

Matthew 27.45–61

God Forsaken by God

Chapters of Matthew's Gospel Bring Us to GROUND ZERO

Face to Face w/ Core Doctrines of Christianity > CROSS and RESURRECTION

APOSTLE of Jesus Christ to GENTILES Summarized the GOSPEL Message...

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” 1 Corinthians 15.3,4

3 Key PILLARS of our FAITH: Christ's Death, Burial, and Resurrection

1. Savior's Travail

a. Darkness

Matthew, Unlike Other Gospels, tells of Unique MIRACLES at Jesus DEATH

Miracles Accompanied Death AND Birth of Jesus

Virgin Birth, Angel Visitations, Star guided Wise Men, Warning to Flee to Egypt

Miracles Follow his Death > Most especially Greatest Miracle > Resurrection!!

v. 45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

That Sky should Grow Dark for a Time is not MIRACLE – happens here in BJ
Severe Storm - Eclipse – Smoke from Fires or Volcanoes --- us in Hawaii

This Darkness Lasted for at Least 3 hours! In Middle of the Day!!

By OUR RECONING of Time = 12 noon to 3 p.m.

Passover always observed during Full Moon > Eclipse cannot happen Then

Special Divine Intervention > Striking, Sober, & Well-Observed EVENT

“the wonder (of this darkness) is related in your own annals and is preserved in your archives to this day.”
Tertullian, the early Christian apologist

Much was Going On before Darkness Descended

Jesus Prayed for Executioners – Promises made to Believing Criminal

Comfort given to Grieving Mother – all the while Taunted by Religious Leaders

Then > VEIL of Darkness draws over Unspeakable Suffering of God’s Son

Utterly Silent Hours > Gap in the Narrative > Time we Know Nothing about

SIGN of JUDGMENT and TRAGEDY Upon the LAND and its PEOPLE

3 DAYS of Darkness over EGYPT before the PASSOVER

3 HOURS of Darkness as LAMB of God dies for the EXODUS of the World

“And on that day,” declares the Lord GOD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord GOD, ‘when I will send a famine on the land—not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, to seek the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it.”
Amos 8.9-12

b. Despair

What happened during those hours of darkness? We know the Answer

Son of God took Burden of our Sins on Himself, Punished for them in our Place

Experienced such Terrible Alienation from his Father that he cried out...

v. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Darkness Veiled Anguish of Son of God > Bearing Punishment for our Sins

Not Right for Human Eyes to Look on Him in his Suffering

Darkness cried out Against Blackness of our Sin

Darkness VIVID PICTURE Tremendous Cost to God of our Redemption

Crucifixion was unspeakably painful and degrading...the victim endured countless spasms as he pulled with his arms and pushed with his legs to keep his chest cavity open for breathing and then collapsed in exhaustion until the demand for oxygen demanded renewed desperate heaving. The scourging, the loss of blood, the shock from the pain, all produced agony that could go on for days, ending at last by suffocation, cardiac arrest, or the loss of blood. D.A. Carson

Cannot FATHOM this DIVINE MYSTERY – DARKNESS and SUFFERING ETERNAL, LOVING, FELLOWSHIP of TRIUNE Godhead Strained GOD the Son FEELING ABANDONED by His GOD and FATHER

God forsaken by God, who can comprehend that? Martin Luther

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Hebrews 5.7

c. Deliverance?

vs. 47-49 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

As ELIJAH Never DIED but was CARRIED Directly into HEAVEN

Jewish LEGENDS Developed he Came to AID Faithful in their Time of Need

If ANY Kindness in OFFER of DRINK > It was to Satisfy their CURIOSITY

WONDERED if this KING on a CROSS could CALL DOWN God’s Prophet?

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.” Malachi 4.5

AGAIN they Unknowingly FULFILLED Scripture from 1000 yrs EARLIER

Like PSALM 22 – Ps 69 – DAVID’s Sufferings Point Clearly to THIS Cross

You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor; my foes are all known to you. Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink. Psalm 69:19-21

DESPITE His UNSPEAKABLE AGONY – Jesus is Sovereign in His DEATH

v. 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

Chose the TIME to RELEASE His Life as a RANSOM for His PEOPLE

2. Symbols of Termination

MIRACLES that MATTHEW Details filled with Theological Significance

a. End of Sacrifice

v. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

Tearing of Great Veil separated Holy Place from Most Holy Place in Temple

Temple > Series of Courts, Center was Temple Building itself, divided in 2 parts

Larger part: Holy Place > Thick Veil separated Inner Room: Most Holy Place

Presence of God SYMBOLIZED in Most Holy Place > Present yet SET APART

There was NO Ark of Covenant in Herod's Temple – LOST in Babylon Attack

Dividing Veil > Enormous Gulf btwn Holy God and People because of their Sin

Veil saying "Thus far you may come, but no farther."

Only One Day a Year could High Priest pass Veil, on the Day of Atonement

v. 51 "from top to bottom" > Something God Did, Heavy Spiritual Significance

Righteous MAN tore Garment at Blasphemy / Righteous God RIPS this VEIL

Anger over BLASPHEMOUS Murder of His RIGHTEOUS SON

Veil torn at 3 in Afternoon > Time began Evening Sacrifice

Priests in Temple, Engaged in Duties, When Veil was Torn would have Seen It
 Found selves Standing Aghast before Now-Exposed Innermost Recess of Temple
 Game Changer – Life’s Work was Over – God New Way of Dealing with Sin

Rending of Veil teaches 3 things.

1. *The old system of offering sacrifices year by year was over.*

Priests probably Sewed Veil back together & Continued Empty RITUALS

In the Sight of God the Old Age Ended and a New COVENANT began in X

Both Jew and Gentile have FULL STANDING by Grace in Christ’s church

“For he himself Jesus is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility”

Ephesians 2.14–16

Pointed Forward to True and Final Atonement that Jesus would make on Cross

Significance of Tearing of Veil > Jesus fulfilled all Symbols of OT Sacrifices

No Need for Further Sacrifices > Way to God Open for all who Trust in Jesus

“So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and *a large number of priests* became obedient to the faith” Acts 6.7

2. *Jesus’ offering of himself was the perfect and final sacrifice; so nothing more needs to be done or can be done to reconcile sinful men and women to God.*

Jesus’ Sacrifice was Real and FINAL - Not a Symbol like All Animals were

For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Hebrews 10.4

Reformers coined Latin Term *Solus Christus* (Christ alone)

Expressed Completeness & Total Sufficiency of Christ’s Work

To Add Anything to Christ's Work is to have "another gospel" ANATHEMA

But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Hebrews 9.26

"there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time" 1 Timothy 2.5–6

The rent veil does indeed serve as a sign of the temple's impending destruction - a destruction conceived not as a brute fact but as a theological necessity. D.A. Carson

3. Because of Christ's work it is now possible for those who believe on him to approach God directly.

People of God could Not do this before Christ's Death

Needed to Approach God Indirectly, asking Priest to Intercede for Them

Now the Way is Open for Everyone

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith Hebrews 10.19–22

b. End of Time v. 51 And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

Earthquake split Rocks and Broke Open Many Tombs

Earthquakes Not Miracle > But this Miracle was DIVINE SYMBOL

The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved ... the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 2 Peter 3.10-12

END of World – FINAL Act of Judgment – Will have Earth & Sky QUAKE!

When he opened the sixth seal...there was a great earthquake Revelation 6.12

Earthquake corresponded to Giving of Law at Sinai, Earth also Trembled
 Time of Fear those Brought Out of Egypt, Holy God and Law is Pure and True
 Moses said on Mount Sinai, "I am trembling with fear" Hebrews 12.21

This Earthquake Took Place at Precise Moment when Jesus Died

Earthquake at Calvary parallels Earthquake at Sinai, reminds us

Jesus: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Matthew 5.17

DAY of the LORD has NOW COME in the CRUCIFIED & RISEN CHRIST

c. End of Death

vs. 52,53 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Not Understand ALL DETAILS Resurrection of Old Testament Saints

Appeared to Many in Jerusalem following Jesus' Resurrection

Matthew fits this Strange Event here, Not to Cloud Focus on Jesus' Resurrection

Jerusalem on CRAGGY, ROCKY Cliff with Lots of TOMBS Dug into It

Don't THINK Earthquake Necessary to Let them OUT of their Graves
 Or STONE Needed to be Rolled Away to Let JESUS Out of HIS TOMB

God's WORD of Life is all that is NEEDED to GRANT LIFE

Were they Long Dead – OT Prophets? Recently Died – More Recognizable?

Die Again after Years? Translated back into Heaven like Elijah? Ascension?

VERY CURIOUS but NOT CENTRAL to Story

POINT – Jesus has Power to RAISE the Dead, and WILL Raise All the Dead
Raising Some Now // FIRSTFRUITS of FINAL Resurrection of ALL Believers

Jesus told his disciples, “Because I live, you also will live” John 14.19

For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

1 Corinthians 15.23

3. Sure Testimony

a. Word

Standing by Cross was Roman centurion > Leader of EXECUTION SQUAD
NOT Likely a Christian > Seems pretty CLOSE to Becoming a CONVERT
CONVINCING Signs > This was NO ORDINARY Day, No Ordinary MAN

v. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Just BEGINNING of Faith, Mustard Seed / BABY Step – SINCERE Conviction
Not WIN any Points with his MURDERING HOMIES for Public Confession
Blob of Blood – Flayed Flesh – Dead Mutilated Carcass > this is SON OF GOD?

CONTRAST with Other Times this Phrase has been USED

Devil The devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “*If you are the Son of God...*” Matthew 4.5,6

Religious Leaders “*If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*”
Matthew 27.40

Disciples > Right WORDS but all RAN AWAY and HID

Simon Peter: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Matthew 16.16

Peter cannot CONFESS Jesus before SERVANT GIRLS

Roman declares Him the Son of God > when NOT POLITICALLY CORRECT
RIGHT at CROSS – Not even Full Picture or Understanding – Still Gets It!

“I Dared to Call him Father” Bilquis Sheik – Pakistani Muslim Noblewoman

Beautiful Story of God drawing her to Himself – Opposition, Sincere Follower

Thru Matthew Jesus PROMISED Adversity – Here at Cross, Man picks his UP

HAVE YOU Stood to DECLARE Jesus? Afraid OF Man or Afraid FOR Man?

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ
1 Timothy 6.12-14

b. Deed – People Need to HEAR AND SEE the Gospel

From Matthew’s Perspective – All the Men Ran Away – INCLUDING him!

vs. 55,56 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and a the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

v. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

Ministry of PRESENCE – SUPPORT – LOYALTY – FAITHFULNESS

RISKED their Lives and Safety to BE WITH Jesus as He GAVE HIS for Them

WOMEN who SAW – Jesus CRUCIFIED, NOW saw Him BURIED & RISEN

In first-century Palestine... a woman's... testimony would be inadmissible in a court of law. As witnesses they had no standing! No one who wanted to fabricate a convincing account of resurrection in first-century Palestine would ever dream of doing it this way. Sinclair Ferguson

It is strange that a more competent witness could not be found. John Calvin

SARCASTIC JIBE > those who Claim Gospel Message is Human INVENTION
IF SO > INVENTOR was PRETTY STUPID > Base Tale upon WOMAN!

Yet St. Augustine calls them "Apostola Apostolorum" - Augustine
APOSTLES TO APOSTLES - 1st PREACHERS of the RESURRECTION

Normal Practice > Suffering on CROSS lasted for DAYS > GASPING, AGONY
After DEATH > Romans LEFT Victim on CROSS > VULTURES ate FLESH
Another GRISLY, SADISTIC Fact from Roman History of CRUCIFIXION
After VULTURES Finished Feasting, Gnawed Carcass thrown RUBBISH Dump

...people sentenced to death forfeited their property and were forbidden burial
Tacitus Roman historian

NOBODY IMPORTANT was Crucified > No Victim Worthy of NEW Tomb

700 Years EARLIER – Prophet ISAIAH saw these Events and PREDICTED:
AMAZING Prophecy > JARRING, Never Heard of CONTRADICTIONS:

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death Isaiah 53.9

DIED with ROGUES / BURIED by ROYALTY

GRAVE – Between 2 Guilty THIEVES

DEATH – Placed in Expensive Tomb of Prominent Leader

vs. 57-60 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.

ENEMIES Thought they were FINISHED with JESUS >> CORPSE Remained

v. 46 a tomb cut out of rock

Very LIKELY in CLOSE PROXIMITY to the place CROSS was LOCATED
EXACT SITE is UNCERTAIN > 2000 yrs of CHANGE > WARFARE, SIEGE

COULD NOT MAKE this STORY UP > TOO STRANGE for FANTASY!

Jesus # 1 FOLLOWER – Ran like SCARED CHICKEN, Weeping like BABY

Then into SCENE of Grisly HORROR > 2 of Most Prominent Men in Nation

John says JOE was assisted by Nicodemus, who Brought the Spices

Perhaps because they were Council Members – Knew Where/When to WAIT

Nicodemus > Jesus called him ‘Israel’s Teacher’ > TOP Teacher in Nation

Every ref to him in John ‘CAME at NIGHT’ > Founder of ‘Nic at Night’??

Unlikely HOMEBOYS – for BLOODY, THANKLESS, TASK

Joseph takes His STAND AMIDST the Ashes > EVERYTHING to LOOSE

HOPED Jesus would ESTABLISH KINGDOM of God > He’s DEAD NOW!

At THAT Point: Jesus MAY be MARTYR but Clearly NOT the MESSIAH

Joseph THROWS Away his Prominence, Position, & Prestige for a CORPSE

Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man... Luke 23.50

We may be grateful that the gospel story includes men like Joseph – not easily persuaded, not naturally given to public demonstration of their loyalties, but in the crisis ready to rise to the occasion as a disciple. Donald English

Before THIS MOMENT was QUIET, RESERVED, Secret Follower

Now THINKS Needs of BODY of Jesus Demand CLEAR, BOLD STAND

Mark says that he was “waiting for the kingdom of God” Mark 15.43

First and Only Time we Hear of Joseph > Not Mentioned Before or Again

Moment when Christ’s Other Disciples Forsaken Him, Joseph STANDS

Decision to Care for Jesus Body must have ENDED his Career in Sanhedrin

Sanhedrin have No Use for him once shown Public Allegiance to the ENEMY

“a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action”

Luke 23.51

TOUCHING the DEAD BODY of JESUS > DEFILED Joseph and Nicodemus

COULD NOT Participate in the PASSOVER FEAST

NO PROBLEM > Christ, their PASSOVER LAMB > Had BEEN SLAIN

Where are the palaces, the estates, the fleet of vehicles and the rest, for Jesus?

These two men who were secret disciples of Jesus put us to shame – even as we openly claim to be his disciples. Samuel M. Ngewa

DEATH > Ends SECRET DISCIPLESHIP of Joseph & Nic > Join His Suffering

WHERE DO THEY GO?? > Rest of NT Never Mentioned

Nevertheless > One Critical Moment in History of Redemption

Grim Day > Dark and Fearful Moment > THERE, BIG WAY, BIG THING!

We can expect to find secret disciples in the most unlikely places. We ought always to consider what the Lord commands, and how far he bids us advance. He who stops in the middle of the course shows that he does not trust in God, and he who sets a higher value on his own life than on the command of God is without excuse. John Calvin

Imagine MANY in this City > POSITION of PROMINENCE

Fear LOSS of STATUS, JOB, INCOME, RESPECT

DISAPPOINTED w/ OLD Religions and Traditions > Attracted to CHRIST

PRAY we Could help Them – By our LIFE and EXAMPLE move CLOSER

The World Christian Encyclopedia, estimates there are about 112 million secret disciples or “churchless Christians” worldwide, about 5 percent of all adherents, and projects that number will double by 2025. If we look at the secret believers in India today we find a common characteristic that others around them are quietly challenged to examine the claims of Christ. In almost every case the secret believer in India has been influential to a family member or acquaintance to look at the claims of Christ and become a follower of Jesus. Brad Beaman

DO Not KNOW SECRET Thoughts of YOUR Heart > Any Room for Him?

Joseph GREAT Example of MAN Transformed by God > Head, Hands, Heart

NEEDS of this BODY – ZGC – Requires you to BOLD, RISK-TAKING Service

Matthew 27.45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” 55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and a the mother of the sons of Zebedee. 57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.