

The Crucifixion

Mark 15:33-41

Mark 15:33-41 – *“Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”*

³⁵ *Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, “Look, He is calling for Elijah!” ³⁶ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.”*

³⁷ *And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.*

³⁸ *Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. ³⁹ So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, “Truly this Man was the Son of God!”*

⁴⁰ *There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, ⁴¹ who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem.”*

Background Notes

Verse 33 says that there was darkness over all the land to the ninth hour - from noon to three o'clock. Possibly God used thick clouds to cover the sun to bring about the three hours of darkness. During those three hours of darkness, the judgment of a holy God for our sins fell upon the Lord Jesus Christ. The darkness was real, but it also symbolized God's judgment on sin.

There is extra-biblical evidence for the three hours of darkness. A 1st century non-Christian historian named Thallus, a Samaritan, wrote about the darkness. He tried to explain it away as a natural event, a solar eclipse, but the early Christian writers refuted Thallus. They said that it could not have been a solar eclipse, because the Lord's crucifixion was at the time of the Passover, the time of the full moon.

In verse 34, our Lord's cry, *“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani”* is Aramaic for, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* The more familiar, *“Eli, Eli,”* is from Matthew 27:46. It's the Hebrew translation of *“My God, My God.”*

The loud cry of our Lord in verse 37 was most likely the cry, *“It is finished”* in John 19:30. It certainly was not a last gasp of exhaustion. It was a loud cry of **victory!** The Lord's life was not taken from Him - He gave up His life. It was an act of His own will. *“It is finished!”* was a cry of victory, because the penalty for sin was settled.

The veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (v38). This was the veil, or thick curtain, that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the Temple. What an amazing experience that must have been! This event would have occurred just as the priests were conducting the evening sacrifice. Suddenly they heard the loud noise of a heavy curtain, the veil, being torn in two! Some of them may even have seen it happen. What a tremendous testimony to the finished work of Christ that had just been accomplished – finished - on the cross!

Where did the information about the veil being torn in two come from, since only priests were allowed in the Temple? Most likely it came through the priests who later became Christians (Acts 6:7).

The Roman centurion who observed all that took place saw the way in which our Lord died - with a loud cry. A crucified person usually died from exhaustion and finally suffocation. Our Lord's death was completely different – it was unique. When the Roman centurion saw all this, he declared, *“Truly this Man was the Son of God!”*

You might think that this Roman soldier was thinking and saying that Jesus was a son of one of the Roman gods. But no! Look at Luke 23:47, *“So when the centurion saw what had happened he glorified God.”* This was not a glorification of a pagan Roman god. If this Roman soldier was a pagan, he changed after seeing the death of Jesus! I believe we'll see that Roman centurion in Heaven.

Doctrinal Points

1. ***“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* was not a question of surprise or a cry of despair.**

Why did our Lord ask this question? He was quoting Psalm 22:1. Psalm 22 is a Messianic psalm, concerning the sufferings of the Messiah. The Lord, on the cross, was not just quoting Psalm 22 for encouragement. The Lord fully realized that the suffering He was going through involved His work of atonement on the cross.

In the Garden of Gethsemane our Lord prayed, *“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.”* So the cry, *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* was not a question of surprise or a cry of despair. It was a quotation from Psalm 22, with full understanding of what was required for payment of the penalty of sin.

In a way that we cannot completely understand, God the Father had to forsake, abandon, and turn His back on God the Son as the Lord Jesus suffered and died on the cross for our sins. Christ suffered the judgment of the holy wrath of God against sin.

Jesus was forsaken so that we would not have to be forsaken. He died as our substitute. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* 1 Peter 2:24 says *“He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we having died to sin, might live for righteousness.”*

“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” was not a question of surprise, or a cry of despair. It was the cry of One who had full understanding of the meaning of Psalm 22.

2. Entrance into the Holy of Holies is now permitted - and encouraged!

The fact that the veil of the Temple that separated the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, was torn from top to bottom was not just a supernatural event. It certainly was supernatural, but it was also symbolic. In the Old Testament, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only once a year, on the Day of Atonement. The tearing of the veil at the death of Jesus Christ meant that entrance into the Holy of Holies, the presence of God, is now permitted and **encouraged** for all believers!

Hebrews 10:19-22 says, *“Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”* In other words, the torn veil typified (pictured) our Lord’s broken body. If we didn’t have that inspired statement of the author of Hebrews, we would have never thought that the veil torn from top to bottom typified our Lord’s broken body. As the torn veil opened up the way into the Holy of Holies, so the work of our Lord on the cross has opened up the way into the very presence of God!

Are we availing ourselves of this privilege to enter the Holy of Holies? That’s not only permitted now – it’s actually encouraged! We can enter the presence of God with confidence because of what Christ has done for us. No human pastor or priest is needed; no payment is needed. We can enter the presence of God in worship and praise, with our prayers of thanksgiving, and with our requests.

Some Christians never really catch the concept of this great truth. They’re believers, and they pray, and they thank the Lord - but they never really catch the concept that they can actually enter the presence of God. Entrance into the Holy of Holies, the very presence of God, is now permitted and encouraged!

Practical Application

Let's follow the example of the *women* who followed Christ!

Verses 40-41: *"There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem."*

Where were *the men*? They had fled! So we should follow the example of the **women** who followed Christ. The women remained at the cross to the end, and the women were the first to come to the tomb. What an example for us to follow! Many of these women had come up to Jerusalem believing that Christ was about set up His kingdom, particularly after His triumphal entry. How disappointed and how heartbroken they must have been when the Lord was arrested and crucified. But they still continued on in their faithful devotion to Christ.

The women did what they could. They couldn't take over the Sanhedrin, they couldn't stop the crucifixion, they couldn't fight the Roman soldiers - but they *could* be there to remain with the Lord, and to watch in faithful devotion. And that's what they did. Let's follow the example of the women who followed Christ.

Maybe you think that you can't be of much help in Christian ministry. Maybe you wonder what kind of Christian service you can offer. Well, don't worry! Just be faithful in devotion to the Lord, as these women were. Let's follow the example of the women who followed Christ.

I think the story of the Willis parents is a great demonstration of this principle. As many of you may recall, the Willises are a Christian couple from the Chicago area that lost their six children in a terrible fiery car accident. Throughout this ordeal, they have been a tremendous witness of faithful devotion to the Lord. While they cannot understand why God has allowed this tragic event, they're not bitter. They've been a tremendous example to the entire community. Even the news media have admitted that it is their faith in Christ that has sustained them.

They are very much like the women at the cross - disappointed, heartbroken, not able to understand the sudden and tragic turn of events - but they have continued on in faithful devotion to the Lord. They have followed the example of the women in Mark 15.

Let's all follow the example of the women who followed Christ!