Explaining the Death of Jesus

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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
  • 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
- Found innocent by Roman official 23.22
- Forgive 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 receive 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

• Meichizedek’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