

THE CRUCIFIXION OF THE KING OF KINGS

LUKE 23:26-49

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In our passage from Dr. Luke's Gospel this morning we see revealed in the narrative the *Via Dolorosa* or the "way of suffering" that Messiah had to take to fulfill His Divine Messianic Mission (9:21-22; 51).

This is the fourth movement of Jesus' Passion; Jesus has been forsaken and denied by those closest to him in the world, now he will be utterly forsaken by God for the sins of His people. Jesus will not only be carrying his cross, but carrying the sins of His people, and the weight of God's wrath as the Sin-Bearer.

ESV Isaiah 53:3-5: He was despised and rejected¹ by men; a man of sorrows,² and acquainted with³ grief;⁴ and as one from whom men hide their faces⁵ he was despised, and we esteemed him not. ⁴ Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.

Jesus will lay down his body and blood for His own; Jesus will open a new and living way to the Father through His flesh.

This is the last Passover Lamb- -the final sacrifice for sinners. What the blood of bulls and goats could never take away, here Jesus is satisfying God's wrath on sin once and for all as a propitiating vicarious sacrifice for His people.

We should understand that in the death of Jesus, our Lord Jesus is securing our salvation and redemption by his full and complete obedience in body and soul; the full obedience from His conception to death on the cross that we could never fully do as sinners. Jesus is the vicarious sacrifice, that is the sacrifice in our place.

Christ is *negatively* bearing the punishment for our sins but he is also *positively* obtaining for us through his death the righteousness and life Adam had to secure by his obedience. Christ's obedience to the Father in his Divine-Messianic-Mission returns us not to the beginning but to the end of the road that Adam had to walk (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. III, pg. 326).

As the Apostle's Creed words it, Jesus must "descend into hell". The hell that Jesus will experience is not a place of this dimension; Jesus went to paradise after his death (Luke 23:43, not to a literal Hades or Hell and we will discuss further in our next sermon); what "descended into hell" in the Apostle's Confession means is that Jesus experienced on the

cross in his suffering the very absence of God the Father's favor toward him, and the presence of God's eternal wrath.

Men after death have experienced God's eternal wrath for their sins and failure to repent and believe, but no man but Jesus has actually suffered God's eternal wrath in its entirety, all at once, in one offering of himself in suffering and death.

As Professor Schilder noted: "Hell... is the place where God exercises His justice to the fullest extent and where not the slightest remnant of common grace resists the penetrating rays of His wrath" and here, Jesus the Beloved Son of God is brought under the eternal sentence of hell and the experience of God's wrath, being denied even the slightest common grace as He suffers *for us*!

We should be reminded that the entire *Via Dolorosa* is Jesus' descent into hell if we may use this language. The entire "way of suffering" is God's forsaking his Son not merely in His death for sinners, but also in His going outside the gates of Jerusalem particularly to experience God's wrath as the sin-bearing Christ.

CARRYING THE CROSS TO GOLGOTHA (23:26-32)

And this is why Dr. Luke begins the final suffering of Christ with the important phrase: "***And as they led him away...***" (23:26a)

Here the King of Glory is being led away to be accursed and condemned as a Law-Breaker, accused of cosmic treason against God not for his own sins, but for the sins of his people that he has willingly placed on himself- -it is not the heaviness of the actual physical cross but the actual cup of wrath that he will have to drink to the dregs on behalf of those he loves.

In our sermon last week, we learned that Pontius Pilate, Governor of Rome, declared Jesus "not guilty" four times. Was Pilate completely right about Jesus? Was Pilate right when he said before the crowds

"Look, nothing deserving of death has been done by him" in Luke 23:15b?

He is partially right; Jesus has done nothing deserving of death before the kingdoms of man; he has not sinned against Rome or Israel's teachers. However, when Jesus lays down his life on the cross, the Father will place the sins of all his people, past, present and future upon Jesus Christ as our Substitutionary Savior.

When Jesus is on the cross receiving the Father's wrath for our sins, he will be dying because he is the sin-bearer who deserves to die before God *for us*. That is, as our substitute, he will bear the penalty that is due us- -he will die in our place- -for our transgressions and God will punish him with the fury of eternal punishment.

At the cross, we are reminded that the perfect righteousness God requires of mankind, God provides in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ for all who repent and believe.

Remember, as the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

ESV 2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

This language of being “led away” reminds us that Jesus in His suffering was going outside the gates of Jerusalem to suffer. As the Lamb of God and also the scapegoat (Lev. 16:9ff), Jesus is not received as the glorious King in Jerusalem, but rather suffers near the place where the left-over sacrifices were thrown in the dung heap of Gehenna.

Psalm 37:22: ...For those blessed by the LORD¹ shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off.

Jesus the very Temple of God, is walking outside the precincts of Jerusalem’s Temple. The place where Jesus could seek and find the living God under the Old Covenant administration, is not sought far away from the Temple, because Jesus is being forsaken by His Father so that in His death, a new and living way to God would be opened up for all who believe.

Dr. Luke focuses our attention primarily on Christ, but also wants us to see others around him during his suffering, first is Simon of Cyrene.

“Privileged Simon of Cyrene”? (23:26b) Is Simon’s ministry meant to be a pattern for all of Christ’s disciples? Historically, there have been some legendary aspects that may or not be biblical that have been added to and assumed about Jesus’ passion, including Simon’s place in Jesus’ suffering.

Was Simon of Cyrene necessarily privileged to carry Jesus’ cross? Was he later a Christian? It seems that his sons were, and perhaps Simon became a Christian too (Mark 15:21; cf. Romans 16:13). But this is not Dr. Luke’s purpose in mentioning Simon of Cyrene here. There are other places that we could use to support the disciples’ call to carry their crosses after Jesus, and this may be a kind of picture of that (9:23; 14:27), but that is not the main point of Simon.

We must look at the Glorious Suffering Servant here and not lose our focus. With respect to Jesus, who is Simon?

As Dr. Klaus Schilder wrote in his magnificent book *The Death of Christ* about Simeon of Cyrene: “We do not know Simon, and we will never know him. Whether he lived on a “villa,” was a farmer or a peasant, was of the black race or of the brown, whether he lived in Jerusalem or merely tarried there, whether he took the cross upon his shoulders willingly or resisted the coercion of the soldiers—these are all things we do not know, and we do not wish to act as though we knew them” (pg. 44).

We do know that Simon was from Cyrene and that this is modern Lybia in Northern Africa (or Tripoli) (cf. Acts 2:10).

What is Simon's purpose then in Jesus' passion according to Dr. Luke? Perhaps many things could be said that focus on Christ, but Simon can be a picture of the nations coming close to Messiah and being brought into his service as the King (*if* Simon is a pagan).

But I think what is important here is to understand that Christ as King, as the particularly suffering servant king is being denied a bit of his suffering; it was Christ's goal and purpose to come to this hour of suffering for His people (In fact, in John's account, Jesus denies the wine and gall formula that was often given to criminals to ease their pain *because he was suffering vicariously as a substitute for God's people and the whole weight of God's wrath must be experienced in order to achieve the salvation of his people, see also Matthew 27:32-35*).

In other words, it seems likely that Simon is not granted in God's sovereignty to help Jesus in his suffering as we have romanticized our interpretation of this passage, but rather God has allowed Simon to be seized by the Jews and Romans to heighten Jesus' suffering.

Jesus must suffer completely, fully, wholly on behalf of his people as the Sin-Bearing Lamb of God- -and this "help" with his cross is actually a hindrance and diabolical distraction of Jesus reaching his goal of death.

It was not God ultimately, but the devil's army that drafted poor Simon! Now saying this is not meant to undermine or take away from the service he did indeed commit himself to, nor undermine this help that he gave to Jesus, the purpose of these comments is to simply ask: "Did Jesus need- -that is, did Jesus appoint and direct and requisition Simon's service?"

NO- -His enemies did!

The work of Christ is being undermined by the very heartless people who have judged him (the soldiers "seized" Simon, v. 26), not because of their love for Jesus, or even sympathy for the suffering Savior, but ultimately behind that was Adversarial Satanic involvement to deny Jesus some of the weight of His suffering that he was so willing to go through for His own!

You see how legendary interpretations can creep into our Biblical understanding; we need to ask again: "Is it scriptural?" even if Simon of Cyrene is part of the "stations of the cross" and he has held legendary status in the Roman Catholic Church, particularly the Medieval Church of Rome.

But what of Simon? He may have later come to faith, but here he is in some ways hindering Jesus' Messianic Mission and this is accomplished because the Roman soldiers seize him and place him in this service.

If Jesus had had need of someone to help him at this dark time of suffering, he would have requisitioned it as King that he is, as he already has done before. Already as King Jesus requisitioned a donkey's colt to ride into Jerusalem; already he has requisitioned a place to celebrate the institution of the Lord's Supper; now he has requisitioned a cross to die for his people, and this is *partially* being taken away from him.

Dr. Luke reports that there are women from Jerusalem mourning and lamenting for Jesus.

In response to the mourning and lamenting of the women as Christ goes to Golgotha (26:27-31), Jesus turns to them and tells them that the curse of God is not permanently on Him but will be upon them (and Jerusalem) if they do not repent and believe. It is important to note that these are not the women who were in Jesus' inside group of disciples who loved and cared for him like Martha and Mary; rather, these are women from the city of Jerusalem who have heard of him- -not those women committed to him as a disciple by faith.

“And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him” -23:27.

Jesus is telling the women in his response that he is under the curse of God presently, and perhaps there is an appreciation of their mourning and lament, but the great need of the moment is to see in Jesus the very life and hope of mankind; they should not weep for Christ, but for themselves- -they should seek tears of repentance so that they through faith might know the blessing that comes to all mankind through Christ's curse. Jesus says:

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains ‘Fall on us,’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’”

This saying of Jesus is rooted in Isaiah's prophecy, this eschatological blessing reversal:

ESV Isaiah 54:1 "Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married," says the LORD.

Great will be the judgment of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel as Jesus has foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple before in Luke's Gospel- -but this

judgment of God is a mere foretaste of his wrath and curse that will be upon all unbelieving mankind when Christ returns as the Son of Man and Son of God in glory!

Those in Jerusalem will experience devastating judgment for rejecting Messiah, and not knowing the time of his visitation, but this pales in comparison to the judgment that will come upon unbelievers when Jesus is revealed as the Great Judge- -first to the Jews, and also to the Gentiles! As Zechariah had prophesied about the inhabitants of Jerusalem many years before:

ESV Zechariah 12:10-11: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Jesus specifically says something that seems on the surface to be a mystery: ***"For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"*** - 23:31. This has been best summarized and interpreted by New Testament professor Godet; he wrote:

"The more contrary to nature it is that Jesus should die as a rebel, the more is it in keeping with the nature of things that Israel should perish for rebellion. Thus Jesus makes the people aware of the falsehood which ruled His condemnation, and the way in which God will take vengeance."

Another commentator added this as a way of understanding what Jesus said: "If the innocent Jesus meets such a fate, what will be the fate of guilty Jerusalem?" (Both quoted in Geldenhuys, NICNT, pgs. 605-606).

The background of Jesus' proverbial application to his last sermon is Isaiah 10:16-19, particularly the imagery of fire being God's consuming wrath and judgment, and unfaithful Israel being likened to a dry and unfruitful tree:

ESV Isaiah 10:16-19: Therefore the Lord GOD of hosts will send wasting sickness among his stout warriors, and under his glory a burning will be kindled, like the burning of fire.¹⁷ The light of Israel will become a fire, and his Holy One a flame, and it will burn and devour his thorns and briers in one day.¹⁸ The glory of his forest and of his fruitful land the LORD will destroy, both soul and body, and it will be as when a sick man wastes away.¹⁹ The remnant of the trees of his forest will be so few that a child can write them down.

ESV Joel 1:12 The vine dries up; the fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm, and apple, all the trees of the field are dried up, and gladness dries up from the children of man.

ESV Nahum 1:10 For they are like entangled thorns, like drunkards as they drink; they are consumed like stubble fully dried.

Here is revealed to us the Suffering Servant Savior Messianic King who is ministering God's Word once more before His death in order that there may be

repentance in the people of Jerusalem and that there will be great rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents on the *Via Dolorosa*.

Here is the One, the Son of Man, the very Son of God who still weeps over Jerusalem and invites the repentant True Israel to weep not for the Suffering Savior, but for themselves- -for their children- -tears not of regret that Christ is dying- -but tears of repentance leading to great joy in the Savior. The seed of the women is threatened with covenantal curse if there is no repentance from the fathers and mothers (“...to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me...” could be echoed here!).

Here is the Eternal Minister of the Word who is calling the people to repentance one more time in His incarnation. But for those who do not repent, the suffering of Jesus is nothing compared to the eternal torment and wrath of God for rejecting him, mocking him, and defiantly living in unbelief and sin against God.

But there is a wider application of this than merely Jerusalem and the Jews of 70 AD. All people who reject Christ, all those who have spurned his lordship, will experience great wrath and wish that they and their children had never been born on the Great Day of Judgment when the Lamb of God shall be revealed in glory as the roaring Lion of Judah!

“Unparalleled misery is awaiting those who have rejected him” (Geldenhuyts, pg. 604).

The tears of these women have become part of Christian legend; but we need to ask again: “What does the Scripture say?” These are not the tears and lamenting of faithful *disciples* of Jesus, but these women are also more distractions for the Son of God as he must go the way of suffering to the cross; these women may be just another temptation and disturbance from the Adversary against Jesus to prevent him from going to the cross.

Dr. Luke reveals the criminals to be crucified with Jesus:

Jesus with the criminals, numbered as a transgressor (23:32); Jesus’ new company of disciples.

Two biblical words and theological concepts that we need to stop and think about:

Accursed and Condemnation

Jesus was accursed on the tree according to Mosaic Law; Jesus was condemned in the place of His people. As the Apostle Paul wrote later:

ESV Galatians 3:10-13: For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."¹¹ Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."¹² But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does

them shall live by them." ¹³ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"...

THE PLACE OF THE SKULL (ON GOLGOTHA) (23:33-43)

“And when they came to the place that is called *The Skull*...” (23:33a)

What an appropriate name for the revelation of the “accursed” and “condemned” Sin-Bearer!

Dr. Luke omits the name “Golgotha” because it was an Aramaic name for this place that his Greek readers would not have known; he uses simply “The Skull” which is the meaning of *Golgotha*. The place resembled a skull in its rocky protrusion and so was called “The Skull” by the Roman and Jewish people (Latin is translated *calvaria*, thus where we get the term “Calvary”).

The “Passion Procession” arrives at the high place where the sacrifice of the Lamb of God will take place; the final sacrifice for sinners will be made.

What is significant about Golgotha, or the “Place of the Skull” (another place of legend in church history), is that it is outside Jerusalem so spiritually it is located between Mount Zion where the temple of God was built and the Valley of Ginnom or “Gehenna”.

I think that we should understand that in redemptive-historical theological places, the cross on the place called “The Skull” is a picture of Christ’s bridge of salvation between heaven and hell.

Literally, and redemptive-historically, the cross is in the center of two eternal destinies. Mount Zion symbolized heaven and was where God was worshipped; Gehenna symbolized the place of suffering, or the place of outer darkness, or hell where Christ said the worm never dies.

Golgotha represents blessing for believers and a curse of unbelievers; Golgotha represents salvation by faith in Jesus and represents eternal judgment through rejection of Jesus; Golgotha represents election and reprobation; Golgotha represents the way to heaven and the way to hell.

Crucifixion between two criminals (23:33b). Christ is again revealed as a bridge not only between two criminals, but two destinies represented by the criminals’ response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus reveals his ongoing compassion for those who crucify him “*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*” (23:34).

ESV Isaiah 53:12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,¹ and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,² because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

In our passage here Jesus intercedes for the transgressors as Isaiah foretold.

“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” – Luke 23:34

Some misunderstand this prayer of Jesus and think that it must not have been answered because not all of the people were forgiven; this is to misunderstand the larger context.

We know in the larger context that there will be a destruction of judgment upon Jerusalem and we know that Jesus told of that many times; we know that that foretaste of God’s wrath came in 70 AD. What Jesus is particularly praying for here as an Intercessor-Mediator for the transgressors is that the immediate judgment of God that should be exacted and carried out at that moment for killing Messiah, should be delayed in order that men might repent and be forgiven.

Here we see Jesus even at His death as a temporal mediator so that the wrath of God will not immediately consume them, but rather that they will be motivated by God’s grace and mercy to repent. Jesus is revealing Himself as God who “doesn’t want any of his people to perish, but for all to come to repentance.”

However, this prayer will be immediately answered, in that Jesus takes God’s wrath rather than those around the cross who richly deserve it; God is patient and merciful here because of Jesus’ mediation. Like Abraham mediating for Sodom and Gomorrah or Moses mediating for Israel, both prayed and the immediate wrath of God was held back- -but their mediation was temporal and God eventually enacted his judgment as he promised he would.

Even in the midst of Jesus’ agony, suffering and crucifixion there can be found the forgiveness of God- -even *this day is the day of salvation* as we will find out later when one of the crucified criminals finds life in Christ’s death.

As New Testament Professor Geldenhuys wrote: “[God]...gave [Israel] another forty long years the opportunity, through the mighty signs of Pentecost and the ministry of the apostles and other believers, to repent in time and to be saved. Several thousands made use of this period of grace [before the destruction of Jerusalem] and were saved, but the majority were in their folly precipitated into abyss” (NICNT, pg. 609).

And Pentecost was a glorious day of salvation for many in Jerusalem who repented, believed and were baptized after Peter’s rousing and Spirit-filled sermon- -because Jesus prayed that they might be forgiven and hear (“...slow to anger, compassionate...”; cf. Acts 2).

And they cast lots to divide his garments -23:34b

ESV Psalm 22:17-18: I can count all my bones- they stare and gloat over me;¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

As Jesus prays, he loses the last piece of earthly possession and belonging he had; they took his clothes. Dr. Luke has shown Jesus' compassion for the poor since the beginning of his gospel, now Jesus has become poor so that His people might be rich in Him; now Jesus who as God owned the cattle on a thousand hills and possessed the riches of heaven itself, becomes poor in his lowly, humiliating, naked estate as Suffering Servant Savior-King.

And the devils flutter around and demonically dance at the scene of the cross...

Rulers scoff at Jesus! (23:35)- ***"He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!"***

Here is the Satanic, adversarial, skeptic language of theological "if"- "If He is the Christ of God." This same implication has already come from Satan himself when he tempted Jesus in the wilderness:

If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread."- Luke 4:3

This particular Satanic, adversarial skeptic language of theological "if" was just after God had clearly revealed who Jesus was:

ESV Luke 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son;¹ with you I am well pleased."²

Here Satan, Christ's adversary, like a juvenile, wants to have the last word even at Christ's death- -and he attempts to speak over the words of Jesus revealed in his tender and merciful prayer for those of Israel who know not what they do!

The blasphemous and devilish voices rise to a feverish pitch!

Soldiers continued to mock the Lord Jesus! (23:36-37)

A criminal railed against Jesus! (23:39)

All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"

And in this hostile, sinfully wretched atmosphere of devils and blasphemy and crucified men, there is the gracious fresh air of repentance and forgiveness.

Simeon's prophecy that was spoken at Jesus' circumcision and dedication in the Temple is coming to pass at Jesus' death:

ESV Luke 2:34-35: And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed"³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

Around the cross of Israel Jesus is causing the fall and rising of many in Israel; around the cross the world is divided between believers and unbelievers. In the midst of the darkness there is light and salvation.

Salvation-redemption! There is a criminal redeemed (23:40-42)

There are a lot of wonderful things about the criminal's redemption and faith in Jesus Christ the Suffering Savior-King that is revealed here; I will limit my observations to two: (1) The criminal understood the simple gospel of Christ's Kingdom and articulates it well for a "baby Christian": ***Do you not fear God...we indeed are justly condemned, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong***" (23:40-41).

The criminal by God's grace "gets it!"- -he gets the gospel "loud and clear": We should fear God because all of us are under God's condemnation; in fact, death is what all sinners deserve, but Christ has done nothing wrong (read: sinful). So how do we escape the punishment due to us for sinning against God? In Jesus Christ, the one who was sentenced and pronounced "guilty" for all who believe -and we will receive the good news for ourselves that we are "not guilty" before God in Him:

"There is therefore NO condemnation for those in Christ Jesus...He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?- Romans 8:28, 32

(2) Secondly, there is hope for every repentant sinner that they can still find hope and salvation in Jesus Christ- -no matter how close to death they are, they can repent and believe and find the Heavenly Kingdom of God that Christ came to reveal by His grace!

Jesus makes a promise to the repentant criminal on the cross- -that he as Sovereign Suffering Savior King He is able to keep- -because He will live again- -and He knows it (cf. 22:66ff; 23:43)- ***While we were yet sinners...enemies of God...Christ died for us***" (Romans 5:6-11).

ESV John 3:14-15: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Jesus says: "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Jesus will undergo the pains of eternal hell upon the cross, but when he willingly gives up his life (his spirit) to the Father upon the cross, he will not go to hell as sinful mankind, but will be in the very paradisiacal presence of His great and loving Father!

Jesus was indeed the chastisement of God that brought us peace with God and paradise!

THE DEATH OF JESUS AND THE KINGDOM (23:44-49)

“From noon to 3 PM” (23:44):

As Jesus is hung on the cross for the sins of His own, as the nails cut and tear his flesh, the prayers of the sons of Cain are answered as they once again rage murderously against the sons of Abel and Seth; the enmity between the Seed of the Woman and the Seed of the Serpent has reached a frenzied heightening and intensity that has never been known before in Redemptive-History.

Darkness over the whole land (v. 44); At the time that the sun would have reached its zenith and full intensity of light at noon, there is darkness all around. When Jesus was born there was great light in the dark night when the angels proclaimed his birth; now at Jesus' death there was great darkness in the light of day as he lays down his life as the Lamb of God.

What is important about this event of darkness is to remind us of the terrible and cosmic consequences of what is happening on this day in the body of Jesus in real time and space history.

All of creation is being effected- -even the sun created to shine upon this earth, does not shine on the earth at this time; the sunshine of God's common grace is being denied Jesus as he dies as the Sin-Bearing Lamb of God for his people (cf. Matt. 5:45). The whole creation or cosmos is reacting in light of the death of the Son of God, and God denies His Beloved son even the common grace that all sinners usually experience in this world before their eternal punishment in hell.

Darkness, pitch black darkness, a cold, and heartless atmosphere in which the Son of God suffers violently for His own; as the Son of God lays down his life, deep darkness covers the earth.

All of our sins: our lies, idolatrous practices, wrong theology, lusts, our hates, our unforgiveness, all of our rebellion, and sinful thoughts and actions, all of the darkness of our hearts were imputed to Christ, so that His perfect righteousness might be imputed to us; Jesus suffers and writhes in pain in darkness, so that we might be the children of light.

Like the deep black darkness over Egypt when the angel of death passed over, so now once again as Christ takes the curse of God's wrath for sinners in His death, darkness covers the land- -the outskirts of Jerusalem have become like the darkness of Egypt many years before.

And yet in this final Passover Sacrifice, after this darkness, there will be a greater and final Exodus for God's people- -an Exodus in Jesus Christ- -a deliverance from their

former enslavement to death, hell and the devil will give way to life, heavenly joy and living as the children of God!

After this night, we will sing with Isaiah: “Arise, shine for the light has come and the glory of the LORD has arisen upon you!” (Isaiah 60).

***ESV** Isaiah 60:1-3: Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.*

Curtain of the temple was torn in two (v. 45)

The Old way of approaching God and accessing him for worship in the Temple was now obsolete. The death of Jesus brought about the complete fulfillment of all that the Temple stood for; three things stand out here:

- 1) The Temple was the place where God was worshipped and sacrifices were made; now that the final sacrificial Lamb of God had been sacrificed, the people of God would access God through One Mediator Jesus Christ, and they would in Him worship God not in temples made with hands, but in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:22ff).
- 2) The Temple was now completely obsolete with the final sacrifice of the Lamb of God; God would no longer be worshipped according to Old Covenant types and patterns or mere outward ceremonies, but would be worshiped in Jesus Christ, the True Temple of God.
- 3) The curtain was the way into the Holy of Holies. This was the typological place where God ruled and reigned- -his very throne room. The way to that throne room was no longer through the Temple in Jerusalem but now through the body of Jesus- -and not just the Levites had access to it- -but all who believe!

Hebrews 10:19-27: Therefore, brothers,¹ since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God,²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.²⁶ For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries.

The direction for the apostles on their mission of gospel proclamation would be *from* Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth; no longer would

Jerusalem's temple be the center of focus in the life of the Church- -now that focus would be on the Christ as the way to God, and truth and life from God.

Geldenhuis wrote about the rent or torn veil: "...It was the sign that the temple and the old form of ceremonial religion were no longer necessary—the Old Dispensation, which had been merely preparatory significance, had finally made room for the New Dispensation founded upon the all-sufficient work of redemption of the Son of God" (NICNT, pg. 611).

Jesus cries: "***Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!***" (v. 46)

Jesus is faithful as the singer and fulfillment of the Psalms; to the very bitter end Jesus is faithful to God's Word- ***-he truly does not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of God's mouth- -to the very end.*** His last words are the Word of God and he meditates on it even in death:

^{ESV} Psalm 31:5 Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

What the Psalmist many years before wrote as a reflection of his own trust in the LORD was actually inspired by God in Scripture to speak of Christ's death for those who trust in the LORD; God's Word and particularly the Psalms are Christ's words *for us and for our salvation.*

Jesus lays down his life and dies, trusting His Heavenly Father and his Holy Word until the very end.

A centurion's verdict: "***Certainly this man was innocent!***" (or literally "righteous")

Mark records more of what the centurion said; he said: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39):

The confession was the result of the Centurion's revelation from God that Jesus truly was the Son of God and that there truly was a power in the cross to save...the only power to save was through Jesus' suffering and death, his laying down his life to ransom men and redeem men out of their sins so that they might be forever reconciled to God.

Although Dr. Luke has brought the Centurion of Rome to the center stage, it is clear that it is the suffering, dying Messiah on the cross that is the prime actor of this scene. It is just in his work on the cross that brought hope to the church in Luke's day, and that brings hope to us today.

Did the Centurion ever imagine that such an act, such a confession would have passed from his lips that day...No! but what hope for us all.

This is great hope for all unbelievers, all of us who have been pagans, for all sinners who look to the cross and see their sins being punished in the body of Jesus...Jesus being filled up to the uttermost with the wrath of God.

On the cross, the face of God turned away from Jesus in order to forsake him, in order that God might turn his face of grace toward us who are like the Centurion. On the hill of Golgotha something of cosmic significance happened when Jesus was on the cross. It was a pivotal act in the history of God's redemption of and reconciliation with man the sinner, and here Luke shows us a true portrait of God's grace even in the midst of darkness, because of a Messiah who dies on a cross, on a hill called the "place of the skull."

Some of the crowd returned home "beating their breasts" (v. 48).

Some of the crowd, his disciples, stood at a distance and watched (v. 49).

Modern unbelievers have sometimes condescended to pity Jesus and attempt to show sympathy for Jesus much like the great multitude of the people and the women, but Jesus Christ needs no sympathy. The *Via Dolorosa*, "the way of suffering" and Christ's death is not for us to pity or for us merely to have sympathy for in our sinfully condescending way!

No the *Via Dolorosa* and the death of Christ is a specific final offering of the Lamb of God for His own. God's people respond to God's Work in the Perfect Suffering of Jesus Christ by repenting and believing by faith that Christ died specifically for their sins.

Those who reject Jesus Christ should not weep for Him- -but rather for themselves and for their children. For the wrath of God is coming and all mankind must suffer for their eternal debt of sins and cosmic treason against God.

Jesus is the Suffering Savior-King-Messiah who has suffered and died in the place of those who believe; their sinful debts have all been paid, and now there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus!

Hebrews 10:9-14: "Behold, I have come to do your will." He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ¹ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Through the Second Adam, through Abraham's Greater Son, through a Greater sacrifice than Isaac and blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel, Christ died for His own and redeems all who believe who have lived lives of fear of death, and enslaved to hell and the devil.

The final Exodus has come- -not merely an exodus from Egypt but an exodus from the very grave itself!

Through Jesus Christ, the *Via Dolorosa* the “way of suffering” becomes the narrow way that leads to life in God’s blessed presence and kingdom for eternity.

For those who would still reject Christ, Christ does not represent them on His *Via Dolorosa* and so it becomes their way of suffering for eternity.

Hebrews 13:8-16: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³ Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come. ¹⁵ Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Thanks be to God for His Word! Thanks be to God for His Christ!

Grant Almighty God, that we see our whole salvation and all its parts comprehended in Christ.

If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that its is “of him”;

If we seek any gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in Jesus’ anointing;

If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion and power;

If we seek purity, it is in Jesus’ conception;

If we seek gentleness, it appears in Jesus’ birth. For by his birth, he was made like us in all respects, that he might learn to feel our pain.

If we seek redemption, it lies in Jesus’ passion; if acquittal, in Jesus’ condemnation; if remission of the curse, in Jesus’ cross; if satisfaction, in Jesus’ sacrifice; if purification, in Jesus’ blood; if reconciliation, in Jesus’ descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in Jesus’ tomb.

If we seek newness of life or immortality, it is in Jesus’ resurrection; if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in Jesus’ entrance into heaven.

If we seek protection, security, if abundant supply of all blessings, these are found in Jesus’ Kingdom.

In short, since riches of every kind of good abounds in Jesus, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other!

We pray dear Father that we may truly know this day that Jesus was put to death for our sins and raised for our justification.

We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

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Scripture Lesson

^{ESV} **Psalm 22:1** TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE DOE OF THE DAWN. A PSALM OF DAVID. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? ² O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. ³ Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises¹ of Israel. ⁴ In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. ⁵ To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. ⁷ All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" ⁹ Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother's breasts. ¹⁰ On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother's womb you have been my God. ¹¹ Be

not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. ¹² Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; ¹³ they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. ¹⁴ I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; ¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet ¹⁷ I can count all my bones- they stare and gloat over me; ¹⁸ they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far off! O you my help, come quickly to my aid! ²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog! ²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued¹ me from the horns of the wild oxen! ²² I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you: ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel! ²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him. ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will perform before those who fear him. ²⁶ The afflicted¹ shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD! May your hearts live forever! ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you. ²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations. ²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, even the one who could not keep himself alive. ³⁰ Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; ³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

Psalm 31