

## What Did the Centurion See in Jesus?

### Matthew 27:45-54

- (45) Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.
- (46) And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, **Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?** that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
- (47) Some of them that stood there, when they heard *that*, said, This *man* calleth for Elias.
- (48) And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled *it* with vinegar, and put *it* on a reed, and gave him to drink.
- (49) The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.
- (50) Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.
- (51) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;
- (52) And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,
- (53) And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.
- (54) Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

### Crucifixion Explained

- First, a normal crucifixion was a cruel and slow way to die. It would take more than just a few hours and sometimes days for a person to die on the cross. It wasn't just a way to put someone to death, it was a method of torture and the Romans had perfected it!
  - The person would struggle to breath and had to pull themselves up and push with their feet, the spots where the nails were driven and in extreme pain push up to take a breath and sink back down.
  - This would be repeated for hours of pain with no relief until exhaustion set in.

### Who was the Centurion?

The centurion was a career military man that would have been in charge of at least 100 men. He would have been proven on the battlefield and now given charge under the authority of Pilate.

- He would have witnessed hundreds, if not thousands of crucifixions, so he knew what to expect from prisoners. Most people who were sentenced to be crucified were criminals, thieves and murderers.
- He had heard countless men scream in agony while being whipped and plead for their lives before Pilate. From their crosses, he had heard them shout curses to men below and blasphemies to God above. The behavior of the thieves on either side of Jesus was all too common, as they mocked and ridiculed Jesus as he hung between them.

- (54) Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

- What did the centurion see in Jesus' death to make him say that Jesus was the Son of God?

### **Kept the Law – Mary's Care - (1<sup>st</sup> Three Hours)**

**John 19:26-27** When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, **Woman, behold thy son!** (27) Then saith he to the disciple, **Behold thy mother!** And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own *home*.

- Jesus was not being disrespectful when he called his mother "Woman" but through the agony and torture of the cross, Jesus had already been whipped, carried his cross, wore the crown of thorns and had been nailed to the cross.
- Jesus knows that his mother, is a widow and that God expects us to care for the fatherless and the widows and if the widow is your mother, the commandment to honor your father and mother still stands!
  - Mary needed cared for and the law would have put Jesus as responsible in that role, so in the midst of the cross, Jesus instructs Mary that John will take care of her, as a son, and John obeyed taking her into his home.
- Jesus never broke any of the OT laws that are still applicable to today, he only fulfilled laws that were a foreshadowing of him.
  - That is why we don't still need to celebrate feasts, release the scapegoat, and have the furniture of the temple in this church, because anything that pointed to Jesus was replaced when Jesus came into the flesh!
  - Imagine having a post card of the Grand Canyon and being amazed by the beauty in the picture, then driving to the Grand Canyon itself and refusing to get out and look because you have the postcard! We don't need a picture of Jesus or a symbol of Jesus, when we have Jesus!

### **Fulfilled Prophecy – I Thirst - (2<sup>nd</sup> Three Hours)**

(28) After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, **I thirst.**

- As Jesus has now been on the cross over three hours and through the pain and torture of the cross he knows each and every Old Testament prophecy about himself and there was one left:
  - Psalm 69 speaks of when Jesus is on the cross and it says in verse 3, "my throat is dried" and in verse 21 it says, "in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."
- Jesus was sent by God the Father to execute the plan of salvation and he fulfilled every single scripture that spoke about his life and his death.
  - There are skeptics that would say that Jesus knew the law forwards and backwards and he knew what he needed to do to fulfill them all, but that would be impossible for any man to do without being the true Messiah.
    - Many of these prophecies were outside of Jesus' control, he was born in Bethlehem, he died on a cross, the soldiers parted his clothes and cast lots for his coat, they never broke his legs but pierced his side...no mere

man could make those things happen, but God can see the future as plainly as we can see the present and he knew every detail of what would happen!

### **Jesus' Quick Death & Physical Body**

The Jews wanted the crosses to be taken before the Sabbath day and they asked Pilate to order the legs to be broken to speed up the death. Broken legs would not allow the person to breath very easily, lift entire body with nail pierced hands.

- When they got to Jesus to break his legs they found out he was already dead, so the didn't break his legs but pierced his side.
- When Joseph of Arimethea asked for the body of Jesus to bury him, and Mark's Gospel tells us that "Pilate marveled if he were already dead." He was shocked that Jesus had died so quickly.

### Jesus' Physical Body

Jesus was born of a virgin, who knew no sin, no transgressions against God the Father, no guile was ever found in his mouth, no guilt...

- Living a life of sin will take a toll on your body, some things worse than others, but Jesus never sinned, he did not have any vices, and he was in his early thirties.
- Also, not only does the Bible say that Jesus was the son of a carpenter, but in Mark 6:3 early in Jesus' ministry when they were amazed by his teaching, they said, "Is not this the carpenter?"
  - They wouldn't have had as many woodworking tools as we have today, so it would have been a physically demanding job on a sinless, healthy, 30 year old body, means that Jesus' body would have been impressive.
  - Not only that but he would have been very strong and could have stayed alive on the cross for a very long time, which is why they were amazed that he died so quickly.
- He also showed no signs of being weak:

**Matthew 27:50** Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

**John 19:30** When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, **It is finished:** and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

So how did this very strong man, who instead of gasping for breath, yelled with a loud voice and kept his head up and looked death and his enemies in the face, how did he so suddenly die:

**John 10:17-18** **Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. (18) No man taketh it 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 commandment have I received of my Father.**

- Jesus did not die on the cross because of the cross, he voluntarily laid down his life. He looked death right in the face and death had no power to take Jesus Christ.

- Jesus knew no sin and the wages of sin is death, so there is nothing death could do but watch Jesus decide at what very moment he would chose to give up the ghost.

### **What does this mean for you today?**

(54) Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

A man who watched Jesus be whipped, who watched his soldiers mock and abuse Him and who probably enjoyed every minute of it, suddenly cries out in terror, realizing that He has killed an innocent man, “Truly, this was the Son of God!”

- Just as we share the centurion’s guilt for driving the nails into Jesus, so we can share the victory He won that day. As with this soldier who lived and died almost 2000 years ago, we need only have faith to believe that “truly this was the Son of God” and we, too, can be forgiven for the part we played in this terrible, unjust execution.

What an awesome, exciting testament this is to God’s divine grace! God was willing and eager to save one of those primarily responsible for the murder of His Son.

### **Conclusion**

Even though you and I weren’t there to witness Jesus on the cross, we can see it through His Word and the Holy Spirit.

- What did you see on the Cross? A common man dying on the cruel Roman cross or God himself laying down his life for you?
  - Jesus was not a mere man and you and I will stand before him one day and there are only two outcomes.
  - Either you believed that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you sins and you asked him to forgive you of your sins and through faith were given the gift of eternal life and stand before him forgiven OR you don’t believe or don’t confess Jesus or reject the Gospel or just live your life without thinking about Jesus and you stand before him as a stranger and he casts you into hell for eternity.
    - The most important choice you make in your life is not which career field you decide to go into or who you marry, it is what will you do with Jesus Christ?

If Jesus were here, he would tell you the same thing that he preached and said to the people everywhere that he went, “**Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.**”

**Romans 10:9-10** That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.