

Matthew 27:50-66 The Death of Christ

Our scripture this morning is Matthew chapter 27 verses 50 through 66. It begins on page 8 on your study guide. We are finishing chapter 27 and also finishing the fourth section of Matthew's Gospel. The fifth section is the last chapter, which is the resurrection that we will take next week.

So far we have seen Jesus before Pilate, the Roman governor who condemned Him to death in order to facilitate the demands and requests of the leaders and of the people to let Jesus be crucified. So he gave Him over to be crucified and as He was crucified, He was walking out and they pulled the man out of the crowd to help carry the cross as Jesus was wilting under the under the heavy load of the cross, because of the beatings that He took. Jesus did not symbolically die on the cross, He literally experienced the punishment for our sins. What it would be like to be separate from God throughout eternity on a personal basis. He experienced separation from God while being God. He experienced what it would be like.

Because He said **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani**, some people thought He was calling for Elijah. So one went and grabbed a sponge and some vinegar, dipped it in vinegar and was going to give Him something to drink. And they said, "No, let Him alone. Let us see if Elijah comes to help Him."

That brings us to our section for today, verse 50. Verses 50 to 56, The Parting Words of Jesus as he continues. The Conclusion to His Crucifixion according to Matthew. **And Jesus again having cried with a loud voice, released (or dismissed) His spirit.** *Yielded up* in the Greek word means *to release* or *dismiss*. He dismissed His spirit. He is the one in charge of His spirit leaving His body, which would bring death to the physical body.

In John chapter 10 verse 18 Jesus said, **Nobody takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.** Jesus has authority over His own spirit and His own body. He can dismiss His spirit and release His spirit or call it back again as He sees fit. He is in charge. So what actually happened is that Jesus dismissed His own spirit voluntarily from out of His body. He died when His spirit left His physical body. Nobody killed Him.

Verse 51, **And, behold, the veil of the temple was torn into two from top unto the bottom. And the earth was shaken and the rocks were split!** The temple curtain divided the sanctuary from the holy of holies in which the high priest would go behind the curtain into the holy of holies once a year, on the day of atonement, to sprinkle blood on the mercy seat for the sins of the people. This curtain is said to be as thick as the palm of a person's hand and so big and so heavy that they had a little saying amongst themselves that it was going to take three hundred priests to hang the curtain, it was so thick and so heavy. And the veil was torn from top to bottom, not bottom to top. God did it. Again, breaking the separation. But when Jesus released His Spirit from His body the veil and separation between God and man was torn into two.

Now it is interesting in the book of Hebrews chapter 6 verses 19 and 20 that the writer of Hebrews says the veil has been done away with. And that Jesus has gone through the veil and is now interceding for us, as our great high priest. Just as the human high priest would go once a year, that there was torn in two and that Jesus is in His holy of holies, is interceding for us that we have free access to the holy of holies. So Jesus passed through the holy of holies in heaven. There is no separation. We have access to Jesus in heaven in the holy of holies. There is no more curtain, there is no more separation between the two.

When this happened, when Jesus cried with a loud voice and released His spirit, the veil than temple was torn into two, from top to bottom. Secondly, **And the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. And having gone out of the tombs after His rising, they entered into the holy city and were revealed to many.** There were actually some Old Testament saints seen walking through the streets of Jerusalem and manifesting themselves to the people in Jerusalem. So the tombs were split open when He died. But when He was raised from the dead three days later the saints came out of the tombs, were seen walking through the streets of Jerusalem.

It is interesting, it tells us in I Peter 3, beginning in verse 18, it says that after Jesus died, He went into the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. While His physical body lay in the tomb, His Spirit was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth in a place called Hades. That is where Jesus went for the three days and three nights. His body was supposedly dead. In Hades there are compartments. While Jesus's dead body lay in the tomb, He went down into Hades where these compartments were kept.

We know this from Luke chapter 16 verses 19 through 31. The Old Testament saints were there on one side, those who rejected the Lord were on the other side and were in torment. So Jesus when He dismissed His Spirit on the cross went down and proclaimed the victory. When He rose from the dead many of the Old Testament saints appeared to reveal themselves to many in Jerusalem. So all the saints who had died prior to Christ were released from the tombs, their spirits were released, and that is who the people saw walking through the streets of Jerusalem during that time. So first the tombs were split open at the death of Christ. And then Jesus went down into Hades for three days and three nights, and announced victory to the Old Testament saints who were there. And then when Jesus rose from the dead, they were raised with Him from out of these open tombs and they revealed themselves to many, many in Jerusalem.

Verse 54, **But the Centurion and the ones with him guarding Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things having taken place, they feared exceedingly, saying truly this One was Son of God.** Notice how it is worded. This one was Son of God, not the Son of God. It is a Hebraism, it is a Hebrew phrase. These are Gentiles and that they are saying that He is a divine person. *Son of God* is a divine title placed upon Jesus. A Centurion is the head of one hundred soldiers. So he and the ones with him were guarding Jesus. They saw the earthquake and the things that took place. They feared exceedingly and confessed that this was a divine person. This was Son of God.

And many women were there, watching from afar off, those who follow Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him; among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, which is a shortened form of Joseph, **and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.** That would be James and John, the apostles. Mary Magdalene, we know from the Gospel of Luke, Mary Magdalene was delivered from seven demons. After she was delivered from seven demons, she followed Jesus and ministered to Him and to those around Him. Her name is literally Mary the Magdalene. *Magdalene* is not her last name, she is from the city of Magdala, which is in the northwest shore of Galilee. So it mentions the companions traveling, the women traveling with Jesus. The disciples have left the scene. They ran away. Some of the women who were with Jesus, they stood afar off, just watching and viewing everything.

And when it became evening, verse 57, there came a rich man from Arimathea, (Joseph by name), who also himself - notice, this is the literal translation and I emphasize it to you because none of the regular translations have it literal. They have it, *who became a disciple of Jesus*. It is literally, **who also himself was discipled to Jesus**. I think that is an interesting expression. It hits home in a lot of areas for a lot of reasons. He was discipled to Jesus. Discipleship is a phase that lasts many years over a person's life. It has its highs and its lows, and its ups and its downs, on and off. Nothing consistent. It is all part of the discipleship process. A person gets discipled to Jesus, not to church, not to a system of doctrine, but to Jesus. It is important to understand this whole concept, **He was discipled to Jesus**.

Verse 58, let us go back to verse 57, Joseph of Arimathea. According to John 19 it says that Joseph of Arimathea was a secret disciple. He was a member of the religious council, the Sanhedrin of the Jews. John tells us that Nicodemus was also with him when he came.

Verse 58, **This one having gone to Pilate requested the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given over. And having taken the body Joseph wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb. This is Joseph's new tomb. And having rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, he departed.** He gained access to Pilate and gained permission to have the body of Jesus because he was a member of the Sanhedrin. And Pilate had no problem giving the body of Jesus over to Nicodemus and Joseph.

Like I say, in John 19 it says that he was a secret disciple. So Pilate had no idea that Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus. But all this time, all these years that Jesus was ministering, Nicodemus was discipled to Jesus. He went through the phases. It is not a one-time thing. Like I say, it has got its ups and downs, ins and outs, on and off. No consistency. But it is a phase. And over a period of time discipleship becomes more consistent and you see the working of all the years that the Lord has been ministering take place as the discipleship process continues.

Verse 60, **He laid Him in his new tomb, which he cut out in the rock. And having rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, he departed.** Again this is in fulfillment of Isaiah 53 verse 9. **He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in His mouth.** Verse 61, **And Mary Magdalene was there and the other Mary, sitting across from the tomb.** So again, they are observing.

Verse 62, **Now on the next day, which is after the Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together to Pilate.** This would be the next day following the day of Preparation which would be the Sabbath. **The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together to Pilate,** to mention something to him, **saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver while still living said, After three days I will rise. Therefore command the tomb to be secured until the third day, lest His disciples having come by night should steal Him, and should say to the people, He was raised from the dead. And the last deception will be worse than the first. And Pilate said to them, You have a guard; go make it secure as you know how.** That is, seal it as you know how. **And they having gone they made the tombs secure, having sealed the stone, with the guard.** So they had the guards there.

We are told by the other Gospel writers that it was not just a guard but it was a cohort of guards. There were six hundred soldiers at the tomb to ensure that nobody messes with the body and claims that Jesus rose from the dead. And they sealed the tomb, they sealed the stone. They put ropes across the door of the tomb in an X shape and put a seal in the middle where no one could break the seal without it being noticed. And the guards were there twenty-four hours a day guarding the tomb, to make sure nobody stole the body, so that Jesus could not claim to have been from the dead.

Of course, they are making the resurrection of Jesus Christ more secure. Guarding the tomb to make sure nobody steals the body, so that when the resurrection miracles take place, it is all by God's doing, it is not by human effort.

So Jesus dismissed His spirit. The veil was torn. The tombs were opened. Joseph came and laid Him in his new tomb, and he had been discipled to Jesus. Very significant phrase in the New Testament. People are not brought to Jesus, they are discipled to Jesus. It is a process. And it has many phases to it. The tomb was sealed to prevent being stolen. This gets us ready for next week's study for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Let's close with prayer.