

WHEN GOD SHOOK THE WORLD

Text: Matthew 27:51-66; 28:1-20

There are many things that have been called earth-shaking events. April 19, 1775, British and American soldiers exchanged fire beginning at Lexington's Green, followed by the confrontation on the North Bridge in Concord, Massachusetts, chronicled in the poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson:

By the rude bridge that arched the flood
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled
Here once the embattled farmers stood
and fired the shot heard round the world.

Another earth-shaking event took place this past week as it was reported that the "Mother-of-All-Bombs" had been dropped in Afghanistan.

We could write an endless list of events that could be considered earth shaking. But none to compare with the time in history that God shook the world.

I. DEATH'S GRIP WAS SHOOK

Matthew 27:51-56

A. The Ubiquitous Message

Mathew 27:51

The veil was six to nine inches in thickness, strategically placed separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. The two holiest days in Jewish life was the Passover and the Day of Atonement. Although our Lord died on the Day of the Passover, the Day of Atonement is addressed by the tearing of the veil. Only once a year, on the Day of Atonement could the High Priest enter and only then with the blood of the sacrificial lamb. By the tearing of the veil, there is no longer any separation from any man, woman, boy or girl who believes. Salvation is available everywhere to the "whosoever" of John 3:16. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."

B. The U-turn of Death

Matthew 27:51-53

This has to be one of the most awe-inspiring aspects of our story, i.e., Christ had company when He rose from the dead! As Christ was dying, the rocks broke! This earthquake was all encompassing. It broke not only the rocks but graves sealed with massive boulders broke. It is important to point out that no one came

out of the grave until Jesus rose, “And came out of the grave after His resurrection...” (Matthew 27:53a). I Corinthians 15:20 says, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” It is also important to note that the ones who were brought forth from the grave were only the saints.

C. The Universal Witness

Matthew 27:54-56

God’s Word is quick to point out that at the cross, not only Jews, but also women and Gentiles gave witness. The centurion and those under his command were now part of the believing crowd. Ephesians 2:16 confirms, “And that he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.”

II. DEAD RELIGION WAS SHOOK

Matthew 27:62-66

A. Two Shaken Men

Matthew 27:57-60

It was not only Joseph of Arimathea who came to retrieve and bury the body of Jesus; John 19:39a informs us, “And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night....” John is referencing the famous story of John 3 when Nicodemus was told that being born again is the only way to go to heaven. It becomes obvious that not only Joseph, but also his fellow Sanhedrin member has accepted the Gospel. They have been shaken from mere religious life to relationship!

B. Two Types of Sinners

Matthew 27:61

We see a contrast of two famous ladies. “...Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils” (Mark 16:9b). The “...other Mary...” ((Matthew 27:61b) is the mother of James the Less, a chosen disciple and his brother Joses (Matthew 27:56). The Bible points out that we all have sinned (Romans 3:23), therefore we all need a Savior.

C. Two Failures

Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15

These religious people made two desperate failures, 1) They refused to accept their Messiah. 2) They tried to cover the undeniable truth of Christ’s resurrection. The chief priests and Pharisees came to Pilate asking him to set up guards at the grave of Jesus so that it may be “...made sure...” (Matthew 27:64). Pilate granted them a watch and sarcastically used their own words and said, “...go

your way, make it sure as ye can” (Matthew 27:65b). We see that after our Lord rose again, these conniving religious rulers, content to dwell in their dead religion, paid large amounts of money for the soldiers to lie about the missing body of Jesus. One of the more humorous points of the resurrection was the penalty for these guards should have been death. If indeed our Lord had been taken, they would have died (not received money) because this was a capital offense.

III. DEATH ITSELF WAS SHOOK

Matthew 28:1

A. The Witness of the Sunday

Matthew 28:1

The fact that we are here today worshiping on Sunday is proof that our Lord’s resurrection, which happened on Sunday, created a paradigm as is seen in Acts 20:7a: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together....”

B. The Witness of Earth

Matthew 28:2a

According to Psalm 19:1-3 we see that God speaks through His nature. Romans 8:22a, says, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth...” The earth spoke when Christ came back to life and gave us a gigantic, “Amen!” in the simultaneous earthquake.

C. The Witness of Heaven

Matthew 28:2b-8

The mighty angel descended from heaven and rolled the stone from the grave. He came like a bolt of lightning and his garment was spotless white. The guards were so terrified that they shook and fell motionless. The angel told the two Marys to not be afraid, check out the empty tomb and then go tell Jesus’ disciples!

D. The Witness of Jesus

Matthew 28:9, 10

Jesus Himself appears to the ladies and says, “All hail” (Matthew 28:9b). This expression means “Oh joy! Be cheerful or be calmly happy!” The he also tells them to tell His disciples to meet Him in Galilee. I Corinthians 15:5-8 records the Lord Jesus being seen by eyewitness testimony consisting of the disciples, James, Paul and over five hundred other people!

E. The Witness That Continues

Matthew 28:16-20

Just before our Lord ascended to heaven after His last forty days on the earth, He gave the Great Commission to His disciples and the requirement of that commission is still with us today. I can say with the songwriter, "He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today, He walks with me and talks with me...you ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!"

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.