

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 27:50-56

“The Curtain Was Torn”

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Matthew 27:50-56

Verse 50

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

- The phrase, “he gave up his spirit,” was written to affirm the great truth. Jesus did not die in the ordinary way that men die. He released his spirit of his own accord, thus choosing, embracing, death as part of God’s plan for him and for the salvation of humankind.

Verse 51-53

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus’ resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

- The curtain that was torn in two was the curtain that separated the Holy of Holies, the place where God was believed to be enthroned on earth, from the rest of the temple. The Holy of Holies was entered only once a year, and then by a specially appointed priest. The tearing of the curtain symbolized that a new way of coming into the presence of God was established for us by the death of Jesus Christ. See Hebrews 9:1-14 and 10:14-22. That it was torn from top to bottom, instead of from bottom to top, indicates that this tearing was by God’s doing according to God’s design.
- At the same time, a great earthquake occurred which split rocks and opened tombs.
- At the same time, holy people were restored to life and appeared to many after Jesus was raised from the dead.
- Those who mocked him as he hung on the cross and sought after supernatural signs to prove that Jesus was the Messiah were given

such signs. However, since these were not the signs they sought, they did not believe.

Verse 54

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God.”

- However, those who had no preconceived notion about who Jesus was were impressed by the signs they saw. They correctly realized that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.

Verse 55-56

Many women were there, watching from a distance. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

- For information about Mary Magdalene see Luke 8. For information on Mary, the mother of James and Joses, see Mark 15:47. The mother of Zebedee's sons, was probably the Salome mentioned in Mark 15:40. For information about her, see Matthew 20:20-28.
- It is important to note the loyalty of these women. They stayed with Jesus until the moment of his death on the cross. Most of the Apostles, with the exception of John, had fled in fear before this. But these women stayed with Jesus until his death.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Curtain Was Torn*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)