

Events Surrounding the Cross

Today we are going to discuss some other events that surrounded the cross; the first being the **thief on the Cross**. *Luke 23:39-43 – And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. (40) But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? (41) And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. (42) And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (43) And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

The question that often comes up is, “*what about the thief on the cross?*” He was saved without being baptized. My question is, “*How do you know he wasn’t baptized?*” After all, he knew something about the kingdom that was coming, and both John the Baptist and Jesus preached about the kingdom to come, and they both baptized people. He addressed Jesus as Lord. So, how do you know this thief wasn’t baptized? It’s apparent that he knew something about who Jesus was. Be that as it may, Jesus said, “*today you will be with me in paradise – where is that?*” Paul wrote: **2 Cor. 12:4 – How that he** [i.e. a man 14 years before] ***was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*** Verse 2 called this paradise the “third heaven.” So, we conclude that paradise is a good place. Most think it is the good part of the hadean world which was called “*Abrahams bosom*” in the story of the rich man and Lazarus recorded in Luke 16. We know that late in the day when Jesus died, he went to Hades or hell as KJV reads. (i.e. good part of the grave – paradise)

Acts 2:31 -“*He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*” So, the conclusion is that day both Jesus and the thief on the cross were in the good part (i.e. paradise) of the hadean world.

Left Alone. On the cross, Jesus hung for his final agonizing breaths, a period that lasted about six hours. During that time, soldiers cast lots for Jesus' clothing, while people passed

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by shouting insults and scoffing. From the cross, Jesus spoke to his mother and the disciple John. Yet while on the cross, Jesus was also abandoned by God his Father; thus he cried out to his father, "*My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?*" God can have no association with sin, and there was a moment when Jesus bore the sin of all mankind and at that time, God turned his back on Jesus. For the only time in his life, Jesus was literally all alone.

Miracles: There were several things that happened during the crucifixion that would have gotten one's attention. For one there was darkness. *Matthew 27:45 - "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.* At the ninth hour Jesus "gave up the ghost."

The curtain, or veil, of the Temple separated the Holy of Holies (where the presence of God dwelled) from the rest of the Temple. Only the high priest could enter there once a year, with the sacrificial offering for the sins of all the people. When Christ died and the curtain was torn from top to bottom, this symbolized the barrier between God and man had been removed. *Matt. 27:50-54 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. (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; (52) 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. The earthquake opened the tombs, and God raised many righteous people who were dead. It does not say how many. **Fallen asleep** is frequently used in the Bible to refer to the death of righteous people. It does not deny the reality of death, but rather affirms the reality of the resurrection. When one goes to sleep, he does so with the anticipation of waking up. When a righteous person dies, he does so with the anticipation of being resurrected. The final resurrection will be when Jesus comes again (John 5:28-

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29). Only Matthew records this and many questions are left unanswered. It is assumed these died again at a later time. *(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.*"

It was typical at crucifixions for Roman soldiers to show mercy by breaking the criminal's legs, thus causing death to come more quickly. But this day only the thieves had their legs broken. When the soldiers came to Jesus, they found him already dead, so they pierced his side. *John 19:32-36 – "(32) Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. (33) But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: (34) But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. (35) And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. (36) For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."*

Claiming the Body After the death of Jesus, His disciples had to quickly remove His body from the cross and get Him buried because the Sabbath began in three hours, and this all had to be done before the beginning of the Sabbath. I imagine they carefully lowered him from the cross, washed the blood away and gently somehow removed those fastening nails. *Luke 23:48-56 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. (49) And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things. (50) And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:*

Matthew 27:57 describes Joseph as a rich man from Arimathaea. It is unclear what he did to become rich although some think he was in metal works. The term "counselor" suggest that he was part of the Sanhedrin, the court that has just railroaded Jesus before

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Pilate. (51) *“(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: WHO ALSO HIMSELF WAITED FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD”.*

He didn't agree with the counsel, but there is no evidence that he actively opposed what was going on. But now he approaches Pilate and asks for the body of Jesus. The text says that he begged for the body. (52) *“This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. (53) And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen.”* It was the custom in Palestine during the first century to bury people the day they died. They wrapped them in wraps of linen and filled the crevices of that wrapping with sweet-smelling spices. John 19:39 tells us that Nicodemus brought about 100 pounds worth of myrrh and aloes. After they wrapped and prepared the body for burial, they *“... laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid”*.

Matthew 27:60 describes this tomb as a “new tomb.” This sounds strange to us, but back then, tombs were often caves in a mountain side, and inside that cave they would hew out ledges like shelves and there they would lay the body for burial. Often many members of a family would use the same cave, so it would become like a family burial plot. This tomb was new and had never been used before. *Mark 15:46–“And he [Joseph of Arimathaea] bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in A SEPULCHRE WHICH WAS HEWN OUT OF A ROCK, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre.”*

Notice that Joseph rolled the stone in front of the door. Some have speculated that such stones that sealed the door of a tomb weighed several hundreds of pounds, perhaps even a ton or more, but Joseph moved this one into place. What we are not told is if he had any help or not.

Seal of the Tomb. Go to Matthew 27. The next day after the body of Jesus was being buried, the enemies of Jesus were still at work on Pilate, the Roman governor. A delegation consisting of the chief priest and Pharisees came to Pilate with another request.

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It seemed Pilate just couldn't get rid of the matter of Jesus. *Matthew 27:63-66* –“*Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.*”

It's interesting that the enemies remembered Jesus saying something about being raised again on the third day, and his disciples didn't. Nonetheless, they wanted the tomb sealed to keep Jesus' disciples from coming and stealing the body and then claim that he arose. (64) “*Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.* (65) *Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.* (66) *So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.*”

Pilate gave them their request and perhaps thought he had heard the last of Jesus of Nazareth. The sealing of the tomb involved round-the-clock Roman guards plus a strap or rope that was stretched across the stone that had been rolled in front of the tomb. This rope, much like the ribbon you see at a crime scene today, was attached on both ends and a wax seal was affixed to it. Embedded in the wax was the Roman insignia. If the rope was tampered with, then the wax seal would be broken, and the one caught tampering was severely punished. So, with the seal and Roman guards in place, the Jewish leaders could rest easy that no one was going to steal the body from the tomb.

Jesus died for you and me. He died to make salvation available for each of us. If you haven't obeyed the gospel will you do it for Him and do it today.

Invitation