

Luke 23:44 - 49 The Miraculous Death of Jesus

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We, in the previous sessions together in Luke's account of the crucifixion and death of Jesus have been witnessing Satan mocking God. In our story of the trials and the crucifixion of Jesus we have witnessed what Jesus, in Luke 22, during His capture and arrest, has called the hour of darkness.

In Luke 22:53b Jesus states; *but this hour and the power of darkness are yours."*

It is as if, in the plan of God, the plan of redemption, God simply pulls back the restraints and by doing that, it's as if He's saying to Satan, this hour of darkness is yours, go for it. Go for it. Restraints are lifted. You can't have the 12 disciples. You can trouble Peter a bit. But as far as Jesus is concerned, no holds barred. Have at it.

The power of darkness. What is that? That is descriptive of the power Satan has over those who belong to him to do his bidding, to accomplish his evil. Always within the restraints that God sovereignly sets and allows.

In our modern world we could look back and say Hitler fell under the spell and power of darkness to accomplish all of the evil that he did. Murdering 6 million jews.

God sovereignly allowed that for His purposes, Hitler became a modern type, a picture of the yet future anti-christ for us to marvel at the powers of evil as he fell under that spell, the power of darkness and actually captured a whole nation in that spell. Shocking evil.

Our nation has fallen under the power of darkness. We've now murdered something like 10 times what Hitler accomplished with unborn humans. And our nation has reversed every institution that God designed at the beginnings, in the book of Genesis. Marriage. Family structure. Morality. Fidelity. Binary genders designed to accompany the opposite gender in marriage and family structure.

We are under the power of darkness in this land. Rejecting every limit that God ever designed and gave to us. Shaking our little fist at God. As a nation.

When God removed the restraints of Satan, and the power of darkness was given to Satan to accomplish God's task, shocking things take place. Corporately. What happened to Jesus wasn't accomplished by a single person under the spell of Satanic darkness, it was a corporate nation that followed Satan down the paths we've been on for a couple of weeks now. Is it 3 weeks? Oh dear. I double checked and it has been 8 weeks of the power of darkness we've studied together

Judas begins it. Under the power of evil that perhaps even he is surprised and shocked by, he receives 30 pieces of silver and takes a lynch mob to where he knows Jesus will be. It says Satan entered into Judas.

Well, when Satan was finished with Judas, you can count on the fact that he entered Annas and Caiaphas and Pilate. Darkness like a fog envelopes everything that happens next. Satan is driving it all. Restraint is gone.

When the restraints were lifted, suddenly a lynch mob of over 500 comes to the the garden to arrest Jesus. Temple police. Chief priests and scribes. Pharisees. A Roman cohort. It's a lynch mob. How quickly did that happen. The restraints on Satan are lifted and almost immediately a mob of 500 - 600

people storms the garden to get Jesus.

It's a corporate mob. People who usually dislike and distrust each others ideology, come together in a common cause against a common enemy, under the dark spell of Satan. It's almost comical. Satan is in full force, the soldiers show up, the temple police, all of the strong men, a corporate mob controlled by the power of darkness, and Jesus says one word, I AM HE! and they all go down like dominos. So much for Satan's big power . . . if it were not under the sovereign allowance of God.

Never the less, they arrest Him and drag him to the false trials. Shocking trials. They abandon every rule of justice that they had practiced and would practice again, because they are under a spell of darkness. Throw justice out the window. We'll follow our own rules of justice again in the future, after this dark task is complete. Jesus is sentenced to death. For nothing. They could find nothing He did, worthy of death, but darkness must be obeyed. Sanity has left the room.

The mock trials. Justice abandoned. Pilates hand is forced. And in the spell of darkness of shocking evil, a party atmosphere. Satan is having his day. Jesus said He is a King, let's make Him a king. Party time. Insane evil party time.

They beat Him unrecognizeable. Blood is covering Him from the lashings. They smash a crown of thorns onto His head. His whole head is unrecognizeable. Covered in blood. Keep the party going. They crucify Him with left hand and right hand man, like every King should have.

They mock Him and spit on Him. Come down from that cross big shot. Christ and King, come on down since you're the all powerful messiah, Son of God. The party rages under the powers, the spell, the shocking darkness of Satan . . . until it doesn't.

I'll preface what happens next with a couple of familiar scriptures. We've all heard these before. One from the new testament, and one from the old;

Galatians 6:7 *Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.*

Did you get that? In the middle of the darkness, you may forget and think you're getting away with the evil. Our nation is spitting at God, throwing dirt in the air, furious with God, shaking our little corporate fist at God, and in the midst of the darkness, they think they're getting away with it.

God is not mocked, United States. God is not mocked Israel and Rome, corporately mocking the Savior. Spitting at God. Beating God with clubs. Blaspheming God. God is not mocked. You think you're getting away with your evil. It simply isn't harvest time, that's all. Harvest will come. It always does. God promises a harvest. I'm astonished that our nation hasn't collapsed yet. We are ripe. Riper than many nations of old that did get the harvest of wrath from far less wickedness than us.

I'll read you a second verse; Hosea 8. You may not be as familiar with this one. We are at our house. 7 *For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.*

Under a spell of darkness we mock God, but God will send a harvest, and the harvest is magnified. Our wickedness was like a normal wind. 20 - 25 mph. Wind. But God's harvest will come back at us at 150 mph. Sow the wind, reap the whirlwind.

At the cross, the party atmosphere of evil is full blown. They mock, they taunt, they beat with their fists, they blaspheme. Satan is throwing everything at Jesus that he can get out of these duped people under his power and spell. He's bringing it!

And God simply turns out the lights. Party over. Thick darkness. You can't see your hand in front of your face darkness. Party is over. Or is it?

At Sodom, in Genesis 19, the angel turned out the lights. He struck the men

with blindness who were trying to break down the door in order to get in to those angels who had come. 11 *And they struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.*

There's something about the darkness and blindness when it is raging, the power of darkness and evil, the insanity of sin that causes reason to depart. Struck blind and they wearied themselves, they wore themselves out trying to continue in their evil. Mass, corporate, mob mentality insanity.

We could ask, did these men at the cross continue to mock God, when the lights went out. Or did the party atmosphere get instantly sober.

The verbs and grammar in the greek is that God removed all light. All light. Thick darkness. Total blindness. God turned the sun off.

Are you afraid of the dark? I do better than some, having trained myself to work with film for long periods in total darkness. I lay out my tools ahead of time so that I'm not like those guys at Sodom. I can get along OK for an hour if that's what's needed.

But think about what your Bibles just told you.

44 And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 the sun being obscured;

The 6th hour in Hebrew time is noon. At noon the sun goes out. The greek word is that which describes something that has ceased to be. God turned off the sun. Complete utter darkness. Everything comes to a halt.

We take our light and our sight for granted. Even more so now. When darkness falls we flip a switch and continue our activity until we decide to quit. This kind of utter total darkness, the equivalent of blindness is not something we ever think much about. We're in control.

Utter darkness is such an untenable thing to comprehend that we don't think about it. And yet over and over Jesus describes hell as outer darkness. Outer darkness. Conscious eternity in utter darkness. This three hours is just a little taste.

We think of God as light. Our Bibles tell us He is light and in Him is no darkness at all. And yet God uses darkness in judgement. In Exodus 10 God causes a darkness to fall over Egypt. The Lord said to Moses, *“Stretch out your hand toward the sky.”* This is in Egypt. *“That there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.”*

Darkness is associated with judgement. When Israel comes to Sinai, a cloud envelopes the mountain like the smoke of a furnace along with lightning and thunder and the whole mountain quaked.

In Joel 2 the day of the Lord comes with darkness, thick darkness; This is a future prophecy not yet realized. These events will happen at the very end of the tribulation period just prior to Jesus return. How frightening this must be;

*1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming;
Surely it is near,*

*2 A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness.*

In Joel chapter 2 vs. 10:

*10 Before them the earth quakes,
The heavens tremble,
The sun and the moon grow dark,
And the stars lose their brightness.*

11 And the LORD utters His voice before His army;

*Surely His camp is very great,
For strong is he who carries out His word.
The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome,
And who can endure it?*

When God comes to judge this world, thick darkness will descend. Darkness and judgement come together. This is repeated in many of the minor prophets. Amos ch. 5 and 8. Zephaniah 1 Darkness accompanies judgement.

Zephaniah 1:14, "Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly. Listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness."

Imagine a world in thick darkness, but you can hear an army approaching. In heaven an army is coming towards you in the darkness. You can hear the shouts of the man leading the charge. In the heavens. Jesus, the Christ, risen from the dead, returning to earth for all to hear, in the sky, somewhere in the darkness, He returns in fury and judgement.

Darkness accompanies judgement. This was a taste for Israel of what was to come, what is prophesied in the book of Revelation when darkness descends on the whole world in judgement. But this judgement although a sobering taste, the party of mocking God is over, but the darkness isn't for them.

This darkness accompanies the judgement upon Jesus, the fierce wrath of God that visits Jesus as He pays the penalties for my sins. And yours. For three hours He undergoes the awful judgement for sins, not His own, on that cross. My sin. Your sin.

*44 And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 the sun being obscured; **and the veil of the temple was torn in two.***

For centuries, God has been unapproachable, because of our sin. The temple

represents God, and the barrier between the Holy place where sacrifices were offered and the Holy of Holies where God dwelt, that thick curtain separated us from God. A curtain of separation between sinful man and God.

Only one time a year the high priest went inside the Holy of Holies and quickly got back out. Access denied. Sin must stay outside the curtain.

But after those three hours of darkness, where Jesus bore the punishment for all of God's elect, past, present and future, When that task was complete, the veil that separated God and sinful men was rent in two, top to bottom.

The way to God is once for all time opened for those whose sins are forgiven. At that moment, Judaism was complete and rendered pointless. All of the sacrifices were types that pointed to the final sacrifice, the lamb of God who paid for all the sins of all who will be with God for eternity during that 3 hours of darkness.

Sin is forever rendered powerless for those who believe. The sacrificial system is rendered null and void by the one final sacrifice, Jesus, God's lamb. That all happened around the 9th hour, 3:00 o'clock, and yet blind Israel goes on about it's business, when the lights come back on, keeping the passover, slaughtering the lambs.

They missed the whole thing. The pharisees kept asking for signs. Show us signs in the sky. The sun was literally turned off for 3 hours, and when it comes back to life, they blindly go about their business. And that wasn't the only sign they missed in their God caused blindness.

Matthew tells us; Mt. 27:51 *At that moment the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth quaked and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs broke open, and the bodies of many saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 After Jesus' resurrection, when they had come out of the tombs, they entered the holy city and appeared to many people....*

A mighty earthquake that splits rocks open. Graves are opened and saints

come out of the tombs. All of this happened at precisely the time that the final sin was forgiven, the wrath of God absorbed by Jesus, on that cross.

46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." And having said this, He breathed His last.

Jesus was in full control of His own moment of death. Death on a cross is death by suffocation. Your bones come out of their joints and your breathing apparatus is blocked, and when the final moment of exhaustion comes when you can no longer lift with your legs to capture a quick breath and then slump down again, at that moment, you suffocate.

Lack of oxygen to the brain causes a stupor for a time preceeding death. Silence as your brain goes to sleep while other functions shut down. It's a gruesome death.

You don't cry out with a loud voice. That takes air. But Jesus is in control of His own death. He still had enough breath available to cry out, and then He controlled the moment of His final breath.

But not before He cries out in completion of prophecy; Mt. 27:46 *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?"* Mt. 27:46

The wages of sin is death. Separation from God. Even for Jesus; There must be this mysterious separation from the Father in the final punishment for sins, not His own, but our sins. It was at this moment that the veil, the curtain was rent in two, the way into the presence of God was opened for us.

He took our sins upon Himself and received our punishment. He gave to us His righteousness. The way into the presence of God with sinless righteousness, a righteousness not our own, the righteousness of Jesus, given freely to us, opens the way into God's very presence.

That tearing of that thick curtain into two pieces, top to bottom, is the symbolic moment from God. The old covenant is complete. The new covenant, in Jesus blood, has come. All of the sins, past present and future, of the elect who will enjoy God in His presence for eternity, are punished during those 3 hours of darkness, and at the moment of Jesus death, the curtain between God and us is torn in two, and life for us, begins. Access to God is opened.

47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent."

So many symbolic events all happen at the same moment in God's sovereign plan. The curtain between God and men, the access to God's presence is rent in two, top to bottom, the old covenant is completed, finished, and the first person to walk through that access into God's presence is NOT a jew.

Make no mistake. This is a clear message from God, caused in His own sovereign control over every event. Jesus dies. The curtain is rent. Access is open. Sins are paid for. And at that exact moment, the first person recorded in God's word to walk through that access is a gentile. That was no accident of history. That was according to God's sovereign plan.

We view history since sin entered the world, and God sovereignly chooses individual men, patriarchs, to carry out His ultimate plans. Then a single patriarch, Abraham becomes a family, set apart for God's purposes on earth. That family becomes a great nation, and within that chosen nation, the chosen people, chosen by God for His possession, the word of God is revealed through Moses and the prophets.

The plan of redemption is unfolded with temporary recurring sacrifices that look forward to this final once for all sacrifice to forever remove sin. The jews were the vehicle and caretakers of the revelation of God. And when the moment comes, the barrier between God and men is rent in two, the first person to walk through that new covenant opening into God's presence is a gentile. A roman occupier.

God used the jews to bring the messiah, and when the way is opened into God's presence, a gentile walks in first. The thief on the cross was the final old testament saint that looked forward to the access brought by Jesus blood, and this Roman gentile is the first person to walk into God's presence in the new covenant. Access granted. Not just for jews. Everyone is welcome. Forgiveness is for the nations. Pinch yourselves, here we are in 2022!

Luke is giving us reactions to the events. Thick darkness for 3 hours on the day the passover lambs are to be slaughtered. In the temple the curtain has been ripped open. A massive earthquake. Pandemonium really.

The first reaction is the Centurion and the soldiers. They're used to criminals dying on crosses. But never has there been one like this. An innocent man who dies on His terms. He controls the moment. He doesn't die from suffocation, He dies exactly on God's pre-ordained shedule with plenty of breath for the loud final statements. Those hardened gentile soldiers are convinced. This innocent Man was the Son of God.

Next is the multitude;

48 And all the multitudes who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts.

The multitude has been on a roller coaster. First they're spilling over with excitement and joy at their perceived political messiah. Then they're disillusioned and angry that He won't be fulfilling their temporal dreams. They are the ones who hours ago cried "Give us Barabas!" "Crucify Him"

Now they've witnessed the evidence of a rock splitting earthquake and God blocking out the sun for 3 hours of utter darkness. Then Jesus gives up His spirit to His Father and dies.

The word for their reaction is conviction. Beating your breast was the jewish sign of sorrow over sin. What have we done?? What have we caused?? Did

we just murder the true Messiah? Conviction.

Peter's sermon at Pentecost is tailored exactly to this group. It's as if he's speaking directly to this multitude who were frightened and sorrowful over their sin at the murder of Jesus. Acts 2:22 - 24;

*22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know— 23 this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, **you nailed to a cross** by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 “And God raised Him up again,*

YOU nailed Him to a cross. YOU put Him to death. Peter is speaking directly to this convicted multitude, and 3,000 believed. The church began.

Finally, the reaction of the followers.

49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee, were standing at a distance, seeing these things

Those who already believed simply watch and wait for God to act. Did Jesus mother and half brothers, who tried to throttle Him earlier and contain Him as if He had lost his senses, was it this moment that they crossed over into full belief?

Jesus half brother James was the head of the Jerusalem church as we go forward in Acts. Was this the moment when it hit home? Watching from a distance the old covenant coming to it's conclusion as the final Lamb of God is sacrificed at the last passover, the one completing passover.

What is our own conclusion on this 2nd day of 2022? This isn't fiction. These events surrounding the death of Jesus are true. The veil between God and sinners was opened at these moments recorded here. Have we believed and asked Jesus to remember us also, when He comes in His kingdom.