

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Sermon Series: Doctrine ***
*** Topic: God the Son—Death and Resurrection * Luke 23:26-24:12 * 4/5/26 ***

MAIN POINT

“I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ.... For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

The Nicene Creed

INTRODUCTION

Can you think of a movie where just when it appeared that all hope was lost, a sweeping victory comes in at the last moment?

Examples include The Lord of the Rings, Star Wars, Rudy, or any Hallmark movie where just before the happy ending, a last minute job change appears to separate the two love birds forever.

How do you think Jesus’ disciples felt when Jesus died on the cross?

Jesus’ death must have seemed surreal. Even though Jesus often spoke of His impending death and resurrection, His disciples did not understand. His death must have appeared as if all hope was lost. But God would use what appeared to be the greatest defeat to bring about His ultimate victory.

UNDERSTANDING

THE CRUCIFIXION

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ MATT. 27:15-26.

What spiritual picture do you see in the account of Jesus and Barabbas?

Pilate’s freeing guilty Barabbas in exchange for innocent Jesus parallels Jesus’ death in our place on the cross. The explanation of Jesus’ life is that He, the innocent One, was delivered over to death so that we, the guilty ones, could be free from the wrath of God.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 23:26-43.

What spiritual picture do you see in the account of the two criminals?

From Mark 15:32, we learn that initially, both criminals heaped insults on Jesus. While one criminal continued to insult Jesus, the other experienced a change of heart. He acknowledged that he was guilty, and Christ was innocent. Then he asked Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. The repentant criminal’s salvation is a beautiful picture of our salvation.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 23:44-56.

What spiritual picture do you see in darkness covering the land?

In Luke 22:53, we read that when Jesus was arrested, he said, “But this is your hour, when darkness reigns.” So, darkness pictures evil having its day.

What spiritual picture do you see in the temple curtain tearing in two?

The Temple curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple tore in two. This pictures the fact that Jesus' payment for our sin restored access to God (Hebrews 9:1-10). No longer is God's presence separate from us.

Why do you think this Roman (gentile) centurion felt terror, and declared Jesus was the Son of God?

He oversaw the execution of Jesus. He heard the things Jesus said on the cross and saw Jesus die on the cross. He could tell he was innocent. Then, he saw the supernatural effect the death of Jesus had on nature. He was terrified. Sort of like, "What have we done?!?"

Was there any doubt in anyone's mind that Jesus was actually dead?

What do you think of the sceptics' idea that maybe Jesus didn't die?

Jesus had been scourged and nailed to the cross. The Roman soldiers saw that he was dead, and pierced his side with a spear (John 19:23-24). Joseph of Arimathea took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped it in linen, and placed it in the tomb. Jesus body remained in the tomb from Friday until Sunday. He had been without water since at least Friday morning. To think that he wasn't dead but revived, exited the tomb, met Mary Magdalene and walked to Emmaus with two of his disciples (Luke 24:13-32), and they initially didn't recognize him or see anything wrong with him is absurd.

THE RESURRECTION

When we look at various gospel presentations, we rightly see an emphasis on the sacrifice Christ made for us on the cross. Hebrews 9:22 tells us that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." But the resurrection is also vitally important. Ro. 10:9 says, "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." So, the resurrection of Christ is vitally important. We'll now develop this idea further.

"The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the single greatest event in the history of the world. It is so foundational to Christianity that no one who denies it can be a true Christian." John MacArthur

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ LUKE 24:1-12.

Who were the first people to see Jesus after His resurrection? What did they do with this information (verse 9)?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8

What do you think of the sceptics' idea that Jesus died, but didn't resurrect?

There were way too many eyewitnesses to the living Jesus. And Christianity exploded onto the Roman Empire while many of these eyewitness were still alive. The story could be checked out, and no one ever produced a body, which would have stopped this story from spreading.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:14-17

What did Paul mean when he suggested that without the resurrection our faith is futile? Why is faith in a Jesus who did not rise from the dead insufficient?

The resurrection of Jesus verifies His power over death and His identity as the Son of God. Believing that Jesus was only a good man and moral teacher would not offer us life after death.

HAVE VOLUNTEERS READ THE FOLLOWING VERSES

What do these verses add to our understanding of the importance of the resurrection?

- **John 11:25-26:** In one of the “I AM” statements made by Jesus, he declares that he is the resurrection and the life. This is who Jesus is.
- **1 Peter 1:3:** Through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, God in his mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope. The resurrection proved there is a spiritual reality beyond flesh and blood.
- **Acts 2:24:** In the resurrection, Christ demonstrated he has power over death.
- **1 Thessalonians 4:13-14:** Jesus’s resurrection gives us hope in our resurrection.
- **Romans 4:25:** Jesus was delivered over to death for our sins, and raised to life for our justification. Our salvation is more than “Your sin debt is paid, you are free to go”, but rather you are justified (your sins are expunged from the record), and we are adopted into God’s family, being able to call God “our Father”.
- **Hebrews 4:14-16:** Since Jesus experienced life as a man, he can sympathize with our weaknesses. And he has ascended into heaven as our high priest, going before God in our behalf. Because of this, we can approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

APPLICATION

ASK VOLUNTEERS TO READ 1 PETER 2:15, 21-24 AND 2 CORINTHIANS 5:14-16.

What are we to learn from Jesus’ example as he chose not to retaliate to those who were wrongfully accusing him?

How can we apply 2 Corinthians that “from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view”?

As servants of Christ, we need to prioritize the advancement of the gospel above our own “rights”.

PRAYER

Thank You God that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. And we thank You that Jesus didn’t stay dead, but was resurrected, showing His power over death, and becoming our High Priest. We thank You that what we received through this was not just, “Your sin debt is paid for; you are free to go” but much more than that, we have been justified and adopted into God’s family, and can now call God our Father. Pray that we would live with a keen awareness that Jesus is alive, and that this knowledge and belief would impact everything about our lives.

COMMENTARY

Matthew 23:26 Simon of Cyrene was staying outside Jerusalem and coming in from the country to worship each day during the feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus was unable to carry the cross any farther after His earlier beating (22:63), so it was placed on Simon's back. Simon may have been part of the synagogue of the Cyrenians mentioned in Ac 6:9. Mark 15:21 mentions the names of Simon's sons. This may indicate that Simon became a Christian, as the original readers may have known his sons. Romans 16:13 may refer to one of those sons.

Matthew 27:15-26

27:15. The custom of releasing a prisoner for Passover seems to be attested in one Jewish text (m. Pes.8:6: "they may slaughter a Passover lamb for one... whom they have promised to bring out of prison").

27:16. Mark 15:7 describes Barabbas as a murderous rebel. Some ancient manuscripts of Matthew and some important figures in the early church mention that Barabbas's full name was Jesus Bar Abbas, which might indicate that he was the son of a renowned teacher ("son of Rabba"). Thus Pilate apparently offered the Jews a choice between a Jesus who was the son of a teacher and a Jesus who was the Son of God.

27:24-25. Both Judas (vv. 3-5) and Pilate (v. 24) feared being accountable for Jesus' death, but the people gladly accepted responsibility. Many later Christians speculated that the destruction of Jerusalem was the penalty for this self-confessed guilt.

27:26. Roman flogging utilized an instrument of torture called the (Gk) flagellum, a leather whip that had thongs laced with sharp pieces of iron or bone. Although beatings in the Jewish synagogue were limited to 39 blows, no limit was imposed on Roman flogging. Ancient writers described victims being disemboweled or having their bones laid bare by the flagellum.

Luke 23:26-24:12

23:26-31. Jesus told the crowds who were mourning His unjust crucifixion that they should weep for their own families because of the future destruction of Jerusalem. It would be preferable not to have children in such awful times. Jesus then cited Hos 10:8, where it is said that people will request landslides to hide them from the military onslaught. The proverbial statement in Luke 23:31 implies that if things are this bad for an innocent man in a time of peace (when the wood is green), they will be much worse for those who deserve judgment during a time of war (when it is dry).

23:32. As Jesus struggled toward the site of crucifixion, two other victims accompanied Him (v. 32). Luke identified them as criminals—literally, "evildoers." Luke didn't name the nature of their crimes. Other Gospel writers used a different Greek term for these two that can mean either "robbers" or "revolutionaries" (see Matt. 27:38; Mark 15:27). Appropriately, Jesus spent His last hours in the midst of sinners, the very people for whom He came to die.

23:32-33 Being executed between two criminals fulfilled the prophecy of Isa 53:12, as well as Jesus' words in Lk 22:37.

23:33. The entourage proceeded to a place called The Skull (v. 33). Many Bible students presume that the term rendered "The Skull" (Greek, "kranion," from which the English word "cranium" is

derived) originated from a geological shape that appeared in the side of the hill. The King James Version here uses the Latin term “Calvary” to identify the place of crucifixion. Other Gospel writers also included reference to the Aramaic-Hebrew name “Golgotha” (see Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17). At this spot they crucified Jesus. Luke provided few details of the elements of crucifixion. He preferred an emphasis on Jesus’ spiritual battle. During a typical crucifixion, death came slowly. The victim could live as long as two days. The soldiers suspended the victim from the cross using ropes and nails. Usually they stripped the person of clothing. Death came from blood loss, suffocation, exposure, and dehydration. Crucifixion was a painful, humiliating death.

23:34. From the cross Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (v. 34). Jesus forgave His executioners because they acted in ignorance of who He really was. Some early manuscripts do not include the first part of this verse. Jesus’ prayer probably was a reference to those present who were responsible for this event—soldiers and religious leaders. He held out hope for a spirit of repentance from them. They sinned out of ignorance. This emphasized the supernatural nature of a God who could forgive even the most heinous sin. According to custom, the soldiers divided His clothes and cast lots. They gambled away the last of Jesus’ possessions. This final insult pictures Jesus giving everything He had in death. Jesus demonstrated the ultimate in forgiveness. Their dividing his clothes and casting lots fulfilled Ps 22:18.

23:35-39 Four different groups (the people in general, the leaders, the soldiers, and one of the criminals being crucified) scoffed at Jesus and challenged Him to save Himself. None of them believed that Jesus was the Messiah... the King of the Jews, even though the official inscription above His head on the cross charged Him with posing as “the King of the Jews.”

Certain people stood watching (v. 35). A crucifixion often attracted curious onlookers. Luke offered no record of their thoughts at this point. The leaders, however, responded in character. They kept scoffing at Jesus. These religious leaders insisted on Jesus' death and got it. But they kept on the attack even as Jesus died. The scoffing alluded to Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. In His ministry, Jesus performed miracles that saved people from demons, illness, and death. In the view of the leaders, then, if He truly was God's Messiah, the Chosen One, why did He not save Himself? They mocked what appeared to be true—the helplessness of Jesus. They looked for a Messiah who represented physical power. They failed to realize that they spoke the truth. He could have rescued Himself from the cross. He refused, however, to use His divine power for selfish reasons. Instead Jesus chose to obey God's call to a different purpose—to give His life in sacrifice.

The mob mentality around the cross dominated (v. 36). Roman soldiers carried out the execution on behalf of the government. They too mocked Him. They offered Jesus sour wine. This cheap drink possibly came as a kindness to the condemned. More likely, however, the soldiers scornfully gave a supposed drink of kings to Jesus, who came to be a King. The inscription tacked to the cross above Jesus possibly spurred their actions (see 23:38). Then the soldiers took up the taunt of the leaders, "If You are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" (v. 37). As He did with the leaders, Jesus made no response to this abuse. He let His actions speak for themselves.

These verses describe the ridicule Jesus endured on the cross. Even the dying criminals who were crucified beside Jesus got in on the mocking act as one of them echoed the Jewish cry (v. 39). The Messiah should at least be able to save Himself. While He was doing that, He might as well show His power by saving those who were dying with Him. Surely this criminal deserved his fate, showing his character to the end. Suffering the most insulting of deaths, he hurled insults at the only one who could save him.

23:40-42. The word "rebuked" (v. 40) is the same term Jesus used in casting out demons (4:35,41; 9:42), healing the sick (4:39), and calming the storms (8:24). The second thief thus followed Jesus' advice in an ironic way, catching his fellow thief in a sin and rebuking him. The second thief confessed his sins and invited the other thief to join his confession (v. 41). They deserved to die. They were guilty. As such, they stood in sharp contrast to Jesus. How this thief came to recognize the innocence of Jesus we are not told, but his statement incorporates a great theological truth: Jesus did not deserve to die. He was the sinless dying with sinners, the innocent sharing the fate of the guilty, the pure Lamb of God taking on Himself the sin of the world.

The repentant thief had rebuke for his fellow thief but a request for Jesus. He wanted to be remembered when Jesus entered His kingdom (v. 42). This thief did not know all he asked, but he had enough faith to ask to be part of whatever Jesus was up to. He had no more life ahead of him, but he sought eternal blessings beyond the cruel death he was enduring. When Jesus raised the dead, some decided to kill Him. When they killed Him, one decided to join Him.

23:40-43 In the midst of this display of unbelief and mockery, the other criminal came to understand the difference between his own guilt and Jesus' innocence (this man has done nothing wrong). He also realized that Jesus was the Messiah and asked to take part in His coming kingdom. Jesus assured him that, after death, he would immediately be reunited with Him in paradise (eternal life beyond the grave; see 2Co 12:4).

23:43. Here we see a central New Testament text on eternal life. Jesus promised this believing thief that he would share life with Jesus in paradise today. The thief had asked for participation in Christ's kingdom, and Jesus appeared to grant the request. The thief did not have to wait even one day (v. 43) to be with Jesus in paradise. His faith secured him an immediate place with Jesus. The Hebrew equivalent for "paradise" appears three times in the Old Testament (Neh. 2:8; Song 4:13; Eccl. 2:5).

23:44-45 The three hours of darkness at midday (from noon... until three) was a sign of divine judgment against sin (which Jesus became on the cross) and the sinners who unjustly executed the Son of God. The torn temple curtain symbolized that Jesus' death had opened access to God.

23:46 While expressing faith in God by reciting Ps 31:5, Jesus breathed His last. Jesus was placed on the cross at about 9:00 a.m. (Mk 15:25) and died after only six hours—an unusually short time. Crucifixion victims sometimes lingered for two or three days before death occurred.

23:50-53. Even though Joseph of Arimathea was a member of the Sanhedrin, he had disagreed with their decision to execute Jesus (22:71-23:1). He was a good and righteous man, but he was also a secret disciple of Jesus (John 19:38). Jesus was laid in the tomb of the wealthy Joseph instead of the shallow common grave reserved for criminals. This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9. Matthew (Matt. 27:65-66) stated that soldiers were assigned to guard Jesus' tomb and that the stone rolled in front of the tomb was stamped with the Roman seal of authority.

There were many eyewitnesses that saw Jesus' dead body up close. And they also saw in which tomb his body was laid.

23:54-56. Preparation day (from Thursday sundown to Friday sundown), was the last day before the Sabbath when preparations for the Sabbath were completed. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did much to prepare Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39-40), but the women disciples from Galilee planned to finish the task (prepared spices and perfumes). They had to wait for the Sabbath to pass before they could carry out their plan.

24:1 The first day of the week was Sunday. It was so early in the morning that it was still dark (Jn 20:1) when the women set out to Jesus' tomb to anoint His body.

24:2 On their way to the tomb, the women pondered the difficulty the sealing stone would present. Who would move it for them (Mk 16:3)? However, when they arrived, they found the stone rolled away from the entrance. The stone had been moved by "a violent earthquake" (Mt 28:2).

24:3-8 Jesus' body was nowhere to be found, and the women had no answer for why it was missing. The two men who suddenly appeared and terrified them were angels (v. 23; Jn 20:12). Matthew 28:2-3 and Mk 16:5 mention only one angel. The angels announced the resurrection of Jesus to the women and reminded them that He had predicted this would happen. As soon as they were reminded of Jesus' assertion that He would rise on the third day, they remembered His words. Now they were better prepared to understand and believe the radical things Jesus had said.

24:9-12 The Eleven (the apostles who remained after Judas' act of betrayal) did not believe the women's report about what had happened at Jesus' tomb, viewing it as nonsense. However, Peter was curious enough to run to the tomb and look for himself. When he saw only the linen cloths in which Jesus had been wrapped (23:53), he was amazed, but didn't understand.