

“SATURDAY”

“At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.” —MATTHEW 27:51-52

At the moment Jesus died three events took place. The temple curtain being torn in two from top to bottom was of great theological significance. It separated the ‘Holy Place’ from the utmost ‘Most Holy Place’. Only the high priest could penetrate that curtain, and only once a year on the Day of Atonement, carrying shed blood as a token of sacrifice for sin.

Behind this curtain was the presence of God, hidden to the ordinary person. The curtain torn apart was symbolic of God breaking out from behind it, and making Himself available to all people. From that moment, there was no longer a need for a mediator between God and people. 1 Timothy 2:5-6 says, “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men...” This is dramatically portrayed by a divine act within the temple the moment Jesus died.

The second event describes an earthquake, a physical phenomenon accompanied by three hours of darkness. The work of Jesus on the cross was not only for the redemption of humankind, but of all creation. Paul says in Colossians 1:20, “...and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in

heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” The moment Christ died the physical world responded.

The third event tells us tombs were opened and holy people experienced a mass resurrection, but did not appear until after Jesus was resurrected on Sunday. They then came to Jerusalem and were seen by many. Several speculations surround the implication of this event, but nothing more is recorded. Scripture does tell us, however, that after Pentecost, the Sadducees were greatly disturbed, and seized Peter and John because they were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead (Acts 4:2). It is entirely possible the Sadducees were greatly disturbed because they had been witness to this third event, having seen one or more of the resurrected in Jerusalem.

Four people attended the funeral of Jesus; Joseph of Arimathea, in whose tomb Jesus was laid; Nicodemus, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of Jesus. Other than the burial of Jesus and placing Roman soldiers to guard the tomb, the Bible does not tell us much about the next day. As for the Sanhedrin Council, we do know they were witnesses to three hours of darkness at midday. They would have felt the earthquake and have known about, if not seen, the torn curtain to God’s most holy sanctuary.

We have to wonder what thoughts would have run rampant in their minds that night and the entire next day. Would Saturday still have been a day of triumph?

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, I am so grateful for the Bible. Thank You for giving us an account of what happened at such a crucial time.

TO REFLECT UPON: Do I relate to how events in Scripture affect me personally?