



Matthew 27:45

The Darkest Day in History

There were a series of miracles that took place at Calvary when Jesus was crucified. All of them were in direct connection with His death.

Nature was in sympathy with the crucifixion of the Son of God.

The miraculous darkness that surrounded the cross illustrates the depth of His suffering of soul as He felt Himself regarded as sin though sinless (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was bearing the sin of the world. He was the sinless substitute dying in the place of sinners.

In that moment when the Father regarded Him as sin, He experienced the anguish of the deepest suffering. The Son of Man did not cease to be the Son of God.

In the Temple at Jerusalem, darkness filled the Holy of Holies symbolizing the dwelling place of Jehovah. On the mercy seat God's mercy met man's sin and God judged it there. Once a year on the Day of Atonement the High Priest slipped behind the thick veil and sprinkled blood on the mercy seat to make atonement for sin.

THE SCENE

Matthew, Mark and Luke tell us that a sudden, strange mysterious darkness fell over the scene at Calvary. It was darkness at noontime, a darkness in the presence of the sun while the sun was brightly shining. Under normal conditions it is the light that is antagonistic to darkness. We don't click on darkness to extinguish the light, but light to extinguish the darkness. However, the darkness at noonday at Calvary smothered the sun at high noon! No wonder God caused the earth to tremble.

The great darkness the day Jesus died extended far beyond Jerusalem. It was as if the sun could no longer look upon the terrible effects of the depravity of sin.

Not an eclipse

This mysterious darkness continued for three hours and could not have been the result of an eclipse of the sun. The time of the year was the Passover, which was always observed at the time of the full moon when an eclipse of the sun was impossible. The brightness of the sun would have been most powerful at noon time. A strange supernatural darkness settled down over the world obscuring the sun so it would no longer be seen 12 noon until 3 p.m.

No simple phenomenon

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There are instances in history when darkness sometimes precedes earthquakes when a smoky haze obscures the sun and gives the impression of the close of day. But what happened at Calvary was not a simple phenomenon. Nothing in this passage indicates a sand storm.

Matthew simply says the sun failed without indicating the cause. Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour (27:45). Mark and Luke write, darkness fell over the whole land (Lk. 23:44; Mk. 15:33). It was a sudden and great darkness. All at once, suddenly, unexpectedly the whole scene at Calvary shut down and a death silence covered the land, and the miraculous darkness appeared to have vanished as quickly three hours later just before Christ died.

There is independent historical evidence of this miraculous event. The second century Christian leader Tertullian responds to an atheist saying, At the moment of Christ's death, the light departed from the sun, and the land was darkened at noonday, which wonder is related in your own annals and is preserved in your archives to this day. "

Extensive darkness

How extensive was this darkness? How much of the earth did it cover? Did it cover the whole of the daylight half of the earth or just the land of Judea? We are not told in this passage. But it was extensive and compelling enough to grab the attention of the people of Israel for three hours.

All the land can refer to all the earth or to the whole country as land of Israel. I think Matthew would have us think this was an enormous event that cast darkness over the entire creation. It was a cosmic event.

Penetrating darkness

The darkness had a concentration of force, like that of the three days darkness in Egypt, while at the same time there was light in Goshen where the Israelite slaves lived. Moses tells us the darkness extended over all the land. Then the LORD said to Moses, Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt. "" (Exodus 10:21).

In Egypt there was a thick darkness that lasted for three days (v. 22). It was so dense they did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings (v. 23). It was miraculous. The hand of God cut off the light of the sun for three days. God did it.

The Egyptian's chief god was RA representing the sun and Isis was their moon goddess. They were supposed to control the light. The god the Egyptians worshipped was obscure. Egyptians had darkness which they could not light up. Israel had a light which they could not put out!

How deep was the darkness at Calvary? We are simply told only there was darkness. You are made to feel the sudden hush over the scene. It was not twilight. This was penetrating, thick frightening darkness.

Supernatural darkness

The whole country was covered with darkness. Matthew probably sees the darkness as a fulfillment of Amos 8:9, The time is coming when I will make the sun go down at noon and the earth grow dark in daytime (TEV).

The only way to try to explain this darkness over the land when Christ died is to accept the fact that it was supernatural. God did it and He simply did not tell us how He did it. There was a visible suspension of the order of nature. The Creator stepped into His creation and caused darkness to suddenly cover the land. It was a supernatural manifestation in nature. God did it! Nature was in sympathy with its Maker during those horrible three hours of suffering.

The darkness was supernatural. The timing was perfect as it lead up to the moment when the Son of God breathed His last breath and gave up His spirit.

It takes far more faith to say it didn't happen than to accept the historical evidence that it did. Nothing in creation could have produced the darkness of these dimensions. The Creator intervened and caused a hush over the land of Palestine.

It was a silent, sudden somber darkness like a thick heavy curtain. The LORD God got everyone's attention that afternoon.

THE SILENCE

All was silent at Calvary during those three hours of thick darkness. The deathly silence must have created a feeling of trepidation, consternation and horror.

There are some things that go beyond description. Some things are so holy that they are beyond observation. During that incredible silence, Jesus suffered extreme anguish of spirit. It is as if God drew the curtain across His Holy of Holies so no outsider could see or hear within. The increasing wrath of God grew more and more intense with every moment until the silence was broken by the Son of God. It was the desolate isolation and loneliness of God forsakenness.

No more blasphemy. No more scuffling. No gambling. No cursing. No insults. No taunts by the criminals and crowds.

It was just a deathly silence.

The suspense must have grown as it reached a terrifying climax at the end of the three hours of darkness. The professional Roman executioner experienced what was happening and feared greatly and the people smote their breasts as they left the scene at the end of the darkness.

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The depth of supernatural darkness grew in intensity as the spiritual suffering of Christ wore on. The desolation of suffering reached its lowest point when Jesus was made to be sin in stead of the sinner. The horror of suffering the wrath of God against the sinner reached its climax when Jesus cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

No wonder God hid His Son's suffering from profane eyes of depraved sinners.

Our pardon, peace, and forgiveness has been secured through the death of Christ on the cross. God spoke at Calvary in that awful silence. He was saying, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

God spoke in that terrible silence saying, "The wages of sin is death."

In that terrible silent darkness, God was laying on Jesus the iniquities of us all. Stricken of God is what that silence was saying. What could not be uttered in words God was declaring in silence. In profound silence Jesus was enduring the Father's wrath against our sin. God the Father drew the thick veil of darkness around the most profound impenetrable secret of the Holy of Holies of God.

THE SUFFERING

The spiritual suffering of Jesus was so intense and terrible that God hid it from the eyes of sinful people. God in that darkness hid men's eyes from His holy sacrifice. The cries uttered by Jesus at the completion of the sacrifice declare the unfathomable woe, the desolation and wrath of a holy God against sin. Such suffering is humanly inconceivable.

The darkness symbolized God forsakenness. Jesus cried the awful commentary on that event when He shouted, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." These awful words of anguish have echoed throughout eternity. They thunder down the centuries of time in the awful stillness of the darkness.

This is a mystery beyond our human ability to understand. "The wages of sin is death. The wrath of God was exhausting itself out on the Divine Suffering Substitute.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" These words penetrate far beyond the mere physical pain of suffering.

Jesus was quoting Psalm 22 in His spiritual suffering.

God forsaken of God

Jesus felt the Father was not present in the sense in which He had always been before. Jesus felt "forsaken" by the Father. He felt the desolation of the feeling of a temporarily broken fellowship with His Father. As Luther said so eloquently, "God forsaken of God! Who can understand that?"

The Son of God was never more pleasing to the Father than at this hour of obedience in His voluntarily laying down His life for the salvation of lost mankind.

In that intense terrible darkness, we see the climax of the suffering of Christ for our sins. God was laying on Him the iniquity of us all. He drank the dregs of the bitter cup of the wrath of God for us. He suffered grief, sorrow and pain on our behalf.

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The Bible tells us, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23a). "The soul that sins will surely die" (Ezekiel 18:4). But God goes on to say, "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live" (v. 32). Peter wrote, "The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

In that critical moment in time, the whole weight of the world's sin came crashing down upon the innocent sufferer.

He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus Christ was wounded for our transgressions. He was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. "It was the collective sin of a world of sinners. Christ gave Himself a ransom for many. The One who knew no sin, God made sin for us. On the cross Christ became a curse for us and so redeemed us from the curse of the law. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ shed on Calvary. He gave Himself a ransom for all."

Our divine substitute who bore our sins in His body on the tree was forsaken. That is why God pulled the drapes at Calvary. God drew the veil over Calvary so no profane eyes could see the suffering of the Divine Sufferer.

M. R. Vincent says, "On Him, representatively, fell the collective consequences of sin, in His enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself" (Hebrews 12:3). "God the Father made Jesus Christ, His own Son, representative for all of our sins and bore the punishment. Think of every sin you have ever committed and pile them up in one huge mountain. Jesus came down from heaven to represent that mountain of sin and guilt and God poured out His wrath on Him. He paid the price in full once and for all. Jesus invites us to come to Him and to confess our sins one by one and receive forgiveness."

No wonder God hid it from depraved men's eyes! It was Christ in the Holy of Holies on the Mercy Seat of God bearing your punishment. It was my hell, your hell, all the hells of all guilty sinners were burning their fires out on Him. He paid the price for you and me individually and personally.

Jesus had to pay the price alone and tasted our spiritual death alone. Spiritual death is broken communion. Jesus had to taste this broken fellowship with the Father as a punishment for our sins. That is what He was experiencing in those desolate hours when darkness lay upon the earth and upon His soul. Jesus experienced the wrath of God on sin for our behalf. Jesus experienced what a lost sinner feels without having been saved.

The vicarious Substitute for sinners died on our behalf; and the claims of the law on the sinner that believes in Jesus were fully met.

B. H. Carroll said, "Just before that darkness passed away, closing the ninth hour, Christ died the spiritual death. Right on the very edge of that deeper darkness came another voice. His words were, 'I thirst.' This shows His soul was undergoing the pangs of hell, just as the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments and said, 'I pray the Father Abraham send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' Jesus Christ was enduring the torment of hell for a lost world!"

Because this punishment is everlasting death, Jesus had on the cross to experience absolute forsakenness of God, and the pangs of hell itself. It was a time of utter spiritual darkness that the Son of God had to pass

God, and the pangs of hell itself. It was a time of utter spiritual darkness that the Son of God had to pass through, as the Substitute for the guilty world, notes Norman Geldenhuys (*Luke*, p. 611).

That deep penetrating darkness speaks of the torment of hell. This is the destiny of everyone who dies without Christ as his personal Savior. If I refuse to allow Jesus Christ to become my substitute for me, this is the agony that I will have to pay through all eternity. The agony that Jesus endured in the substitutionary process is the agony that you and I will endure if we reject Him. This is what awaits the doomed sinner in everlasting condemnation if he rejects Christ. God's attitude toward sin will force Him to turn His back on the unrepentant sinner. Jesus Christ chose to go to the place of the condemned sinner and die in his place. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Hebrews 10:31). No wonder the sun refused to shine that day. In that darkness God the Father exhausted the wrath of God on my Substitute.

Did Jesus Christ die for you?

Where will you spend eternity?

The most important question is, are you saved? Have you put your faith in the Divine Sufferer who came and died as your Substitute? Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? God has done everything that needs to be done to save your soul. Jesus Christ died to pay your death penalty. What is your response to that sacrifice for you? Will you now believe on Him and ask Him to be your Savior?

There is nothing so penetrating as the darkness of sin. It blinds people's hearts to God's truths. Darkness speaks of the depravity of sin. The religious leaders acted under the cover of darkness the night before Christ died and the power of darkness killed the Jewish Messiah (Luke 22:53). The real hour of darkness of which He spoke had now arrived. And in the darkness of the noonday, God wrote in the darkened sky His judgment on their sins and our sin and His love for His Son and a lost world.

The timing of the darkness is astounding. The Son of God was dying, God appears and there is sudden darkness. There was total silence. God was speaking in that silence!

That darkness at Calvary speaks of the eternal destiny of everyone who rejects the grace of God in Jesus Christ. All who reject Jesus Christ shall perish. Darkness in the Bible is often associated with judgment (Isa. 5:30; 13:10-11; 60:2; Joel 2:10, 30, 31; 3:14-15; Amos 5:18, 20; 8:9; Zeph. 1:14-18; Matt. 24:29, 30; Acts 2:20; 2 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 6:12-17). God was judging sin at the cross. He was putting away sin. It is a deep unfathomable mystery in the mind and heart of God. We cannot understand how evil appears to a thrice holy God (Hab. 1:13; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21). God hates sin, and a holy God must judge all sin.

G. Campbell Morgan said it well, "Sin is not a small act. Sin is something which, once committed, cannot be undone. The broken law means a marring of the ultimate purpose. . . . Sin is never little. Oh, man, man! If you could but see your trespasses, your little sin, in all its magnified meaning, you would cry out, 'What must I do to be saved?'"

The darkness meant the judgment of God against our sins. Jesus went to the cross and bore that punishment so that we would never have to bear it. Our Substitute suffered the most intense agony, indescribable woe, terrible isolation and God forsakenness so we would never have to. Hell came to Calvary. The clearest picture of hell you will ever get without going there yourself is found at the Cross. Jesus descended into the depths of hell and bore its horrors in our stead.

The darkness says to the believer in Jesus Christ that all darkness is gone. Jesus is the Light of the world. The true light now shines in our hearts. There will be no night, no darkness in the city of light.

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Salvation is not universal. People are not saved automatically just because God loved the world and sent His Son to die for us. We must individually put our trust in Jesus Christ to save us. Each person must appropriate God's free gift by believing on Christ. Salvation is not automatic because your parents were Christians. Each individual must come to a decision whereby he or she says, "I'm a sinner. I have disobeyed God. I have failed to bring glory to God with my life. If I died today I would go to hell. I now believe that Jesus Christ died for me on the cross and I ask Him to save me right now. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. "

The apostle Paul wrote, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9-10).

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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