FOUR POINTS CHURCH

Luke 23:44-56 - Christ's death for us makes true rest possible.

Opening Discussion: What is the significance of the phrase "Laid to rest" or "Rest in peace" for believers? Without being morbid, has there ever been a grave stone epitaph that made you pause and think?

- To know Christ by name is not enough, we want to understand Christ's heart for us, which is seen in his sacrifice for us in obedience to His Father.
- In 1648, Puritan John Owen published a book by the greatest title I have ever seen in a book: *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ.*
  - In this book, he states the importance of studying Christ's death: "By the end of the death of Christ, we mean in general, both,—first, that which his Father and himself intended in it; and , secondly, that which was effectually fulfilled and accomplished by it….Now, if you will ask who these sinners are towards whom he hath this gracious intent and purpose, he himself tells you (Matt. 20:28), that he came to "give his life a ransom for many;" in other places called us, believers, distinguished from the world: for he "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father," (Gal. 1:4). That was the will and intention of God, that he should give himself for us, that we might be saved, being separated from the world."[1]

Question: According to this statement by John Owen, what are the two truths we need to see about the death of Christ?

- **When you read the Bible, every part of the Bible points either forward or backward to the pivotal moment of the cross, a moment designated by God to define His work of redemption in History.**
  - Adam was created, and from Adam came the Human race. That race spread over the whole earth and largely failed to honor God, but God had a plan (Gen. 3).

[1] John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. (Martino Pub: Mansfield CT, 2016), 45.

- Noah was created, and from Noah God restarted the Human race. That race was scattered over the whole earth and largely failed to honor God, but God had a plan.
- Abraham was selected and set apart to bring forth a nation…a nation that largely failed to honor God, but God had a plan.
- A tribe was chosen (Judah) to bring forth the Redeemer, a tribe that largely dishonored God, but God had a plan.
- A king was chosen and set apart, a king who was a man after God's own heart, and from this king would come the lineage of the Savior.
- The Savior was born, who fully honored God and yet was tasked with dying in dishonor for the sins of the Human race. This was God's plan from the very beginning.
    - **The <u>Old Testament</u> points forward to the <u>Savior yet to be revealed</u>, and the <u>New Testament</u> points backward to the <u>Savior</u> that <u>has already been revealed</u>.**

- Isaiah 53:1-9 [1] Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? [2] For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. [3] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. [4] Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. [5] But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. [6] All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. [7] He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. [8] By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? [9] And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

- Isaiah, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, utilized the imagery of a perfect sacrificial lamb dying for the sins of the rest of the sheep!
  - **Don't miss the prophetic indications of Isaiah:**
    - **He was despised and rejected, and went through trial with meekness! (Vs 3, 7)**
    - **He was pierced! (Vs 5)**
    - **He was a sacrificial lamb (Vs 6)**
    - **He was placed in the grave of a rich man (Vs 9)**

Discussion: Why do you think the Jews missed the truth of these prophecies being about Jesus? Could there be a warning of truth in their ignorance for us today?

- All of these fulfilled prophecies are why John Owen would attribute Christ's death as a fulfillment of God the Father's plan.
  - Jesus died to cover the sins of the world, that was the work: covering and redemption. But Jesus didn't die because of mankind, he died because God the Father asked him to do so! It was the Father's will! Jesus, knowing the heart of the Father intimately even asked in the Garden if the redeeming of man could be done another way. This wasn't a question of whether there was another way, but rather if this had to be the way. Jesus ultimately knew the answer, because he knew the law and the prophets.
    - There are several reasons why we must remember that Christ's surrender to sacrifice was an act of obedience to the Father, but the main reason is that it is important that we remember this moment was a proactive part of God's plan, not a reactive response to man's sinfulness. Sin has never had the upper hand because Satan has never had the upper hand. God always intended for this moment to take place. History is His-story, the story of a faithful God keeping His promise to humanity.

<u>Question: What are some other reasons that it is the important to remember that Christ's death was an act of obedience to his father, not simply his own efforts to save humanity?[2]</u>

- We have looked at the prophet, but let's consider the law and the sacrificial system itself. What we need to see is that nothing that happened on the day of Christ's crucifixion was an accident. It all lined up with the work of the temple.

- Luke 23:44-49 [44] It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, [45] while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. [46] Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last. [47] Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent!" [48] And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. [49] And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.
  - We already know, according to the prophets, that Christ was to be seen as our sacrificial lamb. I want you to see how his death lines up with the sacrifices being offered at the temple on the very day he was crucified.
  - A time-line of the typical day at the temple:[3]
    - **The Third Hour (9AM) - The priests conducted the morning sacrificial service, which included the daily burnt offering and incense. Worshipers could gather in the Temple courts to pray. - Jesus would have been on trial during this time, or carrying the cross to Golgotha.[4]**
      - A crowd was gathering to witness the most important sacrifice ever offered.
      - We gather to honor the most important sacrifice ever offered, and to remember that Christ's blood was shed for us.
    - **The Sixth Hour (12PM) - Noon was a recognized time for prayer, although the connection between this hour and a specific Temple sacrifice is less**

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[2] I typed the prompt "Why is it important to remember that Christ died in obedience to his father's will, and not merely out of a personal act of grace and mercy?" into chatGPT and received an excellent answer in response.

[3] Afred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Oxford Publishing, 1883)

[4] See Matthew 27:1-2, John 19:14

direct than at the third and ninth hours. - Jesus prayed and committed his spirit to the Father. Darkness ensued and continued until around 3PM.[5]

- The crowd talked to Jesus in mockery and scorn.
- We pray to honor Jesus and commit our spirits to God through him. When we leave the gathering, we enter a dark world that needs our light.

- **The Ninth Hour (3PM) - The priests conducted the afternoon sacrificial service, accompanied by a worship and prayer service. The offering of incense was also associated with this service. The priest would conclude this time by declaring (It Is Finished!) - Jesus breathed his last and cried out "It is finished!"[6]**
  - Additionally, the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies was torn in two from the top to the bottom; and tombs opened up yielding dead believers who had come back to life!
  - The crowd ran in fear because of the darkness.
    - NASA has proven that an eclipse took place on the traditionally historical day that Jesus died. You can actually read about it on their government website.[7]
  - We approach God's throne of grace with confidence (the veil has been removed) and walk through the darkness of the world with confidence because we know we bear the presence of God through the Holy Spirit!
- **6PM (the beginning of Sabbath) - Jesus would have been laid in a borrowed tomb at this point so as to avoid breaking Sabbath Commandments (vs 55).**
  - **Jesus rested with the Heavenly Father because of the work He had completed.**
  - **We are invited to enter into the rest of the Heavenly Father because of the finished work of Jesus.**

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[5] See Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:33; John 19:15

[6] See Matthew 27:50-53; Mark 15:37; John 19:30

[7] https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/history/

<u>Question: what is the significance of seeing the connection between Christ's death and what was taking place in the temple?</u>

- Luke 23:50-56 [50] Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, [51] who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. [52] This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. [53] Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. [54] It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. [55] The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. [56] Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.
  - What do we know about Joseph of Arimathea?
    - He was a wealthy and respected member of the Jewish council — Matthew 27:57; Mark 15:43
    - He was a good and righteous man who was waiting for the kingdom of God — Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50-51.
    - He was a secret disciple of Jesus because of fear — Matthew 27:57; John 19:38.
  - **Like Joseph, we come to him weak and in fear. He doesn't need our wealth, our status, our righteous deeds or even our desire for his kingdom. What he wants from us is the dead heart space we hold, that he might fill it with abundant life. We rest in the finished work of Christ.**
    - It is a glorious exchange! 2 Corinthians 5:21

<u>Application Question: How do we practice "open" discipleship with Jesus as opposed to "secret" discipleship with Jesus?</u>

- Isaiah 53:10-12 [10] Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. [11] Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. [12] Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was

numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

- Jesus' heal was crushed, just as God foretold in Gen. 3, but He now inherits a portion and spoil that he has earned. We are his portion! We are his reward! He purchased our pardon!
- Because we are pardoned, we should live changed lives in this world. The death of Christ should spark in us a daily desire to live as redeemed people, resting in his righteousness. That is what it means to live openly for Christ rather than in secret.

- I'd like to give the final word to John Owen this morning. "That was the will and intention of God, that he should give himself for us, that we might be saved, being separated from the world. They are his church: (Eph. 5:25-27), "He loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish:" which last words express also the very aim and end of Christ in giving himself of any, even that they may be made fit for God, and brought night unto him…Thus clear, then, and apparent, is the intention and design of Christ and his Father in this great work, even what it was, and towards whom,—namely, to save us, to deliver us from the evil world, to purge and wash us, to make us holy, zealous, fruitful in good works, to render us acceptable, and to bring us unto God; for through him "we have access into the grace wherein we stand, Rom. 5:2."[8]

Final Question: How did Owen see past mere salvation and on into our sanctification in this statement from his book?

[8] John Owen, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*. (Martino Pub: Mansfield CT, 2016), 45-46.