

## INTRODUCTION

## EXPOSITION

- The actual crucifixion had actually begun about 9am in the morning, what would be considered the 3<sup>rd</sup> hour (after 6am, the beginning of the day). **44 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.** In other words, from about noon to 3pm there was a brooding darkness. This seems to indicate something more than a local phenomenon. As a matter of fact, Luke goes on to describe it as **45a the sun was darkened.**
- Imagine the impact that would have among those present. It is one thing, and perhaps we have experienced this on occasions, when in the middle of the day a storm comes overhead. It hangs in the air with an almost tangible sense of its presence. But then, either the storm comes down or even a tornado, or it passes. But this is not a quickly passing phenomenon, but something lasting for three hours up until the time of Jesus' death.
- So the impact on the onlookers would be significant. Unlike the skeptical and merely natural perspectives of our day, the people believed (and rightly so) that there was a higher power than mere natural forces, and that God was involved with this event. The Jews knew this from their Scriptures. They particularly associated this kind of darkness with God's judgment.
- In Exodus 10:21ff we are told of how God commanded Moses to stretch out his hand toward heaven and bring darkness on the land for 3 days as a judgment on Egypt. Unusual darkness of this kind was also particularly associated with "the day of the Lord", which signified God's judgment against human sin. We see this in passages like Joel 2:31 and Amos 8:9.
- With the rich history of Israel, the people would consider this a sign from heaven. You may remember that it was the Pharisees and Sadducees that asked for a "sign from heaven" (Matthew 16:1). Jesus refused to give them one at that time, but now God moves the world in such a way that they have a clear sign.
- There is two ways in which this is likely a sign of judgment. One is that it is a judgment of those responsible for the death of Christ and the nation itself for the rejection of its Messiah. God is very gracious, however, and though He gives the sign of judgment doesn't actually pour out the judgment until 40 years later. It is a warning sign, indicating God's anger.
- There is another, more preliminary way in which this indicates judgment. It is judgment upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in these moments that God is completing the pouring out of His wrath and displeasure upon Jesus who has become the sin offering.
- The pagan Romans would also have associated this darkness with the death of one who was great (Plutarch and Pliny).
- Not only is there this sign in heaven that, but Luke indicates there was another. We are told that **45b the veil of the temple was torn in two.** This veil was made of the fine linen of blue, purple, and scarlet threads and had the images of angels woven into it (Exodus 26:31). According to Jewish Scholar Alfred Edersheim (Book V, p.611), this curtain that separated the holy place from the most holy place was some 30 feet wide by 60 feet tall with the thickness of a man's hand. This was not a little sheet, but a massive piece of material. According to Matthew 27:51 the veil was ripped from top to bottom. We're not sure how this information was obtained, but it seems likely (for this detail) that there was a priest in that place who witnessed it and it became common knowledge.
- This, like the darkness, was a symbol. It is a symbol that the author of Hebrews later picks up on and uses as descriptive of our access to God through the sacrifice of Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22). Jesus is now, by His death, consecrating a new and living way. The veil used to keep people from the Holiest place, direct access to God. But now through His death the priesthood and ritual of the Old Covenant, a necessary but temporary institution, is being abolished by His work.
- Except for the promises Jesus makes to the believing criminal (v.42) Luke records only one saying. We are told that **46 when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' "** What He says, He says for all to hear. With the last bit of energy and power that He has He doesn't proclaim judgment or threat, but rather and cry of trust. He calls upon God, who has forsaken Him because of the sins that He is bearing for the world. As He does so, He calls upon Him as "Father." He continues to maintain that He is the Son of God, and that God in a special way is His Father. Though He had earlier cried "Why have you forsaken Me?" as evidence of God's wrath upon Him, having completed the work He now commits Himself, His Spirit, into the hand of His Father.
- From church history we are told that these dying words were echoed in the dying words of men like Polycarp, Bernard, Luther, and Melancthon as well as other dear saints. They are words of faith, indicating that though one is being consumed by death that that is not the end.
- **Having said this, He breathed His last.** In that moment the God-man, come to earth as Redeemer and Savior, died. The One who gives life and breath to all things breaths His last and passes into the presence of His Father.

- In response to all that has taken place, the heavenly sign of darkness, the prayer for forgiveness of His enemies, as well as what Luke doesn't mention regarding an earthquake, there we are told of a response from the centurion. The centurion, whose title indicates that he was responsible for a group of 100 Roman soldiers, and probably overseer of this whole crucifixion episode, speaks out. His words echo what has been stated numerous times. It says **he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!"**
- We don't know for sure if this man became a Christian, but he recognized what had just happened. It may be that he has been present for all (and certainly for a good part) of this whole process from Pilate's judgment seat and through the day. This Roman soldier, who had likely witnessed 100's of crucifixions and heard the bitter cries of the condemned, realizes that this is a righteous man. It is the equivalent of saying that he was innocent. He was unlike the others, and in making this statement he glorifies God.
- Jesus had said in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:16) "so let your light shine that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
- We are also told that there is a response from **48 the whole crowd who came together to that sight. Seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned.** No longer silent, they are obviously affected by the whole scene. The beating of their breasts was a sign indicating sorrow and repentance. They too realized at that moment that something tragic had taken place. Even unconverted people were able to see this. This is in contrast in the story to the Jewish leaders who by and large remained impenitent and unsorrowful for what they had caused.
- There is special mention here of **49 all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee.** There were apparently a group of people who were His disciples (including John and Joseph of Arimathea) who were present at the crucifixion. They too had watched Jesus dying hours as they **stood at a distance, watching these things.** We can only imagine what kind of things were running through their minds as they watched the One who they had committed to follow indicated by their baptism. What pain caused by love that they surely felt as they watched the Lord Jesus die. Did some feel like all hope was lost? Did some feel like they had been duped? Did some merely feel disappointed, and wondered what they would do now as they return to their homes?
- They apparently didn't understand, by and large, the fact that He would keep His promise of resurrection. There is no indication that they went away thinking "Okay, so now on the day after tomorrow everything will be just fine, He's coming back.

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#### APPLICATION

##### 1.) The mystery of God's ways.

- On this event hangs all the hopes of men to be made right with God and one another. The cross of Jesus is at the center of our faith.
- How do you respond to the cross? With indifference? With ridicule? With a mere sense of its tragedy? Or with faith and hope?

##### 2.) The example we are called as disciples to follow.

- We too are called to live in this way (1Peter 2:12; 2:21-24).
- His trust in God through suffering death and suffering. How do we respond to dark providences and difficulties? With commitment to the God who judges rightly?
- Suffering for righteousness (not self-righteousness) is what we have been called to.
- His response to those who did injustice to Him was not reviling, but trusting in God.
- This is not an unreachable standard, but a calling that with the help of the Holy Spirit, we are called.
- It is only as we gaze into the face of our Savior that we will be transformed into His image.

##### 3.) The reminder that we are crucified with Christ.

- Galatians 6:14 Our boast is in the cross. In doing so, we pledge allegiance to the Savior in our recognition that the world has been crucified to us. The world, as the totality of all that is opposed to God, is reprehensible and ugly and disgusting.