

An Eyewitness Account

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Date: 08 May 2022

- [0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Could I welcome you to this service of worship and to any who may be joining the service through the YouTube link.
- Let us worship God by singing to his praise from Psalm 99A, page 130 of the Psalter.
- The Lord reigns from his throne on high. Let all the nations quake. He sits between the cherubim. So let the whole earth shake.
- Great is the Lord on Zion Hill, exalted over all. Upon his great and holy name, let all the nations call.
- The King loves truth and equity, established by his might. In Jacob, you have done for us all that is just and right.
- [1 : 03] Exalt the Lord our God with us. Let all the world abroad before his footstool worship him. For holy is the Lord.
- Let us sing these verses. The Lord reigns from his throne on high. The Lord reigns from his throne on high.
- Let all the nations quake. He sits between the cherubim.
- So let the whole earth shake. Great is the Lord on Zion Hill, exalted over all.
- Upon his great and holy name. Upon his great and holy name. Let all the nations call.
- [2 : 29] The King loves truth and equity, established by his might.
- In Jacob, you have done for us all that is just and right.
- Exalt the Lord our God with us. Let all the world abroad before his footstool worship him.
- For holy is the Lord. Let us engage in prayer.
- Almighty God, we thank thee for the opening words of the psalm that we have newly sung.
- [3 : 57] Let us pray. Words that remind us that thou art a sovereign God. That thou art a sovereign king. The Lord reigns.
- And that thou art a holy king. Holy with a transcendent holiness.
- Holy in your righteousness. Holy in your righteousness. Holy in your grace. Holy in your righteousness. Holy in your grace. Holy in your grace. Oh, may we be found today acknowledging and bowing down before the holiness of our sovereign God.
- It prompted praise on the part of the seraphim. Who beheld the holiness of almighty God.
- As they went to and fro proclaiming. That God is indeed holy. Holy, holy, holy. That your holiness sets you apart from all your creatures.
- [5 : 11] Grant, O Lord, that we may come into thy presence today with that sense of awe and reverential fear.
- In the knowledge that we are in the presence of our trice holy God. May we come upon the knees of our heart.
- Lord, that we are in the presence of our heart before thee. Acknowledging with thy servant of old. That we are of unclean lips.

Just as thy servant felt. When he came before the holiness of God. In the vision that was granted to him.

When he saw the Lord high and lifted up in the temple. O Lord, we thank thee. That with a holy God there is forgiveness.

[6 : 15] That with a holy God there is cleansing. That thou hast made provision. For sinners to draw near to thee.

Grant thy blessing upon us as we reflect on a part of thy truth today. Blessed richly to our hearts.

May it reach into our innermost being. And may our lives be gripped by the power of the truth.

So that we come in truth to serve the Christ of God. To be joyous subjects of the sovereign king.

Who reigns supremely over the affairs of men. Although there may be much. In a world that is beyond our understanding.

[7 : 19] Much that we find deeply mysterious. Yet, O Lord, we draw comfort from this fact. That the Lord reigns.

Grant most gracious God. That our hope and confidence. Might be placed today and every day.

In the Lord who reigns. So that as we come before thee today. We may not be despondent or downcast.

But uplifted by the thought. That thou art reigning. And that thy will. Is being performed.

And that nothing but nothing can thwart. The will of the reigning sovereign king. That your will will always win out.

[8 : 15] Despite every. Every hostility and enmity. That is aroused by the forces of darkness.

In seeking to thwart the will. Of the reigning sovereign king. We bless thy name that this is so.

Grant thy blessing. We pray thee on each home and family. As we are found before thee today. Thou knowest the needs of each and all.

Thou knowest those who may be here. With heavy burdens. With crushing burdens. Thou knowest those who may be here today. Looking for a token for good.

That they belong to those. Those who are indeed the subjects of the sovereign king. And who rejoice in his reign.

[9 : 13] Grant thy blessing upon them. We pray for any who may be mourning the loss of loved ones. And to her today. The burden of sorrow.

The burden of sorrow. As they mourn the passing of those dear to them. We know of some.

Who have that burden. Some who came face to face. Unexpectedly with that. With that burden of sorrow.

With that burden of sorrow. As they came face to face. With what? Perhaps they didn't want to hear. As those whom they loved in life. Were taken unexpectedly from them.

With that burden of sorrow. Comfort them. We pray thee. With the comfort. That alone is able. To reach into distraught hearts and lives.

[10 : 13] When death removes. A member of a family. Unexpectedly. As often death comes. We pray thy blessing.

For those who may be under thine hand in illness. Confined to their homes. Or in hospital care. Or in residential care.

Grant, O Lord, thy blessing on each and all. According to their needs. And bless those who are providing care for them.

We give thee thanks. For all who are involved in the care system. Doctors and nurses. Care assistants.

All who provide. For those unable to provide for themselves. O grant, O Lord. That we be mindful.

[11 : 11] Of those who are involved. In the care system. The burdens that they bear. The duties that evolve upon them.

The responsibilities that are theirs. Help them to fulfill these responsibilities. As they daily carry out their tasks.

Help us now as we turn to thy truth. Bless the other section of the congregation. And thy servant. As he engages in the act of worship.

In the Gaelic language. Grant thy blessing upon them. Uphold and sustain them. We pray thee. In the duties that evolve upon them.

Bless all who go forth in thy name. And to the ends of the earth. Bless, we pray thee.

[12 : 13] The Slavic Gospel members. Who are carrying out deputation work. We give thee thanks for their commitment. For their zeal.

For their enthusiasm. And for the encouraging reports. That they have brought to us. We pray that thou wouldst bless them today.

In the particular duties that evolve upon them. Wherever they are preaching. The unsearchable riches of Christ. Cleanse in the blood.

In Jesus name we ask it with forgiveness of sin. Amen. Let us now read from the New Testament.

From the Gospel according to Mark. Chapter 15. And at verse 21. And they compelled a passerby.

[13 : 16] Simon of Cyrene. Who was coming in from the country. The father of Alexander and Rufus. To carry his cross.

And they brought him to the place called Golgotha. Which means place of a skull. And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh.

But he did not take it. And they crucified him. And divided his garments among them. Casting lots for them.

To decide what it should take. And it was the third hour. When they crucified him. And the inscription of the charge against him.

Read. The king of the Jews. And with him they crucified two robbers. One on his right. And one on his left.

[14 : 12] And those who passed by derided him. Waking their heads. And saying. And saying. Aha. You who would destroy the temple. And rebuild it in three days.

Save yourself. And come down from the cross. So also the chief priests with the scribes. Mocked him to one another.

And saying. He saved others. He cannot save himself. Let the Christ. The king of Israel. Come down now from the cross.

That we may see and believe. Those who were crucified with him. Also reviled him. When the sixth hour had come.

There was darkness over the whole land. Until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour. Jesus cried with a loud voice.

[15 : 12] Eli. Eli lama sabachthani. Which means. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me?

And some of the bystanders. Hearing it said. Behold. He is calling Elijah. And someone ran. And filled a sponge.

With sour wine. Put it on a reed. And gave it to him to drink. Saying. Wait. Let us see. Whether Elijah will come.

To take him down. And Jesus uttered. A loud cry. And breathed. And breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple.

Was torn in two. From top to bottom. And when the centurion. Who stood facing him. Saw that in this way. He breathed his last.

[16 : 10] He said. Truly. This man. Was the son of God. There were also women. Looking on from a distance.

The Christians. Among whom were. Mary Magdalene. And Mary. The mother of James. The younger. And of. Joseph. And Salome. When he was in Galilee. They followed him.

And ministered to him. And there were also. Many other women. Who came up with him. To Jerusalem. Amen. And may he bless to us.

That reading. From his truth. Let us further sing to his praise. From. Psalm 22. Page 26. Of the.

Psalter. At verse 14. Page 26. Of the. Psalter. At verse 14. And the tune is.

[17 : 10] Rockingham. Apologies to the presenter. I forgot to. Mention the tune. For the first song. Psalm 22.

Page 26. At verse 14. Like water. I am emptied out. And all my bones.

Are torn apart. My inmost being. Melts away. And into wax. Is turned my heart. My strength.

Is like. Shattered clay. And these verses. Apply particularly. To the Lord Jesus. On the cross. And as I fight.

To draw my breath. My tongue. Is sticking. To my jaws. You lay me. In the dust of death. A pack of dogs.

[18 : 08] Encloses me. Their circle. Round me. Is complete. I am beset. By evil men. And they have pierced. My hands.

And feet. I count the number. Of my bones. With gloating eyes. The people. Stir. They throw the dice.

To get my coat. Among themselves. My clothes. They share. Let us sing these verses.

Like water. I am emptied out. Like water. I am emptied out. And all my bones are torn apart. Like water I am emptied out, and all my bones are torn apart.

My inmost being melts away, and into wax is darn my heart.

[19 : 29] My strength is dried like shattered clay, and as I fight to throw my breath, My tongue is sticking to my jaws.

You lay me in the dust of death.

A pack of dogs encloses me, their circle round me is complete.

I am beset by evil men, and they have pierced my hands and feet.

I count the number on my board.

- [21 : 06] With floating eyes the people stare. They throw the dice to get my coat.
Among themselves my close they share. Let us now turn to the part of Scripture that we read.
Gospel according to Mark, chapter 15. And we may read again at verse 39.
And when the centurion who stood facing him saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, truly, this man was the Son of God.
The gospel accounts tell us of very strange happenings which coincided with the death of Christ.
- [22 : 32] And one of these that are mentioned is the tearing of the temple veil in two from top to bottom. Three of the gospel writers refer to it, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.
Both Matthew and Mark associate the tearing of the curtain with the loud voice cry of the Lord Jesus on the cross and his final breath.
Some query which temple curtain was torn. But I think it is safe to assume that it was the curtain or the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place of the temple.
You may remember that the holy place was frequented on a daily basis by the duty priests who ministered there.
The most holy place was only entered once a year by the high priest on the great day of atonement.
- [23 : 53] How do we explain the phenomenon that this curtain was torn from the top to the bottom? No one, no gospel writer, refers to anyone with a knife or a scissor trying to tear it in two.
It was apparently made of very thick material, not easily torn. And the gospel writers record that it was torn simultaneously with the moment of the death of Christ at three in the afternoon.
On our timekeeping, in Jewish timekeeping, that is the ninth hour, the equivalent of three o'clock in the afternoon. That is when the duty priests would be offering the daily evening sacrifice.
And for those ministering priests, it must have been a startling and surprising phenomenon to witness this taking place.
Given their familiarity with the Old Testament teaching, it may have even filled them with fear. And the thought of death, now that the most holy place was exposed to their gaze.
- [25 : 22] I doubt that they understood the significance of the event then. But they could not doubt that it was not attributable to anything natural.
For those with the benefit of New Testament teaching, it was very significant that the temple curtain was torn in two.
It signified the new order being ushered in. No longer was there an impediment. In drawing near to God, a new and living way had been opened up through the one sacrifice of the Lamb of God.
A sacrifice that satisfied the demands and full of divine justice. On the writer in the letter to the Hebrews writes, 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.
Now, this strange phenomenon could only be verified by a limited number of people initially, the duty priests of that day.
- [26 : 45] And no doubt, word would have spread quickly of what took place. There were also other accompanying events of which many were witnesses.

There was, we are told, an earthquake. That certainly could be verified by a greater number of people. It took place during the afternoon.

Many would probably be aware of the tremor. No information is given as to the severity of that tremor.

We're not told if houses were destroyed. But what we are told by Matthew in his account is that the earthquake and the rocks were split.

The tearing of the curtain is not attributed to the force of the earthquake by any of the gospel writers.

[27 : 49] They speak first of the tearing of the curtain, and then they speak of the earthquake, and they tell that the rocks were split.

Interestingly, in the original language, the same root word is used to speak of the veil being torn and of the rocks being split.

The same power that tore the veil or the curtain, thick as it was in the temple, was also the power that split the rocks.

They were torn asunder, and the impression that you get is that they were torn like someone might tear a piece of paper. There was also another unusual occurrence.

Matthew writes, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the graves after his resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

[28 : 59] So you could say that these three events were not everyday occurrences. They weren't events that you could shut your eyes to and pretend that they did not happen.

The earth quaked, the rocks were split, the graves were opened, and bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep. Notice, not all the bodies, bodies of those saints.

And notice also the way in which the writers describe death for those who had been saints. They had fallen asleep, and how very suggestive that is.

And that is how the Bible frequently speaks of the death of those who die in Christ. They sleep in Christ, and it is most suggestive.

Now, all of these occurrences were designed, I believe, to catch the attention of people at that time. We are told how all these combined events, including the way in which Christ died, affected some.

[30 : 23] And Mark, in this passage that we read, tells us of one particular individual who I wish to focus on this morning in our reflection.

An army officer, a Roman centurion. Mark records for us the assessment that this man made, and his assessment is an eyewitness statement or account.

So, who gave this account? What did he see? Secondly, what did he see and hear? Thirdly, what did he say?

And fourthly, how does this account speak to us? Who gave it? And the answer to the question is, I don't know.

Because the gospel writers do not see fit to disclose his name, to furnish us with details of his background.

[31 : 32] Obviously, the gospel writers, the Holy Spirit, influencing the gospel writers, didn't consider that that information was really important.

And so, what we are told about this man is really minimal. He was an army officer in the service of the Roman Empire, probably a Gentile.

The fact that he is called a centurion indicates that he was responsible for a hundred soldiers. That's about the total of the scant information that we are given.

So, he remains unnamed. All we know is that he appears to be in charge of the execution squad, overseeing the crucifixion of Jesus and remember two others who were crucified alongside Jesus.

And Mark portrays him as watching proceedings. Mark tells us he stood opposite Jesus. In other words, he was able to observe minutely what was taking place, possibly doing so to ensure that no one would seek to intervene and remove Jesus from the cross.

[32 : 56] I suppose you could say that was part of his duty as an officer on guard duty. But in the overriding mysterious providence of God, he was appointed to this duty.

And it seems to me you cannot but marvel at how the Lord uses steps in our providence for our spiritual good without us being aware of how our steps are being directed in a particular way.

And I hope we can see that in the life of this man as I develop the lecture. Certainly God moves in mysterious ways.

his wonders to perform. Here is a man fulfilling orders from his superiors and through the instructions that are given to him and the duties entrusted to him, he comes to formulate a very different opinion of Jesus Christ.

not just a different opinion as to the fact that he is on the cross but a different opinion as to the identity of this person Jesus Christ.

[34 : 27] Christ. So who gave this account? An unnamed Gentile, centurion, obeying instructions and on duty at the cross.

Secondly, what did he see and hear? And the impression is created by all the gospel writers who make mention of this man is that what he saw and heard is linked to his testimony.

And it seems to me that there are two aspects to what he saw and heard. First, there is clear indisputable evidence for some of the things that he saw and heard.

But secondly, there are also things that we may speculate he saw and heard, but of which I cannot give clear proof from the Bible that he did.

And I'd like to deal with a second of these first. John's gospel tells us that when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane, that Judas came along with accompanied by a detachment of troops and also others.

[35 : 55] Then Judas having received a detachment of troops and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees came there. And the word translated detachment is the word for a unit of soldiers which could consist of up to 600 soldiers.

commentators are of the view that the number present when Jesus was arrested was not that many but that there could be up to 200.

Was there even that many? It's not easy to determine from what is written. But when they were asked the question, whom are you seeking?

And they responded, Jesus of Nazareth, John writes, now when he said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground.

And the thrust of the Bible with the life of Jesus indicates that he veiled his glory when he appeared in this world in true human nature.

[37 : 06] But in that particular context, there is, as it were, a glimpse of his glory shines through the veil of his humanity. And even such a brief glimpse of his glory is enough to floor the arresting party.

It's as if they were paralyzed. And the question I'd like to pose is this, was this centurion among them? Was he struck by the air of authority that emanated from this person whom they had been sent to arrest?

And I don't discount the possibility, but I cannot prove, on the other hand, that he was there. Jesus permitted them to arrest him.

He was taken to Annas, the high priest, to Pilate, to Herod, and back again to Pilate. and you know the story. His accuser stating that he claimed to be the Son of God.

And from their mockery, they are in total denial as to the identity of this person. They are stating, by the way they treat Jesus, they do not believe for one moment that he is the Son of God.

[38 : 31] did this centurion, did he agree with that initial assessment? And again, I have to say, probably, but I cannot prove it.

Jesus was mocked. He was assaulted. They beat him. John writes of how Jesus was ill-treated by the soldiers and how they mocked his claims.

The soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put on him a purple robe. Then they said, Hail, King of the Jews. And they struck him with their hands. Was the centurion part of this group?

It is possible that he witnessed all of these events, but I cannot produce the evidence from the Bible that he did.

So, that's the second thing. We may speculate about that. But the first thing is this. There is clear, indisputable evidence for some of the things that he saw and heard.

[39 : 43] Matthew in his gospel narrative relates, the earthquake, the rocks were split, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised and coming out of the graves after resurrection.

They went into the holy city and appeared to many. So, when the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly.

So, these were some things that he saw and heard, and they resulted in producing fear in the life of this man.

did that indicate that he was fearful of the consequences of what he had done in carrying out his orders? Because it is more than likely that he was responsible for issuing the command to nail Jesus to the cross.

He would have witnessed the meek submission of Jesus to this most inhumane action. There is no evidence of resistance or struggle to escape on the part of Jesus.

[41 : 01] There is no verbal abuse aimed at the soldiers who carried out the act of nailing him to the cross. Because this is one of whom the prophet Isaiah could write hundreds of years beforehand as he spoke of the suffering servant of Jehovah.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep before his shearers was silent, so he opened not his mouth.

So there is Isaiah predicting with the spirit of prophecy the silence of the Lamb of God as he comes before those who are sitting in judgment on him and who are ill treating him.

the centurion could not but fail to notice the calm demeanor of Christ in the face of such provocation.

He would have heard the mocking taunts of those who surrounded the cross. He would have heard the mocking and the initial remonstrance of both of the men who were crucified on either side of Jesus because both of them mocked Jesus initially and the centurion would be aware of the character of these two men and their reputation.

[42 : 31] Did the centurion hear the message of marvelous grace addressed to one of the dying thieves? You remember what Jesus said to him.

Remember he had pleaded with Christ Lord remember me. It's such an impressive prayer and it's a prayer that fits every one of us.

Lord remember me. And you remember the response of Christ. Assuredly I say to you today you will be with me in paradise. did Jesus speak it loudly enough for the centurion to hear?

It's possible. The centurion would also have seen the thick judgmental darkness that covered the sight from midday until 3pm.

He must have wondered about that. he would have heard the cry of dereliction that pierced the thick darkness when Christ cried out my God my God why have you forsaken me?

[43 : 56] And Mark in this particular context especially links the testimony of the centurion to his observation of the manner in which Christ died.

Mark writes and Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed his last. And then in our text he goes on to write 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.

Now we know that people respond to the death of Christ on the cross in different ways. If you in your life that the death of Christ means that you are forever thanking the Lord that Christ Jesus came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost.

It is obvious then that the manner of Christ dying had a profound effect on the opinion of this man as to the identity of Jesus of Nazareth.

He heard him cry with a loud voice and he saw him breathe his last. Remember Jesus had been hanging on the cross for six hours the third hour to the ninth hour on our clock nine in the morning till three in the afternoon.

[46 : 04] He heard Jesus cry with a loud voice and John in his gospel tells us that Jesus cried out it is finished. In the Greek it's just one word tetelestai.

Did the centurion understand the significance of what Christ said? I can't be sure about that.

But I think he would certainly have found it peculiar that a weakened dying person should have the energy to shout with a loud voice.

It's not what you normally associate with the act of dying. John tells us that Jesus bowing his head gave up his spirit and it's as if John is telling us that this was a regal act on the part of Jesus as he gave himself to death.

Unlike you or I when our time to die has come we will be conquered by the power of death.

[47 : 17] Oh yes we will fight it as long as we are able. We will struggle against the onset of death but the power of death will conquer you and me.

Christ doesn't come first. And you know we don't know when that will be or where it will be do we?

We may think we know but we don't. Just in the last few days there was a car accident in the Isle of Sky the parents of the man who was killed in that accident were in my first congregation they're not alive anymore going to work in his car he never reaches the office you know and these things are all food for thought we don't know when that moment is going to come about in your life or in mine but here Jesus gives himself to death so there's a world of a difference between my dying your dying and the death of

Christ the centurion saw and heard what transpired at the cross he may have even seen and heard what took place from the moment of Jesus arrest in Gethsemane right up to the cross and beyond I cannot prove that part but what he saw and heard had a profound effect on his assessment of this person Jesus of Nazareth what did he see and hear who gave this account thirdly what did he say and the question takes us right into the heart of our text in the light of what he heard and saw under the influence of the Holy Spirit he speaks in glowing terms of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth you know many saw and heard what the centurion saw but it didn't have this effect on them many people hear of

Jesus Christ and you may be even here this morning but until now Jesus Christ has not had a transforming effect on your life Luke in his account tells us so when the centurion saw what had happened he glorified God saying certainly this was a righteous man now Luke's record suggests the centurion was expressing words that exonerate the character of Jesus while both Matthew and Mark's accounts are more a declaration of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth if we look at Luke's record of what is stated by the centurion you can see how what he says exonerates the character of Jesus why do I say this think about it for this very good reason that this form of capital punishment that he was undergoing was reserved for the very worst of crimes now that was true of the two who were being put to death alongside

[51 : 12] Jesus so when the centurion states that this was a righteous man in effect he is stating that this person Jesus of Nazareth is innocent as one who had been present perhaps from the time of his arrest but certainly present at the cross he has come to the conclusion that this man has been punished for a crime of which he is innocent what he saw and heard convinced him that this man is truly righteous the thief who was brought to faith in Christ and who was given such blessed assurance of where he was going to spend eternity also came to a similar conclusion we receive he says to his fellow accused the due reward of our deeds but this man has done nothing wrong the centurion would be in full agreement without assessment he had seen enough to convince him that

Jesus was innocent he's a righteous man what he saw and heard convinced him that Jesus was undeserving of death and Luke tells us he glorified God how did he glorify God well I'm going to suggest by merely making the statement that Jesus was a righteous man he was glorifying God he was saying the same thing as God says about his own son you remember the letter to the Romans Paul speaks of those although they knew God they did not glorify him as God you see the statement that the centurion made it it it if I can put it this way he it concurs with the assessment of heaven when

Jesus was being baptized at Jordan remember what we are told this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased here is one who was supernaturally conceived in the womb of the virgin and he was righteous you could say he was righteous before he came into the world he was righteous from the womb righteous as a child righteous as a teenager righteous as an adult and throughout all his sufferings no unrighteousness of any kind can be found in him and the centurion is convinced on the basis of what he had seen and heard that this person is not on the cross for the sake of any breach of the law the priests the scribes the Pharisees who had condemned him and were gloating in his death were being challenged by the testimony of the centurion they were putting a righteous man to death was there not a danger that this testimony would be carried back to the years of his superior and ultimately to the governor that an injustice had been done that justice hadn't been served well you know

I don't know but I get the impression that this centurion didn't care about that he was basing his assessment on what he had seen and heard and not only does he by his testimony exonerate the character of Jesus but he goes even further truly this man was the son of God he is not now justifying the character of Jesus but he is setting before us the identity of this condemned person on the middle cross he's not just merely a righteous man he's the son of God and you remember how Mark begins his gospel the beginning of the gospel the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ the son of God there would be no good news if Jesus Christ was just a right a mere man even a mere righteous man my sins and your sins could never be atoned for by a mere man even a righteous man die in our place we require a substitute who is both God and man if this centurion was present in Gethsemane then he saw his display of authoritative power in his trials and crucifixion he would have seen how how how nobly he conducted himself remember how the apostle

Peter writes of Christ who committed no sin nor was deceit found in his mouth who when he was reviled did not revile in return when he suffered he did not threaten but committed himself to him who judges righteously the centurion saw Jesus during these six hours on the cross he saw how disparagingly the chief priest spoke to him mocking him himself he cannot save if he is the king of Israel let him come down from the cross and we will believe he trusted in God let him deliver him now we love for he said I am the son of God he saw all of that it's not improbable but that the first thought of who Christ was was sold in the garden of Gethsemane other thoughts followed as he viewed events of the actual crucifixion he saw as it were heaven itself bearing witness to what was taking place he saw the split rocks the open graves did he understand what these things meant

[57 : 24] I don't know but of this he was convinced certainly this was a righteous man truly this man was the son of God that's what he said what did he see and hear who gave this account finally how does that speak to us what does that do with us here this morning what does the testimony of the centurion say to you and me well can we not say this that we have to reckon with this confession everything in the Bible supports and confirms the accuracy of his statement and assessment and that raises another question if Christ is righteous and he is if Christ is the son of God and he is why is he on the cross dying as an unrighteous person in the

Roman place of sinners could God not protect him and deliver him could God not have defended himself and saved himself and the answer to all of these is yes so why was he there we cannot pretend to ignore the question why did he die why was he placed on the cross and the Bible answers the question superbly Christ also suffered once for sins the just for the unjust that he might bring us to God that's the biblical answer why did he die the cursed death of the cross it was for sins not his own sins he had none but for your sins and mine when he went to the cross he went as the just in place of the unjust he bore our sins our pride our lies our blasphemy our sinful desires he died the just one for those who were unjust and the reason that the

Bible gives us this that he might bring us to God that sets before us that not only was he the sole sacrifice that satisfied the justice of God but that he was active as priest and bringing sinners to God he is able to plead the efficacy of the cry of the shed blood within the courts above oh there is much efficacy and the cry of the shed blood within the courts above our sins are as a huge impossible mountain between us and a holy God we require to have that obstacle removed and he came over the mountains of our sin he came as the king of grace into this world as so well set out by Mark in the beginning of his gospel as he sets before us the heart of Jesus message Jesus came to

Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and saying the time is fulfilled the kingdom of God is at hand repent and believe in the gospel so here is this man the centurion a non-Jew a non-disciple a gentile testifying to the sonship and the righteousness of Jesus and as far as I can gather he is the only person praising God at the cross he glorified God at the cross and here are we today thousands of years later most of us have heard about Jesus Christ from childhood we've been taught about his identity and why he died on the cross is it true this morning that you do not see your need of

Christ to bring you into subjection to God is it true that you live as if you do not need the Jesus who died on the cross or are you here today and have you been reflecting on the death of Christ on the cross did you come to the same conclusion as the centurion are you praising God that Christ came into the world that he was crucified the just in the room of the unjust or does that leave you totally unmoved uncaring well it didn't leave this man this hardened soldier it made a deep indelible impression on his life we don't know anything more about him after these times but what we do know is this his testimony still rings out as he assures us truly this man was the son of

[63 : 05] God what place does the son of God have in our lives this morning let us pray oh eternal God we thank thee that the son of God came into this world in true human form that he suffered that he died and that he rose again that he is at the right hand above a prince and a savior oh grant eternal one that we might share with the centurion the conviction that this was the son of God and as the son of God that we look to him and to him alone for salvation and the glory shall be thine in Jesus name we ask it amen let us conclude by singing to

God's praise from Psalm 149 page 450 of the Psalter and the tune is Gainsborough Psalm 149 page 450 of the Psalter praise ye the Lord and to him sing a new song and his praise in the assembly of his saints in sweet psalms do he raise let Israel in his maker joy and to him praises sing let all that Zion's children are be joyful in their king oh let them unto his great name give praises in the dance let them with timbrel and with harp in songs his praise advance for God doth pleasure take in those that his own people be and he with his salvation the meek will beautify in his glory excellent let all his saints rejoice let them to him upon their beds aloud lift up their voice let us sing these verses praise ye the lord praise ye the lord unto him sing a new song and his praise in thee assembly of his saints in sweet sounds do ye praise let

Israel in his make a joy and to him praise his sing let all uskil our children mit joyful end let he O let them I do esse dit Give praises in the chance.

Let him with timbrel and with high, His songs his dreams advance.

For thought of pleasure to make it those that is for people we.

[67 : 35] And here with his salvation, the meek will beautify.

And in his glory excellent, let all his saints rejoice.

Let them to him upon their face alone lift up their voice.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit, rest on and abide with you all, now and forever.

Amen.