

Christian Basics Program

Session 3: Jesus' Death

Introduction

In the last session, we learnt that when Jesus walked on earth, He was identified by God, people and spiritual beings as the “Son of God”. He did many supernatural works which proved that He was worthy of the title “Son of God”. However, the greatest work of Jesus happened when He was crucified and died on a Roman cross. Jesus’s death on the cross provided the solution to the problem of our separation from God as a result of our sin. In this session we will learn more about the death of Jesus and why it was so important to every human being.

1. Jesus predicted His death

Jesus’ death on a cross did not happen without His foreknowledge or consent. In fact, He told his disciples at least three times that he was going to be put to death.

Read: Matthew 16:21

(See also: Mark 9:30-32; Luke 9:22)

2. The night before Jesus died

On the Thursday night during the Jewish feast of Passover, Jesus shared a meal with twelve of His closest disciples. During that meal Jesus did something very interesting with the bread and the wine.

Read: Matthew 26:26-28

(See also Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor 11:23-25)

Jesus was telling them that His body was going to be given for them, and His blood would be shed for them so that their sins could be forgiven. We learn in other parts of the Bible that sin could only be forgiven through the shedding of blood (see Hebrews 9:22; Leviticus 16). Jesus, the Son of God, would shed His blood so that those who put their faith in Him could receive the forgiveness they needed to be able to be in relationship with God.

Following the dinner, Jesus and his disciples went to the Mount of Olives to pray. He began to be sorrowful and prayed to God the Father.

Read: Mark 14:36

Ultimately it was God’s will that Jesus would die on the cross, and Jesus went willingly to suffering and death, even though He did not deserve it. Jesus had led a sinless life (2 Cor 5:21; Heb 4:15; 1 John 3:5) yet He would be falsely accused and put to death.

3. The sentencing of Jesus

Following Jesus' prayer in the garden He was betrayed by one of His closest followers, Judas Iscariot, who led the Jewish temple guards to capture and arrest Jesus (Matt 26:37-56; Mark 14:43-46; Luke 22:47-53). They brought Jesus before the Jewish religious council (called the Sanhedrin).

Read: Matthew 26:59-66

(See also: Mark 14:55-64; Luke 22:66-71)

When Jesus replied, "You have said so" (also translated as "It is as you said"), He was affirming that He is the Messiah, the one God promised in the Scripture to save the people of Israel from oppression. Jesus claims to be the "Son of Man" referring to a heavenly vision of God's throne in Daniel 7. The vision reveals one like a "Son of Man" who is given power and rule over all of creation.

As a result of Jesus' statements about Himself, the Jewish ruling council accused Him of the sin of 'blasphemy' which is claiming to be God (John 10:33). Jewish religious law demanded that a person found guilty of 'blasphemy' should be put to death.

Because Israel was ruled by the Romans at the time, people could only be put to death under Roman law by a Roman official. The religious leaders mocked Jesus, (Mark 14:65, Luke 22:63) before sending Him to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.

Read: Luke 23:13-15

(See also: Matthew 27:19-24; John 19:4)

However, because it was the Passover feast (a special celebration remembering how God had miraculously rescued the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt) he gave the crowd accusing Jesus the option of choosing to have Jesus or another prisoner called Barrabas set free. The crowd chose Barrabas and called for Jesus to be crucified (Luke 23:18-20). Pontius Pilate wanted to please the Jewish leaders and so he ordered that Jesus be crucified.

4. The crucifixion and death of Jesus

Following a brutal flogging and mocking by Roman soldiers (Matt 27:26-31, Mark 15:15-20, John 19:1), Jesus was forced to carry His cross to a hill named Golgotha. He was then nailed to that cross alongside two criminals and suffered horrendously for the next 6 hours.

Read: Luke 23:32-46

5. What did Jesus' death achieve?

In the passage above, we learnt that when Jesus died, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. This was very significant as the curtain in the Jewish temple separated the ‘Holy Place’ from the ‘Most Holy Place’ where God was most present in all the earth at that time. Only the Jewish High Priest could enter the ‘Most Holy Place’ and only once a year after he had sacrificed an animal and cleaned himself. The tearing of the curtain now symbolized that all who wanted to be in relationship with God could now do so because of the death of Jesus on the cross.

Read: Colossians 1:21-22

(See also: Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

For people to be able to enter the presence of God, their sins had to be removed. On the cross, Jesus was punished for our sins so that they could be removed and we could come into the presence of God.

Read: Hebrews 9:26-27; 1 Peter 3:18

(See also: 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 John 2:2; Colossians 2:14; Galatians 1:4; Hebrews 9:26; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 John 4:10)

On the cross Jesus also broke the power of Satan/The Devil over humans that he gained when Adam and Eve first obeyed him in the Garden of Eden.

Read: Hebrews 2:14-15

(See also: 1 John 3:8)

Looking Forward

Jesus' suffering and death on a Roman cross, achieved restored relationship with God and eternal life for all those who put their faith in Him and His finished work on the cross. However, Jesus' death was not the end of the story. What happened next is a confirmation that those who put their faith in Jesus can be assured of having eternal life in the presence of God.

Prayer to Make Jesus Lord of Your Life

If you have not done so yet, you can say the following prayer today, to put your trust in Jesus and make Him the Lord of your life:

Jesus, I believe that You are the Son of God and that You died on the cross to rescue me from sin and eternal separation from God.

I ask for Your forgiveness for all of my sins and I choose to turn from them and make You the Lord of my life.

I receive Your forgiveness and ask You to come and live in me and help me to love in the same way that You do.

Thank-You for the free gift of salvation and for making me a child of God.

Thank-You that you will never leave or forsake me and that I can be assured of spending all eternity in heaven with You, only because of what You did on the cross for me.

May Your will be done in my life.

Amen.