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Sermon Notes

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God the Father Interprets the Cross

Matthew 27:45-54

The cross of Jesus Christ and His subsequent resurrection from the dead combine to form the most significant moment in all of human history... but that fact can only be received by faith... the cross is the most radiant display of the glory of God there has ever been in the universe, but only the eyes of faith can see that brilliant display. The cross towers over the wreckage of human sinfulness, but only the faith-filled heart can fall in worship before that awesome tower.

Those with no faith can never understand the cross of Jesus Christ... for the Jews, it is a stumbling block, and for the Gentiles, it is foolishness. The day that Jesus was crucified, many walked past and had no idea the awesome significance of the crucifixion. So people have been MISINTERPRETING the cross of Jesus Christ since that awesome day that Jesus was hanging there, suspended between earth and heaven.

As we saw last time, four different groups of people misinterpreted the cross and mocked Jesus:

- The soldiers mocked His Kingship with a tattered purple robe, crown of thorns, and wooden scepter
- The Jews walking past Golgotha hurled insults at Him,

Matthew 27:40 "You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

- The religious leaders also heaped insults on Him as He was dying:

Matthew 27:42-43 He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³ He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

- Even the thieves who were crucified with Him also heaped insults on Him until one of them was converted by God's sovereign grace

All of them MISINTERPRETED the cross of Jesus Christ... they all thought it proved Jesus was not at all what He claimed to be... the King of the Jews, the Messiah... THE SON OF GOD????!!!

So it is that the cross of Christ has begun its long history of being misinterpreted by unbelievers...

The Apostle Paul ran into this mocking unbelieving attitude in Athens, where he preached Christ crucified and resurrected, and the philosophers on Mars Hill SNEERED and MOCKED the very idea

Martin Hengel captures their attitude:

To believe that the one pre-existent Son of the one true God, the mediator at creation and the redeemer of the world, had appeared in very recent times in out-of-the-way Galilee as a member of the obscure people of the Jews, and even worse, had died the death of a common criminal on the cross, could only be regarded as a sign of madness. The real gods of Greece and Rome could be distinguished from mortal men by the very fact that they were *immortal*--they had absolutely nothing in common with the . . . one who . . . was bound in the most ignominious fashion and executed in a shameful way. [Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 6-7]

For this reason, Paul wrote these words:

1 Corinthians 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

And so it has gone throughout history... unbelievers mocking the cross—mocking what they cannot fathom

But some have even sought to find meaning in the cross far less than the truth of the gospel... some have found inspiration in Jesus' death without really understanding its true significance. One well-meaning speaker recently was talking on Good Friday about the significance of that special day for him... He said it was "a day in which a certain man was prosecuted for crimes he did not commit and, although innocent, was sentenced to death." He was speaking of Jesus Christ, of course... and he celebrated the inspiration that Christ is for those who stand firmly for what they believe in, regardless of the cost or sacrifice they have to make."

This is the approach Mahatma Gandhi took... seeing the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross as an example of committed love that we are to follow...

So the world has **WRONGLY INTERPRETED** the cross of Jesus Christ

But the true interpretation of the cross must come from God Himself!

William Cowper, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way"

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
 And scan his work in vain;
GOD IS HIS OWN INTERPRETER,
 And He will make it plain

In our text today, we will see how God acted as the interpreter of the cross in some astounding ways

- In the supernatural darkness that came over the land
- In the significance of Jesus' statement: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?!"
- In the tearing of the curtain in the temple from top to bottom
- In the supernatural earthquake that ripped the earth
- And in the resuscitation of many dead people from the grave

And in the text, we have the effect of all these signs in the words of an eyewitness: "Surely this man was the Son of God."

This is the end result of God's interpretation of the cross... the salvation of the many in the watching world!!

Matthew 27:45-54 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." ⁵⁰ And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. ⁵¹ ¶ At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. ⁵² The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. ⁵⁴ When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

I. The Father Withdraws the Daylight, for Sin Is Darkness (vs. 45)

Matthew 27:45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

A. The Facts of the Darkness

1. The time: “from the sixth hour to the ninth hour”... from about noon to about three in the afternoon
 - a. Jesus’ crucifixion began at around 9:00 a.m according to Mark 15:25
 - b. When this eerie darkness began, Jesus had been on the cross for three hours
2. The extent: “Darkness came over the whole land”
 - a. The Greek word for land might be translated “earth”
 - b. It is impossible to know how widespread this darkness was
 - c. John MacArthur cites two church fathers, Origen and Tertullian who both alluded to Roman witnesses that indicated this darkness was experienced in Rome as well

The Christian apologist Tertullian, writing in the second century, called it a “cosmic” or “world event”--evidently visible in Rome, Athens, and other Mediterranean cities,¹ and challenged his non-Christian adversaries with these words: “At the moment of Christ's death, the light departed from the sun, and the land was darkened at noonday, *which wonder is related in your own annals, and is preserved in your archives to this day.*”² The Greek writer Phlegon, writing in 137 AD, reported that in the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad (33 AD) there was “the greatest eclipse of the sun . . . it became night in the sixth hour of the day (noon) so that stars even appeared in the heavens.”

2nd-century chronicler [Phlegon of Tralles](#): "records that during the reign of Tiberius Caesar there was a complete solar eclipse at full moon from the sixth to the ninth hour". The church historian [Eusebius of Caesarea](#) (264 – 340), in his [Chronicle](#), quotes Phlegon as saying that during the fourth year of the 202nd [Olympiad](#) (AD 32/33) "a great eclipse of the sun occurred at the sixth hour that excelled every other before it, turning the day into such darkness of night that the stars could be seen in heaven, and the earth moved in [Bithynia](#), toppling many buildings in the city of [Nicaea](#)".¹

3. The nature of the darkness:
 - a. During the time of Moses and the Exodus, one of the ten plagues in Egypt was a “darkness that could be felt”
 - b. The Gospel records use no such language... but perhaps it was the same again
4. The cause of the darkness

- a. Solar eclipse: astronomically impossible, because the Jewish feast of Passover occurs during a full moon, and solar eclipses can only happen during a new moon
- b. Lunar eclipse: would not have explained the total failing of light implied by the Greek, nor would such a total darkening effect have lasted for three hours
- c. Supernatural act of God... a miracle: God blocked the light of the sun

B. The Significance of the Darkness

1. God's first words in the Bible

Genesis 1:3-4 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.

2. Light a metaphor for God... for His holiness and purity

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.

3. On the fourth day of creation, God made the sun to shine on the earth... and sunlight is essential to life on earth... the plants drink in the sunlight and make the basic nutrients that support all of life; also by the sunlight we mark the passage of time... daytime, night time

4. Jesus the "light of the world"

John 1:4-5 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

5. Jesus' birth was attended by a supernatural light

Luke 2:9 And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them

6. So... Jesus' death attended by a supernatural darkness

Matthew 27:45 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

7. When Judas went to betray Jesus... John's Gospel tells us "IT WAS NIGHT"

8. When Jesus was arrested, He spoke of the darkness in clear spiritual language

Luke 22:53 *But this is your hour-- when darkness reigns.*

9. Satan's Kingdom the reign of darkness

Colossians 1:13 *... the dominion of darkness*

^{CSB} **Ephesians 6:12** *For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.*

10. So... while Jesus was hanging on the cross, God supernaturally testified to these spiritual truths by blocking the light of the sun for three hours

C. The Future of Darkness

1. Judgment on the whole earth for sin... frequently associated with darkness; so language about the Day of the Lord speaks of the darkening of the sun

Amos 5:20 *Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light-- pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness?*

Thus, to some degree it was "the Day of the Lord" for the elect when Jesus was dying for them... the darkness was representative of God's wrath on Jesus for our sins...

So the future Day of the Lord will be a day of darkness:

Isaiah 13:9-11 *See, the day of the LORD is coming--a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger-- to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. ¹⁰ The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. ¹¹ I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins.*

Matthew 24:29-30 *"Immediately after the distress of those days "the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." ³⁰ "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.*

Revelation 8:12 *The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.*

2. Eternal darkness in hell

Matthew 25:30 *outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

3. The end of darkness forever for God's children:

Revelation 22:5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light.

II. The Father Withdraws from the Son, for Sin Breaks Fellowship with God (vs. 46)

Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

A. Infinite Mystery in this Moment

1. The doctrine of the Trinity and of the Incarnation are deeply mysterious... actually infinitely so
2. How can we comprehend the concept of the Trinity? Of one God, eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son, and Spirit... each Person fully God, but each Person distinct from the other two... and yet there is One God, and Only One God
3. And this One God is ETERNAL and indestructible... if at any moment the Trinity ceased to exist, then the universe (including us) would cease to exist
4. And the Father's perfect love for God the Son is unchangeable... the link between the Father and the Son cannot be broken ever... the Father loves the Son with an intensity that is greater than the heat of the hottest star
5. So also the doctrine of the Incarnation: Jesus is 100% God and 100% human
6. Yet, while Jesus was on the cross, bearing the sins of the world, the Father forsook Him, turned His back on Him and poured out His wrath on Him

B. Only By This Statement Can We See This Spiritual Reality

1. By this statement alone we can peer into the invisible spiritual world and see what God the Father was doing with His Son...
2. Jesus cries out, like a cry from the pit of hell... total abandonment by God; deeper, total wrath poured out on Him by God

Isaiah 53:10 Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer

3. Jesus was the focus of the infinite wrath and power of God directed against sinners
4. The abandonment of a sinner by God is the most severe penalty God could ever pour out... God alone is the giver of all good gifts;

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father

Psalm 16:11 In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Psalm 16:2 I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing.

5. Therefore, hell is a place completely stripped of all good things... the damned can experience no pleasure, no joy, no friendship, no gifts, no happiness of any kind... a cold empty terror, of sheer loneliness and isolation
6. More than that, other texts speak of God's measureless wrath against sin... His rage, like a consuming fire
 - a. Hell is often spoken of as a place of endless torment, of a Lake of Fire, of wailing and gnashing of teeth
 - b. God is perfectly holy, and He consumes sinners with a great rage that we can scarcely comprehend
 - c. Jesus was undergoing that wrath once for all for us

C. The Sinlessness of Jesus... and the Substitution of Jesus

1. Jesus was perfect in every way

John 8:29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.

1 Peter 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

2. This statement comes only because of His role as our sin bearer... only because of this

2 Corinthians 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

And this:

Isaiah 53:5-6 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

D. Without Understanding This, We Will Understand Nothing of the Cross

1. This is where all the mockers go astray... because they do not understand the holy wrath of God against us for our sins, or Jesus, the perfect Son of God, as the only substitute for our sins
2. This sermon is God's Interpretation of the Cross: this is the highest interpretation there is:

Romans 3:23-25 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a propitiation, through faith in his blood.

Propitiation is the turning aside of the wrath of God by a sacrifice... by the substitution of the Son of God, we sinners can be made holy

III. The Father Fulfills a Final Prophecy, for Christ Died According to Scripture (vs. 47-49)

Matthew 27:46-50 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-- which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷ When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling Elijah." ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

- A. Jesus was Quoting Psalm 22: The Clearest Depiction of Crucifixion in the Old Testament

Psalm 22:16-18 Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. ¹⁷ I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. ¹⁸ They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

Fascinating that Matthew literally quotes Jesus' words in Aramaic... so that you can hear exactly what He said!!

- B. So Also Jesus Drank According to Scripture

1. Key Lesson: Christ's Death Written About in Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures

2. This final act was a fulfillment of Scripture

John 19:28-29 Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." ²⁹ A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips.

3. The Scripture:

Psalm 69:21 They put gall in my food and gave me vinegar for my thirst.

4. Tiny detail... yet so powerful for testifying to the salvation planned by God before the foundation of the world

C. The Misunderstanding by the Crowd

1. Once again, we have the clueless crowd, unable to understand the depths of what was happening
2. They even got Jesus' statement wrong... thinking He was calling for Elijah, when actually, He was saying "Eloi, Eloi..." "My God, My God..."

IV. The Father Receives His Son's Spirit, for the Death Penalty Had to Be Paid (vs. 50)

Matthew 27:50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

A. Here... He Simply "Gave Up His Spirit"... He Chose to Die Exactly When He Did

1. Greek word is powerful... "gave up"
2. In one sense, He didn't die because of the crucifixion, but because He willed to give up His Spirit

B. Jesus was In Total Control of His Death

John 10:18 No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."

Actually, Jesus died much sooner than was expected:

Mark 15:44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died.

C. Just As Jesus Was In Total Control of His Birth

John 18:37 Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.

D. Why? The Death Penalty Had to Be Paid... the Wages of Sin

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death

Ezekiel 18:4 The soul who sins ... will die.

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

V. The Father Tears the Curtain in the Temple, for the Way to God is Now Open (vs. 51)

Matthew 27:51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

A. This Curtain Separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place

The temple curtain was no ordinary curtain (60 feet long, 30 feet high, and about 4 inches thick; composed of 72 squares sewn together; so heavy that it required 300 men to lift it)

B. "At That Moment": Direct Link Between Jesus' Death and the Tearing of the Curtin

C. The Tearing of the Curtain = Full Access to God

D. "From Top to Bottom" = Only God Can Remove This Barrier... Man Could Not

E. Old Covenant: "Do Not Come Any Closer"

Exodus 3:4-5 God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." ⁵ "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Hebrews 9:3 Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place

Hebrews 9:7 But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance.

F. New Covenant: "Let Us Draw Near to God"

Hebrews 4:16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

G. The "New and Living Way"

Hebrews 10:19-22 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

H. The Essence of Unbelieving Judaism: Sewing the Curtain Up, and Putting it Back

1. Probably priests witnessed the tearing... how else could they have known that it was torn "from top to bottom"
2. Some believing priests probably testified to this for the sake of Matthew's Gospel... Acts 6:

Acts 6:7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

3. "What God has torn apart, let man not join together!"
 - a. Unbelieving priests sewed it back up
 - b. Just like them to do this:

Matthew 23:13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

- c. What God shuts and what God opens:

Revelation 3:7 What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

- d. It was punishable by death for someone other than the High Priest to enter the Holy of Holies... God shut it so no one could enter
- e. BUT what should be the punishment for those who shut what God has opened? This is the essence of unbelieving religious Judaism... to deny that the animal sacrifices are finished; to sew up the curtain
4. WE HAVE FREE ACCESS to Almighty God!!! Jesus was forsaken by God temporarily on the cross so that we who were excluded may now have free access to God

VI. The Father Shakes the Earth, for There Will Be a New Heaven and Earth (vs. 51)

Matthew 27:51 The earth shook and the rocks split.

A. Terrifying, Monstrously Huge Earthquake!

1. Some indications were that this earthquake was felt all over the Roman world
2. Phlegon (A.D. 137) indicates that the earthquake was felt in many Mediterranean cities

“the earth moved in [Bithynia](#), toppling many buildings in the city of [Nicaea](#)”

B. Symbolic of the Physical Effects on the Earth of the Event of Jesus Death

1. Throughout the Old Testament Prophets... earthquakes symbol of God’s judgment and wrath

Psalm 18:7-9 The earth trembled and quaked, and the foundations of the mountains shook; they trembled because [God] was angry. ⁸ Smoke rose from his nostrils; consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it. ⁹ He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet.

2. God shook the earth at the establishment of the Old Covenant

Exodus 19:18 Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently,

3. Here: God shakes the earth at the establishment of the New Covenant
4. God will shake the earth in the Judgment at the End of the World

Revelation 6:12-14 I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

Revelation 16:16-20 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. ¹⁷ ¶ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. ¹⁹ The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰ Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.

5. God will shake the earth at the establishment of the New Heaven and New Earth

Hebrews 12:26-27 *At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken-- that is, created things-- so that what cannot be shaken may remain.*

- C. The Earthquake at the Crucifixion: A Sense of Terror for those Under God's Judgment; But Also a Sense of Joy at the Establishment of a New Earth

VII. The Father Raises the Dead, for Christ is the Resurrection and Life (vs. 52-53)

Matthew 27:52-53 *The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. ⁵³ They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.*

- A. This is the Greatest Result of All: Death Has Been Defeated for God's People

1. This whole sermon: God's interpretation of Christ's crucifixion
2. In God's eyes, the whole reason for Christ's death was that God's people be forgiven of their sin and rescued from the death penalty
3. These amazing resuscitations were directly related to Christ's death

- B. Resuscitation, Not Resurrection

1. Christ is the "first fruits"... He alone has a resurrection body
2. Scripture clearly tells us that the rest of us will get our resurrection bodies at the end of the world

1 Corinthians 15:22-24 *For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. ²³ But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. ²⁴ Then the end will come*

3. There is no evidence that these holy people were any different than Lazarus and others who were raised to life by Jesus during His ministry

- C. BUT this amazing miracle was a Sign of the Future Resurrection

- D. What Must Their Witness Have Been Like?

1. Imagine being one of those who saw these people after they had been raised from the dead!!
2. How stunning! How terrifying!!

VIII. Application: Follow the Centurion in Learning these Lessons (vs. 54)

Matthew 27:54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

A. The Only Proper Response!

1. History tells us that over 30,000 people were crucified under the Romans in the first century; only one is known by name: Jesus Christ
2. God was testifying to the utterly unique nature of Christ's death
3. Supernatural signs:
 - a. The Father Withdraws the Daylight, for Sin Is Darkness (vs. 45)
 - b. The Father Withdraws from the Son, for Sin Breaks Fellowship with God (vs. 46)
 - c. The Father Fulfills a Final Prophecy, for Christ Died According to the Scripture (vs. 47-49)
 - d. The Father Receives His Son's Spirit, for the Death Penalty Had to Be Paid (vs. 50)
 - e. The Father Tears the Curtain in the Temple, for the Way to God is Now Open (vs. 51)
 - f. The Father Shakes the Earth, for There Will Be a New Heaven and Earth (vs. 51)
 - g. The Father Raises the Dead, for Christ is the Resurrection and Life (vs. 52-53)

B. A Roman Centurion Testifies to His Faith

1. Seeing the eerie darkness
2. Seeing the amazing way Jesus carried Himself... saying "Father, forgive them..."
3. Hearing the things people were saying about this man
4. Hearing Jesus' final words: "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit..."
5. Seeing Jesus die so amazingly simply... just giving up His spirit
6. Feeling the ground shake beneath his feet...

7. This Roman centurion spoke his new faith:

"Surely he was the Son of God!"

C. The Effects of Christ's Prayer!!! [Christ always gets what He asks for! And what good is partial forgiveness???

1. Focus is on the Roman soldiers in Luke's account

Luke 23:33-34 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals-- one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

2. Jesus always gets what He asks for in prayer

3. I believe these Romans who crucified Him all came to a genuine faith in Jesus as a result of these supernatural actions!!

4. The SAW the events; their hearts were filled with terror!! They fled to Christ

5. This man testified plainly to it:

"Surely he was the Son of God!"

D. Join Him in Testifying to Your Faith!!

E. Other Applications:

1.