

The Central Truth of Christianity

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Date: 09 January 2017

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] Jesus Christ.

We're continuing to look at the inner sanctuary.! These are the very intimate words of the Lord! to His true followers.

may remember they got to be more intimate after Judas was dismissed to go and do his terrible deed. And it's going to get even more intimate when we get to the 17th chapter.

Because there we have the inter-Trinitarian prayer, a conversation between Jesus and the Father. And we are the fly on the wall. We get to hear that. But today is actually lesson 10 in our study of the inner sanctuary. Followers of the Lord Jesus are sometimes asked what his death on the cross means to them. What does it mean to us individually? And I'm sure each of you could provide an answer and it would be a little different, a lot of similarities, but we can all address that question this evening. But the focus tonight is not on what the death of Christ meant to us. But we're going to kind of talk about what the Lord's death meant to Him. The death and resurrection of Christ are the central truths of Christianity. Maybe that's a good title. The central truth of Christianity. Death and resurrection. And if you will think about it, fellows, it is what sets us apart from the world of religion. Remember I've said before, religion is man's efforts to reach God. It always fails. Could be well-meaning, could be horrible, but it always fails. Religion, in fact, in the original meaning of the word meant a return to bondage.

The great bishop J.C. Ryle, over 150 years ago, said that the death of Christ was the grand peculiarity of the Christian faith. And it really is. He's trying to explain the death of Christ to a rank unbeliever who doesn't want anything to do with it. I mean, I've even heard the blasphemous statement that God is a child abuser. You ever heard that? That God sent His Son to the cross. He's a child abuser.

[2:52] When you analyze the world's religions, you come up with rules and precepts and forms and ceremonies, all kinds of regulations. There is usually a dose of some rewards and a lot of punishment.

But religion cannot show us a cross on which the God of the universe died that we might live. That's one of the reasons I say man couldn't write the Bible. Because he would never have God coming down, born in a manger, or in a stable, laid in a manger, humble humility, going to a cross to die for His people.

The cross and the resurrection are the crown and glory of the gospel. Another good title, the crown and glory. The truth is that Christ came to this earth to die.

That was the ultimate goal of the incarnation. By His death, sinners are reconciled to a God who has wrath for sin.

The cross became the peace treaty between God and man. War broke out in the garden. Chapter 3. The cross is the peace treaty.

[4:23] And the cross, of course, is the very lifeblood of the true church of which Christ is the head. We observe two ordinances in the church.

The first is baptism by which we identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. Picture that ceremony.

It's the death. We're buried. And we died. We're buried. And we're resurrected. If you look at the baptismal pool, we are buried with Christ and raised to walk in newness of life.

In the ordinance of communion, the Lord's Supper, that's the other ordinance, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes back for us. And by the death of Christ, we were justified before a holy and offended God.

Justification is a legal term meaning to declare righteous. God can declare sinners righteous because Christ's death paid the penalty of their sins.

[5:43] It paid the penalty. And by this act, we then receive the imputed righteousness of Christ. I've heard one writer say, our sins are imputed to Jesus.

Jesus' righteousness is imputed to us. Paul said in Ephesians chapter 1, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace.

The writer of Hebrews says we can now enter into the most holy place. I like that. I'm just going into a holy place. The most holy place because we have obtained eternal redemption.

The great Bible scholar Leon Morris summarized the benefits received by the sacrifice of Christ this way. He says, we are redeemed. We are made nigh to God.

We are reconciled to God. Jews and Gentiles are now made one. We are cleansed. We are justified.

[6:54] We are sanctified. We are perfected forever. We have been purchased unto God. We have boldness to enter the holy place, the most holy place.

We are loosed from our sins. We may overcome by the blood of the Lamb. We have peace with God. His blood establishes a new covenant and His death redeems us from all iniquity.

To mention a few. According to Colossians 2, verse 14, God holds a certificate of death on every human that ever committed one sin.

And that means God had a certificate of death in you, on you and me. but the precious blood of the Lamb has canceled out, has negated that certificate of death.

It is canceled out. That is some of the things that the death of Christ meant to us. But what did the death of Christ mean to Him? And that is a question not often pondered.

[8:12] And first, it meant that His ministry would be vindicated. In John chapter 14, verse 28, we read this, Jesus speaking to His followers, because I go to the Father, I'm getting in the middle sentence here, I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

And we can never know the depth of Jesus' longing to return to the Father. It was there He would be restored to His exalted position as the second person of the Trinity.

He had enjoyed a throne, the love of the Father, the love of the Spirit, the worship of angels for untold millennia.

We don't know how long. That glory was all set aside as He lowered Himself lower than angels and took upon Himself human flesh and dwelt with men.

Again, good example of why we couldn't write that book. Now, He is about to be restored to the right hand of the Father where He existed for eternity in eternity past.

[9:42] By returning to the glory He once had and being placed at the right hand of the Father was total vindication by God the Father of our Lord's earthly ministry.

another very important reason of what His death meant. When this happened, when Jesus entered into the Holy of Holies and took His rightful place following the ascension, took His rightful place at the right hand of the Father, He was totally vindicated.

God was telling all the angels and the world, particularly the saved world, that He is well pleased with the ministry of His Son.

And He would soon accomplish that which had been ordained from eternity past before the foundation of the world. The cross and with it the atoning sacrifice was fast approaching when the Lord speaks these words to His followers.

Really, mere hours away. Hours away. the Father approved of His life. You go all the way back to His baptism.

[11:06] This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased. The Father approved of His life and the Father approved of His death. Now, the cross was still ahead and it was going to be excruciating.

Yeah, there's going to be physical torture but there's going to be separation. from the Godhead. The Lord Jesus would be separated from the Father and the Spirit.

But He could look beyond that to the resurrection, to the ascension, to His coronation, to His exaltation as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

And Jesus says something very interesting here. He says, the Father is greater than I. And there's a lot of people out there, particularly cults, that love to twist that verse trying to make it into something that it is not.

Jesus was not declaring His inferiority to the Father. He is, in His essential nature, fully God, equal to the Father, equal to the Spirit, and His comment here, I believe, has to be in the context of His submissive role during His earthly ministry.

[12:31] He submitted to the Father's will, totally. Led into the Garden of Gethsemane and beyond to Calvary. And He was submissive to the Father in His earthly ministry, His incarnation.

He submitted Himself to the Father's will. He became a man. He became a humble servant. And ultimately, He became the object of God's wrath on the cross.

What did the Father have against Jesus? Well, nothing. He had it against me. But Jesus took all my sins, and yours, and there were many.

He bore our sins, and God's wrath was poured out. He who knew no sin became sin, that we might become the righteousness of God.

I can read that a million times and still just amazes when I read that verse of Scripture. He submitted Himself to the Father's will.

[13:47] because He was made a little lower than angels and suffered the humiliation of death on the cross, He would, and I believe has now been crowned with glory and honor, He has been totally vindicated.

vindicated. And that's why we can say to all religion and all the cults and all the occult that Jesus is true truth. Totally vindicated.

Dr. Carson captures the essence of what it means for Jesus to return to the Father. Listen to this. if Jesus' disciples truly loved Him, they would be glad that He's returning to His Father.

For He is returning to the sphere where He belongs to the glory He had with the Father before the world began to the place where the Father is undiminished in glory, unquestionably greater than the Son in His incarnation state.

To this point, the disciples have responded emotionally entirely according to their perception of their own gain or loss. If they had loved Jesus, they would have perceived that His departure to His own home was His gain and rejoice with Him at the prospect.

[15:11] As it is, their grief is an index of their self-centeredness. Dr. Carson, I think he'd be really particularly tough on Peter. You're not going to die.

I'm not going to allow that. He said, you're going to deny me three times. What do you mean I'm not? His death on the cross as the substitute would stand as verification that His message was true and from God.

People can look at the cross and know it's true. Of course, they can't without the Holy Spirit telling them that it's true. John 14, 29, and 30.

Now, I've told you before it happens so that when it happens, you may believe. And then he adds this, I will not speak much more with you.

Boy, that gets your attention with it. the disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God, but they struggled with doubts.

[16:24] They'd seen Him raise Lazarus from the dead, but still they had doubts. In other words, they behaved just as we do, who among us has never had a doubt about some portion of Scripture.

Jesus was infinitely aware of the inner struggles they were going through. He sought often to strengthen them when doubts arose or when major and even cataclysmic events were going to happen.

Can you imagine with Jesus, the omnipotent God, and He knows what you're thinking. Is this really the Messiah? I mean, I can just picture me by the campfire thinking that and He goes, yeah, I am. He'd answer me. Oh, that wasn't me, Lord. That was the guy next to me. At the cross, as the cross draws near, and it's only hours away, Jesus reminds them that He has told them of these things before it happened.

He's told them what's going to happen. Not only was this intended to be comforting to the disciples, but it stood also as a testimony to the deity of Christ.

[17:41] And how many times have heard people say, well, He never claimed to be deity. He never claimed to be the Messiah. Remember the woman at the well? I who speak to you am He. I know that Messiah is coming. Yeah, I'm Him.

Now He lays out for them everything that's going to happen in precise detail over the next few hours. And I would suggest only God knows the future.

the Lord then says this curious phrase here. He says that He will not be speaking with them much longer. Now, He was not taking a vow of silence.

In fact, He has much more to say to them. And we're going to cover that in the next two chapters of John. And in chapter 17, as I said, Jesus will then enter into a prayer with the Father that will encompass all of chapter 17.

And the fact that He will not speak much more to them is really a reminder that His time on earth is drawing to a close. He could see it in minute detail.

[18:55] He had just about completed the work the Father had given Him, and Heaven awaited Him with a crown. And I could only imagine what His arrival must have been like.

The death on the cross was evidence that His mission was a success. He had accomplished all that He had set out to do. And He had set out to do the Father's will.

For the ruler of the world is coming and He has nothing in Me. And three times in John's Gospel, the Lord refers to Satan as the ruler of the world.

And He is. Don, you talked a little bit yesterday about, you know, I was sure glad you said you could love rivers and mountains, but it's the world system that's controlled by Satan. You mean communism?

Yeah. Yeah. Atheism? Oh, yeah. Yeah. Socialism? Yeah. Capitalism? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So any time the Lord had this conflict with Satan, He declared him to be the God of this world or the God of the air.

[20:09] And He does that three times in John's Gospel. And we need to point out that He is an illegitimate ruler. He is a usurper. His rule is limited to the evil world system that is in rebellion against God.

it's in rebellion. And I think we're going to be in for some interesting times as a church in the next several years if the Lord doesn't come back for us.

Now the Lord Jesus has been in conflict with Satan from the start. Satan had even tried to kill him when he was a baby. Tried to take his place in heaven.

Got cast out. But as the cross neared the intensity of Satan's attack, I don't know why I wrote this this way, but I did.

The intensity of Satan's attack intensified. I guess that's a good English don't know. Satan would triumph in seeing the death of Jesus.

[21:19] But his death would be the fatal blow to all that Satan desired in the universe. He's a defeated foe.

He just hadn't figured that out. I don't think in total. Maybe he hadn't read the end of the book. I'm not sure. It would bring about the devil's destruction. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil and when we come to these chapters that has nearly been accomplished.

what lies ahead for Satan and his followers is eternity in the lake of fire. A place that was already constructed and reserved for them.

Now, since Satan has nothing on Jesus, nothing which with to accuse him, he could not hold him in death.

You know, I've heard it said Satan really didn't want him to go to the cross, but once he went to the cross, he didn't want him to come out of that tomb. He would have Roman guards post a guard and seal it.

[22:30] The devil has no claim that he can make to the Father concerning Jesus. No claim. And finally, his death would validate his motive for coming to earth.

John 14:31. But so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded me.

And then he adds these words, get up, let us go from here. He came because of his love for the Father to do what the Father commanded.

The ultimate proof that the Son loved the Father was his willingness to die on the cross. The essential test of love toward God is obedience.

If we do not obey, we have no right to claim to be his. It doesn't mean we're not. But Jesus demonstrated his love for the Father by being obedient, even an obedience unto death.

[23:49] Unto death. He would do exactly what the Father commanded of him. And even in the agony of the garden when he said, you know, take this cup from me.

But for this reason I came, your will not mine. This conversation had taken place in the upper room.

And now we see a transition as Jesus tells his disciples, hey guys, it's time to leave. It's time to leave.

And now they begin walking through Jerusalem toward Gethsemane. And while he walked, I believe he continued to teach.

And soon, very soon, they would be heading through the Kidron Valley that lay east of the city. Gethsemane lay on the slopes of the Mount of Wallis, which is still there.

[24 : 54] Some of those olive trees are still there. They live to be thousands of years. And I'm always moved by this. In traveling through the Kidron Valley, it would be necessary for these men, including Jesus, to step across a very small stream that flowed there.

It was a stream of water, except over the centuries, this stream flowed down the mountain from the Temple Mount had turned the color of blood red.

Why did they do that? When the blood of the animals was offered on the Temple Mount for the temporary forgiveness of sins, they had troughs that caused it to flow downward into the valley, into the Kidron, where the water would eventually wash it away.

So the Kidron, though a stream of water, flowed blood red because the blood of those animal sacrifices was mixed in with it.

I've seen a colored painting of Jerusalem in the first century, and the hill is this blood red with these troughs of blood coming down. water. I wonder, and I don't know, but I wonder, as Jesus stepped over the red, bloody, Kidron stream, if he looked down at it, and realized or may have said to himself, very soon the blood of those animals being sacrificed will no longer be necessary because he would think to himself, I'm soon to be the sacrifice.

[27 : 06] It doesn't mean that animal sacrifice ended immediately at the crucifixion, but it would ultimately end with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. His blood would soon mix with the Kidrons, and animal sacrifice would be obsolete.