

Tokens of Christ's Love

THE CROWN, THE CROSS, & THE CURTAIN

Sin, Death and Hell Conquered

Matthew 27:27-61

Kingdom Come! (Gospel of Matthew Series)

Prepared by: Matthew S. Black

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livinghopechurch.net

“The heart of Christ became like a reservoir in the midst of the mountains. All the tributary streams of iniquity, and every drop of the sins of His people, ran down and gathered into one vast lake, deep as hell and shoreless as eternity. All these met, as it were, in Christ's heart, and He endured them all.”

~ **Charles Haddon Spurgeon**

Proposition: Jesus is mocked as Messiah. The irony that he is Messiah magnifies his infinite humility.

Open your Bible to **Matthew 27** if you would. We are in a series in the book of Matthew entitled “Kingdom Come.” This morning we are looking at a message entitled: “Tokens of Christ's Love.” We have three more messages to go after today in the book of Matthew.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. **Welcome to our Visitors!**
2. **Good Friday Service:** This Friday, April 13 at 7pm.
3. **New Members' Class** begins Sunday April 23 during Sunday School at 9:30am.
4. **Pastor Garcia Installation service:** Latin meal afterward provided by the Spanish ministry.
5. **Men's Reatreat:** Becoming Worthy Men, May 5 and 6, \$20 for adult, \$10 for child

A Love Token

When I asked Jill to marry me, I gave her a diamond ring. Jesus has three love tokens for us this morning, but they do not seem so glamorous. He gives us a crown, a cross, and a curtain torn in two.

St. Matthew's Account

St. Matthew is writing as one of the twelve disciples, and he probably is best to write, since he likely didn't feel very worthy. He had been such a sinner! He is the “John Newton” of the

apostles. He has been forgiven much. There is so much wrong that has been done to his beloved Savior. Remember Jesus called Matthew from being a tax collector and forgave him much.

Matthew writes in such a way that draws our attention to the great ironies of the cross: the mockery of Christ's death, the miracles that take place at his death, and the security of his tomb all point to the fact that Christ is not to be mocked, but to be worshipped.

Three crosses have been prepared this Friday of passion week. They were originally intended for Barabbas and his two assistant insurrectionists. But Jesus in Pilate's Passover amnesty takes Barabbas's place.

Outline: 3 Evidences of Christ's Love

- The **Crown** Christ Wore Mt 27:26-30
- The **Cross** Christ Bore Mt 27:32-50
- The **Curtain** God Tore Mt 27:51-61

I. **The Crown Christ Wore**, Mt 27:26-30.

The Lord Jesus was crowned with thorns. It was not accidental that Jesus was crowned with thorns.

The People Who Mocked Him: Kings and their Soldiers

Mt 27:27, "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion [600 soldiers] before him."

After our Lord received a scourging with a leather whip connected to broken glass and lead balls that tore the skin and muscles in his back to shreds, he was brought back to Pilate's headquarters (likely the former palace of Herod the Great¹) where both 600 of Pilate's soldiers,² and King Herod who was visiting from northern Galilee began to mock our Lord Jesus.

Luke 23 says Herod was also participating.

Irony: Jesus Really is King!

There is a deep irony here. The One who is mocked is King of kings. He has the power to throw both body and soul into Hell and he is wounded for our hell.

The Scarlet Robe – "they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him" (**Mt 27:28**). Jesus must have had his robe placed back on him after the beating of v. 26, because they once more strip his clothes off (probably with his loin cloth kept on).³

They grabbed a soldier's red garment and put it on Jesus mocking him as some kind of king. The "robe" is probably the short red cloak worn by Roman military and civilian officials.⁴

The Crown of Thorns – They "twist[ed] together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head" (vs. 29) with long, deep spikes and crushed it onto his head crushed it down on Jesus' head in imitation of the victory laurel crown on the coins of Tiberius Caesar.⁵

The Wooden Staff – **Mt 27:29-30**, "they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"" Not content with

¹ Benoit, *Jesus and the Gospel*, 167– 188.

² Osborne, G. R. (2010). *Matthew* (Vol. 1, p. 1029). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. According to Osborne, a battalion is 600 soldiers – one tenth of a legion which was 6000 soldiers.

³ *Ibid.*, 1030.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (2017-03-07). *Matthew* (The Expositor's Bible Commentary) (Kindle Locations 19616-19617). Zondervan.

⁵ cf. TDNT, 7: 619– 24, 632– 33

the ridicule and the torture of the thorns, they spat on him (v. 30) and used the staff, the symbol of his kingly authority, to “strike him on the head” again and again.⁶

The Crown of Thorns Gives Us Hope

The Crown of thorns gives us hope. I want to propose to you that the mocking of our precious and exalted Lord Jesus gives every Christian hope. There is an irony here. The soldiers and the kings mock, but St. Matthew knows, and the reader knows, and you and I know that Jesus really is the King of the Jews and the King of the Gentiles as well!

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROWN

There is a sacred mystery in the crown of thorns that was placed on Jesus' head. In the one sense, this was the random thought, the cruel jest, the hollow mockery of a sociopathic band of Roman soldiers.

The Crown Speaks of the Curse

And yet, on the other hand, there was a mystery here, known in the heart and mind of God. What does a crown of thorns speak of? It symbolizes the curse that is upon humanity, on you, on me, on us all because of sin.

When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, there were no thorns. **Genesis 3:17**, God says to Adam: Because you disobeyed Me, “cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; 18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you...”

When sin cursed the world, pain of thorns mangled the plants of the earth. Had Adam not sinned, thorns would never have grown on this earth. Jesus wore that crown because Jesus bore that curse. The thorns Jesus wore on his head were not just a mockery by the soldiers and the kings.

Jesus is King of all kings. He is the Almighty Savior of the world. By His power all things consist.

He Set Aside His Divine Crown for a Cursed Crown

He set aside His glorious crown of divinity for a thorny crown of sinful humanity. Those thorns represent the curse of sin: all the pain and sorrow and sin you have in your life crowns our Lord Jesus. Can you see him being mocked by the soldiers? He's doing it for you.

No Matter How Comfortable, Always a Thorn

No matter how comfortable your life is, there is a thorn in there. There are many thorns in life that pierce us through. No matter how blessed a life you have, there is tediousness and tiredness and toil. Romans 8:22, “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” Why? We await the new heavens and the new earth when God will take the curse of sin away. Jesus wore that crown of thorns to defeat sin!

There's a curse upon everything you see. Look at the hospitals. Their all full. Look at mental illness in our country. Look at the confusion of every kind. We have gender confusion, but the Lord made us male and female. There's no confusion there. If we trust in the loving heart and perfect mind of God, there wouldn't be confusion.

⁶ Carson, Kindle Locations 19627-19628.

Sin has twisted our minds and our bodies. We are dying. We are pierced by the thorny curse of sin. Take all your depression and anxiety and aches and sickness and mental confusion and write one word over it: sin. That thorny crown is the emblem of sin.

Jesus wore the crown of thorns because he bore the curse. “God made Him to be sin for us Who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (1 Cor 5:21). The one who wore that crown of thorns was absolutely pristine and righteous.

The Almighty King of the universe has become a Substitute. He's taken our place!

Jesus Really is a King

The truth is, that Jesus really is King, and he has to be mocked in the cruelest way to fulfill the pathway his Father prepared for him. Colossians says, “All things were made by him and for him,” including this group of four soldiers who are going to nail him to a cross.

What is Jesus Conquering?

But what is he conquering? Kings in the ancient world were all about expanding their borders and conquering threats. That is why as we mentioned last week, that Christ is the King who rules from a Cross. Christ is King over death! By dying he defeats death. Death is dead, love has won, Christ has conquered!⁷

THE MOCKERY OF THE CROWN

Why were they mocking Jesus? Because of their rebellion. They were saying, “You're not our king. You're not a true king. We will not bow the knee to you.” What they were doing is this, they were ridiculing his right to rule. They were ridiculing his right to rule.

David's Throne in Prophecy

This is all funny to the soldiers, to Pilate, and to Herod. They are laughing. Matthew knows and his readers know Jesus is the King. The Israelites are part of a tradition that goes back to David. The prophecies had accumulated across the Old Testament promising a Davidic king who would be in David's line but would be called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Isa 9:6). Seven centuries before Christ, Isaiah was speaking in those terms.

We have the great promise to David in **2 Samuel 7:16**, “And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

Matthew begins his book with the origins of “Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, the son of David” (Mt 1:1). The point is that Jesus stands in the royal line of the Davidic king. When Jesus begins to preach, he announces, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near” (Mt 3:2). As he tells parables about the Messianic Kingdom, it's obvious he is referring to himself.

Romans Soldiers Don't Want Jesus to be Their King

The Roman soldiers don't want Jesus to be their King. Rather than crowning him with a diadem they crowned him with thorns. Today the same thing is happening, in the world of government, we've outlawed the Lord Jesus Christ in America.

⁷ From “See What a Morning” by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. Copyright © 2003 Kingsway Thankyou Music.

America is cursed with broken homes. A shocking statistic is this, the majority of children today grow up without their father in the home. They might have a step-dad or a boyfriend. But where is dad? Most Dads in America don't want Jesus to be king. They're selfish.

America, our country is cursed with confusion when it comes to sexuality. There doesn't need to be confusion. God made us "male and female."

We are cursed with confusion about marriage. God ordained marriage between a man and a woman for life. The world can call two men or two women together a marriage, but God calls it something that hurts you and hurts our society. It robs boys and girls of a father and mother that they can connect to. If we go against God's designs we will always have confusion.

THE MINISTRY OF THE CROWN

Let me tell you, America doesn't need to stay cursed. Jesus wore that crown of thorns as a saving ministry. He gave his life as a substitute, as a ransom for many. You couldn't pay that price. He said, "It is finished" when He paid the price.

He wants to heal our land. He wants to heal the souls across our neighborhoods. By Jesus' wounds, we are healed. That crown of thorns is a healing crown.

Oh, the blood of Jesus that takes away my guilt and my sin and my shame!

THE MAJESTY OF THE CROWN

Oh, the sovereign majesty of that crown. Do you think that Jesus died as a **helpless victim**? Do you think that Jesus died because things got out of control? Do you think that perhaps Satan was on the throne and Satan was doing all of this?

Acts 4:27-28, "for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had **predestined** to take place."

When Jesus wore this crown, he was the sovereign majesty, not a helpless victim. What God ordained ahead of time, should be done, he was in perfect control. Crowns have always been a symbol of authority.

My security, my safety, my salvation, my all and all is found in the one who wore that crown of thorns.

II. The **Cross** Christ Bore, Mt 27:31-50.

The one who will not save himself is the Savior

THE **PARADE** OF THE CROSSBEAM

To the Jews, crucifixion meant that the person was outside the covenant people; they demanded that crucifixions take place outside the walls of Jerusalem (imagery of the OT scapegoat).⁸

Mt 27:31, "And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him."

After mocking Jesus, they took off the purple robe and dressed him again in "his own clothes" and led him off to be crucified.

⁸ Osborne, 1028.

The Crossbeam. Normally a prisoner would be naked going to be crucified. They likely stripped him again when he took up the cross beam. Jesus was forced to carry his own crossbeam to the place of execution until He could not carry it any longer. The crossbeam would have weighed about 125 pounds.

Marred beyond Human Resemblance

The cross speaks of intense misery – oh the unimaginable misery in that cross. Even what preceded the cross was unimaginably brutal. Both the chief priests and the Romans beat him. The Bible says specifically that Christ's face was pummeled. Remember the chief priests blindfolded him and they laughed at him and said, "Prophecy to us, Christ, who is it that brutalized your face?"

Isaiah 52 face was so brutalized you could not tell whether it was the face of a man or an animal. Remember, with their hands they had snatched the beard from his face (**Isa 50:6**). Can you imagine that? With their fists, they had battered that face, loosened his teeth, blood runs down his nostrils, it's mingled with the filthy spittle from their mouths. They have taken a club, and with that club they have battered the Lord Jesus Christ. You would not want to see him. **Isaiah 52:14** say this, "his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind." That is, he didn't look like a man. He didn't even seem human there upon the cross. Why this? **Isaiah 53:4** says "Surely he hath born our griefs he hath carried our sorrows." There is the mystery of that crown. There is the misery of that crown.

THE POWERLESSNESS THE CROSS (SIMON OF CYRENE)

Christ was so weak he couldn't bear his own cross as Christ followed Simon of Cyrene down the Via Dolorosa. Christ was so beaten and bloodied, his body was weakened by physical shock.

Mt 27:32, "As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross."

There Jesus went down the Via Dolorosa where they would parade the prisoners and further shame them. They would be completely naked. Jesus was unrecognizable because of the beatings he had endured.

Here was the Almighty Creator of the universe, the God Man, the Word who created everything becoming flesh in order to die on a Cross. As **Philippians 2** says, He "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Phil 2:8-9). He laid aside the active use of His attributes.

In other words, he became *powerless* in order to be a substitute for us. **Isaiah 9:6**, this is the Supernatural Son of God. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given..." This is the one whose "name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

And now He's so weak and weary and powerless He cannot even carry the cross.

THE PAINKILLER THE CROSS

Crucifixion was so horrifically painful, they offered him a pain killer. "Wine mixed with gall" was probably a pain-killing narcotic⁹ – but he would not take it. He did not want a painkiller.

⁹ The Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 43a).

Mt 27:33-34, “And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.”

The mixture was intended to ease Jesus' misery. But Jesus refuses to decrease his suffering or to lose consciousness of his surroundings.¹⁰ Jesus is fulfilling prophecy. **Psalm 69:11**, “They gave me gall for my food; they offer me sour wine for my thirst.”

Jesus refused this narcotic. He took it all in. For this reason he came into the world. He is our divine wrath bearer! He is our propitiation!

“In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 Jn 4:10).

Crucifixion was undoubtedly one of the most gruesome forms of torture and death humans have ever invented. It involved prolonged suffering for up to several days. The final cause of death was usually asphyxiation, since the victim finally became too weak to lift his head far enough off his chest to gasp for air.¹¹

Most men would have gladly received a painkiller. **The pain of execution by crucifixion physically speaking was first and foremost muscle spasm.** You hung there and pulled with your arms and pushed with your legs to open up your chest so you could breathe. Then the spasms started, and you couldn't stand that, so you collapsed. Then you couldn't breathe, so you'd do it again. Then you collapsed. Then you'd do it again. Then you'd collapse. This could go on for days. In fact, in earlier times sometimes the crucified person was left there, and friends came and took him down and the person survived. So at this point in Roman history, it was imperial policy that a group of four soldiers had to be left there to keep watch. The soldiers had the right to gamble for the few remaining things the victim had. They became the property of the soldiers, and the soldiers guaranteed that no one came and took the body down.

The whole thing was steeped in absolute futility, absolute shame, absolute horror, unending pain. You pick up your cross member and you're dead. It's only the pain that's left.

Jesus now is so weak the soldiers have to impress someone else, a bystander, to carry the cross member. Then he's mocked and just hangs there suffering. This was why, **when the soldiers wanted somebody to die faster, they smashed the shins.** Then you could no longer push with your legs, and you'd collapse and suffocate in a few minutes.

But Jesus refused this narcotic. He took it all in. For this reason he came into the world. He is our divine wrath bearer! He is our propitiation!

THE PROCESS OF CRUCIFIXION

Mt 27:35a, “And when they had crucified him...”

The pain as they nailed His hands and feet to the cross would have been unbearable. The nails would have been driven through the wrists causing severe damage and unimaginable pain to the median nerves. Medical doctors today have said that when the Roman soldiers pierced Christ's hands and feet, it would have crushed the nerves there and it would have been agonizing and intense pain. Have you ever hit your “funny bone” at the end of your arm? It would have been that kind of pain, but much more intense pulsing through His body.

¹⁰ Blomberg, C. (1992). *Matthew* (Vol. 22, p. 416). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

¹¹ Ibid. On the details of the method, see esp. M. Hengel, *Crucifixion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977); for the theological significance, cf. esp. J. R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1986); and L. Morris, *The Cross of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). On the issues of sources and redaction, see esp. J. B. Green, *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1988).¹¹

Finally, a single spike was driven through both feet, many times going directly through the Achilles tendons.

THE PROTECTORS WHO TRY TO “KEEP” CHRIST ON THE CROSS

Mt 27:35b-37, “...they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.””

So Christ is nailed to the cross (this is what is implied by “crucified” in v. 35)—his feet nailed together at his ankles at the bottom of a vertical pole, his hands nailed at the wrists to either end of the crossbeam.

The soldiers, as usual, cast lots (perhaps variously marked pebbles), just as we might roll dice, for the victim's clothes. Does Matthew see a fulfillment of Ps 22:18, as in John 19:24? It is not clear if Jesus was left totally naked or allowed some kind of covering over his private parts. The soldiers kept watch lest anyone should try to come and forcibly rescue Jesus (v. 36). Also, as was customary, the charge of Jesus' crime was inscribed on a *titulus* (a wooden placard), which was nailed to the top of the cross (v. 37). The wording of the charge drips with irony, making it appear as if the Romans believed that Jesus was the King of the Jews. The irony increases when we recognize that, rightly interpreted, the sign proclaimed the truth.¹²

Christ is the King not only of the Jews, but of the Gentiles.

THE PRISONERS ON THE CROSSES

Hung in place between two thieves, hung the blameless Prince of Peace. Mt 27:38, “Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left.”

Christ again is fulfilling prophecy. “He was numbered with the transgressors” (Isa 53:12).

One of those three crosses were three responses. Christ's cross is a cross of **reception**. He's willing to receive all who come to him. The one thief's cross is a cross of **redemption**. He believed on Christ and Christ said, “Today you will be with me in paradise.” And that thief was redeemed! The third cross is a cross of **rejection**. How sad to be strung up to die next to Christ and not receive salvation. So many are so close to Christ, but are perishing. You may be here today and you know the cross well, but you've never trusted Christ personally as Savior and Lord.

THE PRETENSE OF THE CROSS

The leaders of Israel would not stop mocking Christ, even when he was on the Cross. To think of Christ as Messiah was pretense to them. This was a huge laugh and

Mt 27:39-40, “And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.””

The King who is mocked as a king really is a king, the King of kings! And yet he is subjected to cruel mockery. Crucifixion brought the greatest amount of shame to a person – reserved really reserved only **for slaves and rebels**. No Roman citizen could be crucified apart from the explicit sanction of the emperor himself. Crucifixion was so associated with shame and treason and all that is despicable that children were told they shouldn't talk about these things, and parents were exhorted never to mention these things in front of their children. It would be as culturally barbaric

¹² See esp. G. M. Lee, “The Inscription on the Cross,” *PEQ* 100 (1968): 144, for comparison of the Gospel versions of the inscription and the probable literal original.

as having a humorous conversation today about Auschwitz. Everything here bespeaks utter powerlessness. There's no hope. There's no help. There's only shame and death."¹³

The Utterly Powerless was Transcendently Powerful!

The irony is this: while he hung on the cross in ignominy, odium, and shame, **while he was unimaginably weak, he was powerfully bringing about the destruction of the temple and raising it again.** It was precisely by this means that his power was being exercised. He was on the way to death and resurrection. All four of the Gospels, not just Matthew, drive toward the passion narrative and then to the resurrection. While they were mocking him for his weakness, he was doing what he said he would. The man who was utterly powerless was transcendently powerful.¹⁴

THE PURPOSE OF THE CROSS

The purpose of the Cross is to save. Jesus was accused of not being able to save himself. They mocked him for it. He did miracles but he cannot take himself off the cross.

Mt 27:41-44, "So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, **42 "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel;** let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'**" **44 And the robbers [*insurrectionists*] who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way."**

The Irony

Verse 42 is one of the most profound ironies of the entire Bible. "**He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel.**" They imply that Jesus is powerless. He could raise the dead, heal the sick, give sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. But how is it that He cannot save Himself? It's not that He cannot.

The Power

It wasn't that He was powerless to save himself. He has already said He is capable of calling legions of angels to pull him down from the cross. It wasn't that he was lacking in power.

The Choice

If He did decide to save himself, He could not save others. He came to do his Father's will. The reason he could not save himself was not because of physical limitations but moral constraint. If he came to do his Father's will, **he could not save himself and others.**

Joseph is told, "**You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins**" (**Mt 1:21**). Jesus saves. Everything Jesus does he does in function of this purpose. He comes to save his people from their sins.

Jesus could have easily come down from the cross – but He chose **NOT** to save Himself.

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

¹³ D.A. Carson. "Ironies of the Cross." Klang Valley Bible Conference, Penang, Ipoh, Malasia. 2007. Sermon.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The Darkness

Jesus was on the cross for six hours, but during three of those hours, there was a supernatural darkness. Something supernatural is happening here. Jesus is convulsing in pain through fully conscious. All Creation is groaning under the weight of the sin that Jesus is bearing.

Mt 27:45, “Now from the sixth hour [noon] there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour [3pm].” The sun, moon and stars could not bear the weight of this suffering. If you pool all the sin and iniquity of man into an eternally deep ocean without borders, that is what the Son of God was absorbing.

He was drinking the full cup of God's infinite wrath for your sin and mine. He drank it fully. The very creation of the world groaned and closed her eyes. The sun and moon and stars refused to shine. **There was a supernatural darkness across the entire world for THREE entire hours.**

The Declaration: Fulfilling Prophecy

Mt 27:46-49, “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

Here is another deep irony. He lifts His voice in a cry of powerlessness. “My God, why have you forsaken Me?”

Matthew gives us the Aramaic, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani” (v. 46). It is the only time he lets us hear how Jesus would have sounded on a day-to-day basis. Jesus spoke in Aramaic.¹⁵

The priests mock Him for it: “He trusts in God,” as he's crying out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” All they can see is powerlessness.

But this cry reflects not weakness but sovereignty. Jesus is quoting a Psalm. **Psalm 22:1**, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” He is the sovereign One who is fulfilling prophecy.

This cry reflects his deepest awareness of his abandonment, his judicial bearing of sin that he himself had already predicted and that the other New Testament writers pick up on again and again: “He who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” “He was wounded for our transgressions,” Isaiah had said of the suffering Servant.

The Defeat of Death and Hell

Mt 27:46-49, “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.”

The one who dies is obtaining Prince of life. When Jesus cried out, what did he say? John 18 tells us. “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished,” and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (Jn 19:30). Now, these three words—“It is finished”—*tetelestai* (ta-TELL-a-STYE) in the Greek, are one word. *Tetelestai*, Jesus said. “It is finished.” Just one word, but it was a word that shook the world, that echoed through Heaven, and that devastated the foundations of Hell. “It is finished!”

So we see these tokens of Christ's Love! He's defeating sin, death and hell for you. We see...

- **The Crown Christ Wore Mt 27:26-30**

¹⁵ O'Donnell, D. S. (2013). *Matthew: All Authority in Heaven and on Earth*. (R. K. Hughes, Ed.) (p. 872). Wheaton, IL: Crossway.

- The Cross Christ Bore Mt 27:32-50, and now...

III. **The Curtain God Tore**, Mt 27:51-61.

The Miracle of the Temple Curtain

Mt 27:51, "And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split."

In this verse see three acts of God, but there are more to come. This cry "It is finished" shook the earth, split the rocks, and tore the thick temple veil in two "**from top to bottom**" We know it is supernatural because huge, handwoven tapestries aren't usually "torn in two" and "*from top to bottom*" (v. 51).¹⁶

Which Veil?

What we don't know is to which veil Matthew is referring. Is it the inside veil that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place or the Holy of Holies (the sanctuary where the Ark of the Covenant was kept and where only the high priest could enter only once a year on the Day of Atonement), or is it the outside veil that would have hung at the gate dividing the Court of the Jews from the Court of the Gentiles? If it is the outside veil it is a more dramatic and public spectacle, as that veil was eighty feet high and visible to all. If it is the veil to the entrance of the Holy of Holies it is less public but no less dramatic or theologically rich. Can you imagine Caiaphas's face?¹⁷

Invitation to the Throne of Grace

Now we have access to God through Christ! "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (**Heb 4:16**).

SG: Are you carrying your burdens to God since he has made a way into the inner sanctuary of his presence through Christ?

The Miracle of the Open Tombs

Here are more miracles. **Mt 27:52-53**, "The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

It seems at this point, the tombs of the caves are opened as a prelude to Jesus tomb being opened. They are all dead, but on Sunday not only Jesus, but many other believers are raised from the dead.

The crescendo of the cataclysmic signs, however, is not the ground shaking or rocks breaking. Rather it is the tombs opening and real resurrected human beings (not disembodied souls) walking about Jerusalem.¹⁸

The Miracle of the Believing Centurion

¹⁶ The passive verb "was torn" (v. 51), as Luz notes, "suggests an act of God (*passivum divinum*)" (*Matthew 21-28*, p. 566). Luz also notes that Matthew speaks in the *passivum divinum* for each of the three signs (pp. 566, 567).

¹⁷ O'Donnell, 876-77.

¹⁸ Ibid., 878.

Mt 27:54, “When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!””

Here we have another miracle. The faith of a Roman Centurion. Out of all the people who were to believe, here is the first to believe after the Cross. The first New Covenant conversion is a Gentile! How appropriate!

He doesn't say, “Truly this was the King of the Jews.” Of course Jesus was! But he says, “Truly this was the Son of God.” He's King of all. He's Lord and God – He's the Son of God, the Messiah!

Son of God is a title of ruling. It was as if this soldier says, “I have a new King. I'm not longer bowing to Caesar! I'm bowing to Jesus as Lord!”

Female Witnesses of the Miracles

Mt 27:55-56, “There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.”

These women show true faith in Christ. There are MANY women (vs. 55) there, looking on from a distance. But where are the men? Where are these strong fisherman?

This speaks to the power of weakness. When we come to Christ, we come in weakness.

The Securing of the Tomb

Mt 27:57-60, “When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away.”

The very prominence of the burial site made it secure, but we also have Joseph of Arimathea and probably some servants put a TWO-TON stone in front of the grave.

John says a Garrison of Roman soldiers was 16 Roman soldiers watching.

The Waiting Women

Mt 27:61, “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (*Mrs. Zebedee*) were there, sitting opposite the tomb.” Here two dear women are waiting and watching. What were they expecting? Perhaps they were grieving.

Conclusion

Dear friends let us grieve for the price our precious Lord paid, but let us rejoice. Jesus was buried in the Tomb, but Sunday's coming.

Sunday is coming! But before we get there next Sunday, would you give yourself wholly to Jesus?

He has given you these three love gifts: the Crown of thorns he wore, the Cross he bore, and the Curtain God tore.