

Text: Matthew 27:45-50

Title: Jesus's Death on the Cross

Truth: The text tells in an unadorned way that Jesus died.

Date/Location: January 11, 2023 at FBC

Introduction

The events of this short section of the Bible span about 6 hours, from 9am until 3pm in the afternoon.

I. Sequence of Events Recorded by Matthew

- A. Darkness from noon until 3pm. Jesus had been hung upon the cross at about 9am. At about noon the land became dark. There was a divinely-timed event that may have been somewhat natural, or miraculous. The text does not tell us the specifics. Darkness is indicative of the gloom of judgment in this scenario. Sometimes darkness is just an absence of light (Gen. 1:2-4), other times an absence of revelation from God (2 Peter 1:19), other times a reference to sin (1 John 1:5-6), but here it signifies judgment. For similar uses of *darkness* see Exodus 10:22, Amos 5:18-20, Zeph. 1:15, 2 Peter 2:17, Jude 6 and 13, Rev. 16:10. Remember the phrase “outer darkness” used by the Lord—it too signifies judgment (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30).
- B. About 3pm, Jesus cried out: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” The translation of this is “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”
- C. Onlookers thought Jesus was calling for Elijah. This was a very bad misunderstanding of what He was saying. The Aramaic is clear, at least in writing. Of course, an error in hearing due to volume or distance, or background noise, could have confused the hearers. “Eli” is two parts: “El” for God and the “i” suffix for the possessive adjective “my.” “Lama” is “why.” The long word *sabachthani* refers to being forsaken, again with an “i” suffix for the first person object “me.”
- D. One person ran to fill a sponge with sour wine and raise it up on a reed to reach to Jesus's mouth. John 19:30 says that Jesus did receive that moisture for his mouth and throat. This is not the

anesthetic, pain-deadening mixture that we read about in Matthew 27:34. That was sour wine mixed with gall. This was to give moisture and extend the life of the crucifixion victim. Perhaps this person thought that Jesus would have more interesting words if He could speak more easily.

- E. Others said to leave Him alone so they could see if Elijah would come to save Him. That was not foreordained to happen. The Lord had said Himself, echoing the Hebrew Scriptures, that Elijah would be a *forerunner* of the Savior, not be himself a savior!
- F. Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and then released His spirit. Mark and Luke record that he “breathed his last” so that we see the timing of His death is tied to his last breathing. He “gave up His spirit” (John 19:30). The content of what He cried out is not recorded by Matthew or Mark. Luke gives us the words (23:46). For that, see the next section of these notes.

II. The Words of Jesus on the Cross

Jesus did not answer the mockers or talk to the soldiers. They did not merit or deserve an answer. But the precious few words Jesus did say are important.

1. Luke 23:28-30. Just before going onto the cross, the Lord said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!’ Then they will begin ‘to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”’ For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?”

What is the explanation of Jesus’s saying here? This is a saying with major eschatological implications. The Lord is speaking of the future. The language He uses is definitely applicable to the end times (see similar language in Hosea 10:8, Rev. 6:16). It appears to be applicable to the near future when “they” who do these things in the green will do it also in the dry. “They” seems to refer to the Romans who are abusing the green (living, young) Jewish man Jesus. They would do even more to the crusty old nation in a few

decades when they destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. (I do not believe this is a case of “multiple fulfillment.” It is a case of “formulaic language” which has gotten into the brains of the faithful Jewish reader of Scripture so that he thinks in terms of that language. Similar situations evoke descriptions that use similar language.

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

Truly the men who put Jesus on the cross and guarded him and took him down were ignorant of the real import of what they were doing and to Whom they were doing it. Had they known, it is doubtful that almost anyone would have touched Jesus, including Pilate and the crowds who demanded Him to be crucified. If for no other reason, superstition should have kept them away from it, yet Pilate was not even swayed by his wife’s insistence that he stay away from Jesus. Ignorance “lets” people do things they otherwise would not do.

Also, this shows Jesus’s amazing selfless character. He did not want them to receive special blame for this particular sin. They had enough sin to condemn them already. I believe the forgiveness requested has to do with the particular incident, not all of these men’s sins altogether. In any case, forgiveness for this incident or any other sin can only be found in the redemption of Jesus Christ.

3. John 19:26-27. “Woman, behold your son!” “Behold your mother!”

Jesus was speaking to Mary in the first place, and to disciple John. This was Jesus telling John to “adopt” His mom to care for her, since His dad had died, and his siblings did not yet believe in Him.

4. Luke 23:43. Probably after noon, Jesus said to one of the two thieves, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

This is another support for our certain expectation that when we die in Christ, we will be *with* Jesus in Paradise, which we understand to be the third heaven, where God dwells.

5. Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34. At about 3pm: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

Jesus was a human being. He was “feeling it” as far as God pouring out His wrath and abandoning Him. This was a true feeling of abandonment. Jesus knew it would not last forever—just like the Psalmist knew it—but it was a real feeling for the moment, not just a phantom or pretend feeling.

6. John 19:28. “I thirst.”

This served to fulfill the pattern of righteous sufferer found in the Old Testament. Psalm 69:21 refers to vinegar (sour wine) which was given as a drink to a sufferer who was calling upon God for help. It likely also served a physical need of moisture to aid in speaking after being parched for more than 6 hours.

Even in the end, Jesus was trusting in God to deliver Him, in the right way and right time.

7. Luke 23:46, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ”

In this statement, the Lord Jesus quotes from Psalm 31:5. This also shows that no one took Jesus’s life from Him. He voluntarily yielded it up (John 10:17-18) at the right time, which in this case was about the time of the evening sacrifice.

8. John 19:30. “It is finished!”

The work of salvation is “paid in full” and completely accomplished. Of course, the matter of burial and resurrection had yet to be done, but it was now all assured. The gift was purchased, and final wrapping was being put on it.

Conclusion

Imagine the suffering of the Lord and express your heartfelt gratitude to Him for going through this for your redemption.

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