FBS “Jesus Christ—Crucified…” 4-9-17

Joel Breidenbaugh (Matthew 27:32-56)

**Intro.** As we head into Passion week, it is natural to think of Good Friday & Jesus’ crucifixion. But when you think of Jesus’ crucifixion, beware of the numerous false theories floating around about His death & resurrection. Some people believe the false theories & fail to believe in the literal death & resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lee Strobel was an atheistic journalist who set out to disprove Christ, but it led to his conversion & the book & movie *The Case for Christ*. One such false theory concerning Jesus’ crucifixion & resurrection is the swoon theory. One person wrote to the editor of a Christian site: “Dear Eutychus: Our preacher said, on Easter, that Jesus just swooned on the cross and that the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think? Sincerely, Bewildered. Dear Bewildered: Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear through his heart; embalm him; put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens. Sincerely, Eutychus” (preaching.com/sermon illustrations). While we may laugh at some preachers, crucifixion was no laughing matter. Today, we look at Matthew 27 & “Jesus Christ—Crucified…”

Theme: Jesus’ crucifixion

Background: Matthew wrote his Gospel probably in the AD 60s primarily to Jews to prove Jesus is the long-awaited Christ.

* Matthew told his audience that the crucifixion of Jesus proved He was the Christ.
* I want you to ponder the crucifixion of Jesus Christ & its significance for you.
* **I want to share with you a couple of realities about the crucifixion of Jesus Christ:**

**1. Realize no one suffered like Jesus in His crucifixion**

**a. Jesus suffered as a criminal for you (27:38, 44)**

* Crucifixion was reserved for the worst crimes in Rome’s day—Jesus was crucified between two robbers (27:38, 44)—the word for “robbers” is used of “rebels” by Josephus, insurrectionists—probably those who were with Barabbas trying to revolt against Roman rule & guilty of murder (see Luke 23:18-25)

Illus: At one point early in Julius Caesar’s political career, feelings ran so high against him that he thought it best to leave Rome. He sailed for the Aegean island of Rhodes, but en route the ship was attacked by pirates and Caesar was captured, but his captors did not know his real identity. The pirates demanded a ransom of 20 talents, but Caesar laughed & volunteered 50 & sent his men away to arrange the payment. Caesar spent 38 days with his captors, jokingly telling the pirates on several occasions that he would someday capture and crucify them to a man. The kidnappers were greatly amused, but when the ransom was paid and Caesar was freed, the first thing he did was gather a fleet and pursue the pirates. They were captured and crucified ... everyone he got his hands on! (from Plutarch’s *Caesar*, Great Books, vol. 14, 577) Such was the Romans’ attitude toward crucifixion. It was to be reserved for the worst of criminals, a means of showing extreme contempt for the condemned. The suffering and humiliation of a Roman crucifixion were unequaled.

* No one ever suffered like the Lord Jesus, because He took on all of our sins & received the punishment from God
* Jesus even turned down the painkiller offered Him to drink (27:34)—He was ready & willing to suffer to the uttermost for you & me

**b. Jesus was forsaken by God the Father for you (27:45-46)**

* From eternity past, Christ, the Son of God, had always been in perfect fellowship with God the Father except during those moments when God made Christ sin (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:21) & turned away from Him as He became sin

**2. Realize Jesus proved He is the Christ through His crucifixion**

**a. In fulfilling prophecy (27:35, 39-43, 46)**

* Psalm 22 was written by David 1,000 years before Jesus walked the earth—David prophesies about Christ’s crucifixion, more than 200 years before crucifixion had been invented by the Persians & used by the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks & popularized by the Romans
* Psalm 22:18 mentions casting lots over His divided garments (27:35)
* Psalm 22:7 speaks of people mocking Christ (27:39)
* Psalm 22:8 notes His trust in God (27:43)
* Psalm 22:1 looks to Him being forsaken by God the Father (27:46)—they knew just enough prophecy to know Malachi 4:5-6 speaks of Elijah coming before the Messiah & they thought Jesus was calling for Elijah with the words, “Eli, Eli” (My God, My God)

Illus: Bible scholars have noted there are at least 3 dozen prophecies about the Messiah fulfilled in the 1st coming of Jesus. About 2 dozen of these refer to events fulfilled during Passion Week—rejected by His own (Isaiah 53:3), betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9), sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13), accused by false witnesses (Psalm 35:11) & many more, but one of the most significant was that He would die as a vicarious sacrifice (Isaiah 53:5)

**b. In the miraculous events surrounding His death (27:51-54)**

* The temple’s curtain was torn, which was what separated the Holy of Holies from the outer chamber—with this division removed, man no longer needs different priests to offer sacrifices on his behalf, but he can go directly to God through Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest
* The earthquake, both at Jesus’ death & resurrection, were demonstrations pointing to the uniqueness of Jesus as the Christ
* Tombs were opened with the saints brought back to life temporarily, even walking around Jerusalem after Jesus’ resurrection—another miracle pointing to Jesus as the Christ
* The Roman centurion even exclaimed Jesus as “the Son of God,” a title for the Messiah

**How will you respond to these realities?**

* Will you savor them? Will you share them? Will you receive them? Will you reject them? You cannot be neutral to Jesus. Pilate thought he could be & tried to wash his hands, but he was still guilty of siding against Jesus (cf. Acts 4:27)

Illus: Plenty of sports fans are not real fans unless the team has a lot of success, then they jump on the bandwagon. Up until the success, they are really neutral. How many claim the name “Christian” & only really get excited for Jesus a couple of times each year? You cannot be neutral about Jesus Christ.

**Conc.** “The Cross Is an Anchor” You see that cross on yonder hill? 2,000 years, it remains still. A sign of our sin, guilt and shame/ Freely forgiv’n in Jesus’ name. Critics despise an’ try to deny, “He’s not the only way!” they cry. Yet blood-stained an’ rugged the cross stands/ Through fire, wind, rain, all life’s demands. It’s a sure anchor, dug down deep/ All who trust, their soul does it keep. For on th’ cross the Lord suffered an’ died/ To save ruined sinners far an’ wide. So tell your friends an’ nearest of kin/ No matter th’ stage of life you’re in—Wheth’r you’re young, middle-aged or old—Cling to Christ’s cross, for it will hold (Joel Breidenbaugh, 4-6-17). Either you give yourself fully to Christ & the glory & shame of His cross or you have nothing to do with Him, for you cannot accept Christ & His cross halfheartedly. You cannot have Christ without having Him crucified for your sins. You cannot have God’s grace & forgiveness without having His judgment on your sin in the cross of Christ. Will you have Him? Will you turn from your sins & receive “Jesus Christ—Crucified?”