

The Witness of the Wonders

Matthew 27: 50-56

At this point, Jesus has endured the horrific suffering of the cross for six grueling hours. He was lifted upon the cross at the third hour, 9:00 am. At the sixth hour, 12:00 noon, darkness covered the earth for three hours. It is now the ninth hour, 3:00 pm and Jesus is preparing to give up the ghost, dying for the sin of humanity.

Much has happened in the six agonizing hours on the cross. Jesus has suffered extreme physical pain as He hung upon the cross. The weight of His body pulled Him downward, creating great difficulty in breathing. As His lungs filled with carbon dioxide, needing to be replaced with fresh oxygen, He was forced to push up against the spikes driven through His feet. His muscles would have been experiencing violent spasms, and the nerves in body would have been throbbing with pain due to the spikes driven in the flesh. He endured the mockery of men, the shame of His public display, and being forsaken of the Father as the wrath of God was poured out on Him as He suffered the righteous judgment for sin. The agonies of the cross are nearing their end. The Lamb of God is about to lay down His life as the substitutionary atonement for sin.

Immediately following the death of Jesus, several miracles take place that further confirm His deity. Mark and Luke record the Veil being torn in two and the testimony of the centurion, but only Matthew speaks of the resurrection of many who had died prior to Jesus' death. As we ponder the faithful events of that day and the significance they have for our lives, I want to examine the [manifestations](#) Matthew reveals as we consider: [The Witness of the Wonders](#).

I. The Sovereignty in His Death (50) – [Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost](#). Here we discover the absolute sovereignty in the death of Jesus. Notice:

A. The Cry of Jesus – Matthew refers to the cry of Jesus, immediately preceding His death. We have considered the seven statements of Jesus on the cross in a previous study. There is much to be gleaned from those seven short statements. He had declared triumphantly: **It is finished**. He had fully and finally satisfied the righteous demands of holy God. The debt of sin had been paid in full, the transaction was complete and final. The work of redemption had been fulfilled as Jesus faithfully endured the suffering of the cross, offering Himself the sacrifice for sin.

- The last words Jesus uttered are recorded in Luke's gospel. [Luke 23:46 – And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost](#). Although Matthew doesn't record the exact words, this statement is referred to here. Jesus declared to those who were present that day, the hosts of heaven, God the Father, and all who would read these words in coming generations that He had completed the work and willfully submitted His life in death, commending His spirit to God the Father!

B. The Control of Jesus (50) – [Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.](#)

We must pay careful attention to the detail of this verse. We find that Jesus yielded up the ghost. This is very significant. It reveals that Jesus remained in complete control, even at this final stage of the crucifixion. Here the word [yielded](#) literally means “*to send away; to yield up; to permit or allow.*” Jesus was not at the mercy of the cross and the death it would bring. While He hung there, death was subject to His command and power! Yes, Pilate and the Jews had consented to His death, but Jesus was not crucified because He had no other choice. He was not there because Pilate had forced Him to submit to crucifixion. Jesus bore sin on the cross because He willingly chose to do so. He was in complete control during the events that unfolded that faithful day. Even in death, Jesus was in control. He was crucified, a means of cruel execution, but the wounds He suffered that day did not kill Him. Jesus chose the moment of His death, and knowing all things were finished and complete, He willingly gave up the ghost. In reality, Jesus chose the exact moment He would breathe His last and die.

- As Jesus commended His spirit to God, and yielded up the ghost, He provided for our redemption. This was the way it had to be. There were no other options, no other choices. Had Christ not carried the events of the cross all the way to death, we would have no salvation. We would yet be in our sins and without hope of eternal life. The cross is the central theme of the Gospel. Jesus had to die so that we might live. [Heb.9:22 – And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.](#)

II. The Testimony in His Death (51-54) – These verses record the wonders that surrounded the death of Jesus. They bear testimony to His deity and redemptive work. Consider:

A. The Rending of the Veil (51) – [And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.](#) As Jesus died upon the cross, the veil within the Temple, the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy place was literally torn in two pieces, from the top to the bottom. This happening physically was a miracle within itself. The material is estimated to have been as thick as the palm of one’s hand. Some scholars estimate it would have taken 300 priests just to hang the veil in the Temple. This large piece of woven fabric would have been very sturdy, literally impossible to have been torn in two. This had to be a supernatural event that ripped the veil into two separate pieces.

- We must not miss the great spiritual significance revealed by the rending of the veil. Prior to the cross of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit, indwelling believers, God’s presence dwelt behind the veil. The high priest was the only one permitted to enter behind the veil. It was there the sacrifice was offered once a year on the Day of Atonement. Although Caiaphas never embraced Jesus as the Christ, his duties behind the veil were just a shadow, a picture or representation of the fulfilling work Jesus accomplished on the cross. He fully satisfied the righteous demands of God for atonement. Blood will never need to be shed again to atone for sin. The need for a high priest from the tribe of Levi as man’s representative to God is no longer

needed. Jesus removed the veil of separation, providing equal, unhindered access to the presence of God at His throne for every believer! All those who belong to Christ can now come boldly before the throne of grace, making our intercessions known to God.

- There was also a great earthquake, literally rending rocks in pieces, just as the veil had been rent in two. This was clearly a sign from God that a great and significant event had happened. The earth trembled as Jesus gave up the ghost.

B. The Resurrection of the Saints (52-53) – [And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, ^{\[53\]} And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.](#) Following the death and resurrection of Jesus, graves around Jerusalem were opened, and the resurrected saints entered the city, being seen of many. Apparently the earthquake served to open the graves of many of the saints of God. We must pay close attention to the text, so as not to get confused. Matthew reveals the graves were opened at the time of Jesus' death, but this resurrection didn't occur until after the triumphant resurrection of Jesus.

- Can you imagine the stir this created in and around Jerusalem? Saints of God who had preceded Jesus in death were resurrected following His resurrection and walked into Jerusalem, revealing their resurrection life in Christ! We cannot know how many there were, or which Old Testament saints were raised, but clearly they experienced resurrection life, further confirming the hope and assurance of the Gospel in Christ. Just as these select saints were raised, so too will all who have placed their faith in Christ unto salvation!

C. The Recognition of the Soldiers (54) – [Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.](#) Following the miraculous events of Jesus' death, the centurion and the soldiers who were with him, recognized Jesus as the Son of God. It is likely this man had been involved in the events that led up to the crucifixion. It is possible that he accompanied Judas to the Garden of Gethsemane. He likely would have been present for the trial in the Praetorium, hearing the accusations. It's possible that he witnessed Jesus endure the horrible scourging, being placed on the cross, and crying out for the forgiveness of His abusers. Following three hours of darkness at noon, he stands entrusted with keeping guard on the crucifixion ground. Seeing all of this transpire, he openly declared his belief in Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God.

- Having examined the evidence, the centurion and other soldiers recognized Jesus as the Son of God. Their testimony bears witness of Christ and also challenges all who are exposed to the truth of the Gospel. These men had to make a personal decision, just as all others will.

III. The Loyalty at His Death (55-56) – Finally we discover the loyalty of a few faithful followers. Consider:

A. Their Devotion (55) – *And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him.* Matthew speaks of the women who faithfully followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him. Their devotion to Jesus was not deterred by the actions of the Jews, the condemnation of the Romans, or the fear of persecution for their faith. They remained with Jesus during His most difficult moments, seeking to minister to Him any way they could. Their love for Jesus surpassed the fear of men or the struggles of inconvenience. They were determined to serve the Lord as long as He remained with them.

- Their devotion presents a sizeable challenge to us today. We know nothing of the persecution many face around the world. Our services are held within a beautiful facility, with all the modern conveniences. The average believer in America sacrifices little to attend worship services. We need to develop the devotion these ladies had, being willing to serve the Lord whatever the cost. We must be willing to serve in whatever capacity we can to further the Gospel and advance the kingdom work! We must be willing to follow Jesus wherever He leads.

B. The Identification (56) – *Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.* Matthew reveals the women who followed Jesus to the cross, seeking to serve Him. Mary Magdalene was there, the woman Jesus delivered from demon possession. Mary the mother of James and Joses, this being James the son of Alphaeus, or James the less, one of the apostles. Also there was the mother of Zebedee's children, James and John, the apostles. Although there were few who accompanied Jesus to the cross, Scripture has recorded their faithfulness throughout eternity. God was aware of their devotion to Christ and He honored their faithfulness.

- We don't serve the Lord for personal recognition, but He does know those who belong to Him. All who are born again by the grace of God through faith in Christ, are identified within the body of Christ. Our names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. We will be welcomed into the glories of heaven and the presence of our precious Lord. I am glad to know I am known of my Savior. This world will never know my name, but Jesus does! What a joy to be counted among the redeemed of God, the saved by grace!

Conclusion: We have considered the final moments of Jesus' life upon this earth. Most who knew Him denied His deity. He was not embraced as the Christ, but that didn't hinder His atoning work on the cross. He fully satisfied the righteous demands of God. There is salvation and hope in Christ the Lord.

The majority around the cross that faithful day denied the Lord and refused to believe. However, some believed and were saved by His grace. The resurrection of many saints offers assurance and hope for the resurrection of the saved. The separation of the veil has been removed. The saved enjoy access to the throne of grace. I am glad I was given the opportunity to respond to the Gospel. The promises and benefits associated with Christ are mine to enjoy.

The evidence has been presented again. You have been allowed to examine the suffering and crucifixion of Christ for the redemption of mankind! How will you respond? He died so you too might be saved, but you must embrace Jesus by faith. If you are unsaved, respond to the call of Christ in salvation. Come to Him today and be saved!