**Lesson 5 – Jesus’ Teaching, Death, and Resurrection**

Last week, we ended our lesson by listening in to a dialogue between Jesus and a Jewish religious leader (Nicodemus). This passage is found in **John 3 (NT164)** and includes some of the most famous verses in the Bible. Let’s look again at **John 3:16**, which helps us understand the purpose for Jesus’ coming to this world:

***John 3:16*** *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

Remember one of the first “clues” that we found in Genesis? After Adam sinned and was hiding in the garden, God called out to him, giving him an opportunity to repent. In the same way, notice that this verse shows that it was God who gave man a “second chance” for life, calling out to man with a wonderful offer – believe in Jesus.

We also found the answer to one of our Old Testament “clues in verses 14 and 15:

***John 3:14,15*** *"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life.”*

What was Jesus telling Nicodemus? He was saying that He would be “lifted up” on a cross so that dying people could look at Him and be saved from eternal death. Last week, we talked about the works that Jesus did to demonstrate His power. Let’s look at one more miracle that he did in the presence of 10,000+ people.

In **John 6:5 (NT171),** we see a great crowd of hungry people gathered before Jesus. There wasn’t a noodle shop or KFC anywhere nearby, only a small boy with just a little food (**vs. 8,9**). So Jesus has the people sit down, He breaks the loaves and the fish, and in the sight of everyone present, He creates more bread and more fish (**vs. 10,11**). The people are amazed, and decided to make Jesus their national king. But as I said before, Jesus did not come to be the ruler of the small Jewish nation. He became a man on earth for a much greater purpose.

Remember – Jesus didn’t do miracle to impress people – they always had an important message. So the next day, while people are looking for another meal, Jesus explains the meaning behind the miracle (**John 6:30-35**). When God gave the people bread in the wilderness, it was really just another sign, a sign that someday, He would send the true “Bread of Life” to the earth. Jesus is the bread that gives everlasting life to anyone who will reach out and receive Him.

Not everyone wanted to see Jesus become king. The religious leaders were jealous of Him and afraid that He would harm their political relationships with the Roman government. Since His enemies could not prove Him wrong, they sought to capture and kill Him. It is interesting to read one such attempt in **John 7:30-32; 45,46 (NT 175)**. Notice that Jesus was completely in control of what happened. The Jewish leaders wanted to take Him, but they could not do it until Jesus decided that the time was right.

Do you remember the Passover? This was the time that all of the Jews remembered how God protected them from death in Egypt, instructing them to kill a lamb and paint its blood on the doorposts. Every year, they would kill another lamb, remembering this historic event. But it was much more than just a remembrance of an historic event – it was a picture of the true Lamb of God.

Because of this, Passover was the right time for Jesus to sacrifice His life. In **Mark 14:1,2 (NT90)**, we see that this was one time where the Jewish leaders did not want to arrest Jesus and kill Him. But remember, Jesus is in control. So Jesus allowed Himself to be captured by the religious leaders, falsely accused, and turned over to the Romans for execution.

Before He was executed, the Romans whipped, tortured, and mocked Him (**Mark 15:15-20 NT95**). Records from this period tell us about scourging. The whip had many strips of leather. Pieces of metal and bone were tied onto the lashes so they would cut the back of the prisoner when he was beaten. The prisoner was tied down during this time so he couldn’t escape. This punishment cut the flesh, muscles, and nerves, often putting the victim into severe shock. Some prisoners died from the scourging itself. Notice the evil of men in this painful scene.

Crucifixion was used by the Romans to punish the very worst criminals. This form of torture was especially bad because usually the person did not die immediately. He would endure hours and sometimes days of intense physical pain before dying. For His crucifixion, nails were driven through Jesus’ hands and feet into a wooden cross, and then the cross was placed in an upright position. Now, everyone could look up and see Jesus, “lifted up” like the snake on the pole in the wilderness.

***Mark 15:25, 26*** - *Now it was the third hour (9:00AM), and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS.*

Usually a sign was put above the criminal to indicate what crime he had been found guilty of committing. Because Jesus had committed no crime, the Romans could find nothing to charge Him with. To mock the Jews and their desire to be free from the control of the Romans, they put this title above Jesus’ head where everyone could read it. Little did they know the truth of what they had written.

***Mark 15:29-32*** *Those who passed by hurled insults at Him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself!1" In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others,2” they said, “but he can’t save Himself! Let this Christ3, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe.4” Those crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him.*

Some things that we must notice during this terrible event:

1. The devil was tempting Jesus to come down from the cross, halting the plan of salvation
2. The chief priests could not deny that Jesus saved people
3. The priests were very clear about Jesus’ claim to be the Savior
4. The critical issue: do we “see and believe”?

For three hours, Jesus endured the physical torture of crucifixion. But then, things got much worse – at 12:00Noon, He began to endure the spiritual torture of suffering the payment for our sins. The Light came into the world, but now, darkness…

***Mark 15:33-34***  *Now when the sixth hour (12:00Noon) had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour (3:00PM). And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

Why did God turn His back on Jesus, His beloved Son? Jesus had never done anything wrong, but now, God punished Jesus for sins – for our sins. Jesus suffered the complete punishment for our sins so that God could freely forgive and accept us as His children (**1 Peter 2:23,24 NT412; 2 Corinthians 5:21 NT319**). Jesus was tortured on the cross because of our second problem: guilt requires punishment.

Let’s turn to **Matthew 27:50,51 (NT58)** for the rest of the story. Notice that Jesus “gave up His spirit.” Even in His death, Jesus is in control. And as He dies, look at the response of the creation: the earth shakes and rocks split!

Usually, when criminals were crucified, the Romans left their dead bodies on the crosses as an example to anyone else who would defy their power. But with Jesus, something very important happens in **Matthew 27:57-61.** His body was carefully placed in a very secure tomb by a well-known member of the ruling council. You can see why this was so important in **Matthew 27:62-66**. Everyone knew that Jesus said He would rise again, so his enemies took every possible precaution to prevent any deception by His followers.

It is a good thing that they did this. It adds so much more credibility to what we read in **Matthew 28:1-10**. Just as He said, Jesus suffered physical and spiritual death, but then did something that could never be done by a mere man – He conquered death and returned to life! When Jesus did this, He provided a solution to our first problem (sin leads to death). All over the world, there are many tombs of religious leaders. But there is something special about the tomb where Jesus was buried: it is empty.

Each week, I have repeated the “bad news” from the Bible because it is so very serious. As you’ve heard me say it, I hope that it has become personal, that you understand that you are lost in sin, destined for death and punishment. But tonight, you have heard the “good news.” Turn with me to **Romans 6:23 (NT274)** to see what you should do with this “good news.”

Because we have all sinned, we deserve “wages” – death. But God offers something much better through Jesus – a gift of eternal life. Like all true gifts, it is not something that we earn or deserve – it is simply something that we receive, just like the bread in the desert. So how do we receive it? Look at **Romans 10:9-13 (NT380)**.

Without Jesus, we are all lost. To receive this wonderful, gift, you must agree with God that you have broken His law and deserve punishment. You must confess with your mouth “Jesus is Lord” – not just an important historical figure, but the One who died for you, the one that you will trust and follow instead of continuing on your sinful way. And you must believe in your heart, not just your head, that God raised Him from the dead. Not just an intellectual understanding, but deep trust (**v.11**). Everyone who calls on his name, Jewish or Chinese, will be saved.

Tonight, I would like to encourage you to think deeply about this “good news.” If you believe that it is true, take a step of faith, trusting in Jesus. He has already solved your two biggest problems and offers eternal life to you. He is waiting for you to reach out, by faith, and receive his amazing gift.