

The Final Events of Jesus' Earthly Life

SCOTT HOEZEE

The gospels have been called passion narratives with long introductions. That is, the whole story is ultimately about what happened to Jesus on the cross, and the sacrifice he made for our salvation. Everything up until that happens is just introductory almost. John's gospel is no exception. John devotes eleven chapters to the three years of Jesus' public ministry, but then you get almost as many chapters, nine in total, devoted to the last week of Jesus' life. Eleven chapters for three years, nine chapters for one week, but what a week it was. Today on *Groundwork*, we look at the final events in Jesus' earthly life. Stay tuned.

DAVE BAST

Welcome to *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, this is now the sixth and the second to the last program in our seven-part series on John's gospel; and this final episode...the last two episodes, or almost all of the last two episodes, were in the upper room, where we spent a long time in John's gospel, from Chapters 13 through 17. On this program, we are going to tackle the somewhat daunting task of John 18, 19, and 20: Jesus' arrest, his trial, his death, and his resurrection. That is a lot, so we will be kind of cherry-picking some of the things that are unique to John's gospel as opposed to Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and we will start in Chapter 18 with something really interesting that happens when Jesus gets arrested.

DAVE BAST

Right; so, again, if you are somewhat familiar with the gospel story, and the first three gospels in particular, you know that Jesus took his disciples out to this Garden of Gethsemane, he spent time in prayer, he kind of agonized over the coming ordeal, but if you have been following us in John, you will know and won't be surprised, that John has a slightly different take on Gethsemane, and he skips over the prayer and all that...the agony in the garden...and he comes right to this:

³So Judas came to the garden guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns, and weapons. ⁴Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?" ⁵"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) ⁶When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Now, we read this because when Jesus says: I am he, that is actually the final I AM saying of John's gospel. We have noted all along that John is unique among the four gospels. He doesn't include any parables, but he does include these I AM sayings. Most of the ones are obvious: I am the bread of life; I am the good shepherd; I am the gate; I am the way, the truth, and the life; but there are a couple of hidden ones. The first one was with the Samaritan woman at the well, when she said: I know the Messiah is coming and Jesus says, in Greek, *ego eimi*, I am. In the Greek, you don't really need the I. Usually they leave it out because of the way the verbs are conjugated, you can tell whether it is a first person or second person. So, to include the I was a connection to the great I AM of the Old Testament, the God of Israel. And now here is the last one. There is another hidden one that we didn't look at when Jesus walked on the water and the disciples were afraid and thought it was a ghost. He said: Don't fear; I am...

DAVE BAST

There is actually one more in Chapter 8, when they are challenging him about Abraham...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right.

Dave Bast: And he says: Before Abraham was I am. And they wanted to stone him then because they really got it. So, we said there are seven of the kind of parabolic I AMs with the added comparison, but there are also these hidden I AMs, where he simply says: I am; and it is clearly pointing to Jesus' divine nature.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And this one...this last one packed a punch. It literally knocked these soldiers and others on their backsides. I mean, they literally fell down. You can imagine Hollywood special effects people having a little fun with this, you know. Jesus says: I am; and it comes out in some big thunderous voice and there is a clap of thunder and these soldiers just fall back; but that is actually what happened. They fell to the ground. There was such power behind this final I AM saying, that yes, it literally knocked strapping soldiers and others right on their backs.

DAVE BAST

Everything that happens to Jesus...he is the one in control. So, John says there that Jesus knows full well what is going to happen to him, and he allows it to happen. There is a passage, again, in the synoptics where he says: Don't you know I could have asked the Father and he would send twelve legions of angels? Well, one would have been enough, but he doesn't even need the angels. He could have simply walked away. They had all fallen to the ground. They are helpless; but Jesus wants the Father's will to be fulfilled, and that is all about salvation; and so he goes knowingly to his fate here in John.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; and in John 18 and 19 part of that fate is appearing before Pilate, and we pick it up at 18:29: So Pilate came out and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man (Jesus)?" ³⁰"If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." ³¹Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." (And then we jump ahead a little bit. Pilate talks to Jesus and Pilate says) ³⁷"You are a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." ³⁸"What is truth?" retorted Pilate. But then Pilate goes back to these people because Pilate wants nothing to do with this.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

He says: Look, we have a tradition of releasing somebody. I can release Jesus; and they say: No, no; give us Barabbas. Barabbas is a criminal. He had been part of an uprising. And again Pilate comes and says: Look, I am bringing this Jesus out to you. I find no basis for a charge against him. You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him; and then this line in Chapter 19:12: From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free. He sensed something special about Jesus. Something was up.

DAVE BAST

Namely that he was innocent...

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes.

DAVE BAST

We had a *Groundwork* series on the Apostles' Creed, and there we noted one of the quirkiest features of the Creed is that it only mentions two people besides Jesus by name. One of them is Mary, she is accorded a place because of the wonderful role she played in bringing Jesus into the world; and Pontius Pilate: He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead... How would you like to be the guy who is remembered for crucifying Jesus?

SCOTT HOEZEE

And nobody ever quite could figure out...we said in that Apostles' Creed series...how, I mean, you don't get Moses, you don't get Abraham, you don't get David...not Peter, not Paul, but Pilate makes it into the Creed; and scholars think that it does two things: One, it fixes this in history. This is not a fantasy...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So this had an actual historical marker; but the other thing, the more important thing is that Pilate becomes an unwilling witness to the innocence of Jesus. He knew Jesus was innocent, and Pilate didn't know the half of it. Jesus was *sinless*, no less, right? So, Pilate becomes an unwilling witness to a very important truth, that an innocent man died for all of us; and theologically, of course, that is huge in the doctrine of the atonement and how we become justified from our sins.

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The innocent died for the guilty.

DAVE BAST

But, Pilate, almost against his will...really, against his will...is sort of forced into condemning Jesus by threats of exposing him or accusing him; and so, he does it, but he doesn't like it; and he almost...it seems as though he gets his own back again against the people who forced him to do this, because we read later in Chapter 19: ¹⁹Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews. ²⁰Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. ²¹The chief priests of the Jews protested [to Pilate], "Do not write king of the Jews, but that he claimed to be the king of the Jews." ²²Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

So, maybe Pilate sensed deep down that Jesus was the king actually, but for sure, he put a sign up proclaiming the truth, and in this he becomes another unwitting witness to the reality of Jesus.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; but Jesus is indeed crucified; and so in a minute we will get to the sad story in John 19 of Jesus' death. *Segment 2*

DAVE BAST

You are listening to *Groundwork*, where we are digging into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Dave Bast.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And I am Scott Hoezee; and Dave, the end of John Chapter 19 tells the story of Jesus' death, and it includes a couple things not included in the other gospels. We did a series, *Words From the Cross*, here on *Groundwork*. Most people know there are seven last words...

DAVE BAST

There is another seven.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Another seven in this gospel—seven last words from the cross, but no one gospel contains all of them. Matthew and Mark just have one that they share: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Luke chips in three of the seven, including, you know, his promise of Paradise to one of the criminals, asking God to forgive those crucifying him; and then Luke's version of Jesus' final words: Father, into your hands I commit my spirit; and then John chips in three sayings not found anywhere else...sayings from the cross.

DAVE BAST

And they all come one after another. So, we pick up the reading from John 19:25: Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopus, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son," ²⁷ and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. ²⁸Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. ³⁰When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, the so-called beloved disciple...and this will come up in our final program in this series, too...this comes up often in John's gospel...the beloved disciple. Most scholars think that is John himself. That is sort of his second-hand way to refer to himself in the narrative without saying: It's me. So, he just refers to himself as the beloved disciple. Of course, Jesus loved all his disciples; he even loved Judas. So, it is not like he loved only one of them, but it is just John's kind of subtle signature in the gospel; and here, Jesus does something very loving for his mother. Again, he is on the cross now, and he is still not thinking about himself only, right?

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

We saw that in Luke's gospel, too: Father, forgive them. He is thinking about other people, including the people driving the nails into him. So, here he takes care of his mother and basically makes sure she is cared for. Now, we know Jesus had some other siblings, too, so I don't know quite how that all worked, but the beloved disciples will sort of adopt Mary as his de facto mother from then on out. So, very kind thing for Jesus to do. Jesus doesn't always seem kind when his mother is around. He sometimes will say: Well, now; my real family are the disciples; or you know, he just sort of ignores his mother sometimes, but here he ends his life by taking care of her.

DAVE BAST

Right; and then he says he is thirsty, which most scholars or commentators say really points to his true humanity. He really was suffering on the cross...he was suffering physically. You can imagine what that ordeal would have done, and it is gruesome; and the gospels...interestingly, none of them go into the physical details...

SCOTT HOEZEE

No.

DAVE BAST

Of how terrible that suffering was; but he is given this drink that may have included some kind of pain numbing element in it...kind of vinegary wine; and then, climactically and triumphantly in John, one final

word...it is one word in Greek...*tetelestai*...it is finished...it has been accomplished.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Right; he doesn't say: I am finished; and he doesn't mean finished in the sense of being washed up or worn out or at the end of his rope. Right; you just said it, Dave. The little one line: It is accomplished...my *work* is finished, in the sense of, you know, a finished work of art. The artist puts one last brushstroke on the canvas and he says: It is finished.

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

It is done; it is perfect. That is what Jesus means; and again, the paradox of the Gospel that we have seen come up again and again in this series, that through death is going to come life. It looks like the end of the line for Jesus; it looks like he is at the end of his rope; it looks like he is finished, in the sense of being washed up; but no, this is the beginning of life eternal.

DAVE BAST

Yes, absolutely; and harking back to the first program in this series, we noted John the Baptist's testimony to Jesus: Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. And so, we come here and we understand that the work of sin-bearing...of taking away sin...of dealing with it once for all...and not only sin, but the death that follows it and the judgment that falls upon it, all done...completely and forever done; nothing more needs to be done, and that is why Hebrews especially will pick up this idea that Jesus died for sins once for all. Nothing more need be added to that. It is finished.

SCOTT HOEZEE

But, it is also an awful finish because, again, flashing back to John 1, this is the one and only who was sent from the side of the Father, John said in John 1, and we have seen his glory. This is the glorious Son of God, and we literally decided to cross him out one Friday afternoon...cross him out from history. This is the worst thing that ever happened. It is even worse than the original fall into sin in some ways, because the Son of God is dead; and indeed, there is only one thing to do with the dead. You have to bury them; and so, we read this in John 19:38:

Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate (there he is again) for the body of Jesus. Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. ³⁹He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who had earlier visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. ⁴⁰Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices and strips of linen, in accordance with Jewish burial customs. ⁴¹They laid him in a garden tomb in which no one had ever been laid.

So, there is Pilate again; you know, I don't know how standard it was to let people take bodies off the cross, but he gives permission. Now here is Nicodemus again; the man to whom Jesus had said: As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so I will be lifted up...

DAVE BAST

Right.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And you wonder, was Nicodemus remembering that?

DAVE BAST

Yes, maybe; and Jesus added, or John perhaps commenting on Jesus added right after that reference to Moses and the serpent: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. We have alluded to it, but there it is. We cannot do a series on John without quoting John 3:16. So, Joseph was apparently a member of the ruling body of the Jews, so he had

some authority, which is maybe why Pilate released the body into his custody. Nicodemus comes again, another secret follower of Jesus, and they do as you said, Scott, what you do with any dead body, they buried it; and as far as they knew, that was the end, because none of them yet had caught on to Jesus' repeated prophecies that he would rise again; and that is exactly what happens, as John shows us in a wonderful story from the next chapter, Chapter 20, which we will look at next.

Segment 3

SCOTT HOEZEE

I am Scott Hoezee, along with Dave Bast, and you are listening to *Groundwork*, and coming to now John Chapter 20. Jesus has been crucified, dead and buried, as the Creed says, and now we come to the next part of John 20, which begins in verse 1. We are told while it was still dark, and of course, that was literal. It was not dawn yet...he means that literally...but I think John also means it metaphorically and spiritually, that the world had fallen into darkness in a sense, because the Son of God had died as a result of our sin and our evil.

DAVE BAST

Yes; John loves to play with light and dark, and he does so throughout. So, Nicodemus, in Chapter 3, comes to visit Jesus by night...he comes out of the dark into the light of Jesus' presence. In Chapter 13, when Judas leaves the supper, he goes out, and John says: And it was night; and now, where the other gospels say: Well, it was dawn, it was at first light, John says, no, it was dark; and we are going to come out of that darkness into really glory and light.

SCOTT HOEZEE

The resurrection emerges from the dark, and that is where we need it. It is in our darkness that it comes up from behind. That is often the way of it in the gospels, by the way. Nobody witnessed the moment Jesus burst out of the tomb. Jesus usually sneaks up from behind. On the road to Emmaus he will...in John's gospel...he will just suddenly pop into a locked room; but the first person who has the resurrection sneak up behind her is

²¹Mary, (Mary Magdalene) who stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb ¹²and saw two angels in white seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. ¹³They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I do not know where they put him." ¹⁴At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize it was Jesus.

DAVE BAST

¹⁵He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

That beautiful, beautiful moment when Mary suddenly realizes it is Jesus by the sound of him speaking her name, and the disciples on the way to Emmaus recognized him...their eyes were opened when he broke the bread. Mary recognizes him when she hears his voice saying her name.

SCOTT HOEZEE

Yes; through her tears she couldn't quite recognize Jesus...thought he was a gardener; although, in all the gospels it appears that although Jesus' body...his resurrection body...is a real, you know, resurrection body, there is something just different enough about him that they didn't recognize him right off; but right, the beautiful thing, Jesus says her name the way he had said it a thousand times before...you know, Mary. When I have preached on this, Dave, I said it is the same for all of us. Often into our darkness Jesus comes and he says: Peter, Lucy, Rodrigo, Yung Hee...and we hear his name and we recognize him once more; but we do so by faith, right? Two thousand years later, we only know and hear Jesus by the grace of the Holy Spirit.

DAVE BAST

Right; and the witness of his followers, as we will see in our next program, the last in the series; but there is this marvelous scene...you have alluded to it, Scott, already. Jesus pops into the upper room. The doors are locked. He breathes on them as a sort of a prefiguring, we said in the last program, of the giving of the Spirit; but there is a problem. There are only ten of them there. Now, Judas, we know, has gone off to his own place and that is tragic, but Thomas is not there. Thomas, the one, you know, who was always kind of the down disciple. Thomas says in John 14: Well, let's go and die with him...earlier in John, anyway.

SCOTT HOEZEE

John 11, right; yes.

DAVE BAST

So, he is not there. Bad things happen when you skip church, and in Thomas's case, it meant he missed seeing the risen Christ; and when the other disciples all say to him: Hey, Thomas; he is alive! He has been raised from the dead! Thomas says...well, Thomas says this:

²⁶A week later the disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." ²⁸Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

SCOTT HOEZEE

So, Doubting Thomas, poor guy, branded forever for one little lapse there, saying I'll believe it when I see it; and a week later, Jesus obliges. I wonder why he waited a week...I don't know...

DAVE BAST

Yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

I mean, it is a week from Easter...

DAVE BAST

Well, it was Sunday, you know, so they met on Sunday.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This is where the day of the Lord comes from...

DAVE BAST

Absolutely, yes.

SCOTT HOEZEE

This is why the Church changed from the Jewish Sabbath, which is Saturday, to worshipping on the first day of the week, which is the day of the resurrection, on Sunday.

So, Thomas sees him, and his doubts evaporate: My Lord and my God. He doesn't have to stick his fingers into the holes like he said he would. He believes: My Lord and my God; and then Jesus says: Because you have seen me you believe. Blessed are those who haven't seen me, and yet have believed. When I was a kid, my mom read this at the dinner table and said one time: Jesus means us. We are the ones who haven't seen him and yet believe; and I thought it was kind of cool that we were in the Bible. We saw something similar in John 17, when Jesus is praying for unity, and then at one point he says: I am not just praying for these disciples, but for all those who will believe *because* of their word. So, here it is again. We are in the Gospel picture.

DAVE BAST

And it is maybe the most wonderful beatitude of all, another blessed are: Blessed are we when, not having seen him, as Peter would write in 1 Peter Chapter 1: ⁸Though you have not seen him, yet you love him. And though we have not seen him, yet we believe in him, because...frankly because we believe it actually happened. If we didn't believe that the resurrection was a real event, I don't think we would believe in Jesus...at least I wouldn't; but because we believe the testimony of the witnesses, so we believe in him; and that is actually how John wraps up, apparently the gospel, but at least this Chapter 20.

He writes:

³⁰Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Believe, yes; there it is.

SCOTT HOEZEE

And with that, the curtain seems to come down on John's gospel, but as they on TV ads: But wait, there is more. There is another chapter...an epilogue...and we will be taking that up in our next program. For now, we see the truth of John 1: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

DAVE BAST

Well, thanks for listening and digging deeply into scripture with *Groundwork*. We are your hosts, Dave Bast with Scott Hoezee, and we hope you will join us again next time as we study Chapter 21, the closing chapter, of John's gospel.

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