

Dr. David L. Mathewson, New Testament Theology, Session 22, Jesus' Death, Part 1

© 2024 Dave Mathewson and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 22, Jesus' Death, Part 1.

In our last section, we began looking at the person of Christ and the dominant biblical-theological themes in the New Testament related to Christ.

To suggest it in sort of summary fashion, if we could summarize the significance of Christ in biblical theology in the New Testament theology, Jesus Christ is the climax of God's redemptive activity in the world. So that all God's purposes for bringing about redemption, all of God's purposes for his people, all of what God intends to do in accomplishing redemption and fulfilling his purposes going all the way back to Genesis 1 and 2, find their climax and fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. So, Christ is the pinnacle of God's activity, of God's acting historically and redemptively in the world.

Now, what I want to do is more specifically look at, though there are a number of things we could look at in relationship to Christ's own work and what exactly he accomplishes, I want to focus primarily in the next couple of sessions on the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ as indicative of Christ, what Christ accomplishes in fulfilling God's plan and purposes for redemption. I want to begin by looking at the death of Christ and considering its significance in light of the Old Testament, but in light of the New Testament teaching, what the New Testament emphasizes as far as what Christ's death accomplishes, why Christ died, how we should understand it, and again what the New Testament seems to emphasize. Now, as we'll see, there is so much dealing with Jesus' death.

There are just references everywhere. At virtually every turn, New Testament authors refer to or assume the death of Jesus Christ, and its significance. So, we cannot hope to capture all the nuances of Jesus' death.

We cannot hope to go into detail in regard to every author in every book and every text that refers to Jesus' death. We cannot hope to explore all the contours of the meaning of Jesus' death, but once more, we need to focus on what I think are the most significant and clear features of and articulations of the significance of Jesus' death in the New Testament. Much like other theological themes that we've looked at, we'll consider Jesus' death from the standpoint of the canonical order.

So, we'll look at the Gospels and move into Acts, the Pauline literature, other New Testament texts, and also looking at Revelation. But most of the latter, after we get

outside of the Gospels and Acts when we deal with the latter texts, we'll primarily look at, instead of moving canonically through the books themselves, we'll look at the books in terms of the dominant themes that they seem to emphasize. So, we'll look at the Gospels and Acts and then begin to focus on Paul's letters and the rest of the New Testament, looking at a handful of dominant themes or motifs connected with the death of Christ in the rest of the New Testament.

So, the starting point is with the Gospels themselves. What is significant is that the Gospels all end with a lengthy account of the death of Christ and his suffering leading up to that, including that, as well as the resurrection, which we'll look at later. But they all end with a rather lengthy, almost in disproportion to the amount of time and space devoted to other aspects of Jesus' life, especially with the Gospel of Mark.

The New Testament texts deal with that brief period of time, centering around the trial and suffering and the death of Jesus Christ. In fact, as many New Testament theologians like to recall, the Gospels have often been described, especially Mark's Gospel, as a crucifixion narrative with an extended introduction. But all of them kind of lead up to a climax in an account of the death of Jesus Christ.

However, I think it is also significant for the writers, for the early church and early Christians, and for the people of God. The Gospels also include statements of Jesus actually anticipating his death and leading up to it. For example, in Matthew chapter 16, in the context of Peter's confession of Christ, Matthew chapter 16 and verse 21.

So, Jesus asked Peter, who do you say that I am? Peter confesses that he is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Then, after that, in verse 21, Jesus then goes on and says, from that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things in the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. And then Peter said, never.

Apparently, he wasn't listening to the raised to life part. But again, part of Peter's problem was that, like many people, he could not comprehend a Messiah. After confessing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, and then putting that together with the fact that Jesus must die, simply was not a category that Peter had in his mind that he could fit this into.

We find the same thing then in Mark chapter 8, verse 31. Later on, in Mark, chapter 10, verse 45, Jesus says, the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. We'll look at that text in connection with a couple of themes as well.

So the Gospels anticipate Jesus, very early on in some of his Gospels, anticipating his suffering and the death that he was to face. But also, the Gospels then all agree with

ending with a lengthy account of Jesus' death on the cross and his suffering, suggesting its significance. However, what is intriguing is the Gospels don't bring out in much detail the significance of Jesus' death.

A lot of that is probably because of the literary genre of the Gospels. They're narrative, recounting events they don't dwell on or unpack and describing in detail the significance of Jesus' death. However, as a narrative, they simply record what happened.

So, the Gospels don't bring out in detail the precise significance of Jesus' death. But from the very beginning, the Gospels do make it clear that Jesus' intention, and looking at the Gospels as a whole, that Jesus' intention in coming to earth was to eventually go to the cross and to die. So, the death of Jesus Christ is and becomes a significant feature in God's saving work on behalf of his people.

In the early churches, including the rest of the New Testaments, there was an understanding of the purpose of Christ coming to earth. However, the Gospels do drop a number of hints at times as to the significance of Jesus' death on the cross. For example, Matthew 1 and verse 21 begin with that interesting statement when Joseph is told what to name the baby that his wife, Mary, is about to have.

He is told to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins. So, although Matthew does not at this point tell us how that is going to take place, that only becomes clear as the narrative unfolds; it is clear that Jesus' primary purpose in coming is to save his people from their sins. Probably, at this stage, it is a reference to Christ saving Israel from the sins that got them into exile.

So, if Matthew assumes that Israel is still in exile because of their sinfulness, then Jesus is the one who will come and save them from that sin. Now, once more, we will see exactly how the narrative unfolds and how that takes place. In Matthew chapter 27 and verse 51, in the context of Jesus' death on the cross, we read this interesting account of what happened.

Verse 50: And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. And then, in verse 51, At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. Interestingly, this account or this event of the curtain in the temple tearing from top to bottom, probably, although it could suggest a number of things, probably suggests now that access to God and forgiveness of sins is no longer tied to the temple and its sacrificial system.

But now, forgiveness of sins and access to God and God's temple presence will come through the death of Jesus Christ. So, it's Jesus Christ's death on the cross that will accomplish the forgiveness of sins and bring access to God. Something that was previously restricted to the temple.

In Mark chapter 10 and verse 45, a text we looked at before, but Mark chapter 10 verse 45, that some suggest is sort of the theme of Mark or the dominant portrait of Mark and the Gospels. That is Jesus as a servant. But in Mark 10:45 again, Jesus says, I have come, or the Son of Man has come not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

So even in Mark 10:45, Jesus himself says that his death on the cross will be on behalf of or for the people. Jesus' death will be one that ransoms, purchases or frees his people. Also, we've seen that, most likely, this language of suffering and servant that Jesus came to serve in the context of giving up his life for many as death on behalf of his people is probably also connected with the servant songs in Isaiah chapter 53, where there the servant also gives his life for his people.

Jesus referring to himself as a servant is most likely recalling the servant songs of Isaiah, especially 52 and particularly 53. We also find in the Gospels a clear indication that Jesus' death on the cross is motivated by God's love and by Jesus' love for his people. The most famous two texts are found in the Gospel of John in the fourth Gospel.

The most well-known one is John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave his Son so that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. So, God's love motivates him to give up his Son again in death for his people. And so, God's love is the motivating factor for sending his Son, Jesus Christ.

But also, in John chapter 13 and verse 1, it was just before the Passover festival that Jesus knew that his hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And so, Jesus' love for his disciples is the primary motivating factor for going all the way to the cross.

Another theme that we find in the Gospels in relationship to Jesus' death is the theme of Jesus' own sinlessness and his innocence. So, Jesus is portrayed over and over again, especially in the crucifixion narratives. Read, for example, John's account in the latter chapters of John.

John's own account of Jesus' death and his trial where the blame is laid on others for Jesus' death. But Jesus is innocent. He's not deserving of death.

And that seems to be an important theme in some of the Gospel writers of Jesus' innocence, his sinlessness as he goes to the cross in death. So the Gospels, again, although they do not explicitly unpack in detail the theological significance of Jesus' death, there are already clear indications of the significance of it, especially in relationship to what Jesus came to do and the importance of Jesus' death on the

cross as the climax of God's plan for bringing about redemption for his people. One other motif we could at least raise is the connection with the Old Testament.

Over and over again, Jesus' death is portrayed in connection with the fulfillment of the Old Testament. We've already seen the servant language, but even probably the Old Testament sacrifices, the sacrificial system, and the sacrificial lamb, etc. in John's Lamb of God language, so that probably the Gospel writers understand Jesus' death ultimately as a fulfillment of the Old Testament's sacrificial system and sacrifices for sins.

Moving on to the Book of Acts, the significance of Jesus' death becomes more prominent in references to what Jesus accomplishes, especially in some of the speeches and sermons that one finds. For example, in Acts chapter 3, verses 18 and 19, Peter speaks. In a couple of the early chapters of Acts, you have Peter speaking or giving sermons, and in those, we find references to Jesus' death.

We'll see references to Jesus' resurrection and how that is important. But in Acts chapter 3, verses 18 and 19, But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away or wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.

Two significant things. Number one is that Peter clearly connects the suffering and death of Jesus Christ with the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. It's interesting that he doesn't tell us which Old Testament prophets he has in mind or which prophets predict the death of a Messiah.

Perhaps he has the servant songs in mind again from Isaiah chapters 52 and 53, but clearly, Peter links the death of Jesus Christ with the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. It's also linked in verse 18, and it's also linked in verse 19 with the wiping away of sins. So, by repenting, people can have their sins removed or dealt with or wiped away based on the death of Jesus Christ that had been foretold in the prophets.

So, already in Acts chapter 3, we find Peter referring back to the significance of Jesus Christ's death and what it accomplished. Chapter 5 and verse 30, Acts chapter 5 and verse 30, again a reference to Peter speaking, Peter and the other apostles, verse 29, replied, We must obey God rather than human beings. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree or on a cross.

This reference to hanging Jesus on a tree or on a cross is more than just a cute little saying that summarizes what Jesus did that makes its way into our songs and hymns and things like that. But this may be a clear reference back to the book of Deuteronomy in the Old Testament. Where in Deuteronomy chapter 21 and verse

23, Deuteronomy 21 and verse 23, we read this, I'll read verse 22: If someone guilty of a capital offense is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole or tree overnight, but be sure to bury it in the same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse.

And so, this language of hanging on a tree, the NIV translates as hanging on a pole, but this idea of hanging on a tree, which we'll see Paul picks up on later on in Galatians, but here probably suggests that Jesus is cursed, hanging on a tree means Jesus was the cursed one, as is the context of Deuteronomy 21. In other words, Jesus is portrayed as taking the curse upon himself so that now there is salvation and forgiveness found in Jesus Christ because he's the one who was cursed by hanging on a tree. That is, he took the curse upon himself.

Acts does not develop it any further than that. Paul will develop it further in Galatians, but most likely this statement by Peter and the other apostles is an allusion back to the curse of one hanging on a tree in Deuteronomy chapter 21 and verse 23. Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, to simply give one more example, and there are numerous other ones we could point to in the book of Acts itself, but Acts chapter 20 and verse 28, verse 27, For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God.

Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. Now, that's interesting, although there are some grammatical issues here.

Interestingly, it seems that the reference is to God purchasing his people by his own blood. However, you understand this clearly the reference is to Christ's death, which now secures or acquires his people for himself, the church, and now brings them salvation. So, there are a number of other texts we could look at in the book of Acts, but I think we've looked at enough examples to demonstrate the significance that the death of Christ plays in the understanding of the early church as fulfillment of the Old Testament, as wiping away sins, as Christ taking upon himself the curse and purchasing for himself, acquiring for himself, his people, the church, by his own blood.

Blood is sort of a metonymy for, that is, a part referring to the whole, for the death of Christ, or for death. Now, what I want to do then is move on to the rest of the New Testament, and as I said, we won't move through the rest of the New Testament canonically, but instead, we'll refer to the rest of the New Testament, Paul's letters, other New Testaments, including Revelation, in the context of a handful of dominant themes or motifs that I think bear emphasis. Now, once more, there are so many references to the death of Christ that it can be overwhelming to try to synthesize them all and trace them all throughout the New Testament and their significance.

So, I will no doubt leave a number of passages out, or I might not touch on all the themes that could be emphasized, but I've chosen the ones that I think are crucial and significant and bear exploration. So, I'm going to focus primarily on Paul's letters, but also elsewhere in the New Testament because here is where Jesus, the significance of Jesus' death theologically, begins to get unpacked. And here's where we begin to find, as opposed to long narratives of exactly what happened in relationship to Jesus' death, statements unpacking the significance of what Jesus' death entailed and what Jesus came to accomplish.

So, the first theme or motif that I want to emphasize is Jesus' death as the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture. We've already seen that in the Gospels and Acts, but we see that numerous times in the rest of the New Testament. And, once more, the references are too numerous to survey them all, so I just want to touch on a few of those.

But, over and over again, Jesus' death on the cross is seen as fulfilling Old Testament Scripture, though the New Testament authors don't always tell us what Old Testament Scripture they think is fulfilling. We've already noted that Isaiah chapter 53 is one of the clearest indications of a servant figure who dies, suffers, and dies for his people and on behalf of his people. And that text may underlie a number of examples of New Testament authors pointing to Jesus' death as a fulfillment of the Old Testament.

One of the more clear ones that we've already looked at is Acts chapter 3 and verse 18, where the author tells us that Jesus suffered and died according to what the prophets foretold. We find something similar in Paul's account of the resurrection in chapter 15, his lengthy treatment of resurrection, where he doesn't deal only with Christ's resurrection, but more generally, he's dealing with the resurrection of God's people in general. We'll obviously look at this text in some more detail in connection with some other themes.

But at the very beginning, in the first three verses, Paul begins to unpack the significance of the gospel. He says This gospel that I preached to you, which you received, and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel, you are saved if you hold firmly to the word that I preached to you; otherwise, you will believe in vain.

And here's the gospel. He says, For what I received, I passed on to you. That's a kind of technical language of receiving a tradition, teaching, and then carefully passing it on to others.

And here it is, That Christ died for our sins according to the scripture. He was buried and raised on the third day according to the scriptures. And it's an interesting reference to Christ dying for our sins.

So notice it's not just a bare statement of Christ dying. But Christ's death is understood as for the sins of the people, for the benefit of the people. That dying for our sins is according to the scriptures.

Again, Paul does not clearly tell us what scriptures he has in mind. But Paul is convinced that the scriptures themselves anticipate the death of Christ. Again, perhaps Isaiah chapter 52 and 53, the servant songs, are some of the scriptures that Paul has in mind when he thinks of Jesus' death fulfilling Old Testament scripture.

It's also interesting that even some of the specific details surrounding the death of Christ are seen as fulfillment of scripture. So, for example, if you go back to the Gospels, and again, I'm not going to exclusively refer to Pauline and other New Testament literature. Sometimes I'll go back to Gospel texts in reference to Jesus' death.

But in John chapter 19 and verse 36, in John's account of the Old Testament, or of Jesus' death. These things happened so that the scripture... Actually, let me back up. The man who saw it gave testimony, and his testimony was true.

He knows that he tells the truth. He testifies so that you may also believe. Actually, let me back up even further, verse 33.

But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. This would have been common in Roman crucifixion so that the victim could no longer hold themselves up, and they would quickly suffocate and die. But they found Jesus was already dead, so they did not break his legs.

And then verse 36 goes on and says, these things happened. After this reference in verse 35 to the one who sees this and testifies to this, the author then says, these things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled. And then he quotes out of Zechariah, I'm sorry, he quotes from Exodus chapter 12, verse 46.

Not one of his bones will be broken. And again, my purpose at this point is not to go back and unpack the Exodus text in a lot of detail. But if you go back and read Exodus chapter 12 and verse 46.

Exodus 12, verse 46 is in the context of the Passover and the instructions that God gives the people when celebrating the Passover, which leads them out of Egypt. So as kind of a footnote, one could say that Jesus' death then is understood in the context of a new Exodus. Of redeeming his people and bringing them out in a new Exodus.

But in chapter 12 and verse 36, 12 verse 46, in instruction for the Passover, Jesus says, back up and start with verse 43, the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, these are the regulations for the Passover meal. No foreigner may eat it. Any slave you have brought may eat it after you have circumcised him, but a temporary resident or hired worker will not eat it.

It must be eaten. That is, the Passover lamb must be eaten inside the house; take none of the meat outside the house, and do not break any of the bones. The whole community of Israel must celebrate it. So now Jesus' death is clearly seen in this simple detail of them not breaking Jesus' legs.

The author finds fulfillment, perhaps typologically, because Jesus is now the true Passover lamb that brings salvation and redemption and a new Exodus to the people, so Jesus' bones are not broken either. So, Exodus is not really a prophecy of Christ, but there's a typological relationship. It appears to me, Jesus then as the true Passover lamb that is now being sacrificed. So, even John clearly unpacks and indicates the significance of Jesus' death as the Passover lamb.

A text that we've already looked at from 1 Corinthians 5 verse 7 supports this, where Paul clearly refers to Jesus Christ as the Passover lamb. So, in verse 7, this is 1 Corinthians 5 and verse 7, get rid of the old yeast so that you may be a new unleavened batch, as you really are, for Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. So notice that language of sacrifice.

Jesus' death is seen as a sacrifice for the sins of the people. Jesus Christ's death is seen as a sacrifice in fulfillment of the Passover lamb that Moses and subsequent generations were instructed to offer. We've also already noted Jesus' death as the death of a suffering servant. Perhaps again, Mark 10:45 Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve and give his life a ransom for many may reflect Isaiah chapter 53 and the servant song, the servant language in Isaiah.

We find other examples of Jesus' death being a sacrifice for sins. Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 2 in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 2 Paul says follow God's example therefore as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us and as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God so that language of sacrifice in Ephesians 5:2 and elsewhere, again I'm just utilizing examples we could multiply examples of this, but Jesus Christ's death as a sacrifice probably reflects again Old Testament sacrificial imagery. So, Jesus' death is a fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices.

Jesus' death now is a sacrifice to God for his people. Notice again this language of Jesus giving himself up for us. We begin to see another important theme, and that is Jesus' death being a substitute for the death of the people.

We'll talk about that a little later. In the book of Hebrews, we also find clear references to it. Hebrews has so many references to the death of Jesus Christ and Jesus' death fulfilling the Old Testament sacrificial system.

The explicit comparison between the numerous sacrifices that the Old Testament system had to offer and now the one once-for-all final sacrifice that Jesus himself offers that deals with and takes care of sin ultimately accomplishes what the Old Covenant system could not. Without going into a lot of detail, I don't think the author is saying the Old Covenant system didn't do anything for sin. It did.

But that the Old Covenant system ultimately could not remove sin and cleanse the worshiper so that the worshiper could enter into God's presence. It only served to anticipate and to look forward to a final sacrifice that would accomplish that, and the author of Hebrews is convinced that Jesus Christ's death on the cross does that. The author of Hebrews is convinced that Jesus Christ's death is also the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement.

For example, in chapter 9, verses 11-14, when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, it is not part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, which under the Old Covenant was how the sacrifices that allowed one to enter into God's presence and cleanse dealt with sin, but he entered the most holy place once for all by his own blood, thus attaining eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and ashes of the heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean.

How much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself up unblemished to God, so notice all this Old Testament language, an unblemished lamb, an unblemished animal, unblemished sacrifice, how much more will it cleanse our consciousness from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God. In verses 25 and 26 of Hebrews chapter 9, Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself, again and again, the way the high priest enters the holiest place every year with the blood that is not his own. So, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter into the holy of holies and apply the blood from a sacrifice, but now the author says in verse 25 that Jesus Christ does not do this.

Instead, in verse 26, otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world, but he has appeared once and for all at the culmination of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. So, having read that, hopefully

you picked up on all the sacrificial language, all the Old Testament language, because that's what the author is doing. The author is demonstrating again that Jesus' death is the ultimate fulfillment of the day of atonement.

As we've mentioned before, in Hebrews, sacrifice, priesthood, temple, and tabernacle, all go together. The old covenant, those are all intertwined, and you change one, and you change all the others. So now Jesus Christ offers himself up as a sacrifice for the sins of people in fulfillment of the day of atonement.

So, that forgiveness and cleansing of sins can now be found in him. Something that the Old Testament only dealt with provisionally because it was pointing to someone greater, and that is the coming of Jesus Christ to deal with sin, to fulfill what was intended in the day of atonement. And furthermore, we've already mentioned in a previous lecture that Jesus Christ's death also inaugurates the new covenant promise from Jeremiah chapter 31.

So, there are other texts that we could refer to, but I think those are enough to demonstrate that Jesus' death over and over again is seen as the fulfillment of the Old Testament. Jesus' death on the cross is a fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system without necessarily quoting specific texts or pointing to specific texts. The suffering and death of the Messiah is often also seen as a fulfillment of Old Testament texts.

So, once more, Jesus' death on the cross is nothing less than the fulfillment of God's intention to deal decisively with sin. Also, by the way, it's probably worth noting that all of what we've said so far assumes the presence of sin that must be dealt with. That is, it assumes Genesis chapter 3. It assumes that humanity is steeped in sin.

It assumes that humanity is affected by sin, under the power of sin, from which they need to be delivered and from which they need to be saved. Again, in Matthew 1:21, Jesus has come to save his people from their sins. So, all this discussion assumes the situation and problem of human sinfulness, human rebellion, human alienation from God as creator, that humanity stands under the power of sin, the influence and effect of sin, and needs to be delivered from that and saved and redeemed from that.

And Christ's death on the cross is now portrayed as the means of that. So, the first theme or first motif, Jesus' death, is the fulfillment of Old Testament Scripture. The second motif to look at is Jesus' death, which is portrayed as a ransom.

That is, Jesus' death is portrayed as a price that is paid to free the people. Now, we'll pick up on this theme again when we talk about the New Testament theme of salvation, particularly in connection with redemption. But it's important to introduce

that here because over and over again, Jesus' death is presented as redeeming or as freeing or liberating the people.

Jesus' death is a ransom. That is, it's the price that is paid to free the people. We found this already in a text we've quoted on numerous occasions and will continue to do so, and that is Mark 10, verse 45, where Jesus says, The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.

1 Peter 1, verse 18. Peter says, For you know that it was not with perishable things, such as silver or gold, that you were redeemed from the empty way of life and down to your ancestors. Verse 19, But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

So, again, notice the Old Testament reference. Jesus Christ is an unblemished lamb, the Passover lamb. But it was through the blood of Christ that the people have been redeemed or purchased.

They have been ransomed. We find similar language later on in the New Testament in Revelation. Revelation chapter 1 and verse 5. In the introductory greeting, verse 5, Grace and peace to you from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth, to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

Again, blood is a metonymy for death, for Jesus' death. He freed us from our sins by his blood. So, notice again the language of ransom or redemption or freeing us.

God is freeing his people, and the price that was paid is the blood of Jesus Christ or the death of Christ. We see the same thing in chapter 5 and verse 9. One of the hymns is sung in celebration of what the lamb has accomplished. And again, chapter 5 is interesting because of the imagery of a slaughtered lamb, a slain lamb, which once more recalls Old Testament imagery and language of the Passover lamb, the sacrificial lamb that is now slain or slaughtered on behalf of the people for the sins of the people.

That's evident in chapter 1 and verse 5, as well as in chapter 5 and verse 9. Now, here's one of the songs sung by the lamb. You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals. The scroll probably symbolizes God's plan to bring both judgment and salvation to his people.

So, judgment on the unbelieving world, but salvation and redemption for his people. You are worthy to take that scroll and open its seals, that is to enact its contents, because you were slain, and with your blood, you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nations. So, Jesus' death is seen as a ransom, as a price that is paid to redeem or to purchase his people.

People have been bought or purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. And again, we'll return to this notion of redemption in the context of our discussion of salvation. But one important point to make is the New Testament seems uninterested in pushing this metaphor further than very far.

That is, if we start asking, well, to whom was this price paid? Who's being paid to free and to ransom and to purchase God's people? The New Testament doesn't say, and probably it's not necessary and maybe inappropriate to push that and ask, is it being paid to God? I'm not sure that makes a lot of sense because God's not holding them captive. Is this price paid to Satan to purchase them? That certainly seems inappropriate, and you cannot find it anywhere in the New Testament. So, I think it's unnecessary to ask to whom Jesus pays the price or to whom the price is paid.

What is significant is simply the metaphor of purchasing or ransoming, which is paying the price to free the people. We don't need to push it beyond that. The other thing to recognize, too, I think, is that we should understand this language of ransom and purchase, probably in the context of the Exodus as well.

So, Jesus Christ's death is a fulfillment of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ's death is also to be seen as a ransom or as a payment to free and redeem the people. They have been bought or purchased by the blood of Christ, by the death of Jesus Christ.

Another significant theme related to Jesus' death seems to be that Jesus' death can also be seen as an inauguration of the end-time tribulation. That is the end-time tribulation of the suffering and persecution of God's people, which one reads about particularly in the book of Daniel, for example. Jesus' death can now be seen as the inauguration of the end-time tribulation, especially as predicted in the book of Daniel, where God's people would suffer and even be put to death.

Now, Christ's suffering and his death are the inauguration and the beginning point of that end-time tribulation. Greg Beal has argued this at length in his New Testament theology, where he points to references in the Gospels and elsewhere, references to Jesus' suffering and references to Jesus' death as the beginning of the end-time persecution of God's people, the end-time trials and the end-time tribulations, as predicted in the book of Daniel. I won't go back to Daniel right now and read specific texts, but in chapter 7, chapter 12, and a couple of other places, there are references to the persecution of God's people, even putting them to death.

We find this particularly in the book of Revelation. In Revelation, we read of the fact that Jesus Christ's death on the cross actually becomes a model for or a pattern for how his people will overcome it as well. Just as Jesus Christ overcame his suffering and death, his people overcome, in the book of Revelation, by their suffering and, ultimately by their death.

So, the suffering of God's people, that is, their suffering and death, began with and was inaugurated with the suffering and death of Jesus Christ himself. I would hesitate to say that this is a dominant feature of Jesus' death, or it's the main theme or a major theme that one finds, but it is certainly there. Greg Beal summarizes by saying this: Jesus represented and embodied the saints of Israel as the Son of Man, going back to Daniel 7, and his death on the cross was a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of a great end-time trial which the eschatological foe would oppress the faithful Israelites and kill many of them.

And now this has happened to Jesus, Beal argues. Jesus' own suffering and trial and his death on the cross is the beginning of and the fulfillment of Daniel's end-time tribulation where a foe, a demonic type of figure, an oppressive figure, would come and persecute God's people and put them to death. Now, that has happened to Jesus in reference to his death, especially as you read throughout the Gospels.

Jesus' death could also be seen as Israel's exile. We've noted all throughout our discussion of people of God and a couple of other themes that Jesus Christ is presented as recapitulating Israel's destiny or Israel's history. So, we saw Jesus Christ as the true people of God, especially in Matthew's Gospel, for example, but there are other texts that indicate this. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus Christ, much like the nation of Israel, goes down to Egypt and is rescued from Egypt.

We see in chapter 4 of Matthew that Jesus undergoes temptation, much like Adam and Eve did, but also just like Israel did. Jesus undergoes a period of testing and temptation for 40 days and 40 nights. Yet, in contrast to Israel, who failed, Jesus passed the test.

So, we see Jesus, in a sense, embodying and recapitulating or repeating the history of Israel. And perhaps we should see Jesus' death as also taking upon himself Israel's exile. That is, in a sense, recapitulating Israel's exile.

His suffering and his death is the ultimate exile on behalf of his people, Israel, by Jesus himself being exiled from God's presence. The main text I have in mind is found, and once more, we'll look at the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew chapter 27, in Matthew's account of Jesus' death, chapter 27 and verse 46, this is actually one of the well-known sayings of Jesus on the cross.

But in chapter 27, and let's see verse 46, I'll read 45. From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the land. And sometimes I wonder if that isn't a picture of the removal of God's presence, the removal of God's glory so that now there is darkness.

At the very least, it's a scene of judgment. God's darkness is now over the land. About three in the afternoon, Jesus cries out in a loud voice, Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani, which means, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? So, with Jesus' suffering, and especially now his death on the cross, Jesus seems to suffer the ultimate exile on behalf of Israel by now being excluded and exiled from God's presence.

Many commentators and theologians read this text and note that here we find one of the most theologically interesting texts where God seems to turn his back on the Son. Jesus seems now to be forsaken by the Father. The Father's presence is now, in a sense, removed from the Son.

At the same time, Jesus is still God himself. I don't think that has changed at all. Yet, somehow, we find that Jesus is suffering the ultimate exile on behalf of his people, Israel, by now being excluded from God's presence.

Jesus' death is also seen in the New Testament as another important theme. Jesus' death is seen as a victory over the powers of evil. For example, in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15,

Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15. Theologians often call this the Christus Victor view of Jesus' death. That is, Jesus' death was primarily a victory over the powers of evil.

It subdued, it conquered, it defeated the powers of evil. Certainly, there are numerous references to that throughout Scripture. Whether it is the dominant theme or not, or the main theme in relationship to Jesus' death, or the main thing that Jesus' death does, is another question.

But certainly, it cannot be questioned that Jesus' death is often seen as winning a victory over and defeating the powers of evil. So, Colossians chapter 2 and verse 15. Let me back up, and I will start with verse 13.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ, and He forgave all your sins. Having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us, He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

So, Jesus' death on the cross is seen as triumphing over the powers of evil. Through the death of Jesus Christ, He delivers us from the powers of evil. He rescues us from the powers of evil.

He conquers and defeats them. We see similar language, perhaps, in Ephesians chapter 2. And we spent quite a time looking at verses 11 through 22. But if you go

back and read the first ten verses of chapter 2, we find a reference to what God does for His people through the death of Jesus Christ.

And also, through the resurrection of Christ as well, by uniting His people with Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection. But before He says that, and this is the famous text, By grace, you have been saved through faith. And it's not of yourself. It's a gift of God, not of works, lest no one will boast.

So, by grace, you are saved. That's usually what we associate with this passage. But before Paul gets there, he begins by saying, As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live, when you followed the ways of this world, and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

All of us once lived among them at that time, gratifying the cravings of the flesh. So, in the first three verses of Ephesians chapter 2, Paul provides this picture, I think, of people who are under the dominion of the authority and powers of evil, from which they will be rescued, ultimately, by the death of Jesus Christ. So, as chapter 2 goes on and suggests, it was because of God's great love that He made us alive in Christ by raising us up and seeding us with Him in the heavenly realms.

Although there's no explicit reference to Christ's death in this context, there certainly is one in the rest of Ephesians. These two texts and others, I think, clearly indicate, and probably the book of Revelation, this as well, especially in chapters 12 and 13, that Satan is ultimately overcome by the death of Jesus Christ. Satan's expulsion from heaven, in Revelation chapter 12, ultimately gets interpreted, in chapter 12, by a hymn or by a statement in the verses that come right after it.

So, in chapter 12, Satan is expelled from heaven, and this is what it says. Then I heard a voice from heaven. So, the voice is going to interpret this. It says, War broke out in heaven between Michael and the dragon.

The dragon is identified as Satan. And Satan is hurled down verse 9, and he's hurled to earth, and his angels, and then the voice interprets it. Now has come the salvation and power and kingdom of God and the authority of Messiah for the accuser of our brothers and sisters.

He accuses them before our God, day and night, has been hurled down. They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb. So, once more, the defeat of Satan, the defeat of the powers of evil, comes about by the death of Jesus Christ, or one of the things that the death of Christ accomplishes.

One important way to understand it is that it brings about the defeat, overcoming, and rescue of God's people from the powers of evil. In the next session, we'll wrap

up our discussion of the significance of Christ's death and what it accomplishes and then move on to consider the necessary correlate to that, which is the resurrection of Christ.

This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in his lecture series on New Testament Theology. This is session 22, Jesus' Death, Part 1.