

Matthew 27:45-53 “The Miracles of the Cross”

8.26.18

We have arrived to Calvary...the place of the Skull...Jesus is now on the cross...



He has been beaten mercilessly to the point that He couldn't carry His crossbeam the 1/3 of a mile from Fort Antonia (and the Praetorium) to Golgotha. A man helped him, by the name of Simon, and then the soldiers **helped themselves** to His clothes.



They gambled for His clothes... Jesus has been hanging on the cross now for 3 hours. From 9 am to 12-noon. What happens next is beyond description... What happens next and what we'll see today in the 9 verses we'll read from Matthew 27 are what I'm titling: “The Miracles of the Cross,” six (6) to be exact. They are dumbfounding and mind-boggling. Watch...

Matthew 27:45-53

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ 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.” ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 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. ⁵² 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.

This morning we are going to see Six Miracles. Here they are:

The Miracles of the Cross:

1. **Darkness**
2. **Separation**
3. **Yielded Spirit**
4. **Earthquake**
5. **Torn Veil**
6. **Opened Graves**

Just reading that list seems odd. Strange...Odd descriptions: darkness, separation, yielded Spirit, earthquake, a veil torn, open graves. An odd list for sure... But, that list is another indication of all that Jesus did on the cross for you and for me...miracles...that's what that list is: Miracles.

Once again, Jesus has been hanging on the cross for three hours. He's a mass of mutilated flesh...almost unrecognizable as a man. It's now high noon. They had hung Jesus on the cross at 9 am, or in the reckoning of the Jews...since their day starts at 6 am...Jesus was hung on the cross at the 3rd hour. It's now the sixth hour and He would be dead by the 9th hour...3 pm.

Yes, it's been three hours...from nine to twelve...and Jesus has endured the mocking and the jeering and the reproach of the sarcastic, cynical taunts of the passersby, the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers. Three hours of exposure...nakedness...torture...dying. During those first three hours on the cross Jesus broke His silence just three times. See Him hanging there:



Luke records he prayed from the cross... "Father forgive them, because they don't know what they're doing." Jesus then brought a thief into the Kingdom. He said: "Today you will be with me in Paradise." And He took care of His mother...



"Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother." And then He went silent again... And the 6th hour came...high noon...and that's when the first miracle happened...

Matthew 27:45

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

Darkness. In the middle of the day? Yes, in the middle of the day... complete darkness. The Greek word is: SKO-TAS and it means: "darkness of night." Amazing isn't it...at exactly the time Jesus was hanging on the cross, in the middle of the day, it became as dark as night. Folks, that's a miracle! Imagine what the people were thinking as the sky grew dark. The soldiers had crucified hundreds...perhaps thousands of criminals...they've never seen anything like this...

Why darkness? Well, the Light of the World was dying on the cross...and darkness seemed to be winning! Remember when Jesus came into the world...born as babe in Bethlehem.



the Prophet Isaiah said...

Isaiah 9:2

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.

Jesus would say:

John 8:12

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Now there is darkness in the middle of the day...when there should be the MOST LIGHT...darkness over the entire earth! There's a little number in my Bible beside of the word "land" in verse 45. The Greek word for "land" means: "earth." This wasn't a localized eclipse. The "Light of the World...the earth" is dying on the cross. Darkness... Remember the ninth plague in Egypt... Darkness. Darkness before the Death Angel came and the first born would die. Darkness has come upon on the world, as the Son of God...His one and only Son dies.

But there's another reason it's dark. Jesus has now taken your sin and mine upon His body. Judgment is about to come upon sin...the first miracle...darkness...leads us to the second miracle...**separation**.

Miracle #2

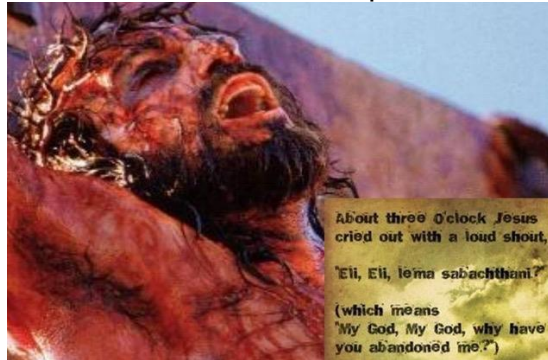
The Miracles of the Cross:

1. Darkness
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 6. Opened Graves
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Matthew 27:46-49

⁴⁶ 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."

Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani. That's Aramaic. See the depiction...Jesus crying out...



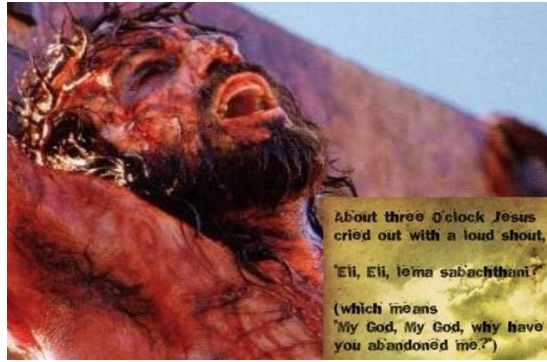
For whatever reason...maybe because of the shuffling in the crowd as the sky grew dark, which had to be causing great confusion and fear...for whatever reason...some thought Jesus was calling on the prophet on Elijah. But, He was not calling on Elijah. He was calling on His Father. The word "El" in Scripture, means God. Jesus was crying out the words prophesied 1,000 years earlier found in Psalm 22:1, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me."

You say, "What's the miracle?" The miracle: God turned His back on His Son. Now listen, this is deep...it's a strange kind of miracle... As I studied this week, I learned Martin Luther went into seclusion for days to try to understand this miracle and he came back exclaiming: "I still don't understand." Listen, when Jesus took your sin, my sin, the sin of every human being who would live, on His body...He became sin. Did you hear that? He become sin...no...He didn't just take our sin upon Himself...like someone putting on a coat...no...He became SIN! Now listen, He didn't become a sinner...because Jesus never sinned...but, in this paradox...a paradox that's beyond our human comprehension...He became sin... See it... 2 Corinthians 5:21...

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Don't miss that last phrase: So that "we might become the righteousness of God." Don't ever forget that God is righteous and Holy. In our culture of permissiveness and anything goes...it's easy to forget that God is pure, holy and righteous and He HATES SIN and it is our SIN that did this to Jesus...



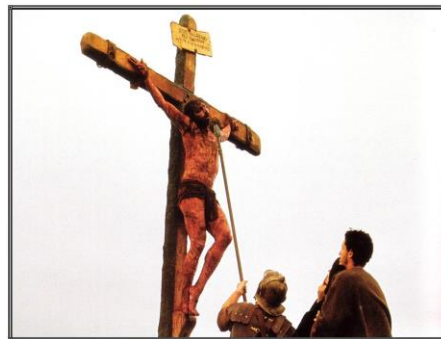
God had to judge sin, and that required separation from sin. God in His righteousness cannot look upon sin, so He had to turn His back on His son. And this was the cup that Jesus asked His Father if it could pass... But, it couldn't pass. Jesus had to drink the cup of separation for sin...so that in Jesus, we might be saved from our sin and never separated from God! And church family, that's a miracle...a miracle that anyone **would be willing** to do that for sinners! "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me..."

Now...Miracle #3

The Miracles of the Cross:

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It was at this point, Jesus said, "I thirst." His body was shutting down. His blood pressure was next to nothing...and His body had no fluids left. He needed to finish...and He needed liquid...so that His parched tongue could speak His last words... And so a sponge with sour wine was offered to Him...



And the 3rd miracle occurred. Jesus yielded...He gave up His life voluntarily...



HE YIELDED HIS LIFE...it was not taken from Him. Think about it...at this point, Jesus now pushes up on His feet...His lacerated back grinding into the cross...pulling with all of His might on His wrists to get air into His lungs before He suffocates...now His tongue is wet with liquid and He cries... How? With a loud voice...

Matthew 27:50

⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

Church, He CRIED OUT... He didn't whisper! He shouted with all of His might: "IT IS FINISHED!" Luke records it this way...

Luke 23:46

⁴⁶ Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.

Do you understand this miracle? **Turn to John 10 and you'll see it very clearly.** You see, as you are turning, crucifixion didn't kill Jesus. Jesus could have used the power of His Deity to will Himself to stay alive, but He gave up His life, voluntarily, for you and for me...reminding us of what He said when He described Himself in John chapter 10 verse 14 as the Good Shepherd... See it...

John 10:14-18

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

Jesus voluntarily chose to die...it was a voluntarily act of sacrifice... Yet, the "WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE" would take up His life again in 3 days: A Miracle!

Miracle #4...as you look at the list again, let me tell you, This miracle is actually the source of the last three miracles...

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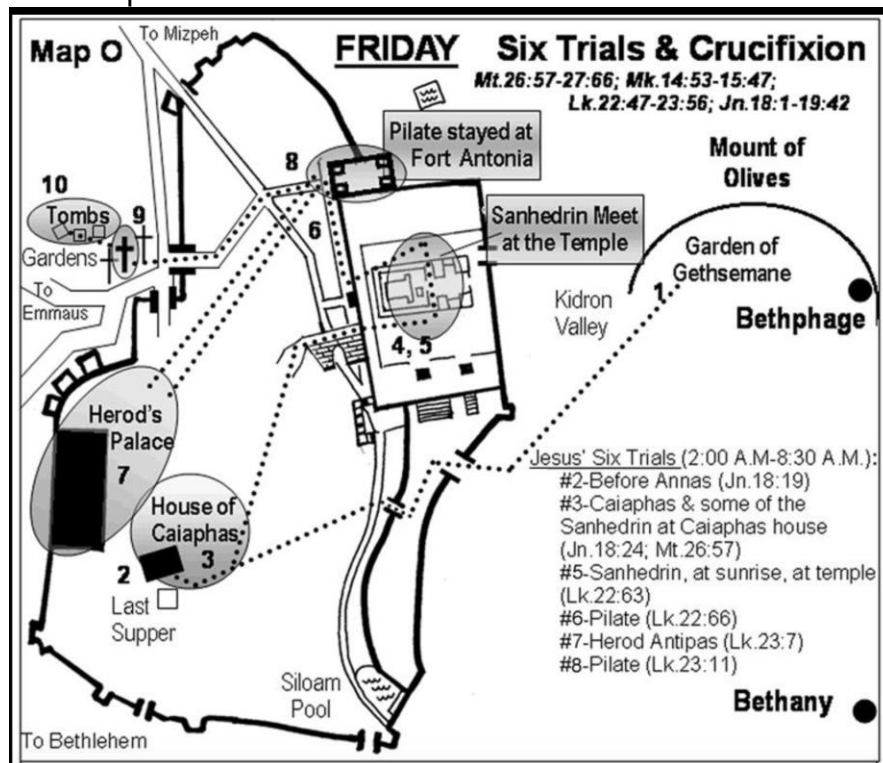
When Jesus cried out with a loud voice...the earth heaved...it quaked... See verse 50...

Matthew 27:50-51

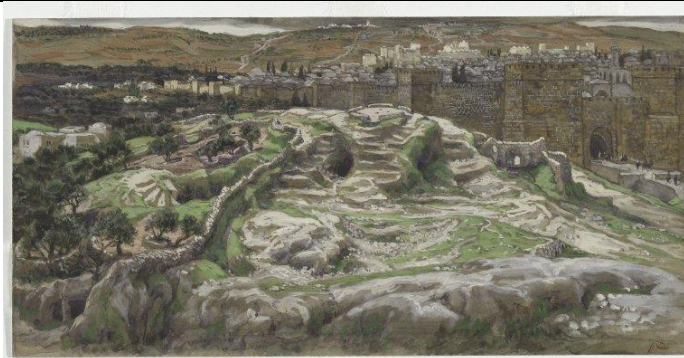
⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

An earthquake... Imagine with me... You're a bystander and you're watching this scene you've witnessed many times...the Romans crucify all the time...but, it's gotten totally dark, like night and now ground starts shaking beneath your feet... Terrifying... And the same thing happened at Mt.

Sinai when God gave Moses the 10 Commandments. The earth shook! And now this mountain is shaking...Mt. Calvary! And this shaking did something miraculous...for you see, a little more 2,000 feet away from where Jesus is being crucified...something else is happening in the Holy of Holies in the Temple. See the map...



See the left hand side, where the crosses are? Now look to the middle: see the Temple. You could see the Temple rising in the distance from Calvary! See the depiction:



That's Calvary in the foreground and the Temple is in the background just beyond the city walls. And it was inside the Temple that the veil separating mankind from God in the Holy of Holies was torn in half. See it...



The priests were in there going about their normal course of business on this Passover...and all of a sudden the earth begins to shake and that massive veil separating the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple was split in to...it just ruptured from top to bottom and **that's miracle #5**.

The Miracles of the Cross:

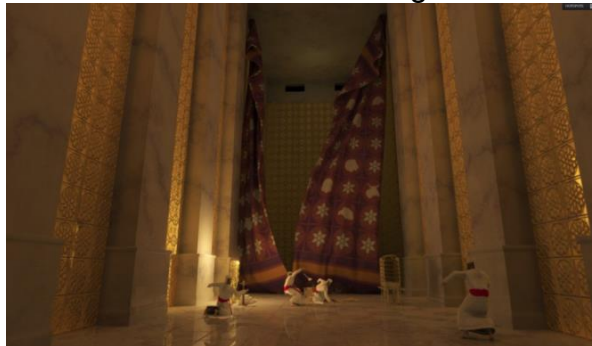
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Did you catch the word "Behold" in verse 51...

Matthew 27:51a

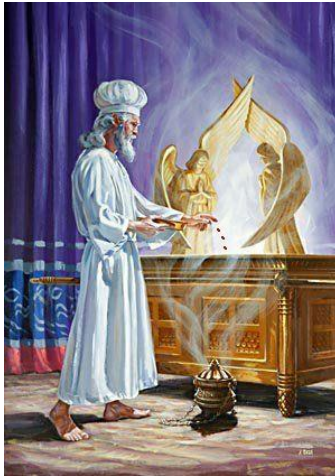
51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two...

It's a big deal when you see the word "Behold" in the Bible. It usually means a miracle is forthcoming! In this case...a torn curtain...a veil...see it again...



It was torn from top to bottom. If man were trying to do this...he would tear it bottom to top. Why? Because the thing was 60 feet tall, according to Josephus, (that's over twice as tall as this room) and get this...it was almost 4 feet thick... Can you imagine how much that thing weighed! And it tore from top to bottom. That's a miracle folks, any way you cut it...literally!!!

But, here's the most important part of this miracle... It's what it means...what it represents. What did the veil do? Who could go behind the veil?



The High Priest. Once a year...on the Day of Atonement, when he would go behind that curtain...that veil and offer blood on the top of the Ark of the Covenant...called the Mercy Seat...for his sins and the sins of the people. The fact that the sin offering was offered annually and countless other sacrifices repeated daily, showed graphically that sin could not truly be atoned for or erased by mere animal sacrifices.

Listen to me, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, the miracle of the torn veil was the fact that God had moved Himself from just being found in the Holy of Holies...He would never again dwell in a temple made with hands. God was through with that religious system...because you see...that veil was a constant reminder that sin rendered humanity unfit for the presence of God. But no more! This is why the writer of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 10:19-22

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

Listen, that curtain kept everyone, but the High Priest, from having true intimacy with God. But, when Jesus said, "It is Finished," that symbol of separation was destroyed...torn into...allowing access to the Father!! And listen...because Jesus paid the sin debt...we today...through Him can come boldly to the throne of grace! There's no more need for separation...Jesus took the separation...He drank the cup and then He split the curtain...saying, "You can now come to my Father through me!"

Do you know who the High Priest is now? Jesus! He became the High Priest when He delivered up (not the blood of a lamb), but His own blood to His Father... For those of us who have received Jesus we have received mercy and grace because of THE VEIL has been TORN!

You see, the torn veil also represented Jesus' torn body. A body torn...**lacerated...mutilated**, so that we could one day be elevated into the presence of God! Do you see, on the cross, Paradise was being restored! Just as God walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, before sin came into the world...because Jesus died on the cross...when we receive Him by faith and choose to follow Him, one day...we will walk right into the presence of God, and we will walk streets of gold with Him!

It's now 3 pm...the 9th hour...and light is beginning to return to the earth...but, something has happened in the cemeteries of Jerusalem. **Miracle #6.**

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That earthquake has wreaked havoc on Jerusalem...there has been a tremendous amount of damage in around the city...including...opened graves... Only Matthew's gospel mentions this miracle. You say, ***“What's the miracle with that? Of course, an earthquake is going to damage cemeteries.”*** True! But, would you expect those opened graves to have people walking out of them?

Matthew 27:52-53

⁵²The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Listen, I believe what Jesus did on the cross was so powerful and so magnanimous that like lightning striking ½ a mile away can still run up your feet...the power of what Jesus accomplished on the cross reverberated throughout the hills and valleys of Jerusalem. And on that Sunday...three days later...the day of Jesus' resurrection...those people revealed themselves in Jerusalem. Can you imagine? You're eating a meal that Sunday afternoon and you're talking about Uncle Joe...he died a year ago...and...

There's Uncle Joe!!! Can you imagine!

Scholars chronicle the fact that on that Resurrection Sunday these people...these SAINTS... (don't miss that part)...only the believers got up from the dead...they went to other saints... believers... Just another testimony of the power of Jesus! All these people walking around that Sunday were just like Lazarus. Miracles!

So what does all of this mean for you? What do the 6 miracles of the cross mean to you?

The Miracles of the Cross:

1. **In Christ, you can't be dominated by the DARKNESS of sin**
 2. **In Christ, you will never face SEPARATION from God**
 3. **In Christ, your YIELDED SPIRIT means you have the power to overcome**
 4. **In Christ, He can even make the EARTH QUAKE to accomplish His will in your life**
 5. **In Christ, the TORN VEIL means you will walk streets of gold with God one day**
 6. **In Christ, no GRAVE will ever hold you down**
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The Miracles of the Cross of Jesus... He did all of that for you!