christ manifest himself as Light and Life.
  • Christ overcomes Death and Darkness.

• Paul:
  • Christ’s death is a removal of sin.
  • Christ restores in himself the Covenant of Faith/Trust in God.
  • Christ is New Adam, brings immortal life.

• Hebrews:
  • Christ became eternal Priest, offering and interceding in heavenly sanctuary.
  • Humans are freed from sin and death.
  • Enter heaven through Christ.
Economy of Salvation

• Death and Resurrection of Jesus solves the fundamental problem of humanity, permanently.
  • Jesus takes on the problem—infidelity, death, curse—in a way that does not allow it to dominate him.
  • Jesus solves that problem in his own humanity.
  • Jesus communicates that solution to Christians (and to other humans?).

• Defining the problem is essential to understanding the solution.
  • Sin: disobedience, violation of covenant with God
  • Death: futility of human life and achievement
  • Weakness in good willing and action
  • Domination of evil in personal and social life
Irenaeus 1

• God created the bodily world good but imperfect; it is meant for perfection and immortality.
• Intellectual beings have to grow into knowledge and love of God by developing in judgment and forming commitments to good.
• Adam and Eve were formed as children and shown the path to knowledge and goodness.
  • Success was possible but not inevitable
• Immortality would be given only after a person was confirmed in good knowing, judging, and willing.
• God would grant immortality by becoming human.
  • Manifestation of divine goodness in sensible form
  • Flesh of a divine human is life-giving
Irenaeus 2

• First humans deviated in seeking knowledge of God.
  • Humans became mortal; they suffer pain and frustration.
  • They generate similar offspring.

• Experience of good and evil builds knowledge and appreciation of good.
  • Learn by error and pain, success and satisfaction.

• Experience of both good and evil teaches the mind and forms the will in good.

• Life comes through knowledge of good—God.
  • No suffering/satisfaction means no correction and no advance
Christ’s Mission

• Incarnation of divine perfects humanity in his own person: gives divine knowledge, goodness, and life.

• Christ communicates those goods through his humanity
  • Teaching and Example
  • Eucharist—Life-giving Flesh
  • Gift of the Holy Spirit

• Suffering and Death are necessary only because of human sin and death.
  • Christ reverses the disobedience of Adam
  • Demonstrates faith in and obedience to God
  • Frees humans from domination by sin

• Reverses the process of death in his own humanity
  • Manifests the divine and confers life-giving knowledge.
  • Makes his life-giving flesh accessible to Christians.
Christ’s Resurrection

• Perfects the humanity of Christ (New Adam)
• Initiates the restoration of whole creation
• Resurrection of Christians is to immortal earthly life
• Heavenly Jerusalem descends to earth; human society is perfected.
• Saints move gradually into heavenly existence.