

The Death of Death in the Death of Christ

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Hebrews

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Hebrews 2, departing from our study of Ezra-Nehemiah to focus on the title of the message this morning is "The Death of Death." The death of death, and I want to ask you to consider this question: when did death die? When was the moment that death lost its power? At precisely what instance was death robbed of the hold that it has upon us?

We are celebrating this week the wonder of Holy Week and the glory of all that God has done in Christ. Holy Week starts on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, which commemorates the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem when he is proclaimed publicly to be the Messiah, the Son of David. And then Maundy Thursday, Thursday evening before Easter is the time that we remember the Last Supper of the Lord Jesus Christ with his disciples in the Upper Room when he explained to them what was about to happen to him, and then his arrest, denial, betrayal. And then on Friday we, remember we call it Good Friday because though it was the most evil event that has ever happened, it was the greatest good that has ever happened, the cross. Then, of course, Easter Sunday, Resurrection Sunday, the third day Jesus rose from the dead. And so we think about these events, this great work of Christ, precisely at what moment did death die?

I think if we were to answer, many of us would suggest that the moment was at the moment at which Jesus' lifeless body in the tomb began to live again, the moment his heart began to beat, the moment his lungs filled with air again on Sunday, Resurrection Sunday, that first Easter. That would be what many of us would think but that is not actually what the Scripture teaches us. The moment that death died was the moment Jesus did not breathe again but the moment he breathed his last. Death died in the death of Christ and so the title of the message really is "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ." The resurrection is the declaration of the great victory that was won on Friday. The work is finished. As Jesus said, "It is finished! Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." The great redeeming work, the great destruction of the power of Satan, the great deliverance from the wrath of God and from hell is accomplished when he breathes his last.

Jesus killed death through death and we see this in our passage this morning, Hebrews 2:14-15. Before we read the text, I just want to say a word about how encouraging it is to

be able to focus on the glorious power of our Savior in days like this. Think about how much the world needs this news. It's always the most needed news but even the circumstances of the day, you can see people beginning to really wonder, be impacted by all that is happening. Coronavirus impacting every corner of the globe, the reality of a potentially deadly virus that hospitalizes about 20% of the people that get it, results in illness, severe illness, death to many, and it reminds people that we are frighteningly frail; that despite our technological advancement, our educational achievements, our political aspirations, despite all of the machinations of mankind, we are still frighteningly frail and fragile. Our life is but a vapor. It is here and it is gone.

So in the midst of this reminder of the fragility of life, the loss of the sense of invulnerability, the sense that people have that not only are they fearing for their physical lives but they're fearing for just their way of life. Will our financial prosperity be lost? Our political stability? Social order and well-being? The world around us and many of us are tempted to gloom and discouragement, confused, afraid. In the midst of times like this, the most relevant truth is that Jesus Christ has conquered death. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords and that is what Easter weekend is about. That is what Good Friday is about and that is what Easter Sunday is about.

He has defeated death, our greatest enemy. He accomplished that in his own death and we see this in Hebrews 2:14 and 15. We read there,

14 Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, 15 and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

It was through his death that he rendered powerless the one who had the power of death. You see, in a sense that the cross, in the cross Jesus accomplished everything for our salvation, the resurrection is the announcement of that. The cross is where he accomplished it, the resurrection is where God announced what had been accomplished, and so the death of death in the death of Christ.

I want us to behold the glory of our Savior this morning and just to wonder and marvel at what he's done and I want us to consider our time under three points, really three questions. We'll spend most of our time on the third question but the three questions that help us unpack what the author of Hebrews is saying here. It's so important and so relevant. He's writing, actually, the author of Hebrews, his purpose is to encourage Hebrews, Jewish Christians, Jews who had become followers of Jesus Christ, he's encouraging them in the midst of times of great uncertainty, times of great suffering, persecution, times where they're tempted to despair, to fall away, he's encouraging them to hold on because they have such a great Savior; that no matter what happens around you, no matter what happens to you, look at Jesus Christ and what he has accomplished and don't lose heart. That's the driving purpose of the book of Hebrews is to help us bear up in times of great difficulty and uncertainty and the way we do that is to behold the exceeding glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So he deals with this particular issue of what Jesus has accomplished in the cross, that he has accomplished the death of death in his own death, and so he points this morning, three points. The first is we need to ask the question: what is death? It's one of those things that we use often and we take for granted.

I was watching a sermon recently of Sinclair Ferguson, he was quoting I don't remember who it was, it may have been John Owen or someone, in fact, I borrowed the title, I may mention while I'm saying that, "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ" is actually the title of one of John Owen's masterpieces, John Owen, an English Puritan in the 17th century who wrote this great work, "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ." I borrowed the title. My focus is going to be a little different than his particular focus was to show particular redemption, I want us to see this morning that the death of Christ is the exact point at which Jesus accomplished the death of death. But anyway, so I was listening to Sinclair Ferguson and he was saying, the question is what is death, and he said, he was talking about something else, I forgot what it was, it was another pretty obvious term that we use, and he says, he was talking about someone who was asked a question like, something like what is death, and they said, "Until you asked me, I was sure I knew the answer. It was only when you asked me that I realized I didn't really know the answer." We take things for granted.

What really is death? What is death? That's our first point this morning. Death biblically is not to cease existing. It is not the end of existence. Jess mentioned when he was encouraging us earlier that there will be a resurrection of all men, some to life and some to eternal death. Some to eternal life and some to eternal death. They will exist in hell forever, so death is not the end of existence. When the body dies, the soul goes on.

So it's not the end of existence, then what is it? Death biblically is to be separated from life. Death is separation from life. It doesn't mean you're not existing but you're separated from life. Physical death we see it's one of the evidence of this deeper death we're gonna talk about which is spiritual death. There are two types of death, physical death and spiritual death, and spiritual death is really the essence of death. Physical death is just merely the symptom of that essential reality of death, spiritual death, but you see it in physical death. When someone dies, they breathe their last, you see a person, a soul that is there, a living person and instantly now you see separation. There is just now an empty corpse and how horrible it is to see what death does. Strength and vitality of life and then life suddenly ebbing away, separation, but the real essence of death is spiritual death. Not just the separation of life from the body in physical death but the essence of spiritual death is separation from the one who is life, God himself. Death is to be separated from God because he has life in himself. John 1:4, after it says that Jesus, through him all things came into being that have come into being and apart from him nothing came into being that has come into being, "In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men." John in 1 John says that, describes Jesus as the word of life. We've come to know the word of life and because we've come to know the word of life, he goes on to say we have fellowship with God. You see, life is fellowship with God. Jesus said in John 17:3, "This

is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Life is knowing God. Life is being connected to life. That is what it is to live.

So death is to be disconnected from life. You see this actually played out with great clarity in the third chapter of Genesis when death enters the world. Let's turn there for a moment, Genesis 3. While we're turning there, I just want to remind you and invite you to join us on Wednesday evenings. I'm actually dealing with this exact passage this Wednesday evening, and did the last couple of Wednesdays, Genesis 3, Wednesday night at 7 PM. We'll be livestreaming again. You can find old messages on the website.

But Genesis 3. Actually it's important to put this in context to remember the commandment that God gave them in Genesis 2. When the Lord commanded the man, Genesis 2:16, "The LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.'" The emphasis "you will surely die," this is emphatic language. God is saying the day that you eat from that tree, you will definitely, undoubtedly die. In the day that you eat of it. Of course, Satan says you're not gonna die, but what happened? They did die in the day they ate it. When you look at the context and you understand what life is and as the Lord makes clear, they did die. They didn't die physically, they began to die physically, but they immediately in the day they ate it, they died spiritually and you see this as when after they eat the food, when the woman saw, this is chapter 3, verse 6, after Satan has tempted her and said you will surely not die in chapter 3, verse 4, God knows in the day you eat of it you'll be like God, and so then in verse 6 of chapter 3, "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate." Then instantly it says, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings." Immediately they're aware of their nakedness and there's a separation between them in their relationship, but what you see in the next verse shows that spiritual death has happened. Chapter 3, verse 8, "They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden." They had died spiritually.

They were made for fellowship with God, they were made to walk with God in the cool of day. Can you imagine what that must have been like, that Adam and Eve would spend time walking in the garden. It's like, you know, you go to a state park or we recently went to a place called Gibbs Gardens and you walk through and you see the beauty of nature but also nature tamed by man like the garden of Eden was, this place that was made to be this incredibly beautiful, incredibly rich, delightful place to be and God walking with them in the cool of the day, fellowshiping with the Lord of glory, and suddenly they eat and now they're disconnected and when God comes, they hide from him, they run from him because they have died spiritually. This is made even more clear when God drives them out of the garden. That's actually the visible, he's basically showing them because

they don't fully understand it. "No, you are separated from Me." He drives them out of the garden.

So spiritual death has happened. Now physical death is going to happen as a symptom or a consequence of spiritual death. So death is separation from life. Separation from life, separation from God. That's the first question that we wanted to answer this morning. The second question is: what is the power of death? Back to our chapter 2 of Hebrews, the language is interesting. He said, "He Himself partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." What is the power of death and how did Satan have this power? What did it mean that he had this power? I think it's important for us to understand that the Bible says in a number of places that the Lord actually is the one who determines when you die, so Satan does not have the power to kill someone apart from God allowing it at the moment God wills. God says, "I bring to life. I put to death." So the Lord is sovereign over all of that.

So what does the power of death mean here? The word "power" translates a noun that means "strength, might and dominion," the noun "kratos," it's a root for all of our things like autocratic, democratic, self-rule or power or dominion, autocratic, democratic, the rule of the people. So Satan has the power over death. What does that mean? He doesn't put people to death in the sense that he doesn't have the power, I mean, he entices and he kills by tempting, yes, but he doesn't possess a power apart from what God is doing, but he nevertheless possesses a very real power. And I want us to think about the power of Satan for a moment here and I want to suggest to you that the power of death is the power to hold people in death; that Satan had the power to hold people in the state of being separated from life; that what he achieved by tempting Adam and Eve was to bring them into a relationship to himself where he held them in his power until Christ would come and deliver. Now God was saving people in the Old Testament and we're not gonna get into some of, there's some complexity to this, but just stay with me on this as we stay focused on the main point.

Satan did have this power. Let me show you how you see this in a number of places, this power and dominion to hold people in death. Well, first of all in our passage in chapter 2, verse 14, he says he had the power of death, that is, the devil and might free those, that Jesus might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all of their lives. To be delivered, to be delivered from slavery all of our lives, Jesus died. I mean, this verb "delivered" pictures moving from one state of being to an entirely different state of being; to have been in one course and now to be transported to a completely different area altogether.

Jesus has delivered us from the former state. What was that state like? Let's think about this. John 8:44, Jesus talking to the Jewish people, the Pharisees in particular but the crowds, he says to them because they're wanting to kill him, he says, "You are of your father the devil," and he goes on to say, "you want to do the will of your father." You see, you've been fathered, you've been birthed by Satan. Satan separated himself from God, he rebelled against God, and was separated, in a sense, died spiritually and then he tempted Adam and Eve to the same thing.

You have a number of verses that talk about the great power of Satan. 2 Corinthians 4:4 we're told that he is the God of this age who blinds the eyes of unbelievers lest they see the light of the glory of God in the face of Christ. So Satan is actively blinding his children, his subjects. He really has real power. In fact, it's interesting, you remember the temptations of Jesus, remember the third temptation of Jesus? The first was to turn stones into bread. The second was to jump off the temple. And the third was, "Fall down and worship me." Satan took Jesus up to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and he said, "Fall down and worship me and You can have all these." That wasn't just an allusion, there was a sense in which Satan had the authority to make that offer because he is the god of this age. Ephesians 2:2, the prince of the power of the air that is at work in the sons of disobedience. In John 12-16, the last hours before Jesus is arrested, three times he uses this phrase to speak of Satan, "he is the ruler of this world." John 12:31 once in 14 and once in 16, the same phrase, "the ruler of this world." So Satan had a sense in which he was able to hold people in spiritual bondage and slavery as we see in Hebrews 2, but as the god of this age, as the prince of the power of the air, as the father, the devil.

You remember another, we read earlier in Matthew 8 where Jesus delivered someone from demonic possession. Later in Matthew's Gospel in Matthew 12, Jesus again delivers a demon possessed person and the Pharisees accuse him of being in league with Satan; that you deliver by the power of Beelzebub, you are delivering people from the power of Satan, and Jesus says, "A kingdom that divides itself cannot stand. This is foolish and ridiculous for you to think that way." And he goes on to say, "What you're seeing is that I am coming into the strong man's house and plundering his goods. You can't enter a strong man's house and take his stuff unless you first bind the strong man." Now what he's saying implicitly is the world is Satan's house, he's the strong man who has all of his goods in order, but Jesus has come to bind the strong man and to plunder his house, and he was evidencing that even in his ministry as he's delivering people but that's gonna come to its ultimate fruition in the cross.

So the power of death is the power to hold people in spiritual darkness. This is why, and we have no ability in ourselves to get out of this spiritual darkness. We are not just victims, we are active participants in darkness. We have rebelled against God. We ourselves are sons of disobedience, objects of wrath, worthy objects of wrath, but Satan has us gathered up under his power. We were without hope without God in the world, and what needed to happen was a change of state from being under the power of darkness to being delivered to the light of Christ. Just to show this again, the fact that it's a domain, Colossians 1:13 describes our salvation this way, "For He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, and has translated us to the kingdom of His beloved Son." So the power of death, this great power of the enemy of our souls, the devil. We have to look at the black, ugly reality and I'm sharing that and hoping to bring that out in the same way that a jeweler takes the black velvet and lays it on the table before he shows you the diamonds; to really understand the beauty and to see the brilliance of what Christ has done, we have to see it against the backdrop of the reality of what the world was because of sin.

So Satan had the power of death. I think in a very real sense as well, somehow this was related to physical death. There's not a lot of scriptural clarity on this but that people could not leave the place of the dead, their bodies are in the ground and would not be able to be reunited, and somehow that power's related to Satan as well. But the good news is Jesus Christ came to destroy this. So we looked at what is death, what is the power of death, now the third point: how Jesus brought about the death of death. How Jesus brought about the end of Satan's power and reign of death. That's the main point of the passage.

The key verb in the passage, well, there are really two key verbs. Basically you're seeing in this passage the description of the Incarnation, that Jesus took upon himself flesh and blood. That's the Incarnation, God becomes man. It's interesting in the Greek the word order is blood and flesh, that therefore since the children share in blood and flesh, he also partook of the same. He is our blood and our flesh, and I think maybe blood is there first because it's his blood that's going to be the source of the victory. But he had to take on blood and flesh, he had to become flesh. Why? So that he could do two things. There are two main verbs in this passage that are in the New American Standard, which I'm reading, through death he's going to die to do two things. He became man in order to die, in order to accomplish two things. First, that he might render powerless him who had the power of death that he might destroy death and the power of death. Secondly, that he might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all of their lives.

I want to talk for a moment about that verb "render powerless." It's actually I think is the best translation of the major translations. The other major translations, the ESV, the NIV, the King James, say "destroyed the power or destroyed," used the word "destroyed the one who had the power of death," as if Jesus in his death destroys Satan. That's not really what the verse is saying. He has accomplished the ultimate defeat of Satan and will bring about the destruction of Satan but the verse is not really saying that, this verse isn't. This verse is saying that he has destroyed the power of Satan. Do you see the difference? Not destroying Satan himself but destroying the power that he had because the verb actually means, it literally means "to make inactive." It means "to be idle." It's a compound word, the root word means "to be completely idle; to do nothing; to have had the opportunity but be doing nothing; to be made to be idle; inoperative."

It's like in a piece of equipment that is powerful and, you know, incredibly powerful. Like I remember to me one of the most wonderful things that I have run across and be able to use is a log splitter. You guys who have ever used one, man, that's amazing because usually splitting big logs, I mean, even if you have the weighted, heavy, sledgehammer like ax, if you have, you know, a wedge that you're using, it takes forever to do it but a log splitter, you just put it in there and the machine just whirs, and it just splits it open and you watch it, these huge logs being split. Okay, so you get all this firewood you want to cut, you go to Home Depot and you rent a log splitter, you bring it out and you're ready to operate it and it won't work. Or worse, it breaks and it may be through my own fault but it broke. That did not happen, hopefully that will not. I hope I'm not prophesying that the next time I get a log splitter, but anyway to be rendered inoperative. This

incredibly powerful tool is now not active. It's worthless. That's the force of this verse. If there is something, this tremendous power that has been rendered completely ineffectual.

The power of death has been made powerless. Jesus did that through dying. That's what he's saying, that through his death he might render powerless him who had the power of death. Let me show you that again in another passage to make sure that you see that it's in his death that he accomplished this. Colossians 2, another wonderful passage about the glory of our Savior's work. Verse 13 to 15, Colossians 2, "When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him." The verb "disarmed" resonates with what we saw in Hebrews 2. To render powerless the one who had this power, to basically take his power away, to take his weapon away, is the same idea here as disarming the rulers and authorities. He has disarmed them. The verb here means "to strip." It means "to strip of honor, dignity and power and authority."

So he has stripped Satan and his kingdom and his dominions of all their power and authority. They had power and authority but it's been stripped from them. How did he strip it from them? How did he? What did he take away? What were the arms? What were they armed with? The text tells us, "having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." What he's saying is that what Satan had and the reason he had power over us was because he had the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us which was hostile to us. This is apparently the record of all of our sins.

It's interesting, the word "certificate of debt" translates the actual Greek word literally means "handwriting," literally translated, and so the idea is our signature of the things that we've done, we've signed, in a sense, our bill and our bill on every single sin is eternal damnation and that we are bound under the power of death. And so think about how many times you've sinned. I mean, it's not even, I have not ever tried to calculate it. If you thought about how many days you live and how many dozens of times you sin a day, or is it scores of times, I mean, if you add up everything that we do, everything, even our best moments are tainted in some way with sin, and this long, incredibly long record of decrees against us and one would be enough to keep you in hell forever. Satan had that. That was what gave him the power over us but it has been taken out of the way on the cross. God nailed it to the cross. That is, sin was, his claim on us was the fact that we had sinned.

Paul gets at this same idea with a different metaphor in 1 Corinthians 15:56 when he says, "the sting of death is sin." The sting, that is, the puncturing power; a holding power; that which brings the venom; that which makes death really hold to you is sin. So if that's what makes death have its power, then how can the power of death be destroyed? Finish with sin. Jesus by paying every ounce of the debt of sin in his own body on the cross, he has finished with sin and so he has taken that out of the way and then having disarmed

the rulers and authorities, he makes a public display of them, having triumphed over them.

This picture is really, Paul is going out of his way to paint a picture that was very relevant to his first century audience in Colossians 2. The idea that he's painting is of something that they would see from time to time when a great Roman General would win a war, a battle, he would go against his enemies and he would capture the enemy, the ruling, the other General would be stripped of his honor, stripped of his weapons, the army is stripped of their weapons, they're now powerless, they've been disarmed and then they are paraded through the streets of Rome or through the streets of any other major city in the train of the conquering General. It's what Paul is saying in Colossians is, "Listen, what Jesus Christ has done, though you and I were under the dominion of the god of this age, though we were slaves of sin, though we were without hope without God in the world, our great Savior, our great Conqueror has come and he has vanquished our enemies and he has made a public display of them." In fact, when he says public spectacle, I think it's a little, it could be public display of them, having triumphed over them, it's like a public display in the most bold way. I mean, the language is over-the-top in a sense. It's public display in the open, is how it really literally in the text says. So he's made this public display in the open, in the cross he's taken everything away and I think that's even getting to the resurrection also is where Satan's humiliation is made public and irrefutable.

Now the fact that death has died in the cross, let me show you one other place where this is really vividly clear. This is a mysterious passage. When I first really saw this, it just raised so many questions. Matthew 27. Because I've argued that the death of death happened not in the resurrection but at the moment Christ died and I want to prove this to you unmistakably. I think it was there in Hebrews and it was there in Colossians as well, but it is here in Matthew 27 with absolute clarity. Matthew 27, we have the story of the crucifixion, the account of the crucifixion of our Savior. In verse 50 we have the moment of Jesus' death and we have recorded for us what happened at the moment of his death. Matthew 27:50, "And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit." The Lord of Glory has died. Look what happened at that moment. "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" Those are astonishing events.

At the moment Jesus died, the veil in the temple was torn in two. Remember we said there are two types of death, there are two parts of death? Essentially death is a separation from life, essentially death is spiritual death to be separated from God who is life, but that physical death is a symptom of that. When was the moment that death was reversed? It was the moment that Jesus breathed his last. The moment he gave up his spirit, the very instant he died, the veil in the temple was torn in two. What does that mean? What's the veil in the temple? What is that talking about? The temple is made up of the temple

courts, the outside area of the temple where the temple courtyard where the altar, the sacrifices are made, that's outside of the temple proper. The temple proper, the inside building part of the temple as God ordained that it would be laid out was divided into two parts: the holy place and the Holy of Holies or the most holy place. The holy place was the place where priests, certain priests according to the rotation, a priest each day would go in and light the incense and continue to offer the, make the sacrifice of incense, would do other things inside the holy place, but he would not go behind the veil. There was a great veil, a great heavy veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place, and the most holy place was the place where the ark of the covenant was, and the ark of the covenant was God's footstool. The ark of the covenant inside the most holy place was the place where God himself was said to dwell, and if any man walked in there, he would die. There was only one time, one day a year, one moment where one man could go behind that veil, that was the day of atonement, remember. The high priest after offering the sacrifice on Yom Kippur, the day of atonement, sending the scapegoat into the wilderness and would take the blood of the other goat, the sin offering, and he would walk behind the veil one time a year to sprinkle the blood of that one offering for the day of atonement on the mercy seat, confessing the sins of the people of Israel, that day representing them before God.

One of the customs that they had when the high priest went behind the veil, he always wore a rope tied around his ankle, he also had bells in his garments, so that when he moved, you could hear the sound of him. So imagine the other priests who have gone with him to prepare him to go behind the veil, they hear the sound of him jingling as he goes in and he's offering the sacrifice, but he has a rope around his ankle. Why? Because if the jingling stops, if the sound of those bells stops, they will use that rope to pull him out from behind the veil because no other man dare go there because it will be certain death, instant death.

So the veil, it could only be passed by one time a year by one designated high priest. The veil at the moment Jesus died is torn from top to bottom. Wouldn't you have liked to have seen the priest that goes in the next day to offer the incense, he's not going behind the veil because it's not the day of atonement, he's just going in to offer incense or to check on the showbread, he's just doing his regular duty and there is the veil torn. What appalling unbelief that wasn't just announced everywhere to all the Jews, but in God's purposes he came to his own and his own received him not. But the important thing is what did God, what was God saying? The veil was torn at the moment Jesus breathed his last, that is, the way into the very throne room of God is now open to everyone who believes in Jesus. It is open. There is no more once a year. There is no more fear as you come. You can now come as the author of Hebrews says in chapter 4, boldly to the throne of grace. You can enter behind the veil boldly because of who Jesus Christ is and what he's done.

So spiritual death has been destroyed in the death of Christ. Those who were far off have been brought near. But secondly and this is what kind of blows my mind is the second part, and watch with me, I think it'll blow your mind if it's not already blowing your mind. Verse 52, "The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised." At the moment Jesus died, not when he rose, at the moment he died,

tombs were opened. So there are other tombs out there that are open. Now obviously it wasn't where, you know, the tombs are up in the hills and there must have been tombs that were hidden so people couldn't see it, and what's interesting is these people who were resurrected had to wait until Sunday to come into town.

My family and I were talking about this this weekend. I mean, to me it makes sense it was probably people who would have been known to the people in Jerusalem. I mean, like if somebody, if were, you know, if we would have been there and somebody gets resurrected that's 300 years before, you wouldn't be able to recognize him. You don't know who they are unless they show you their ID, right? You know, "I'm Elijah. I'm whatever." No, Elijah wouldn't have been there because he hadn't died. But anyway, it had to be probably people who had died in the last few years. They're resurrected at the moment Jesus dies but they then remain in the tombs until Sunday morning.

Now in the tombs for them, it's not like us, we get buried in caskets underground. No, the tombs around Jerusalem, the way people were buried is they would have a cave, they would dig out a cave into rock and roll a stone over it. So you'd have, you know, places in there where bodies would be laid out. So people have been awakened out of death, I guess they have their resurrection bodies, that's debatable exactly, they have a full resurrection body until after Jesus raised, maybe not, but death cannot hold them at the moment Jesus dies. That's the important thing. Satan has lost his power over spiritual death, he has lost his power over physical death because Jesus has stripped him of it in the moment he died.

I wonder, it must have been a party. I think the Lord would have let them probably have some, you know, and the way these things worked is you would have a family cave. Well, they didn't call it a cave, a family tomb, and you would bury, you know, this is what Abraham had when he buried Sarah. He had a tomb and he buries her and then he's able, he's able to be buried there because there's other places for bodies to be laid. So when they would bury somebody, they would go and they would see the body of their, you know, their grandfather laid out, covered in the burial garments so they wouldn't see the skeleton or anything but they would see the body covered in the appropriate burial garb. And on this day, the Lord in some of those tombs he said, "Wake up" to some of those people and they got to come with their physical bodies out on Sunday after Jesus. They had to wait until after Sunday because he's the firstfruits and nobody is going to beat the Lord Jesus Christ coming out and being announced.

But what an amazing reality and these are, apparently this means that some believers have their bodies in heaven and most of them don't. We die and our spirit goes to be with the Lord. We don't get our bodies until the last resurrection but there was this small down posit of people who got their bodies. Why? So that they could go into the city and testify, "Jesus has risen and He has conquered death! We need no longer fear it."

So his death, the moment he died because he was bearing the sins of everyone who would ever believe, he was experiencing on the cross. The genius of this is just so glorious. The way God allowed this to happen, there's a verse in Luke 23 when Jesus is arrested, they

come out to arrest him with clubs and he says to them, "Every day I was in the temple, I was in the city and you did not arrest Me, but here you come with clubs to arrest Me," and he says, "Now is the hour of darkness. That's why you're able to arrest Me. Now is the time that God is giving Me over to darkness. Now is the time that I am willfully choosing to be delivered over to darkness." The Father giving his Son, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." That's how we know what love is. But we also know what love is, this is how we know what love is, 1 John 3:16, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.

So the hour of darkness comes. This is the genius of God. How does he accomplish our salvation? What he does is he pulls back his hand and he allows Satan to unleash all of his fury against the Son and Satan is animating the crowd to say, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Satan is animating the hatred of the Roman guards, the hatred of these Jewish leaders who were supposed to be men of dignity who were actually punching Jesus, blindfolding him and mocking him and asking him if he can prophesy who punched him. There is all of this malice, all of this hatred, this is actually the outpouring of God's wrath, the outpouring of God's wrath is accomplished as God pulls back his hand and allows Satan free reign to attack his Son, and Satan pours out everything he has, everything he has against the Son and Jesus literally experiences what hell is like on the cross, abandoned by God. That's why at 12 noon the sky goes dark. We're told that for three hours as he hung on the cross, the light of the sun was blocked out in some kind of supernatural act of God. This is when Jesus cries out in those hours, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

In those moments what we see is that Jesus has been abandoned, that he is now experiencing the full wrath of God, God's wrath is expressed as he gives over and he turns away, and Satan pours out all of his fury, all of her ferocity, and all of the sins of everyone who would ever believe, that wrath is calculated and it's paid up and Jesus at the end says, "It is finished!" Paid in full. And the beauty of it, this, there's a wonderful verse in 1 Corinthians 2:9 which says, talking about the wisdom of God, it says this, that the wisdom of God is so great that if the rulers of this age had known, had understood the wisdom of God. Remember we talked about wisdom a few weeks ago, talking about Nehemiah? We said that wisdom is the ability to know exactly the best thing to do, and it is the ability, the wisdom of God is the ability to do it in the very best way. You know, sometimes you can accomplish one thing in a multitude of ways, right? But there's only one very best way to accomplish it. And the wisdom of God is that he accomplishes our salvation in the very best way possible and if the rulers, if Satan and his demons had understood, 1 Corinthians 2:9, if Pilate and Herod had understood, maybe it's a double meaning there, the rulers of this age, either Pilate and Herod, or I think it's Satan as well. I think it's both. If Satan had understood the wisdom of God, if they'd understood the wisdom of God, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory because in crucifying the Lord of Glory, they destroyed themselves. Jesus in being passive as a lamb to the slaughter in offering himself up as a sacrifice, he totally and triumphantly destroys the reign of darkness. His death is when death died and that's why on Sunday morning, I mean, basically they're just waiting. The victory is won.

I don't know if any of you watched that, I recommended you check out Andrew Peterson on Friday evening. I didn't know that it was gonna be exactly what it was. I thought it would be more of his songs than we got, but one of the songs that he sang on Friday evening that really blessed me and I hadn't heard it quite the same way, I think I've heard it before but it just didn't hit me with the same force, he was sharing, they were talking about the cross and one of the songs he's written is on the seventh day God rested, and he connects the fact that in six days the Lord made the earth and on the seventh day he rested, Genesis 2:1-3, on the seventh day he rested. Jesus died on the sixth day. He died on Friday. He finished his work on Friday. The work of redemption, he said, "It is finished! Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." And on the seventh day God rested. The work is finished.

When you read the accounts, it talks about how they took him down from the cross, he died around 3 o'clock in the afternoon, took a little while for them to figure out that they needed the body, they were waiting to see, they sent the soldier out to see if he's really dead. He pierces his side and water and blood go forth, the water and the blood and plasma are already separating showing he's been dead. Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, gets permission to take down the body of Christ and he takes him and he lays him in a tomb that no one else was in. It was a brand new tomb, only a brand new tomb fitting for the King of Glory. They lie him in a tomb but they're not able to finish with the burial. Why? Because it's sundown on Friday. That's when the Sabbath begins and so they're not able to finish the burial process which should be done immediately. So they have to wait through the Sabbath. You see, God has finished his work and he's resting and they're resting and he's allowing for some time to show the glory of his salvation. Then on Sunday morning at sunlight, they make their way out, the women make their way out to anoint the body for burial and when they get there, two angels are there and say, "Why are you looking for the living among the dead? Jesus Christ is not here. He has risen."

He finished his work on Friday and Sunday is the declaration that that work is accepted. If he were not raised, we would know nothing about our sins except that it's a pipe dream, but the resurrection proves that he has done exactly what he said he was going to do. He came to die. The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many, and his ransom has accomplished exactly what God intended. Hallelujah, what a Savior. And because he lives, you and I will live. Because he now holds the keys of death and hell, we need not fear death because death will only be one of those things that we continue to follow in the glorious triumphal procession of our great Conqueror, the Lord Jesus Christ. When you pass over, when you pass through the waters, he says, "I will be with you." The Lord leads some of us this year through the waters. He will be with you and you will pass through in his triumphal victory train directly into the presence of God where with your own eyes you will see his glory. That is true for everyone who has repented and placed their faith in Jesus Christ. Why would you not turn to Christ? He is a great Savior but he saves those who come to him by faith, he saves those who turn from their sins and surrender to him. Come as you are. He doesn't say clean yourself up. He says, "No, come as you are and surrender to Me as you are and I will make you new." That's the glorious Gospel and when you are a partaker of that, you have now found life, eternal life.

Let's pray together.

Our Father, how grateful we are for such a great and a glorious salvation, Lord, that You have found a way to remain just and be the justifier of the ungodly for we are ungodly, Lord. We were conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity, our hearts have only sought evil, we have followed in the path of Adam and Eve, our forefathers. There is no health in us and yet Jesus, Jesus has done all that is necessary to deliver us. He has come and lived a perfect life, tempted in every way yet without sin. He has recorded a perfect record of righteousness and then as a spotless Lamb, He went to the cross and bore our iniquities in His own body on that cross that we might die to sin and live to righteousness, for by His stripes we are healed. We thank You that our great Savior is now a living Savior, that His glorified human heart is beating, His lungs are breathing at the right hand of the majesty on high, and that in His Spirit He is still reigning and ruling omnipresent all over the universe. We thank You for the promise that He has made to us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Lord, help us to walk worthy of the manner of the calling we've received. We pray for those that have not repented and placed their faith in Jesus, that today they would do so, that they would turn from their sins and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting in Him and Him alone. Father, we praise You for all that You have done in Him. To You be the glory forever. Amen.