



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

Mailing Address : 11428 E. Artesia Blvd. # 4 ; Artesia, CA 90701
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July 5, 2009

Theme: The Death of Jesus

Text: Matthew 27:45-56

Last week we reflected upon the most mysterious words that Jesus ever spoke: "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me!" We saw that Jesus was carrying the sins of the world upon his shoulders. The prophet Habakkuk wrote, "Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong." Because God is Holy and Just He turned His back, so to speak, upon Jesus as he hung upon the cross. Jesus experienced the total absence of God so that we would never have to experience what that is like.

Today we will cover the events that surrounded Jesus death. It is one of those little "coincidences" that we will also have communion today in which we celebrate the death of the Son of God on the cross.

The people who were standing by the cross completely misunderstood his words, as usual. They thought he was calling for Elijah So they mocked Him yet again by saying, "...Let's see if Elijah comes to save him." Before He dies Jesus gives another loud cry. Matthew does not tell us what he said, but John does. John said that before he died, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" When he said that Jesus did not mean that the whole of God's plan of salvation had been completed. Jesus still needed to conquer death by rising from the dead. Jesus still needs to return to earth to establish his kingdom on earth. We still need to be completely delivered from sin by receiving our glorified bodies. Finally, God's eternal kingdom is yet to come. What had been completed was that part of God's plan of salvation which called for Jesus to make atonement for our sin. This atoning sacrifice had now been completed.

Matthew clearly tells us that Jesus Himself chose the time when he would die. We could translate Matthew's words, "...he dismissed his spirit." In other words, He told His spirit to depart from him and then he died. In verse 46 we saw that it was about 3:00 PM when Jesus gave his cry of abandonment. At 3:00 PM there was another important event taking place at the temple in Jerusalem—the high priest was slaughtering a Passover Lamb for the whole nation of Israel. Matthew clearly means to tell us that Jesus is the Real Passover Lamb. In John's Gospel, when Jesus was approaching him to be baptized, he said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." Just as God had delivered the Hebrews from slavery to the Egyptians on that first Passover, so because of this Passover Lamb, God delivers people from slavery to sin.

Yet another event was taking place as Jesus cried out his last words: The curtain in the temple that separates the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place was torn from top to bottom. This expresses several truths: (1) The fact that it was torn from top to bottom



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means that the curtain was torn supernaturally by God. This was an act of God. (2) It means that all who believe have access to God. He is now approachable to those who believe. (3) It means that the Holy Spirit of God has been released out into the world. This became evident on the Day of Pentecost. Because the sin of the believer has been removed, he/she may now come near to God.

Matthew says that there was a great earthquake and that many righteous people who had died were restored to life. After Jesus resurrection they appeared to many people in the city of Jerusalem. Matthew tells us about these events so that his readers would know that one of the most important events in all of history had occurred. Jesus had been offered as a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the world.

The Gospels tell us that Jesus caused division wherever he went. Wherever he went to preach, the majority of the people did not believe, but a minority of the people did believe. It was not that Jesus intended to cause division but this is what happened. Matthew is quick to tell us that the centurion who was in charge of the crucifixion says, "Surely, this was the Son of God!" Israel had rejected her King; but a Gentile recognizes his divinity—that he is the Son of God.