

Exegetical Notes - Luke 23:44-56

“The Hour When Darkness Ruled, Part 4 -- God is Dead!”

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Luke 23:44-56

Verse 44-46

It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.

- The sixth hour is noon. The ninth hour is 3pm. Jesus was crucified at about 9am (Mark 15:25) and hung on the cross for only 6 hours (John 19:14). This was an especially fast death. Crucifixion usually required a much longer time before the criminal died.
- At about noon there was a solar eclipse that caused the sky to darken.
- At the same time the temple veil which separated the Holy Place, the place where only the priests could go, from the MOST Holy Place, the place where God was enthroned, was torn in two. Scholars believe that this tearing of the veil showed that believers could now come directly to God through Jesus Christ and that a human intercessor, a priest, was no longer necessary; for Jesus had become our High Priest.
- At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out loudly. This was not the weakened cry of a dying man, but the triumphal declaration of one who had done all that was required of him. And then, having completed all that God asked of him, Jesus died.

Verse 47

The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.”

- It is hard to say exactly what motivated the Centurion to this declaration. Most likely it was a combination of things. The signs from nature -- the eclipse, the earthquake (Matthew 27:51) -- must

have shaken him. Perhaps Jesus' utterances from the cross had impressed him. But the manner of Jesus' death caused the centurion to praise God and to declare that Jesus was a "righteous man" or literally, "the righteous one." He must have been shaken by the realization that he had unjustly crucified a righteous person.

Verse 48-49

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

- The crowd that had come out to watch the crucifixion left beating their breasts. This was a sign of grief and contrition.
- Jesus' followers stood by in helplessness still unable to comprehend what they had seen but certain that Jesus was dead.

Verse 50-54

Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

- Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, the court which tried Jesus. However, he was not present at Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin as Mark 14:64 implies that their decision to crucify Jesus was unanimous.
- Seeing that Jesus had died, Joseph asked for his body. This was somewhat dangerous in that the move implied that he was a follower of Jesus.
- Joseph buried Jesus' body quickly because it was nearly time for the Sabbath to begin. He placed Jesus in the tomb he had constructed for his own burial (Matthew 27:60).

Verse 55

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and

prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

- The women who followed Jesus saw his body laid out in Joseph's tomb. They saw that Jesus was dead and that he was buried in Joseph's tomb.
- Because of the beginning of the Sabbath they did not prepare Jesus' body for burial properly at that time. However, they did go home and gather that which they would need to properly bury Jesus. They knew that Jesus was dead and acted in accordance with what they knew. But they did nothing more because they could not work on the Sabbath.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Hour When Darkness Ruled, Part 4 – God Is Dead!* They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by *Cornerstone Fellowship & The Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen*. They are used here by permission.)