

3/29/15

(PALM SUNDAY)

TITLE: **THE CROSS: THE PULPIT OF GOD'S LOVE**

TEXT: MATTHEW 27:45-51A

INTRODUCTION: (1) I READ A BOOK ABOUT 3 YEARS AGO BY IAN MURRAY, MY FAVORITE BIOGRAPHER, WHOM I JUST HEARD A FEW WEEKS AGO SPEAK AT SHEPHERD'S CONFERENCE, **TITLED: "THE OLD EVANGELICALISM." (IT WAS A GOOD READ)**

*** CHAPTER 4 OF THIS BOOK IS TITLED: "THE CROSS – THE PULPIT OF GOD'S LOVE."**

**** NOW THAT TITLE INTRIGUED ME AT THAT TIME AND IS TAKEN FROM A QUOTE FROM AUGUSTINE WHERE HE SAID: "THE CROSS WAS A PULPIT IN WHICH CHRIST PREACHED HIS LOVE TO THE WORLD."**

*** NOW THAT QUOTE IN A CONCISE WAY EXPRESSES THE GREAT SERMON, THE GREAT PROCLAMATION, THE GREAT MESSAGE THAT WAS PREACHED FROM AN UNUSUAL RUGGED NON-POLISHED PULPIT UNLIKE THE BEAUTIFUL PULPIT I AM PREACHING FROM TODAY.

**** BUT THAT PULPIT, THE CROSS, WAS A MAGNIFICENT PULPIT, FOR ON ITS ANGULAR FRAME, A PLACE WHERE CAPITAL PUNISHMENT TOOK PLACE, THE GREATEST SERMON THE WORLD HAS EVER KNOWN WAS PREACHED.

(2) AND UNLIKE MOST SERMONS, WHOSE SIGNIFICANCE LIES IN WHAT IS SAID, THIS SERMON WAS IMPORTANT BECAUSE OF WHAT WAS DONE, THE GOD-MAN, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST DIED AND PURCHASED FORGIVENESS FOR UNWORTHY SINNERS LIKE ME.

* HENCE, THE CROSS PREACHES THE GREATNESS **OF GOD'S LOVE. IT** IS A PULPIT OF LOVE. THE CROSS IS A COMMUNICATION FROM ABOVE OF AN INFINITE, GREAT, IMMUTABLE LOVE FROM GOD.

* AND THE MESSAGE FROM THE PULPIT OF THE CROSS IS PROFOUND, IT IS MIND BOGGLING, IT **IS FROM HUMAN INTELLECT ON IT'S OWN** INCOMPREHENSIBLE, UNFATHOMABLE.

**** FOR IN GOD'S GREAT LOVE FOR SINNERS WE** SEE THE ACTION OF LOVE, AN OUTPOURING OF DIVINE JUDGMENT AGAINST THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, NOT BECAUSE HE DESERVED THAT JUDGMENT, HE WAS SINLESS, BUT BECAUSE HE BORE IT ON BEHALF OF THOSE WHOM HE WOULD REDEEM, HIS ELECT.

*** AND THAT WAS A PURPOSE OF THE TRINITY IN ETERNITY PAST, TO REDEEM UNWORTHY SINNERS, TO SAVE PEOPLE FROM THEIR SINS, TO GLORIFY GOD IN HIS GRACE, IN HIS JUSTICE, IN HIS MERCY AND IN HIS LOVE.

**** NOW IN FULFILLING THAT PLAN OF THE GODHEAD, WHAT KEPT GOD THE SON ON THE CROSS? WELL, IT WAS NOT THE NAILS, IT WAS NOT THE ROMAN GOVT.

(3) IT WAS THE SON'S OBEDIENCE TO HIS FATHER AND LOVE FOR SINNERS. AND HIS FATHER'S WRATH WOULD BE APPEASED AND WHAT KEPT HIM ON THE CROSS WAS LOVE FOR PEOPLE HE WOULD REDEEM AND LOVE FROM HIS FATHER WHO SENT HIM ON THIS MISSION, QUOTE I JOHN 4:9&10. (THE ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS)

* AND THE TRUTH IS ON THE CROSS, CHRIST BECAME SIN FOR US, HE SATISFIED THE **DEMANDS OF GOD'S HOLY JUSTICE AND WRATH FOR SIN, BEARING HIS PEOPLE'S SINS.**

** AND EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN KNOWS THAT CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS. AND THAT TRUTH AND FACT IS VERY VERY RICH AND ONLY IN HEAVEN WILL WE FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS FULL PROFUNDITY.

*** BUT IN THE TRIALS AND DISTRACTIONS OF OUR DAILY LIVES, MANY OF US ARE INCLINED TO TAKE THE MESSAGE DELIVERED FROM THE PULPIT OF THE CROSS FOR GRANTED, AND WITH EVERYDAY LIFE AND TRIALS, SOMETIMES IT GETS OBSCURED, IT BECOMES A COLD FACT.

**** **AS ONE AUTHOR SAID: "WE MISTAKENLY THINK OF IT AS ONE OF THE ELEMENTARY FACTS OF OUR FAITH." AND SOMETIMES IT BECOMES A COLD FACT WHERE IT IS NOT WARMING OUR HEARTS.**

(4) HOWEVER THE LORD HAS GIVEN HIS CHURCH AN ORDINANCE TO REMIND US OF THE CROSS, SO THAT WE NOT TAKE IT FOR GRANTED, A FORGET ME NOT FEAST OF THE SOUL, THE **LORD'S SUPPER, WHICH WE'LL** CELEBRATE TODAY.

* AND EVERY TIME WE CELEBRATE IT WE ARE TAKEN BACK TO THE MESSAGE PREACHED FROM **THE PULPIT OF GOD'S LOVE – THE CROSS.**

** AND BELOVED OUR RESPONSE TO THIS PROFOUND SERMON SHOULD BE NOT ONLY GRATEFULNESS AND OUR LOVE MANIFEST BY OBEDIENCE, BUT OUR HIGHEST THOUGHTS **SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S** LOVE IN THE CROSS.

*** AND BELIEVER, IT IS A SUBJECT WE CAN ILL AFFORD TO NEGLECT OR TREAT LIGHTLY. OUR FOCUS SHOULD REGULARLY BE UPON THIS SERMON.

**** FOR WHEN I THINK OF THE CROSS, I RESPOND WITH THE QUESTION WHY? WHY WOULD GOD DO THIS?

(5) AND I KNOW THE BIBLICAL ANSWER, BUT I STILL COME BACK TO WHY. WHY WOULD GOD SEND HIS SON TO DIE FOR HIS ENEMIES, FOR SINNERS, FOR REBELS FOR BEINGS THAT AT EVERY TURN REBEL AGAINST HIS HOLY AUTHORITY AND WILL.

*** AND I RESPOND IT WAS GOD'S LOVE.**
HOWEVER **KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S GREAT LOVE**
IS FAR BEYOND THE CAPABILITY OF HUMAN
REASON AND EXPERIENCE.

**** FOR ONLY THROUGH THE SPIRIT'S WORKING**
WITHIN US TEACHING US THE SCRIPTURE CAN
WE START TO SCRATCH THE SURFACE OF
UNDERSTANDING **GOD'S GREAT HOLY LOVE FOR**
SINNERS.

*** NOW WITH THAT SAID, THE CROSS WAS A
MIRACLE. BUT NOT ONLY WAS THE CROSS A
MIRACLE IN ITSELF THAT IT HAPPENED, BUT
ALSO SOME OF THE EVENTS THAT SURROUNDED
THE CROSS WERE MIRACLES.

**** AND IN A SENSE THESE MIRACLES ARE
ROOTED IN GOD'S LOVE. IT IS TO SAY, THE
MIRACLES OF THE CROSS COMMUNICATE THE
HEART OF GOD AND SOME OF THE MEANING
AND MESSAGE OF THE CROSS, THE PULPIT OF
GOD'S LOVE.

(6) THUS **I'VE** TITLED OUR SERMON FOR TODAY,
"THE CROSS: THE PULPIT OF GOD'S LOVE."

*** AND UNDER THAT TITLE WE'RE GOING TO LOOK**
AT 4 MIRACLES THAT ILLUSTRATE THE MEANING
AND MESSAGE OF THE CROSS, AND THAT
ULTIMATELY ILLUSTRATE GOD'S LOVE.

** AND OUR OUTLINE IS SIMPLY IN 4 POINTS
TODAY AND THEY ARE ILLUSTRATION AND
MIRACLE NUMBERS 1-4.

*** AND WITH THOSE POINTS BEFORE US, LOOK
AT MATTHEW 27:45 PLEASE WHERE WE'LL SEE
OUR FIRST POINT, ILLUSTRATION AND MIRACLE
NUMBER 1.

I. ILLUSTRATION AND MIRACLE NO. 1, (READ
MATTHEW 27:45)

A. NOW WHEN JESUS WAS BORN, THE NIGHT
SKY AROUND BETHLEHEM WAS FILLED WITH
SUPERNATURAL LIGHT AS 'THE GLORY OF THE
LORD SHONE AROUND" THE SHEPHERDS IN THE
FIELD, IN LUKE 2:9. THERE WAS BRILLIANT
LIGHT.

*** THEN LATER JOHN SPOKE OF JESUS AS "THE LIGHT OF MEN" AND "THE TRUE LIGHT WHICH, COMING INTO THE WORLD, ENLIGHTENS EVERY MAN" IN JOHN 1:4 & 9.**

**** BEYOND THAT JESUS SPOKE OF HIMSELF AS "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" JOHN 8:12 (QUOTE IT).**

1. SO JESUS WAS LIGHT AND THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE FIRST MIRACULOUS SIGN THAT **ACCOMPANIED JESUS' DEATH** ON THE CROSS WAS NOT GLORIOUS LIGHT BUT DEEP DARKNESS.

*** NOW ACCORDING TO V. 45, FROM THE SIXTH HOUR WHICH IS NOON, WHEN THE SUN IS AT IT'S ZENITH, DARKNESS FELL UPON ALL THE LAND UNTIL THE 9TH HOUR WHICH WAS 3:00 P.M.**

**** AND IF YOU RECALL JESUS' CRUCIFIXION HAD**
BEGUN AT THE THIRD HOUR OR 9:00 A.M.
ACCORDING TO MARK 15:25, SO WHEN THE
DARKNESS BEGAN JESUS HAD BEEN ON THE
CROSS FOR 3 HOURS.

2. NOW AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND 3
HOURS THE GREAT MIRACLE OF DARKNESS FELL
UPON ALL THE LAND.

* AND WHETHER THIS DARKNESS FELL UPON
ALL THE LAND OF ISRAEL OR THE WHOLE
WORLD, WE DO NOT KNOW. THE FATHER COULD
HAVE DONE IT EITHER WAY, HE'S NOT LIMITED
IN HIS POWER, **HE'S OMNIPOTENT, HE'S ALL-**
MIGHTY!!

**** BUT REGARDLESS OF ITS EXTENT, THE**
DARKNESS OF THE SUN FROM 12 TO 3 WAS BY
THE SUPERNATURAL INTERVENTION OF
ALMIGHTY GOD.

*** IN FACT, DURING THAT 3 HOUR PERIOD, LUKE EXPLAINS THAT THE SUN WAS OBSCURED, IN LUKE 23:45.

3. AND I DON'T HAVE TIME TO DEVELOP

WHETHER THE FATHER USED CLOUDS TO MAKE IT DARK, OR WHETHER THERE WAS AN ECLIPSE, OR THAT GOD JUST PUT HIS HAND IN FRONT OF THE SUN, BUT WHATEVER WAY HE DID IT, FOR 3 HOURS THERE WAS DARKNESS.

* AND APPROPRIATELY SO. FOR WHAT MANKIND DID IN NAILING THE INNOCENT SINLESS SON OF GOD TO A CROSS WAS A DARK DEED THAT THE FATHER WOULD USE IN HIS PLAN TO SAVE PEOPLE, ALL KINDS.

* NOW TWO QUICK THINGS BEFORE I MOVE ON, NO. 1 THE DARKNESS WAS NOTICED BY AT LEAST ONE PAGAN WRITER.

** FOR PHLEGON, A ROMAN ASTRONOMER, SPEAKING OF THE 14TH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF TIBERIUS, WHICH IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE YEAR **IN WHICH OUR SAVIOR DIED SAID, "THAT THE GREATEST ECLIPSE OF THE SUN THAT WAS EVER KNOWN HAPPENED THEN, FOR THE DAY WAS SO TURNED INTO NIGHT THAT THE STARS APPEARED."**

*** AND BELOVED IT WAS SO DARK THAT YOU COULD FEEL IT.

4. NOW THE QUESTION COMES UP AT THIS POINT, WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DARKNESS?

* WELL, THE PURPOSE FOR THE DARKNESS IS NOT EXPLAINED IN THE GOSPELS OR ELSEWHERE IN SCRIPTURE, BUT ACCORDING TO THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD MANY RABBIS HAD LONG TAUGHT THAT DARKENING OF THE SUN WAS A JUDGMENT OF GOD ON THE WORLD FOR AN UNUSUALLY HEINOUS SIN.

**** NOW, IF THAT WAS GOD'S INTENTION AT THE**
CRUCIFIXION, HE PRESENTED A GIGANTIC
OBJECT LESSON TO THE WORLD REGARDING THE
GREATEST SIN EVER COMMITTED BY FALLEN
MANKIND.

*** YET LET ME ADD SOME INTERPRETERS HAVE
SUGGESTED THE DARKNESS WAS A MEANS OF
GOD'S CASTING A GREAT VEIL OVER THE
SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

**** AND OTHERS THAT IT WAS AN ACT OF
DIVINE FATHERLY SYMPATHY GIVEN TO COVER
THE NAKEDNESS AND DISHONORING OF HIS
SON.

5. BUT IN LIGHT OF MANY SCRIPTURAL
TEACHINGS AND EVENTS, IT WOULD SEEM THAT
THE CRUCIFIXION WAS INDEED A MARK OF
DIVINE JUDGMENT.

* FOR MANY REFERENCES IN THE O.T. AND N.T. TIE TOGETHER DARKNESS AND GOD'S JUDGMENT. SCRIPTURES LIKE ISAIAH 5:30, ISAIAH 13:10&11, JOEL 2:2, ZEPHANIAH 1:14&15, II PETER 2:4, JUDE V. 6, AND MATTHEW 8:12, 22:13 AND 25:30.

** AND BELOVED THE CROSS WAS A PLACE OF IMMENSE DIVINE JUDGMENT, WHERE THE SINS OF SINNERS WERE Poured OUT ON THE **SINLESS, PERFECT SON OF GOD, AND GOD'S** LOVE WAS ON DISPLAY IN THIS JUDGMENT. THE **CROSS WAS THE PULPIT OF GOD'S LOVE.**

*** IT WAS THEREFORE APPROPRIATE THAT GREAT SUPERNATURAL DARKNESS EXPRESS **GOD'S REACTION TO SIN IN THAT ACT OF** JUDGMENT. AND THAT WAS MIRACLE NO. 1. NOW ILLUSTRATION AND MIRACLE NO. 2 STARTS IN V. 46. SO PLEASE LOOK AT V. 46.

II. ILLUSTRATION AND MIRACLE NO. 2, (READ V. 46)

A. NOW A SECOND MIRACLE OCCURRED AT THE **NINTH HOUR OR 3 O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON.**

* AND AT THAT TIME JESUS CRIED OUT WITH A **LOUD VOICE SAYING, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACTHANI."** AND MATTHEW EXPLAINS THE HEBREW MEANING OF THAT PHRASE WHICH WAS, MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAS THOU FORSAKEN ME?

** NOW IN THIS UNIQUE AND STRANGE MIRACLE, JESUS WAS CRYING OUT IN ANGUISH BECAUSE OF THE SEPARATION HE NOW EXPERIENCED FROM HIS FATHER FOR THE FIRST TIME AND ONLY TIME OF ETERNITY.

*** IN FACT, IT IS THE ONLY TIME OF WHICH WE HAVE RECORD THAT JESUS DID NOT ADDRESS GOD AS FATHER.

1. THE REASON BEING, JESUS HAD TAKEN SIN UPON HIMSELF, SO THE FATHER TURNED HIS BACK. THERE WAS NO COMMUNION AT THAT TIME.

* AND THAT MYSTERY IS SO GREAT AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT MARTIN LUTHER IS SAID TO HAVE GONE INTO SECLUSION FOR A LONG TIME TRYING TO UNDERSTAND IT AND CAME AWAY AS CONFUSED AS WHEN HE BEGAN.

** AND BELOVED, THE GOD MAN JESUS WAS SEPARATED FROM GOD THE FATHER FOR A BRIEF TIME AT CALVARY, AS THE FURIOUS WRATH OF THE FATHER WAS Poured OUT ON THE SINLESS SON, WHO IN MATCHLESS GRACE BECAME SIN FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM.

*** NOW WHY DID THE FATHER HAVE TO TURN HIS BACK ON HIS SON? WELL, HABAKKUK **DECLARED OF GOD IN HABAKKUK 1:13, "THINE EYES ARE TOO PURE TO APPROVE EVIL, AND THOU CANST NOT LOOK ON WICKEDNESS WITH FAVOR."**

2. SO GOD TURNED HIS BACK WHEN JESUS WAS ON THE CROSS BECAUSE HE COULD NOT LOOK UPON SIN, AND JESUS BECAME THE SIN OFFERING, HE BECAME THE SUBSTITUTE SACRIFICE FOR SINNERS.

* THE FATHER FORSOOK THE SON BECAUSE THE SON TOOK UPON HIMSELF OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, OUR INIQUITIES, ISAIAH 53:5, ROMANS 4:25, I CORINTHIANS 15:3, II CORINTHIANS 5:21, I PETER 2:24, I JOHN 4:10 (QUOTE THEM).

** NOW UNDERSTAND THIS, JESUS CHRIST NOT **ONLY BORE HIS PEOPLE'S SINS** ON THE CROSS, **BUT ACTUALLY BECAME SIN ON HIS PEOPLE'S** BEHALF, IN ORDER THAT THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM MIGHT BE SAVED FROM THE PENALTY OF THEIR SIN.

*** GOD WAS PUNISHING HIS OWN SON AS IF HE HAD COMMITTED EVERY WICKED DEED DONE BY EVERY SINNER WHO WOULD BELIEVE AND HE DID IT SO THAT HE COULD FORGIVE AND TREAT THOSE REDEEMED ONES AS IF THEY HAD LIVED **CHRIST'S PERFECT LIFE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

*** AND FOLKS, JESUS CAME TO TEACH MEN PERFECTLY ABOUT GOD AND TO BE A PERFECT **EXAMPLE OF GOD'S HOLINESS AND** RIGHTEOUSNESS.

3. BUT AS HE HIMSELF DECLARED, THE SUPREME REASON FOR HIS COMING TO EARTH WAS NOT TO TEACH OR TO BE AN EXAMPLE AS HE WAS, **BUT "TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY", MATTHEW 20:28** – EVEN AS THE SON OF MAN CAME NOT TO BE SERVED.

* SO IN ESSENCE ON CALVARY, ON THE CROSS, GOD WAS SEPARATED FROM GOD, GOD DIED FOR GOD AND GOD DIED FOR HIS PEOPLE. AND ALTHOUGH THE PHYSICAL PAIN OF CRUCIFIXION AND THE THINGS THAT LED UP TO IT WERE TERRIBLE, THE PAINFUL LOSS OF FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS FATHER BY BECOMING THE SIN OFFERING WAS A GREAT MIRACLE AND MYSTERY. AGAIN WHAT LOVE!

** AND IN THIS TIME OF SEPARATION, OF GREAT **PAIN, MAN'S DEPRAVITY AND SIN IS BROUGHT** OUT AGAIN IN V. 47. LOOK AT IT PLEASE.

B. READ V. 47. NOW THE SAYING OF SOME **PEOPLE AROUND THE CROSS, "THIS MAN IS CALLING FOR ELIJAH" WAS NOT CONJECTURE** ABOUT WHAT JESUS SAID, BUT WAS SIMPLY AN EXTENSION OF THEIR CRUEL CYNICAL MOCKERY.

* AND MOST LIKELY IT WAS NO MISTAKE. FOR JEWISH BELIEF WAS ELIJAH WOULD COME BEFORE THE MESSIAH AND JESUS CLAIMED TO **BE THE MESSIAH, AND SINCE GOD WOULDN'T** HELP HIM, MAYBE ELIJAH WOULD.

** AND **ALTHOUGH I DON'T HAVE THE TIME TO** DEVELOP THIS VERSE, THESE PEOPLE WERE KICKING JESUS WHILE HE WAS GOING THROUGH THE DARKEST TIME OF ALL ETERNITY. (AND **MAN'S SINFULNESS AND CHRIST'S LOVE IN** DYING FOR SINNERS ARE CONTRASTED HERE).

** NOW LOOK AT V. 48 PLEASE AS WE SEE AN ACT OF COMPASSION IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING, ANOTHER CONTRAST.

C. READ V. 48. NOW SOON AFTER JESUS CRIED OUT TO GOD ABOUT BEING FORSAKEN, **ACCORDING TO JOHN'S GOSPEL IN JOHN 19:28,** AS WE COMPARE MATTHEW AND JOHN, THE NEXT THING THAT HAPPENED WAS JESUS CRIED OUT **"I THIRST"**.

*** AND ALTHOUGH MATTHEW DOESN'T RECORD** IT HERE, JOHN DOES, AND IN RESPONSE TO THAT, SOMEONE RAN TO GET JESUS A DRINK.

****** NOW THE ONE WHO RAN TO HELP JESUS WAS PROBABLY ONE OF THE ROMAN MILITARY GUARDS, AND BY TAKING A SPONGE AND FILLING IT WITH SOUR WINE, HE MOST LIKELY HOPED TO TEMPORARILY TAKE CARE OF JESUS THIRST.

******* AND OFFERING THE DRINK TO JESUS WAS PERHAPS AN ACT OF MERCY, OTHERS WOULD SAY IT WAS MERE MOCKING, BUT WAS MINIMAL IN ITS EFFECT AND SERVED ONLY TO PROLONG THE TORTURE BEFORE DEATH BROUGHT RELIEF, IT WAS A MOCKING KIND OF PURPOSE.

1. BUT GET THIS, THE REST OF THOSE STANDING NEAR THE CROSS USED THAT GESTURE OF POSSIBLE KINDNESS AS ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO CARRY THEIR MOCKERY OF OUR LORD STILL FURTHER, SAYING, **"LET US SEE WHETHER ELIJAH WILL COME TO SAVE HIM"**. LOOK AT V. 49 PLEASE.

D. READ V. 49. NOW IT SEEMS INCREDIBLE THAT EVEN THE PITCH DARKNESS OF MIDDAY DID NOT ALARM THE WICKED CROWD.

* THEY WERE SO BENT ON SCORNING JESUS THAT EVEN SUCH A MOMENTOUS PHENOMENON AS THE BLOCKING OUT OF THE SUN DID NOT DETER THEM.

** UNFORTUNATELY THE SINGLE THOUGHT NOW **ON THEIR MINDS WAS TO MAKE JESUS' DEATH PAINFUL AND HUMILIATING**. THEY HAD NO COMPREHENSION OF THE AMAZING ALIENATION OF THE SON FROM THE FATHER, MIRACLE NO. 2 AT THE CROSS.

*** WHICH LEADS US TO ILLUSTRATION AND MIRACLE NO. 3. LOOK AT V. 50 PLEASE.

III. ILLUSTRATION AND MIRACLE NO. 3, (READ V. 50)

A. NOW THE MIRACLE FOUND IN V. 50 IS ARTICULATED AND SUMMARIZED BY AUGUSTINE WHO SAID ABOUT JESUS IN THIS **VERSE**: **"HE GAVE UP HIS LIFE BECAUSE HE WILLED IT, WHEN HE WILLED IT, AND AS HE WILLED IT."** (END QUOTE)

* AND THE MIRACLE IS JESUS DIED AT THE EXACT MOMENT HE DECIDED. JESUS DID NOT GRADUALLY FADE AWAY, FOR EVEN THOUGH HE HAD SUFFERED PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY AS THE SIN OFFERING, HE HAD THE RESOURCES TO STAY ALIVE IF HE SO DESIRED.

** SPIRITUALLY AND AUTHORITY WISE HE COULD HAVE CALLED 10,000 ANGELS, BEYOND THAT **AND HE'S THE CREATOR**, THEREFORE THE CREATOR IS CRUCIFIED BY HIS CREATION.

*** AND PHYSICALLY, HE STILL HAD STRENGTH, **FOR WHAT DOES V. 50 SAY, "HE CRIED OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE". IN OTHER WORDS THIS WAS NOT THE LAST BREATH OF A DEFEATED, NEAR DEATH INDIVIDUAL, BUT THE VICTORIOUS CRY OF A VICTORIOUS SAVIOR.**

1. FOR THE WORDS THE LORD CRIED OUT FROM THE CROSS WERE FIRST CHRONOLOGICALLY **"IT IS FINISHED" ACCORDING TO JOHN 19:30,** INDICATING THAT THE WORK HIS FATHER HAD SENT HIM TO ACCOMPLISH WAS COMPLETE, MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, QUOTE 19:30.

*** NOW RIGHT AFTER JESUS SAID "IT IS FINISHED", HE CRIED OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE ACCORDING TO LUKE 23:46, "FATHER IN THY HAND I COMMIT MY SPIRIT."**

** SO JESUS DIED AT THE EXACT TIME HE WANTED. HE YIELDED UP HIS SPIRIT. AND THE GREEK VERB FOR "YIELDING UP" IN MATTHEW 27:50 HAS THE BASIC MEANING OF LETTING GO OR SENDING AWAY, INDICATING AN ACT OF VOLITION.

***** AND BELOVED JESUS' LIFE WAS NOT TAKEN** FROM HIM BY MEN BUT RATHER HE SURRENDERED HIS SPIRIT BY THE CONSCIOUS ACT OF HIS SOVEREIGN WILL IN LOVE DYING FOR SINNERS.

2. AND AS HE EXPLAINED TO HIS DISCIPLES IN JOHN 10:18, NO ONE COULD OR WOULD TAKE HIS LIFE FROM HIM.

*** FOR JESUS SAID, "I LAY IT DOWN ON MY OWN INITIATIVE. I HAVE AUTHORITY TO LAY IT DOWN, AND I HAVE AUTHORITY TO TAKE IT UP AGAIN."**

** AND LET ME ADD JESUS DIED MUCH SOONER THAN NORMAL FOR A CROSS VICTIM, EVEN THOUGH HE HAD A RESERVE OF ENERGY TO CRY OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE FROM THE CROSS.

*** IN FACT, WHEN JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA **INFORMED PILATE OF JESUS' DEATH AND ASKED** FOR HIS BODY, THE GOVERNOR WAS SURPRISED AND ASKED A CENTURION TO GIVE VERIFICATION ACCORDING TO MARK 15:43-45.

**** FOR CROSS VICTIMS, DEATH NORMALLY CAME FROM SLOW SUFFOCATION AND WOULD **TAKE SOME TIME. THE PERSON'S BODY WOULD** HANG IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE DIAPHRAGM WAS SEVERELY CONSTRICTED.

- SO IN ORDER TO EXHALE, THE PERSON WOULD HAVE TO PUSH UP WITH THE FEET SO THE DIAPHRAGM WOULD HAVE ROOM TO MOVE.

* ULTIMATELY FATIGUE, INTENSE PAIN, OR MUSCLE ATROPHY WOULD RENDER THE VICTIM UNABLE TO DO THIS, AND THEY WOULD FINALLY DIE FROM THE LACK OF OXYGEN.

** SO ONCE STRENGTH OR FEELING IN THE LEGS WAS GONE, THE VICTIM WOULD BE UNABLE TO PUSH UP IN ORDER TO BREATHE, AND DEATH WOULD OCCUR QUICKLY. AFTER THAT, BUT IT COULD TAKE SOMETIMES DAYS FOR THIS PROCESS, AND SOMETIMES THEY WOULD LEAVE THEIR ROTTING BODIES HANGING THERE TO BE DEVoured BY VULTURES AFTER THEY DIED.

*** NOW WHEN THEY WANTED TO SPEED UP THE PROCESS FOR DEATH, THE ROMANS SOMETIMES PRACTICED WHAT WAS CALLED CRUCIFRACTURE, THE BREAKING OF THE LEGS BELOW THE KNEES, AND THEY DID THIS WHEN THEY WANTED TO HASTEN THE DEATH PROCESS, WHICH THEY DID TO THE TWO THIEVES CRUCIFIED WITH JESUS IN JOHN 19:31&32.

***** NOW THEY DIDN'T DO THAT TO JESUS. NO.**

1 IN PSALM 34:20 THE PROPHECY GIVEN ABOUT HIM WAS NOT A BONE OF HIS BODY WOULD BE BROKEN.

3. AND NO. 2 THE POINT I WANT TO MAKE AGAIN IS JESUS DIED VOLUNTARILY AT THE EXACT MOMENT HE PLANNED DISMISSING HIS OWN SPIRIT IN VICTORY, HE WAS NOT A VICTIM BUT A VICTOR!

* FOR THE WORK OF SACRIFICE WAS COMPLETE, **"IT IS FINISHED". SO THE MIRACLE IS JESUS** DIED VOLUNTARILY, WHEN HE WANTED, AND WILLINGLY SURRENDERED HIS LIFE IN LOVE AS A PENALTY FOR SIN.

** HE GAVE UP HIS LIFE BECAUSE HE WILLED IT, WHEN HE WILLED IT, AND AS HE WILLED IT. WHICH LEADS US TO THE LAST ILLUSTRATION **AND MIRACLE WE'LL STUDY TODAY, LOOK AT V. 51A PLEASE.**

IV. ILLUSTRATION AND MIRACLE NO. 4, (READ
V. 51A)

A. NOW THE FOURTH MIRACLE THAT OCCURRED DURING THE CRUCIFIXION WAS THE TEARING OF THE VEIL OF THE TEMPLE IN TWO FROM TOP TO BOTTOM.

* AND THIS WAS NO SMALL MIRACLE, FOR ACCORDING TO THE RABBIS THIS CURTAIN WAS A HANDBREATH IN THICKNESS - 2 ½ - 4 INCHES, AND WOVEN OF SEVENTY-TWO TWISTED PLAITS, EACH PLAIT CONSISTING OF 24 THREADS. AND IT WAS 60 FEET LONG AND 30 FEET WIDE.

** NOW THIS MASSIVE CURTAIN SEPARATED THE HOLY PLACE FROM THE HOLY OF HOLIES, THE INNER SANCTUARY, WHERE GOD DWELT IN HIS SYMBOLIC PRESENCE IN THE JEWISH TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM.

1. AND ONCE A YEAR THE HIGH PRIEST OF ISRAEL WAS ALLOWED TO PASS THROUGH THIS VEIL ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT TO SPRINKLE BLOOD ON THE ALTAR FOR THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE.

* AND THIS RITUAL HAD TO BE REPEATED EVERY YEAR, ANTICIPATING THE ONE, TRUE SACRIFICE FOR SINS THAT THE SON OF GOD HIMSELF ONE DAY WOULD OFFER.

** AND WHEN CHRIST YIELDED UP HIS SPIRIT, THAT ONCE-FOR-ALL SACRIFICE WAS COMPLETED SO THE NEED FOR THE VEIL NO LONGER EXISTED.

*** AND THERE IS NO MORE NEED FOR SACRIFICE FOR JESUS IS NOW THE HIGH PRIEST, HEBREWS 10:10, 12-14.

**** AND BELIEVER UNDERSTAND BY COMING TO CHRIST, ANY PERSON COULD NOW COME TO GOD DIRECTLY, WITHOUT NEED OF A PRIEST, SACRIFICE OR RITUAL.

2. CONSEQUENTLY, THE VEIL WAS TORN IN TWO **FROM TOP TO BOTTOM BY GOD'S MIRACULOUS** ACT, BECAUSE THE BARRIER OF SIN WAS FOREVER REMOVED FOR THOSE WHO PUT THEIR TRUST IN CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR.

* AND BELOVED, THE FACT THAT THIS RIPPING OCCURRED FROM TOP TO BOTTOM SIGNIFIED THAT GOD IS THE ONE WHO RIPPED THE THICK CURTAIN.

** IT WAS NOT TORN FROM THE BOTTOM, THE ONLY WAY MAN COULD RIP IT, BUT FROM THE TOP, THROUGH GOD ALMIGHTY RIPPING IT.

*** AND BY RENDING THE TEMPLE VEIL, GOD WAS SAYING IN EFFECT, **"IN THE DEATH OF MY SON, JESUS CHRIST, THERE IS TOTAL ACCESS INTO MY HOLY PRESENCE FOR JEW AND GENTILE."**

**** AND JESUS PAID THE FULL PRICE FOR SIN FOR EVERYONE WHO COMES IN REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

3. AND LET ME QUICKLY ADD THIS, THE **FATHER'S DRAMATIC TEARING** OF THE VEIL WAS MADE WHILE THE TEMPLE WAS FILLED WITH WORSHIPPERS, WHICH INCLUDED NOT ONLY COUNTLESS PRIESTS, BUT ALSO MANY THOUSANDS OF PILGRIMS WHO WERE AT THAT VERY MOMENT CELEBRATING THE PASSOVER SACRIFICE.

* AND WHAT A CLEAR MESSAGE TO THEM, THAT GOD WAS THROUGH WITH THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM, AND THAT THE DEATH OF HIS PASSOVER LAMB WOULD TAKE AWAY THE SINS OF THE WORLD, HIS PEOPLE.

AND BELOVED, AS I WRAP UP THINGS TODAY,
(1) WE SEE FROM THESE MIRACLES ON AND **AROUND THE CROSS, GOD ALMIGHTY'S** COMMENTARY ON THE MESSAGE AND MEANING OF THE CROSS.

* AND THE CROSS TRULY IS THE PULPIT OF **GOD'S LOVE.**

** AND THE MESSAGE, MEANING AND LOVE DISPLAYED ON AND AROUND THE CROSS **SHOULD FILL THE BELIEVER'S HEART WITH PRAISE, WITH GRATITUDE.**

*** IT SHOULD MOVE US TO OBEDIENCE AND SACRIFICIAL LIVING. IT SHOULD LEAD US TO HUMILITY, IT SHOULD LEAD US TO TAKE UP OUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS IN A MORE COMMITTED WAY.

**** FOR AS THE HYMN WRITER ISAAC WATTS SAID **IN HIS HYMN, "WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS - LOVE SO AMAZING, SO DIVINE, DEMANDS MY SOUL, MY LIFE, MY ALL!!**

(2) BEYOND THAT SPURGEON SAID: **"NO SCENE** IN SACRED HISTORY EVER GLADDENS THE SOUL LIKE THE SCENE ON CALVARY. NOWHERE DOES THE SOUL FIND SUCH CONSOLATION AS ON THAT VERY SPOT WHERE MISERY REIGNED, WHERE WOE TRIUMPHED, WHERE AGONY **REACHED ITS CLIMAX."**

* BUT SPURGEON ALSO SAID CONVERSELY, ON **THE OTHER HAND, "THE MOST TERRIBLE** WARNING TO IMPENITENT MAN IN ALL THE WORLD IS THE DEATH OF CHRIST. FOR IF GOD SPARED NOT HIS OWN SON, ON WHOM WAS LAID IMPUTED SIN, WILL HE SPARE SINNERS **WHOSE SINS ARE THEIR OWN?" (END QUOTE)**

** AND THE ANSWER IS NO. AND I TRUST THAT IF YOU HAVE NOT REPENTED AND RECEIVED CHRIST THAT TODAY YOU WILL TURN TO HIM AND CRY OUT FOR FORGIVENESS TO THE ONE WHO SUFFERED ON THE CROSS. THE CROSS **TRULY IS THE PULPIT OF GOD'S LOVE, THAT GOD** IN HIS LOVE SAVES SINNERS. BUT IN CONTRAST - QUOTE HEBREWS 10:31, HEBREWS 12:29. **IT'S** REPENT OR PERISH.

*** BELIEVER, DISCOURAGED, DOWN TRODDEN, DEPRESSED OVER DIFFICULTIES? LOOK TO THE CROSS AND BE REMINDED THAT GOD LOVES US WITH AN INDESCRIBABLE, KNOWLEDGE PASSING, ETERNAL LOVE, AND NOTHING, AND I MEAN NOTHING, CAN SEPARATE YOU FROM HIS LOVE.

**** WHEN DOWN, SET THE CROSS BEFORE YOU, **FOR IT IS THE PULPIT OF GOD'S LOVE! (LET'S PRAY)**