

Sunday School Lesson

Matthew 27&28: Trial, Death, and Resurrection (April 7, 2024)

Jesus arrival on earth is definitely worthy of celebration, but His death and resurrection are the most significant events in human history. Pagans made sacrifices in the hopes of changing the minds of their gods; Jews made sacrifices to change the minds of the penitents, to remind themselves of their indebtedness to God, and to atone for their sins. God's graciousness allowed Christ to be the ultimate substitute atonement.

“Jesus’ resurrection is the hope of our own salvation realized. God intends to save us, not by remembering us forever, or allowing us to ‘live on through our children,’ but to have new bodies and new life in a new creation, just as Jesus rose again and is alive today!”¹

I. “Trial” of Jesus

- Jesus was captured at night when there were no crowds to witness/protest it.
- He was tried before Caiaphas at night, which was illegal, relying on the testimony of false witnesses. Two of them claimed Jesus blasphemed, taking his prophecy out of context regarding destroying the Temple and resurrecting it in three days. This was not sufficient for a death penalty.
- They took Him to Pilate, the governor [according to Luke w/3 charges: 1) national subversive activity, 2) teaching against paying taxes to Rome, and 3) claiming to be a King]. Jesus refused to answer Pilate's questions.
- Pilate's wife warned him not to be involved with this “just man.”
- Pilate offered the crowd the choice of Jesus or Barabbas. The crowd shouted for Barabbas, so Pilate washed his hands of the matter.
- John's Gospel gives greater details from Pilate's interrogation of Jesus. Luke's Gospel adds that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, but Herod's interrogation was also unsatisfactory, so Jesus was returned to Pilate for sentencing.

II. Death of Judas

When Jesus did not respond to His arrest as Judas had hoped, Judas repented and tried to return his bounty. Matthew implied that this was after the Sanhedrin decided on a death penalty.

It was “blood money,” and by law could only be used for strangers; so the chief priests and elders could not take it back into the treasury. Read **Matthew 27: 3-10**.

¹ Rudolph, Day 294.

Attributed to Jeremiah, but what did Jeremiah actually say?
Read **Jeremiah 32:6-9**.

Now read **Zechariah 11:12-13**.

III. Jesus Crucifixion

- Jesus has been up all night, mocked, spit upon, stripped for a scarlet robe & redressed, scourged (which frequently killed), and crowned with thorns.
- He either carried the cross-arm or dragged the whole cross
- Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry His cross.

Luke inserted that one of the thieves rebuked the other and then requested Jesus remember him. John includes Jesus request of him to care for His mother.

What did the sign over Jesus' head say?

- Matthew, in Aramaic (Hebrew – the language of the Jews): “This is Jesus the King of the Jews”
 - Mark, in Latin (the legal language of the government of Rome): “The king of the Jews
 - Luke, in Latin: “This is the King of the Jews”
 - John, in Greek (the universal language of the day): “Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews”
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- About third hour (9 am) – crucifixion begins
 - Sixth hour (noon) – darkness (not an eclipse because the moon is full at Passover)
 - Ninth hour (3 pm) – “My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me?”
 - Jesus refused a sponge of drugged wine that would ease the pain
 - Jesus died (by asphyxiation)
 - Temple curtain (30' wide x 60' long and a handbreadth thick) was torn in two from top to bottom, earth shook and rocks split
 - “the tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”
 - Joseph of Arimathea requested the body from Pilate and placed Jesus in his own tomb.
 - Next day the chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate to seal the tomb and set a guard.

At Jesus' crucifixion:

- Temple leaders: scorned & mocked as he was finally put in his place
- Roman soldiers: eradicating more sub-humans
- Jewish crowd: thoroughly disheartened that Jesus failed their expectations
- Women: wept and mourned
- Disciples: hiding in fear

Which group would you be in?

Note: legend developed that Joseph was Mary's uncle; he resigned from the Sanhedrin when he saw they were set on destroying Jesus; and his two sons became leaders in the Jerusalem church.

IV. *Jesus Resurrection*

Matthew 28:1-10

The guards were bribed by the chief priests to lie, saying that the disciples came by night and stole the body away. Matthew 28:11-15.

V. *The Great Commission*

Jesus has sent His disciples out before. Read **Matthew 10:5-8**.

Now read **Matthew 28:16-20**.

Why the difference?

“In his first word Jesus lays down a limitation of their work, a circumstance which they must inevitably have found strange and difficult. The choice of field for their labours does not depend on their own impulses or inclinations, but on where they are sent. This makes it quite clear that it is not their own work they are doing, but God's. How much they would have liked to go to the heathen and the Samaritans, who needed the glad tidings far more than anyone else. That may be quite true, but they receive no injunctions to go to them. The work of God cannot be done without due authorization, otherwise it is devoid of promise.

“We, who are the Gentiles, were once shut out from the message of the gospel. It was first necessary for Israel to hear and reject it before it could come to the Gentiles, and a Church of Gentile Christians be established according to the commission of Jesus. Not until after his resurrection does Jesus charge his apostles to go out into all the world. The disciples found it hard to understand this limitation of their commission, but in the end it turned out to be a means of

grace for the Gentiles. When they received the good news, it was the good news of a crucified and risen Lord. Such was the way of God's wisdom. All that is left to us is the commission.

“God's language is clear enough. It is not for the messenger to decide who will hear and who will not, for only God knows who is ‘worthy;’ and those who are worthy will hear the Word when the disciple proclaims it. But woe to the city and woe to the house which rejects the messenger of Christ. They will incur a dreadful judgment; Sodom and Gomorrah, the cities of unchastity and perversion will be judged more graciously than those cities of Israel who reject the work of Jesus. Vice and sin may be forgiven, according to the word of Jesus, but the man who rejects the word of salvation has thrown away his last chance. To refuse to believe in the gospel is the worst sin imaginable, and if that happens the messengers can do nothing but leave the place. They go because the Word cannot remain there. They must recognize in fear and amazement both the power and the weakness of the Word of God. But the disciples must not force any issue contrary to or beyond the word of Christ. Their commission is not a heroic struggle, a financial pursuit of a grand idea or a good cause. That is why they stay only where the Word stays, and if it is rejected they will be rejected with it, and shake off the dust from their feet as a sign of the curse which awaits that place.”²

Summary:

The Great Commission: “Some day I would like to visit that black church in Kansas City where, we are told, they have this slogan in their bulletin: ‘Wake up, sing up, preach up, pray up, stay up, pay up, but never give up or back up or shut up until the cause of Christ in the church and in this world is built up!’”

– Anonymous, via Dr. John J. Walker, Post, TX, in Samars' *Holy Humor*

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² Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, Chapter 23, *The Work*

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