

Matthew Ch27v45-54 - Jesus Dies

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Preacher: Jonny Grant

- [0 : 0 0] Just to remind people that we do have a sheet, a little worksheet.
- There may be some on the table. You're very welcome to go and get one of the tables as you came in. And a Bible which is on the stand as well so you can follow along. And there's pens there as well.
- And the title of the talk, as you see on the screen, is Jesus Dies. It's just a bit confusing. For some reason, I seem to mess it up every week in one way or another.
- So, well, what the best thing to do is, is just start with Jesus Dies and just follow the titles on the screen.
- And that will tell you which page you should be on next. Yeah. I'm not even going to try and tell you how to do it. I'm confused myself.
- [1 : 1 0] But there we are. So, let's turn in our Bibles to Matthew chapter 27.
- And we're going to read from verse 45 down to verse 54.
- Matthew 27, verse 45 to 54. Let's hear God's Word. When some of those standing there heard this, they said, He's calling Elijah.
- Immediately, one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a staff and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, Now leave him alone.
- Let's see if Elijah comes to save him. And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
- [2 : 5 2] The earth shook, the rocks split, and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.
- When the centurion and those who were with him were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified and exclaimed, Surely he was the Son of God.
- Well, let's pray. Our Father God, we thank you for Matthew's account of the life of Christ, his death, his resurrection.
- And we thank you, Father, that we can read these words today, knowing that they are your words, your voice to us.
- And we pray that what we hear and what perhaps may be familiar to us would have power and would change us and would cause each one of us to worship you and to love you with all our heart, our soul, our minds.
- [4 : 2 5] That we would do this for your glory, for our good and for the blessing of all those around us. In Jesus' name.
- Amen. Well, over the month of April, we're looking at the Easter account, the events surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Last week, we looked at the trial and the execution, and today we're specifically going to focus on his death. So keep an eye on the text, Matthew 27, 45 to 54.

And there's three extraordinary things that happen. Darkness falls, a curtain tears, and tombs open.

Now what connects these three events is the death of Jesus. They all happen as Jesus dies. So what do they all mean?

[5 : 34] Well, let's look at one each in turn. First, darkness falls on the land. Jesus has been crucified early in the morning.

And from what we can see or what appears to everybody else, there doesn't seem to be anything different about the crucifixion of Jesus to anybody else who's been crucified.

But then, at twelve midday, something very strange happens. Look at verse 45. From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over all the land.

When the sun is at its highest and brightest, everything goes dark. Literally, it's saying it became dark with darkness.

So it's not an eclipse. We might say it went pitch black. In the middle of the day, darkness descends.

[6 : 41] You know what it was like yesterday, what a beautiful sunny day it was. Well, you think at twelve o'clock midday yesterday for your town, for Carragalline, to just go pitch black. what is going on with the darkness. Well, have a look back at Matthew chapter 24. Just go back a couple of chapters.

Chapter 24, verse 29. Jesus has been speaking about future events and he's talking about what's going to happen at the very end of time.

So Matthew 24 and verse 29. Immediately after the distress of those days, so the days leading up to the end of the time, he says, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

The stars will fall from the sky, the heavenly bodies will be shaken. Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven and then all the peoples of the earth or the peoples of the land will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

[8 : 05] at the very end of the age, Jesus says, at the end of time when the Son of Man comes, he's going to come and wrap everything up in the whole history of the world.

He's going to come and bring his judgment and the sign of his coming is going to be darkness. Verse 29, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

Back to Matthew 27. In other words, when darkness descends, it's a sign that God is bringing his judgment.

So what does the darkness teach us? Well, three things. First, it's God's judgment on sin. again, look at verse 45.

It tells us that darkness came over the whole land. God is displaying his displeasure at the injustice of all that's taking place. God is rightfully angry at the false charges and lies, the disciples' betrayal and denial, the mocking and abuse that's taken place.

[9 : 21] And God's judgment falls on the people because they have all rejected God's king. You see, God takes sin personally because it is personal to God.

He can't ignore the things that have happened. He can't pretend that it doesn't matter and brush it under the carpet. It does matter. God is grieved with the injustice, the lies, the mocking and the rejection.

And God is grieved with all the terror and the wars that we see happening. It must be judged. But not only that, judgment falls on Jesus.

Look at verse 46. About three in the afternoon, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, Eli, Eli, Lamech Sabachthani, which means my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Now, this should surprise us because, remember, judgment has fallen on the land because of the people's sin. So, we would expect the people to be mourning and crying out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken us?

[10 : 47] But they don't, do they? Out of the darkness, it's Jesus who cries out. Of all the people who are there, there is only one who experiences the weight of judgment.

You see, Jesus' cry is much more than just physical pain. It's one of spiritual agony. Jesus, who is one with the Father, who enjoys the Father's delight and pleasure for all eternity, is forsaken as he dies.

He's cut off. Jesus isn't crying out here to his Father, what are you doing to me? Or why is this happening to me? Jesus knows exactly why he's come.

Look at verse 47. When some of those standing there heard this, he said, he's calling Elijah. Verse 49, now leave him alone, let's see if Elijah comes to save him.

It's not Jesus who needs saving. God is saving us through his Son. His cry is one of absorbing the judgment that humanity deserves.

[12 : 02] As Jesus bears the weight of sin, he is forsaken, abandoned, separated from the Father. He takes the darkness of hell for you and for me, because that's what hell is.

It's separation from God, being cut off from all God's goodness and glory. No forgiveness, no peace, no mercy, no joy, no happiness, cut off from all that is beautiful and good.

So as the darkness falls, only one voice is heard, because Jesus is taking the judgment on our behalf.

There's one other thing to learn from the darkness. As the darkness falls, it reminds us that there is a greater and a more final judgment to come.

In one sense, as Jesus dies on the cross, the judgment of the future has been brought forward. God in his love and his kindness is giving the world people opportunity to find salvation in Jesus and so we can turn to him today and we can trust him today and say, Jesus, you take the judgment for me.

[13 : 33] but in another sense, all that is happening at Jesus on the cross is pointing to an ultimate judgment, a future judgment to come when all wrongs of this world will be corrected, that every injustice we hear about and see will be dealt with.

There will be no hiding place. Everyone will come before God and will have to face him. But the point of all that Matthew is teaching us is this, either Jesus takes the darkness for you or you will take the darkness.

Either Jesus takes it or you take it. So first, darkness falls on the land.

The second big thing that we see happening is that the curtain tears in the temple. Look at verse 51.

At that moment, at what moment? Well, go back to verse 50. When Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

[14 : 55] As Jesus died, at that moment, the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.

Matthew wants us to see that there is a direct connection between the instance Jesus dies and the curtain in the temple tearing.

They happen simultaneously. Why? What does it all mean? Well, first we got to understand that access to God is denied.

The temple was hugely significant. It represented God's presence amongst the people. And when you entered into the temple, there was a series of rooms you would go through, and as you went through these rooms, it brought you closer to God.

So to try and imagine and understand what it was like, think of this hall here as inside the temple. Outside the car park was the courtyard where people could come.

[16 : 05] And then once you entered, suppose you came in through those tubble doors there, you would come into the first room which was called the holy place. And at the end of the holy place where that blue screen is, behind that was a room called the holy of holies.

And it was inside this room that God's presence was represented. The only problem was there was this huge curtain, 60 feet high, I don't know what, maybe half the height of this ceiling again, and about 30 feet wide, so the width of this hall.

And this curtain was just one piece of material, not like our curtains where they kind of divide in two, but one ginormous curtain, about as thick as a hand.

It acted as a barrier, a wall. Stop, no entry. God was separate from the people, the holy from the unholy, the pure from the impure.

People were literally, by this curtain, shut out from God's presence. It was a physical reminder of a spiritual reality, that my sin, our failure, means access to God is denied.

[17 : 43] You can't get close to God. So how do we get through this barrier? How do we get through so that we can enjoy God without fear?

Well, the barrier is broken, isn't it? As Jesus dies, verse 51, at that very moment, the curtain in the temple was torn in two, the barrier is ripped apart.

Imagine a curtain this size and it being torn apart. But how does Jesus' death achieve it?

Jesus died, what, maybe a kilometre away from where the temple was? How did Jesus' death achieve it? Well, remember what keeps us out of God's presence is our sin.

Sin and God don't mix together. But remember the darkness has already fallen on Jesus, so at that very moment as Jesus dies, he's taking the sin upon himself for all who will trust in him.

[18 : 56] He becomes unholy so that we might be made holy. He becomes impure so that we are made pure. as Jesus dies, the barrier is broken.

You see, this is something that God does for us. Did you notice how the curtain was torn? Verse 51, from top to bottom.

Sixty feet high, the curtain begins to rip. I mean, if it was man doing it, if you try to rip something, you go from bottom to top and you pull and it rips apart.

Well, this is torn from top to bottom. This wasn't an act of man. This was a direct intervention by God himself. God is saying, I am going to do for you what you will never be able to do for yourself.

I am going to open up the way for you to come to me. And as God looks at his son dying on the cross, he is pleased with all that his son has achieved.

[20 : 11] And so he rips open the curtain, almost a ripping of celebration. He breaks the barrier down so that we can be welcomed in.

Access is given, no longer shut out in fear, instead welcomed and embraced by the Father. The author of Hebrews helps us to understand this.

You can keep your finger in Matthew 27 and jump forward to Hebrews chapter 10. Hebrews chapter 10.

Hebrews chapter 10. Hebrews chapter 10. Hebrews chapter 10. Hebrews chapter 10.
Hebrews 10 verse 19.

So we're thinking about the curtain being torn as Jesus dies. And because of that we have access to God. And this is what the author picks up on.

[21 : 27] Therefore, because of Jesus' death, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence, underline that, confidence, to enter the most holy place, by the blood of Jesus, by his death, by a new and living way, open for us, through the curtain, that is his body.

The picture is vivid, isn't it? as Jesus himself is torn at the cross, as his body has been ripped apart by the crucifixion, so the curtain is torn in two.

Welcome. Don't fear. Come in. And look at the warm invitation, verse 22. let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

sin. The only thing that stops us enjoying the delight and pleasure of the Father is sin. That's the only thing.

And the only one who can deal with it is Jesus, and he has dealt with it. So the invitation is, come, let us draw near to God.

[23 : 04] What are you waiting for? What better offer is there? Come in. Access is opened. The way is there for you to come and enjoy the Father.

We no longer have to hide in shame or cower in our guilt. He washes you. He cleanses you internally and eternally forever and forever so that we can enjoy the Father.

By the death of Jesus, we, you and I, are made holy. so that we can enter into his presence every day. We don't enter his presence as we come into this building.

We are with him wherever we go and he is with us. So darkness falls on the land and the curtain tears in the temple.

people. The third big event is that tombs open by the earthquake. As Jesus dies, something else takes place.

[24 : 14] Let's go back to Matthew chapter 27. As Jesus dies, pick it up at the end of verse 51. As Jesus cries out in a loud voice, we are told that the earth shook, the rocks split, and the tombs broke open.

Well, you say there is nothing surprising there. Earthquakes are common enough in some parts of the world and they were very common there. And tombs being above ground and cut into the rock, well, very often they were split open and, well, that was just normal.

But what is surprising is what comes out of the tombs. That's what should shock us. Look at verse 52. The tombs broke open.

The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. amazing! When have you ever seen that?

Bodies walking out of a tomb. Now, the problem is, we can get sidetracked by all of this.

[25 : 35] Let's read verse 52 again. The tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people had died and were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city, that's Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.

Question time. When were the bodies raised to life? When the tombs broke open? Or after Jesus was raised to life?

Or, did the tombs break open as Jesus died, and then they all stayed inside the tomb, kind of peering out, you know, when, when, when, when, when, when, when, when, when can we go?

Waiting for Jesus to rise, and there, Jesus rise, they go into the city. What's going on? Strange, isn't it? well, I don't think we should get bogged down with the order of things.

You can read all the commentaries at home, and you'll find that people take different slants and different views on the order of things. The point is that we don't get sidetracked from the main point, because what we learn from this is just incredible.

[27 : 01] Two things. first, death defeats death. Matthew's account is clear. As Jesus died, at that very moment, an earthquake took place, tombs were opened, the rocks split open, and bodies that had been wrapped up in their cloth and put in the tomb were raised to life.

We don't even know who they were, we don't know how long they had been dead. The fact is, they were dead, and now they're alive.

That's the point. Jesus' death defeats death. His death is a death in place of my death and your death.

Again, the author of Hebrews helps us. I have it on the screen for you. that by his death, by the death of Jesus, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death, that is the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

death. The world lives in fear of dying, and Jesus has freed us from that fear.

[28 : 31] You see, the devil's only power over you and I is to stand before the Father and accuse us like a prosecution in a court.

He brings all the evidence before him. Look at their sin. Look at Johnny Grant's sin. Look at the mess and the failure of his life. And he brings before the Father, here's the charge, here's the punishment, Johnny Grant must die.

Death is what he deserves. Jesus steps forward. Death has been dealt with.

Johnny Grant's sin has been paid. Therefore, his death has been dealt with once and for all. Yes, we will die, but death is not the end.

for those who hope in Jesus. His death defeats my death. But not only are these bodies raised, look where the people went, verse 53.

[29 : 48] They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. The holy city was of course Jerusalem.

But it's also a reference, and I think he uses this phrase particularly and specifically holy city because the holy city was a reference to the eternal city.

The new Jerusalem to come at the end of time where God would be with his people and dwell with us forever. You see, Jesus' death reveals to us what we can expect.

The events that happened here in Matthew point forward to something wonderful. These raised bodies to life who walk out of their tombs and these living people who find their way into the city of Jerusalem is a foretaste of what awaits for all God's people.

This is what the death of Jesus has achieved. Death is defeated and there is a future hope. One day the risen Lord Jesus is going to return and our graves, if we're buried, are going to be burst open and we will walk out of our graves and we will walk into the eternal city of God.

[31 : 19] Does that amaze you? it amazes me and I can't wait. Don't get sidetracked by the order of events.

Did they come out of the tomb on Friday? Did they come out of the tomb on Saturday? Were they hiding in there before? Be amazed. Be amazed at what God has done.

You see all of this. should lead us to humble worship. Look at the response of the soldiers, verse 54.

When the centurion, he's the leader, the head of a hundred soldiers, a hundred soldiers who are guarding Jesus. When the centurion and those were 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.

These soldiers were the first witnesses to what? What does it say? To all that had happened. The darkness falling, the curtain tearing, the tombs opening.

[32 : 41] They were present, they heard, they saw all that had happened. and as they reflected on all that had happened, they were terrified.

Better translated as some of your versions might have it, they were filled with awe. Filled with awe and amazement.

It means to hold in admiration and deep respect and to worship. you see these hardened soldiers who spent their entire working life torturing people and executing people on crosses and killing people, reflected and took to heart all these events and all that had happened and as they reflected, they saw behind these events, before them was the son of God.

God, this bloody and dead man on a cross was the God, man, Jesus Christ.

And it all began to make sense. The darkness that fell, they deserved it, but it fell on this man before us. The curtain opening in the temple so that these hardened soldiers could be forgiven.

[34 : 12] and welcomed into the presence of God. The tomb's opening, pointing forward to these soldiers' future hope that they could have a future with God.

Is it possible? Absolutely. Awestruck. They humbly worship Jesus Christ. Christ. We look back to these events.

The darkness falls, the curtain tears open, the tombs burst open. Let us worship the man who is God.

Worship him, love him, serve him. That's what we're going to do right now. We're going to respond in song and we're going to worship.

We have two songs. One is reflective, meditative, as we worship the man who is God.

[35 : 24] I invite you to stand as we sing together. give us together.

Yes,