

The Burial and Resurrection
Matthew 27:50—66

In the last remaining moments of Jesus' life He utters three things. With everything accomplished and in order to fulfill Scripture Jesus said, "I thirst." With that the soldiers raised a sponge laden with vinegar (sour wine) for Jesus to drink in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21. According to Luke 23:46 He then cries out with a loud voice to the Father, "Into Your hands I commit My spirit" followed by, "It is finished!" (John 19:30) With that he bowed His head and gave up the spirit. Notice it is Jesus who is giving His spirit into the Father's hands. Death came because of sin (Romans 5:12; 6:23 and since Jesus was born without sin and lived a sinless life (because he was not born into sin) He would not have died unless He caused Himself to die. Death is nothing more than a separation of body and spirit so while Jesus' body was lifeless His spirit was still active.

All the events of the cross were being watched carefully by a centurion whom was assigned to guard Jesus. As he sees the three-hours of supernatural darkness, the shaking of the earth and the things Jesus was saying he remarks, "Truly this was the Son of God." Many would understand this centurion became a believer, however, a literal translation leaves that a bit open for debate. It says (loosely) "the centurion who was beside Him... said truly the human, this Son was of God." He was not admitting Jesus was THE Son of God but rather was someone who came from God. I'm not so sure he believed in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel but rather acknowledged Him to be a very special person who did things that could only have been done by Deity.

The torn veil (Matthew 27:50)

Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention the curtain covering the entrance to the Holy of Holies being torn from top to bottom at Jesus' death. This curtain separated the presence of a perfect, holy God from sinful man. It was a picture of heaven (Hebrews 8:5). The High Priest was allowed in the Holy of Holies only once each year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) to atone for the sins of the nation (Hebrews 9:7). If God rejected the sacrifice, the High Priest would be struck dead when entering the Holy of Holies (Leviticus 16:2). This fact lead to the popular narrative that a rope was tied to the High Priest so he could be pulled out if he were to be struck dead. This is pure conjecture with absolutely no historical evidence this was ever done. The Bible was very specific in what the priest was to wear when approaching God. Since the Bible does not mention a rope it is highly doubtful that they would be allowed to wear a rope into the Holy of Holies.

Another idea promulgated as truth is the thickness of the curtain. It seems to be common knowledge that the curtain was 4 inches thick making it one heavy and untearable piece of cloth. This again appears to be unverifiable stemming from rabbinical tradition. Scripture never mentions what the thickness of the curtain was making this perhaps another story given legs by over zealous Christians.

What we do know from Scripture is that there was a curtain separating the holy place from the Holy of Holies and that this curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom, at the moment of Jesus' death. This is significant because the curtain represents man's access to God. Under Law, man could only come to God through His appointed priests, the Levites. The torn curtain represented a change coming that would allow man to come directly to God through Jesus Christ. For Israel, Jesus Christ would become their High Priest (Hebrews 3:1; 4:14—15; 6:20).

However, I don't believe this change was revealed immediately because there were in Jerusalem a group of believing Kingdom believers who were still zealous of the Law as late as Acts 21 during Paul's second missionary journey approximately 20 years after Jesus died. I believe Hebrews was a call for Israel to meet Jesus Christ outside the walls of Judaism and outside the confines of the Law. Hebrews, I believe, was written just before 70 A.D. when the temple was destroyed. It was God's way of forcing Israel to set aside the Law and His way of informing them that Jesus Christ was their new High priest.

Although Israel does have a High Priest and were themselves to become priests (Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9) we in the Church, the Body of Christ do not technically have a High Priest and we certainly are not part of a

priesthood. 2 Corinthians 5:20 clearly states that we are ambassadors with the message of reconciliation not the conduit through whom people need to go through in order to reach God. Jesus Christ is our mediator bringing the sinner and the Father together (1 Timothy 2:5—7). This was Paul's message to the Church and part of the Mystery that was revealed to him.

Jesus' burial (Matthew 57—66)

Jesus died around 3 p.m. and since a Sabbath was looming the three had to be taken down from their crosses and buried. John 19:31 calls it the day of preparation. Those who believe in a Friday death would understand this day as being the day of preparation for the regular weekly Sabbath. I believe Passover was on a Wednesday and Jesus died on a Thursday. Sundown became the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is a special Sabbath day (see [Lesson 102](#)) so the Jews desired to have everything wrapped up within the three hours after Jesus died.

To hasten their death, the guards were told to break the legs of the condemned. This would make it much more difficult for them to push themselves up to get a proper breath and would therefore die of suffocation. When they came to Jesus they were surprised that He was already dead. Instead of breaking His legs, one of the guards stabbed him with his spear and water and blood came out indicating he truly was dead. This was also in fulfillment of Scripture (Psalm 34:20; also see Numbers 9:12; Zechariah 12:10).

Two leaders of Israel, who had become believers, took the body of Jesus, prepared it and put Him in a tomb. Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent member of the council and a secret disciple of Jesus and was being helped by Nicodemus who came to Jesus by night (John 3). They prepared Jesus by wrapping Him in linen along with around 100 pounds of spices. As they did this there were a number of women watching including Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph, whom may be the Mary the mother of James and Joseph of Matthew 27:56 and the "other" Mary of Matthew 28:1. Some even make a case that this Mary was the mother of Jesus. Bottom line, we can't say definitively who this Mary was. We do know that the women who were watching Jesus being buried went and prepared spices of their own to honor Jesus (Luke 23:56).

The day after Jesus was buried, the chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate to ask him to post guards at the tomb until the third day. The tomb was sealed and guarded because of talk that the Disciple would try to steal the body then claim He had raised from the dead. They were making sure nothing would happen to the body during that time.

Imagine the disappointment of the Disciples having lost their best friend, savior of Israel and hope of a glorious Kingdom. All who followed Jesus were now questioning everything they were taught by Him. Although Jesus told them He was to go to Jerusalem, die and rise again, they really didn't fully understand until they saw him face to face. It must have been especially hard for Peter who denied three times that he was associated with Jesus. The last thing Peter probably remembers is Jesus looking at him after the third denial (Luke 22:61). It wasn't much better for all the other Disciples for every one of them also renounce any knowledge of Jesus. Things could not become any bleaker than at this point.

For previous notes and additional mid-Acts materials please visit www.MidActsTruths.com