

92 Mark 15:33-41

The Death of Christ

Text

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. 34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." 37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

The Darkness

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

The sixth hour would be noon. Darkness covered the land. There have been attempts to explain this phenomena through natural means such as a dust storm or a solar eclipse. Ultimately, however, these explanations fall short. This is not the right time of year for dust storms. Also, the Passover was celebrated at a full moon, there is no way that a solar eclipse can occur at the same time as a full moon. Without a natural explanation it is tempting to cast this purely in terms of its symbolic significance. But while it does carry that significance, there is nothing textually that suggests it is not real. Ultimately, it seems best to understand this darkness as real, but supernaturally achieved.

Far more important, however is the symbolism that this event conveys. Darkness is a sign of judgment. Darkness covered the land of Egypt during the final plague in Exodus 10. The very next plague, of course, was the angel of death who passed through the land and killed any who were not covered by the blood of the lamb. The people trembled at the thick darkness at the giving of the law in Exodus. Deut 4 describes it as "darkness, cloud, and gloom." The people feared for their lives. They feared the command that if even a beast so much as touches the mountain it will be killed. Darkness through Job and the Psalms refers to gloom and despair and the anger of God. We labored this point when we looked at Mark 13 and the destruction of Jerusalem.

There is the great and dreadful darkness that fell over Abraham when God appeared to him in a vision of a smoking pot passing through the halves of the animals. This is especially significant because of what that promise entailed. This was the cursing aspect of the covenant. It was in this

ritual that ANE treaties communicated that the lesser party should be killed as the animals were divided if he failed to keep the covenant. But in this instance, God takes upon himself the covenant curse. It was God, not Abraham, who passed through the animals.

God in essence say through this act, "May my body be broken as these animals are broken, if this covenant is not kept." "The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor11:23-24).

In this ritual with Abraham, God basically said, "If this covenant is breached, may I be divided as are these animals." At the ninth hour there was a great divide!

The Divide

34 And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

This is the final level of abandonment. This is something that we can never fully understand. All those who should have stood by him have fled or have been active objects of his suffering. From eternity past, the Son has experienced nothing but the pleasure and love of his Father. They have eternally existed in mutual love and blissful companionship. For the first time, there is now wrath.

Ps 114:7; 119:120; Isa 66:2

Judas had been drinking it for nearly 2000 years, often crying out with a groan that shakes hell, Oh that I had never been born! Oh that I had never seen or heard of the Lord Jesus Christ! But he has not reached the dregs. The fallen angels have not come near the dregs: for they have not arrived at the judgment of the Great Day. The only One who has taken, tasted, drunk, and wrung out the bitterest of the bitter dregs, has been *the Judge Himself*, the Lord Jesus! . . . The universe saw Him with it at His lips. It was our cup of trembling; the cup in which the wrath due to the "multitude which no man can number" was mingled. What wrath, what woe! A few drops made Him cry, "Now is my soul troubled!" In the garden, the sight of it wrung out the strange, mysterious words, "Sorrowful unto death!" though God-man, He staggered at what He saw, and went on trembling. Next day, on Calvary, He drank it all. I suppose the three hours of darkness may have been the time when He "was wringing out the dregs"; for then arose from His broken heart the wail that so appealed to the heart of the Father, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" As He ended the last drop, and cried out, "It is finished," we may believe angels felt an inconceivable relief—and even the Father Himself! So tremendous was the wrath and curse!—the wrath and curse due to our sin. (Andrew Bonar, <http://www.mountzion.org/fgb/Fall01/FgbF6-01.html>)

How dare we doubt the love of God!

Within His soul, there is an agony such as we cannot fathom. Above, there are the swelling waves of Almighty wrath against our sins, covering all His soul. Hark! that dreadful soul-piercing cry, "MY GOD, MY GOD, why hast THOU forsaken ME?" It seems to be the gathering up of all His griefs, sorrows, and sufferings into one expression. Like some enormous lake, which receives the torrents of a thousand rivers, and holds all within its banks, so does that sentence seem to grasp all His woes, and express them all, "My God,

my God, *why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" (Spurgeon, Our Suffering Substitute,
<http://www.pilgrimpublications.com/substute.htm>)
<http://www.beginningwithmoses.org/bigger/crucifiedgod.htm>

35 And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." 36 And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

When Jesus cried out in Aramic, "Eloi, Eloi" some must have mistook him as saying, "'Eli, Eli," and therefore thought he was calling to Elijah. They seem to continue their mocking of him even in this. I don't think that they were really interested in whether Elijah would come to his rescue any more than they genuinely expected him to come down from the cross so they could believe. This was just another way for them to mock him.

Someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine and offered it to Jesus to drink. This sour wine is different from the wine mixed with myrh that he was offered earlier. Wine mixed with myrh was designed to deaden the pain. Thus tradition has it that the women offered it to Jesus. This sour wine, on the other hand, was the wine of the soldiers. It was suppose to refresh and invigorate. To give this to a crucified man was cruel. It seems to be a way to prolong the torture. Mark does not record whether Jesus drank it or not Luke records that this was offered by the soldiers. And John records that "Jesus had received the sour wine."

The Death of Christ

37 And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. 38 And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. 39 And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" 40 There were also women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. 41 When he was in Galilee, they followed him and ministered to him, and there were also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem.

The women continue one of Mark's themes. Mark has been keen to focus on the lowly. That is the kingdom ethic. If you want to be first, you must be last. It is the women and children that are prominently featured in Mark. It is the disciples who don't get it. It is the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the poor and the blind that are prominent in Mark. It is the Scribes, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees that don't get it.

In verse 37, Mark does not record what Jesus said, only that it was a loud cry. It is John who informs us that Jesus cried out "It is finished!" It is done. His work is done. His active obedience is done. His passive obedience is done. The covenant has been fulfilled. Sins have been atoned for. The rift between God and man has been healed. The gap has been filled. The promises have been fulfilled. The decisive battle has been won.

Everything That the Old Testament looked forward to has been fulfilled. Everything in the New testament onward flows from this point. The Seed of the woman has crushed the head of the Serpent. The covenant with Abraham is realized. His promised Son has come and has been sacrificed. And through him all the nations will be blessed. Jacob's ladder now exists as that

means of traversing from earth to heaven. The salvation of the brothers through Joseph who was thought to be dead now finds its fulfillment.

The Paschal lamb has been sacrificed. The real exodus has begun. The sins have been transferred to the scape-goat and he has been driven into the wilderness. The High Priest has performed his work. The incense of intercession has been lit. The blood of the bull has been sprinkled before the mercy seat. He has tabernacled among us and he has finished his work. He has secured for us a Sabbath rest. He has purchased Jubilee, the forgiveness of debt.

From this perfect life and substitutionary death will come the resurrection, the ascension and the enthronement. The reign of conquest begins. The church will continue to grow until it is the largest tree in the garden. The forces of evil are being led captive. This age will come to an end when Christ returns and everything that he has accomplished on the cross comes to its final state. The centurion proclaims, "Surely this was the Son of God." This serves as a high point in the book of Mark. Jesus is described as the Son of God at several points, but never has a person confessed Jesus as God's Son. There is a very good reason for this. It is a sign of deity.