

MATTHEW 27:27 – 66

THE DAY HEAVEN AND EARTH STOOD STILL

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. 28 And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. 29 When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

There is some debate as to the location of the Praetorium. Some believe it to have been in the Fortress Antonia whereas others believe it to have been in the governor's palace. In my opinion, the only difference it makes is the route Jesus would have taken to get to Golgotha. Personally, I believe it was at the Fortress Antonia, which I contend was the whole of what is now referred to as the "Temple Mount."

We will see a constant mocking of Jesus from now until He yields up His Spirit. As we can see here, the Roman soldiers are mocking Him. There was a game they played with those headed for crucifixion. They would place them on what looked like a giant game board painted on the floor. They would then roll dice and move the prisoner around the board while cursing, mocking and beating him. This is what Jesus was going through at this time. The difference is that He was being mocked as "The King of the Jews."

32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross. 33 And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull, 34 they gave Him sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink.

35 Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet:

***“They divided My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.”***

36 Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there. 37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him:

THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

38 Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

39 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

41 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 42 “He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. 43 He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ”

44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

- Simon of Cyrene – Cyrene was a town in North Africa with a large Jewish population, not unlike Alexandria. Simon was probably a Jew in Jerusalem on a pilgrimage for Passover. He was compelled to carry the cross for Jesus due to the fact that in His weakened condition He was unable to carry it Himself.
- The cross bar was what was normally carried by the accused. It weighed between 30 and 40 pounds. It was tied across the shoulders while being carried.
- Once the prisoner arrived at the site of crucifixion, He and the cross bar were lain over the vertical piece where the cross bar was affixed to the vertical pole. The hands and feet were nailed to the cross, which was then lifted and dropped into a hole.
- Asphyxiation was the normal means of death. This was a slow, painful death.
- Golgotha – location: 1) Had to be outside of the city walls. 2) Had to be in a conspicuous spot so everyone could see it. 3) A garden tomb had to be in close proximity.
- Church of the Holy sepulchre; Gordon’s Calvary; What is now Sylwan village. I maintain that it had to be the last location – East of the city. The Roman guard saw the veil in the Temple tear.
- Psalm 22: some verses quoted here. The last several verses speak of a restored kingdom.
- Jesus was stripped and what dignity He had left was taken from Him.
- The mockery continues, even by those in his same situation.

39 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If

You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

41 Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 42 "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. 43 He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.' "

44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

These mocking words should sound familiar to us. They are very similar to those Satan used at the beginning of Jesus' ministry during the temptation. Save yourself! Prove yourself! But Jesus didn't move. He was on a mission.

45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

47 Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" 48 Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink.

49 The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him."

50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

54 So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

55 And many women who followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, were there looking on from afar, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

- The sixth hour: 12 Noon. The sky went black for three hours – the middle of the day!
- This couldn't have been an eclipse because Passover happened during the full moon and eclipses don't happen during a full moon. Others contend that a huge dust storm hid the sun, but Passover took place during the wet part of the year and even a dust storm wouldn't have hidden the sun as it is described. More on that later and the words of Jesus later.
- The earthquake. More on that later.
- The ladies from Galilee – those still faithful were there and they were from Galilee, as we should expect. They looked on from a distance probably because they weren't allowed to be too close. The Roman soldiers were there to keep people away and prevent anyone from helping the accused.

57 Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. 59 When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. 61 And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

- Most bodies of those crucified were not given a burial. They were left to rot on the cross as a sign to anyone else who might want to do what the accused had done. But the Sabbath was rapidly approaching and there was a provision that allowed for bodies in certain cases to be taken down and buried in a common burial plot. However, Pilate granted that Joseph could take Jesus' body and bury it in his own tomb.
- Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were taken to the tomb and sat there in order to prepare the body. They knew where the tomb was. This is a problem for the skeptic.

62 On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, 63 saying, "Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise.' 64 Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead.' So the last deception will be worse than the first."

65 Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how." 66 So they went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard.

- Pilate thinks this whole thing is rather silly. He doesn't give them a roman guard. Therefore they place some the of the Temple guard at the tomb. Roman guards wouldn't have answered to the temple authorities once the body was not found.

BACK TO THE CROSS!

45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

47 Some of those who stood there, when they heard that, said, "This Man is calling for Elijah!" 48 Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink.

49 The rest said, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him."

50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

51 Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, 52 and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53 and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

54 So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

At 3:00 that afternoon everything went dark and there was an earthquake. The quake was so violent that some tombs carved into the surrounding mountains were sheared and opened. Eventually some of the dead were seen as resurrected in the city.

- You can see evidence of the sheared tombs in Sylwan Village to this day.
- In order for the centurion to see the temple curtain tear, he would have had to be east of the temple, because it faced east. Sylwan Village is east of the temple.
- The veil of the temple tore from top to bottom – showing that it wasn't just an ordinary earthquake that tore it. God tore it. Why is this?

45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

- "My God! My God!" Jesus referred to His Father in a more intimate way than most would have referred to God. That is because there was and always has been a relationship there. And for the first time in eternity, God the Father has turned away from His Son. Jesus experienced a separation from His Father for the first time in eternity. This is why it went dark! In the OT, darkness during the day was a symbol of God's judgment. When there was no rational reason for darkness during the day, it was God intervening in a supernatural way and it always meant judgment. But who was being judged? Look back at verse 46. Jesus asked, "Why have you forsaken me?"

Jesus was being judged. Why? Because this was the plan of redemption! Jesus experienced separation from God so that we don't have to experience it!

Have you ever been in total darkness? Even being in a closet for a short period of time? As kids, when we traveled between our house and our grandparent's house, or vice versa, if it were night, we would run as fast as we could. Why? Because darkness is scary. Bad things happen. Things go bump in the night. But even then, it isn't totally dark. Light pollution is something even those in the most rural areas of America know.

In 1914, British explorer Ernest Shackleton took a ship and crew to Antarctica. The plan was to land on the coast and then walk across the continent to the other side. (I have no idea how they were going to get off the continent. But there was a problem. Their ship was caught in the ice and eventually crushed. Over the next several months, Shackleton and his crew fought to survive and get home. One of Shackleton's biographers said that of all the things they had to endure, including starvation and sub-freezing temperatures, the worst thing was the darkness. Near the South Pole the sun goes down in mid – May and doesn't come back up again until late July. And there, there is no light pollution. It is pitch black, 24/7 for almost two months.

The darkness is debilitating. You can't get our bearings. You don't know where you're going or even which way is up. Disorientation is the norm. People who are in total darkness for any time at all suffer from it and those who are in it for extended periods of time suffer severe psychological effects. We weren't created to live in darkness. People in Northern climates are more susceptible to depression during the winter months because of a lack of sunlight. Lack of sunlight has a negative, physical effect on our body chemistry. We just weren't made to be in darkness.

But apart from a relationship with God and the presence of God, that is where we are. We are in spiritual darkness. And that is what Hell is. That is what spending eternity apart from God is – darkness that is disorienting and tortuous to the mind and soul.

But we can be in darkness on this side of the grave also. Even though we walk outside in the sunshine, we can be walking in darkness. And it is disorienting as well as debilitating. Even though you feel your life is going in the right direction, you don't really know where you are going – you can't! You are wandering around in the dark! You don't even know which way is up! And apart from the intervention of God, we are all wandering around in the dark and headed toward disintegration!

This was our trajectory! And the only way to prevent it was the death of Jesus on the cross. He fell into the complete darkness for which we were headed. He died the death we should have died, so that we can be saved from this judgment and live in the presence of the light of God.

This is what was symbolized in the tearing of the temple veil. Jesus took away the barrier between God and us. Now we have access to the Holy of Holies. Now we have access to God! Now everyone, anyone can come to God on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ! It was the Roman centurion who stated, "Surely this was the Son of God!" He was a Gentile! At that point it was as Jesus had been saying throughout His ministry that people would come from the east and the west to enter the kingdom. God has gone international, in a sense!

Jesus died the death we should have died. He lived a life we can't live, not in totality, but He died in order that through His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit we can live out a life as His imager, in His kingdom as it has begun here on earth.

This was the day that both the Heavens and the earth stood still, some 2,000 years ago. If you are standing still, then you're backing up. And even if think you are moving forward and progressing, if you are moving without Jesus, then you are just wandering in the dark. Come to Jesus and walk in the light. Yield to His plan and you will have direction as well as eternity.