

Dr. Dustin Daniels | River Bible Church
Matthew 27:45-54 | The Death of Jesus
Sunday May 24, 2026

WELCOME:

- Bibles in the back—our gift to you.
- My sermon notes are in the foyer—please take them home with you.

REVIEW:

We continue our study of Matthew's Gospel this morning.

For the past many weeks, we have examined the story of Jesus' suffering—the "Passion Narrative."

If you've seen the movie called "The Passion of the Christ," you've seen Hollywood's version of these passages.

Last Sunday, we saw how Jesus suffered specifically by being mocked, beaten, and then crucified.

The suffering of Jesus was certainly not in vain for many reasons—but last week it led us to the realization that...

Last Week's KEYPOINT 1:

Jesus is a portrait of our sin.

Jesus' physical appearance points to the inner spiritual reality of what sin does to our souls.

At that particular moment in time, Jesus didn't look like a king—nor was he supposed to.

And the reason is that Jesus had to *become* sin for us.

I closed last Sunday by encouraging you to ponder that powerful truth throughout the week—that Jesus became sin for you.

When you have a bad day and forget the Gospel—run to the empty cross.

When you lose your cool and burn another bridge—run to the bloody empty cross.

When you lose hope, and you feel like life is not worth living, and nothing will ever change—run past the empty cross and into the arms of the Living God.

These are moments in our lives where your church family becomes real.

Yes, we need Jesus. Yes, we need His Word. But we all need one another, too.

INTRODUCTION:

Today, we close Jesus' Passion by examining and explaining His death.

In doing so, Matthew shares four miracles that take place.

What do these miracles reveal? How do they impact you?

Let's find out together.

Please stand for the reading and honoring of God's Word.

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 27:45—*From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land.*

Matthew 27:46—*About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?" that is, "**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**"*

Matthew 27:47—*When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for Elijah."*

Matthew 27:48—Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered him a drink.

Matthew 27:49—But the rest said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

Matthew 27:50—But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit.

Matthew 27:51—Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.

Matthew 27:52—The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.

Matthew 27:53—And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many.

Matthew 27:54—When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith 1.6

“The whole counsel of God concerning everything essential for His own glory and man’s salvation, faith, and life is either explicitly stated or by necessary inference contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Nothing is ever to be added to the Scriptures, either by new revelation of the Spirit or by human traditions.”

PRAY:

Let your faithful love come to me, LORD, your salvation, as you promised (Ps. 119:41).

EXEGESIS:

Matthew 27:45— *From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land.*

Darkness is the first miracle.

Historically, both Jews and the Romans thought unnatural darkness as a sign, threat, or omen.

The Greek noun for darkness is *skótos*, which means “the absence of light.”

There are three main theories as to what this darkness is.

1. Dust Storm (Khamsin Theory/haboob)
2. Severe thunderstorm (clouds covered the sky)
3. The solar eclipse theory.

The most popular theory is that of a solar eclipse.

The problem, however, is that a solar eclipse can't occur during Passover because Passover happens during a full moon in April.

A solar eclipse happens when the moon moves between the Earth and the sun.

In addition, a solar eclipse lasts only a few minutes, not three hours.

For those reasons, astronomers say that a solar eclipse was impossible at the time of the crucifixion.

All the synoptic Gospels say the same thing—darkness covered the land.

Biblically, the Gospel writers don't embellish this moment, nor do they speculate about its cause.

They simply state the facts.

Now, the timing is crucial—darkness covers the sky from 12 noon to 3:00pm.

These are the brightest hours of the day.

It's like the Father unplugged the power from the whole sky.

So, it's not a dust storm, a thunderstorm, or a solar eclipse.

However, let's talk about a *divine* eclipse.

Biblically, in the OT, we see darkness symbolize many things—chaos, oppression, exile, injustice.

Darkness signals the “day of the Lord,” when God judges the nations,

During the Exodus, the ninth plague against Egypt was darkness.

Exodus 10:21— *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be felt.”*

The phrase “a darkness that can be felt” conveys its intensity and density.

In Hebrew, “darkness of darkness.”

This is not merely poetic language.

Darkness of darkness is seeing and feeling God's judgment on sin.

Exodus 10:22— *So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness throughout the land of Egypt for three days.*

Exodus 10:23— *One person could not see another, and for three days they did not move from where they were.*

The question becomes, why?

Judgment—God is divinely judging Egypt for enslaving His people.

But a more impressive illustration comes from Amos.

Amos 8:9— *And in that day—
this is the declaration of the Lord God— (Thus saith the Lord)
I will make the sun go down at noon;
I will darken the land in the daytime.*

Amos 8:10— *I will turn your feasts (Passover) into mourning
and all your songs into lamentation....
I will make that grief
like mourning for an only son
and its outcome like a bitter day.*

Was the crucifixion a bitter day for Israel? Disciples?

Amos wrote this passage 800 years before Jesus' birth.

It's within these OT passages that Matthew frames Jesus's death within Israel's sacred history.

Just as darkness fell on the Egyptians—a darkness that everyone *felt*—a similar darkness falls on Calvary.

The darkness represents judgment, and the judgment represents three things:

1. God's wrath on Israel for crucifying His Son,
2. God's wrath on sin,
3. God's wrath on Jesus, who *became sin* on our behalf.

Matthew 27:45— *darkness came over the whole land.*

Several interesting secular reports suggest that the darkness was worldwide.

However, most secular historians conclude that there is insufficient evidence to prove a global darkness event,

What we do know is that darkness did cover Israel for three hours during the brightest part of the day.

What happened during those three hours of darkness?

They represent a gap in the narrative—not one Gospel writer whispers a word about what happened during this darkness.

It's as if a divine veil had been drawn over Israel that day. Why?

Because the physical pain of the crucifixion was over, and now the spiritual pain was about to begin.

It was during this darkness that God the Father transferred/imputed the sins of His people to His Son.

The sins of God's people were poured out vicariously/substitutionally on the sinless, perfect Son of God.

In order for Jesus to pay for the sins of His people, He had to be cursed.

Due to the nature of sin and the severity of this spiritual transaction, no human would be permitted to see the details.

None of us will ever understand the horrors that took place during these three hours.

Every sin of every Believer was spiritually transferred to Jesus.

Today, it's reported that there are between 2.3–2.6 billion Christians.

That doesn't account for the Christians who went to be with the Lord over the past 2,000 years.

It also doesn't account for the OT saints either.

How many sins does one Christian—do you— we commit in your lifetime?

Doing the math is not as important as realizing the cost of being forgiven.

As a Christian, you were bought at a price (1 Cor. 6:20).

So after three hours of divine judgment upon Israel, God's wrath on sin, and God's wrath on Jesus—the silence is broken.

Matthew 27:46—*About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"*

These are the only words that Matthew records of Jesus speaking from the cross.

His question is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic.

The cry comes from Psalm 22:1.

Fulfilling prophecy, King David wrote this Psalm before crucifixion was invented and nearly 1,000 years before Jesus was born.

The psalm describes the realities of crucifixion—Jesus' terrible thirst, pierced hands and feet, even the gambling (Matthew 22:14–18).

Matthew 27:46—*"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"*

Throughout Matthew's Gospel, we've seen Jesus address God the Father as "Father/Abba."

But here, at this moment, Jesus cries out to the Father as "God." Why?

The passage tells us—Jesus has been abandoned/forsaken/deserted by His Father.

The relationship between God the Father and God the Son has been disrupted—there's a break between them.

Now, Jesus knows all about being abandoned.

Throughout the entire *Passion Narrative*, we've seen how Jesus was betrayed, forsaken, and abandoned by everyone He knew.

But that is quite different than God the Father abandoning God the Son.

How is that even possible?

Because Scripture teaches that the Lord our God is one, the only living and true God.

His Divine Being consists of three real persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

These three have the same substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence without this essence being divided. (The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith)

But we have to ask, at this moment, was the Trinity divided? Was there a separation?

Was there somehow a severing of Trinitarian fellowship?

The Trinity cannot be broken, can it? Was there a divine divorce?

How could there be? Did the Father really forsake his Son on the cross?

The mystery of the redemption might just be as mysterious as the mystery of the incarnation!

The bottom line is that God cannot stop being God—and one of God's attributes is His holiness.

Habakkuk 1:13—*Your eyes are too pure to look on evil,*

Because the Father is unable to look upon evil, He had no other choice but to turn His back on His Son.

And when the Father turned His back, Jesus felt the agony of that abandonment.

KEYPOINT 1:

It's one thing to feel abandoned; it is another thing to actually be abandoned.

Yes, God the Son was absolutely abandoned by God the Father.

Yet, God the Father did not abandon His Son absolutely.

He still loved his Son—temporary abandonment—we'll see that in a moment.

When the Father forsook Jesus, their separation was not one of nature, essence, or substance.

In other words, Jesus never ceased to be God's Son.

Human terms: when your son or daughter, grandson or granddaughter, sins against you, are they still your son or daughter? Grandson or granddaughter?

Though there was no interruption in the Father's love for Jesus as a Son, the Father still had to turn away from Him because Jesus represented our sin.

Matthew 27:46—*About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?"*

Matthew 27:47—*When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for Elijah."*

When Jesus called out, they misunderstood what Jesus said.

People tend to hear what they want to hear anyway.

"Eli, Eli" sounds vaguely like "Elias," especially from the lips of a dying man crying out in agony,

Matthew 27:48—*Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered him a drink.*

Someone offers Jesus sour wine to drink.

Sour wine was a popular beverage among poor people to quench thirst, but quenching Jesus thirst is not what they're concerned about.

Sour wine is not a gesture of mercy but of mockery.

Remember that the purpose of crucifixion is to suffer.

The Romans perfected the art of keeping criminals alive as they died.

Crucifixion was designed to be slow, cruel, and public.

So they try to give Jesus this beverage to prolong Jesus life and His agony.

Matthew 27:49—*But the rest said, “Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”*

Why doesn’t Elijah come? Because Jesus never called him.

Besides, they do not believe for a moment that Elijah will come to rescue Jesus.

Yet they are right—Elijah will not come for Jesus, because Elijah had already come twice.

Elijah came symbolically through John the Baptist.

He also came at the Transfiguration with Moses.

Matthew 27:50—*But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit.*

After six hours on the cross—the first three suffering the wrath of man and the last three suffering the wrath of His Father...

Jesus was at the end of His life—death was only moments away.

We would expect that whatever He might say would be murmured or whispered, but it’s not—it’s a loud cry of victory!

Matthew does not tell us what He said, but Luke and John do.

Luke 23:46—*And Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.” Saying this, he breathed his last.*

Notice that Jesus once again calls God the Father, “Father— which conveys that the relationship is restored.

John 19:30—*When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished.” Then bowing his head, he gave up his spirit.*

Jesus said both statements, but each Gospel writer focuses on a different aspect.

“It is finished” is just one word in Greek, *tetelestai*.

What exactly is finished?

Two things—one physical and one spiritual

First, the physical suffering.

Second, the Father’s plan of salvation is complete.

Tetelestai carries profound theological meaning and has two definitions.

First, it can be a financial term—it means “fully paid.”

It can be used for a debt or tax bill that is “paid in full.”

Ancient tax receipts said, “*tetelestai*”— meaning “paid in full.”

Imagine your student loan, business loan, or mortgage documents being returned to you, saying, “paid in full.”

Second, it can also mean—no surprise—“It is finished.”

By dying on the cross, Jesus finished the work that the Father gave him to do.

Jesus’ last cry was one of victory—it wasn’t a whisper of defeat.

Matthew 27:50—...*gave up his spirit*.

Even at death, we see Jesus retain self-control.

Physically speaking, Jesus dies from physical wounds caused by beatings and crucifixion.

But Matthew says that Jesus does not simply die—*he releases His spirit.*

Jesus chose when to die—humans don't do that.

At that moment, it was 3:00 p.m during Passover.

Timing is no coincidence.

3:00pm is the exact hour when the priests made their sacrifices in the temple for Passover.

So as the priests were sacrificing their lambs for Passover, God the Father sacrificed the Lamb of God.

Before Jesus' sacrifice, priests offered the same sacrifices again and again.

The repetition proves that their work was only a band-aid, never complete.

Hebrews 10:11—*Every priest stands day after day ministering and offering the same sacrifices time after time, which can never take away sins.*

Hebrews 10:12—*But this man, after offering one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.*

When Jesus gave up His Spirit, the price of our sin was paid in full.

Jesus had done the work the Father had sent Him to do.

The work of redemption was complete.

Now, we see the effects of Christ's finished work.

Matthew 27:51—*Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom,*

God the Father has not abandoned His Son forever.

The proof is in this curtain-tearing ceremony!

This is the second miracle.

We're very familiar with the miracles of Jesus' birth—the visitations of the angels, the star that guided the wise men, and the virgin birth itself—but we don't pay much attention to these miracles.

There is probably a good reason for that—the resurrection is the miracle of miracles.

Yet, let's not miss the pre-game celebration.

Matthew 27:51—*Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom,*

Your translation may say veil—same item.

There were two curtains in the Temple—both curtains symbolically said the same thing: “Do Not Enter.”

The Temple itself was designed as a series of boxes—so the closer you got to the middle, the more sacred the area became.

So there were two curtains to protect people from wandering into the presence of God and dying.

The first curtain, which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, was eighty feet tall.

The Holy Place contained the Altar for incense, the Table of Shewbread, and the Lampstand.

The Holy Place served as the headquarters for the priests.

The second/inner curtain separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies.

The Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant—a sacred portable chest—which held the Ten Commandments, manna, and Aaron’s rod.

The Holy of Holies was only accessible to the high priest, who would enter once per year on the Day of Atonement (six months apart from Passover) to burn incense and sprinkle blood on the mercy seat.

So there are two curtains, which one is it?

The tearing of the outer curtain symbolizes the temple’s destruction in 70 AD, because the Temple is no longer needed.

The tearing of the inner curtain symbolizes open access for everyone who comes to the Father through Jesus’ sacrifice.

The atonement—the reconciliation between God and man—demands that the inner curtain be torn, and that’s what Matthew is referring to.

Now, can you imagine what the priest must have thought when the curtain was torn?

Can you imagine Caiaphas’s face?

Matthew 27:51—...*was torn in two from top to bottom,*

The phrase “from top to bottom” means that no man, starting at the bottom, tore the curtain.

God Himself tore the curtain as if He reached down from Heaven with His holy hands and ripped it in two Himself.

Symbolically, “it is finished,” and nothing *more* needs to be done, nor *can* anything more be done.

KEYPOINT 2:

Because of Jesus’ sacrifice, Believers can approach God the Father directly.

God’s people couldn’t do this before Christ’s death.

They needed to approach God indirectly, asking a priest to intercede for them.

It’s like a child wants to talk to his parents, but has to go through the next-door neighbor first, telling the neighbor what he wants, and then the neighbor passes the message on.

But now the way is open for everyone who believes.

Matthew 27:51— *the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.*

The earthquake is the third miracle.

Remember what the Pharisees told Jesus during His triumphal entry just days earlier?

Everyone was shouting “Hosanna,” which means “God save us.”

Luke 19:39—*Some of the Pharisees from the crowd told him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”*

Luke 19:40—*He answered, “I tell you, if they were to keep silent, the stones would cry out.”*

And the stones did cry out—all creation cries out that “it is finished!”

Creation lets the world know that Jesus’ sacrifice was accepted.

Earthquakes themselves are not miraculous; however, the timing of this one was.

Because it took place at the precise moment when Jesus died.

The Lamb of God dying for the sins of His people is a seismic event.

What other seismic event happened in the OT?

Remember what happened when the Lord gave Moses the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai?

The earth also trembled.

The earthquake at Calvary parallels the earthquake at Sinai and reminds us that although “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

In other words, the Old Covenant of works has been replaced with the New Covenant.

Grace and Truth have replaced the Law.

Moreover, the earthquake prepares us for the next miracle.

Matthew 27:52—*The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised.*

Matthew 27:53—*And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many.*

What in the world is going on here? And what does this mean?

This is the fourth miracle.

- Who were these saints? (Moses, King David, John the Baptist?)
- How many saints were raised? Were there ten or 10,000?
- Who did they talk to and what did they say?

This is a puzzling statement from Matthew.

The passage seems inconsistent with the overall narrative.

—The opening of tombs occurs during the earthquake at Jesus’ crucifixion, yet the bodies are said to emerge with Jesus’ resurrection.

Matthew 27:53—*And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection.*

To make sense of what Matthew is saying, we have to keep in mind that the Gospels are not written in a strict chronological order—but instead in a thematic fashion.

Matthew is probably referring to these saints rising on Sunday morning—“after His resurrection”—but emphasizes it here for theological purposes.

- What happened to them after this resurrection?
- Did they have to die again?

What a trip it is to see people who were dead for years cruising around Jerusalem.

Matthew doesn’t say a word as to its meaning—that’s what the Epistles are for—so we can make an educated theological hypothesis.

We know that within Jesus’ death, death itself is defeated.

Therefore, the resurrection of these saints is the first fruits of what’s to come for all Believers.

Matthew 27:54—*When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”*

For the Romans, it was just another day at the office—they had seen hundreds of crucifixions— and they all ended the same way—death.

Except for this one.

Miracles Recap:

1. God the Father tears the curtain
2. Earthquake
3. Saints are resurrected.

The fourth miracle, however, is the accumulation of them all.

Standing by the cross was a Roman centurion, the soldier in charge of crucifying Jesus.

It’s likely that he witnessed some, if not all, of *The Passion* events, from the very beginning:

Matthew 27:54— *When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened,*

What things?

- Jesus being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane
- Brought to the Jewish leaders for trial
- He may have heard the conversation between Pilate and Jesus
- He may have witnessed Pilate tell the Jewish leaders that Jesus is innocent

- He may have witnessed or even participated in Jesus' flogging, in pounding the crown of thorns on His head, in mocking Him, and in beating Him with the scepter.
- He certainly witnessed Jesus being nailed to the cross, gambled for His garments, and overheard the conversation between Jesus and the man on the other cross.

So whatever or whichever of these events he witnessed...

Matthew 27:54— *they were terrified*

Why were these battle-hardened pagan soldiers terrified?

Because God confronted their sin.

The Greek verb is *phobeō*, from which we get *phobia*, and refers to sheer terror, the absolute panic that causes rapid heartbeat, profuse sweating, and extreme anxiety.

It's the same response when the Disciples saw Jesus walk on the water, thinking He was a ghost (14:26).

Matthew 27:54— *and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"*

This moment turned sacred.

They now realized that they stood in the presence of the Living God.

This could be a conversion moment.

Luke 23:47—*When the centurion saw what happened, he began to glorify God, saying, "This man really was righteous!"*

APPLICATION:

That's the story of Jesus' death. That's the story of our salvation.

There's more to come with the burial of Jesus, and the Jewish drama that comes with that—— and obviously the resurrection.

As I close, I'd like to review...

KEYPOINT 2:

Because of Jesus' sacrifice, Believers can approach God the Father directly.

- What does this mean for you personally?
- What's it mean for us as a church corporately?

First, if you're an unbeliever, I want to encourage you to keep coming to get your spiritual questions answered.

Second, if you're a Believer, there are two extremes I want us to be aware of:

The first extreme is not to take Jesus' sacrifice/death/grace for granted.

- Lack of reverence: God is not our homey—He is holy.
- Not taking personal sin seriously—"God will forgive me."
- We cheapen God's grace.
- Grace is a gift we don't deserve.

The second extreme is legalism— confusing works with grace.

As Believers, we dare not mix the two—works and grace are polar opposites.

Legalism pops up when we feel obligated to do something.

If Jesus' work is finished.

- Are you working to be loved?
 - Do your children work to be children or are they your children?
- Filled with the shame and guilt of past sins?
 - "It is for freedom that Christ set you free."
 - Because of Jesus' work—not yours—your sins have been cast as far as the east is from the west.
 - If you're struggling with your past, talk with someone who can help.
- Are you trying to atone for your own sin when Jesus has already done that for you?
- Are you carrying around the weight— and the baggage of your darkest days, letting those decisions impact your future?

Jesus said, "tetelestai"—"It is finished!"

Maybe that's your word for the week.

Regardless of how you feel—the cross proves how much God loves you.

The death and resurrection of Jesus is why grace is so amazing.

The Father planned your salvation, the Son completed your salvation and now the Spirit works this salvation out in you.

"It is finished!"

Lastly, What does "tetelestai" mean for us corporately as a church?

The church is God's ordained means for worship and discipleship.

We gather for worship, not because we have to—but because we want to.

Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overcome it."

How does Jesus build his church?

First, Jesus himself is the foundation of the church.

Jesus builds His church through the public reading of His Word, explanation, illustration and application of His Word.

Jesus builds His church through singing psalms and spiritual songs, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and discipleship.

Every time we gather, it's like Jesus is putting up a 2x4, or maybe a shingle on the roof.

It's a very slow process.

As Jesus builds His church, His people grow up in spiritual character.

The church is where we learn to pick up our own crosses and die to ourselves.

And it's out of love that we want to serve and give back to the people around us and our community.

My notes include reflection questions...

POP QUIZ:

1. According to the sermon, what does the three hours of darkness primarily represent?

- A. God's sorrow over Israel's suffering
- B. God's judgment (wrath) on sin, Israel, and Jesus who became sin
- C. The power of Satan over creation
- D. A natural astronomical phenomenon

Answer: B

2. Why is a natural solar eclipse ruled out as the cause of the darkness at the crucifixion?

- A. Eclipses do not happen in Israel
- B. A solar eclipse only happens in winter
- C. A solar eclipse cannot occur during Passover's full moon and does not last three hours
- D. The Romans banned watching eclipses

Answer: C

3. Which Old Testament prophet foretold God making the sun go down at noon and turning feasts into mourning?

- A. Isaiah
- B. Jeremiah
- C. Amos
- D. Ezekiel

Answer: C

4. When Jesus cries, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” what change in His address does the sermon highlight?

- A. He stops calling God “Lord” and uses “Yahweh”
- B. He stops calling God “Father” and calls Him “God”
- C. He speaks in Greek instead of Aramaic
- D. He calls on the Holy Spirit instead

Answer: B

5. How does the sermon explain the Father’s abandonment of the Son on the cross?

- A. The Trinity was permanently broken
- B. The Father stopped loving the Son
- C. Jesus ceased to be God temporarily
- D. The Father truly forsook the Son as sin-bearer, yet not in nature, essence, or love

Answer: D

6. What is the meaning of the Greek word “tetelestai,” emphasized in the sermon?

- A. “God, forgive them”
- B. “Into your hands”
- C. “It is finished / paid in full”
- D. “Behold your Son”

Answer: C

7. What is the theological significance of the temple curtain being torn from top to bottom?

- A. It shows Rome’s power over the temple
- B. It symbolizes that the Ark of the Covenant is lost
- C. It symbolizes God destroying the priesthood permanently
- D. It signifies that through Jesus’ sacrifice believers now have direct access to God

Answer: D

8. According to the sermon, why is the earthquake at Jesus' death significant?

- A. It proves Jerusalem was built on a fault line
- B. It parallels Sinai and signals that the Old Covenant of law is giving way to the New Covenant of grace and truth
- C. It frightened the disciples into hiding
- D. It caused the temple to collapse immediately

Answer: B

9. How does the sermon interpret the resurrection of many saints who appeared in the holy city?

- A. As a legend added later, with no theological meaning
- B. As the first fruits and a preview of the resurrection promised to all believers
- C. As a hallucination of the disciples
- D. As a vision seen only by the high priest

Answer: B

10. What is the key application the sermon makes from Jesus' declaration "It is finished"?

- A. Christians must work harder to earn God's love
- B. Believers should fear that their salvation can never be secure
- C. Since Christ's work is complete, we must stop trying to atone for our own sin and live in the freedom and grace He has purchased
- D. Worship, giving, and serving are no longer necessary for Christians

Answer: C

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

I. 1. The Darkness and God's Judgment (Matthew 27:45)

1. From noon to 3 p.m., darkness covered the land. In Scripture, darkness often signifies judgment (Exodus 10; Amos 8).

- How does this three-hour darkness help you understand what was happening spiritually while Jesus hung on the cross?
- In what ways does this challenge a purely “sentimental” view of the cross?

2. The sermon emphasized that during these three hours, the Father imputed the sins of His people to His Son.

- How would you explain “imputation” in simple terms to a new believer?
- Why is imputation essential to the doctrine of substitutionary atonement?

3. Think about the sheer number of sins represented—believers of all ages, Old and New Covenant.

- How does meditating on the *weight* of that sin deepen your sense of the cost of forgiveness?
- Does it change the way you view “small” or “respectable” sins in your own life?

4. The sermon spoke of a “divine veil” over those hours—none of the Gospel writers record what Jesus experienced internally.

- Why might God have chosen not to reveal the details of those three hours?
- How can that mystery cultivate both humility and worship in us?

II. “My God, My God, Why Have You Abandoned Me?” (Matthew 27:46)

1. Jesus shifts from calling God “Father” to “My God” and cries out the words of Psalm 22:1.

- What does this tell us about the depth of His suffering and His consciousness of bearing sin?
- How does it also reveal His confidence in Scripture in the midst of agony?

2. The sermon argued that the Son was truly forsaken by the Father in some sense, yet not in His divine essence or Sonship.

- Why must we affirm both that the Father truly judged sin in the Son and that the Trinity remained undivided?

3. Habakkuk 1:13 says God’s eyes are too pure to look on evil.

- How does God’s holiness help explain the Father “turning His back” on the Son?
- In what ways does this correct casual or flippant views of sin—even among Believers?

4. KEYPOINT: “It’s one thing to feel abandoned; it is another thing to actually be abandoned.”

- Have you ever *felt* abandoned by God? What was that like?
- How does knowing that Christ was truly forsaken in our place comfort us when our *feelings* tell us otherwise?

III. Misunderstanding Jesus (Matthew 27:47–49)

1. The crowd misheard “Eli, Eli” as a call for Elijah.

- What does this reveal about spiritual blindness and the human tendency to hear what we want to hear?
- Can you think of ways people today still misunderstand or distort Jesus’ words?

2. Sour wine is offered to Jesus, not as mercy but to prolong His agony.

- What does this scene show about the cruelty of sin and the hardness of the human heart?
- How might we be tempted to “soften” the ugliness of sin in our own lives or culture?

IV. “It Is Finished” and the Voluntary Death of Christ (Matthew 27:50; John 19:30; Luke 23:46)

1. Jesus cries out, “It is finished” (*tetelestai*—paid in full) and “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.”

- What *exactly* is finished—physically and spiritually?
- How does the idea of “paid in full” relate to our understanding of justification by faith alone?

2. Jesus “gave up His spirit”—He laid down His life willingly.

- How does Christ’s control over the moment of His death highlight His deity and kingship, even on the cross?
- How does this shape the way you think about His suffering—not as a tragic accident, but as a sovereign, purposeful act?

3. At 3 p.m., the Passover lambs were being sacrificed while the Lamb of God died.

- How does this providential timing illuminate the relationship between the Old Covenant sacrifices and Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (Hebrews 10:11–12)?
- How might this deepen the way we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

V. The Tearing of the Curtain (Matthew 27:51)

1. The inner veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom.

- What did that curtain symbolize before it was torn?
- Why is the direction of the tearing (top to bottom) theologically important?

2. KEYPOINT: Because of Jesus' sacrifice, believers can approach the Father directly.

- How does this reality correct a "priestly" mindset where we think we still need human mediators beyond Christ?
- Practically, what does "direct access" look like in your prayer life and worship?

3. The outer curtain symbolized the coming destruction of the temple; the inner curtain symbolized open access.

- How does this reinforce the shift from temple-centered worship to Christ-centered worship (John 4:21–24)?
- In what ways could our churches still be tempted to cling to "temple-like" forms or rituals instead of resting in Christ's finished work?

VI. The Earthquake and the Open Tombs (Matthew 27:51–53)

1. The earth shook, rocks split, and tombs opened.

- How does creation's response underline the cosmic significance of Christ's death?
- Compare this to the trembling at Sinai when the Law was given. What does the contrast between Law (Sinai) and Gospel (Calvary) teach us (John 1:17)?

2. Many saints were raised and appeared to many after Jesus' resurrection.

- Why do you think Matthew includes this strange detail?
- How might this event serve as a “firstfruits” preview of the final resurrection of believers?

3. The passage leaves many questions unanswered (Who were they? How many? What happened next?).

- How do you deal with biblical passages where God does not satisfy your curiosity?
- What does this teach us about trusting what God *has* revealed and not speculating beyond Scripture?

VII. The Centurion’s Confession (Matthew 27:54)

1. The centurion and the soldiers were “terrified” and confessed, “Truly this man was the Son of God!”

- Why do you think these battle-hardened men were so afraid?
- What role did God’s confronting their sin play in that fear?

2. Luke adds that the centurion glorified God and said, “This man really was righteous!”

- How might this moment illustrate conversion?
- What elements of true repentance and faith can you trace in this scene?

3. Consider all the miracles together: darkness, torn veil, earthquake, open tombs, centurion’s confession.

- How do these signs collectively testify that the cross was not a defeat but a victory?
- Which of these signs most grips your heart personally, and why?

VIII. Law, Grace, and the Finished Work of Christ

- In what subtle ways do you find yourself still trying to earn God’s favor—through performance, ministry, spiritual disciplines, or morality?
- How does the doctrine of justification by grace alone free you from that slavery while still motivating holiness?
- Where do you personally tend to drift: toward self-condemning legalism or toward taking grace lightly? How does the cross correct both errors at the same time?
- How would you counsel a fellow believer who says, “I know God forgives me, but I can’t forgive myself” in light of *tetelestai*—paid in full?

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