

MARK — The Death of Jesus

Pastor Perry Burkholder

Mark 15:33-47

At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, “Listen, he’s calling Elijah.”

Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. “Now leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to take him down,” he said.

With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”

Some women were watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Mk 15:33–41.

A Darkness Settled Over The Land

None of the gospel writers try to explain more details about this darkness, only that the darkness happened. This couldn't have been an eclipse or a mere windstorm. But there was total darkness, which cast a shadow over the death of Jesus.

But Mark wants us to focus on what's happening during the darkness.

The Cry of Jesus

This cry clarifies the significance of his death, as the true innocent sufferer, who calls to mind Abel, whose blood cried out from the ground.

Through this cry, Jesus quotes Psalm 22:

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?

My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Ps 22:1–2.

It was at this moment that Jesus was drinking the cup that he talked about earlier, the one he asked to pass. But instead of the nations drinking the cup, Jesus drinks the cup instead:

This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take from my hand this cup filled with the wine of my wrath and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it. 16 When they drink it,

they will stagger and go mad because of the sword I will send among them.”

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Je 25:15–16.

Jesus takes on God’s justice for our wrongdoing. And through this, he is taking on the justice in us. He tasted hell on our behalf so that we don’t have to.

Paul reflected on this moment and describes what Jesus did this way:

We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

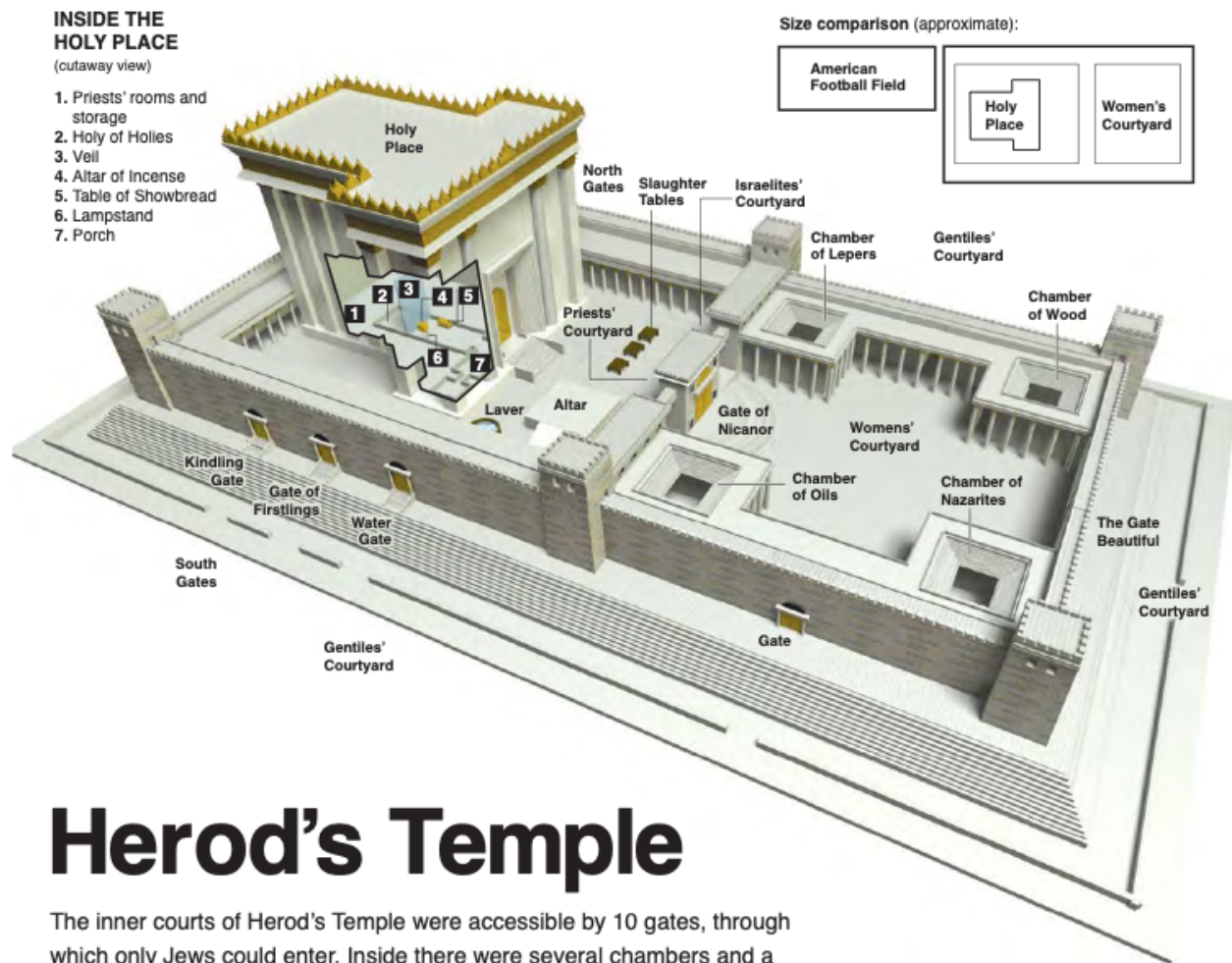
The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 2 Co 5:20–21.



Jesus took your darkness that you now wrestle with so that he could remove it, all of it, and made you righteous.

The Curtain Tearing

Yom Kippur was the one day of the year that only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies, and only for a few minutes, to perform a cleansing ritual.



Herod's Temple

The inner courts of Herod's Temple were accessible by 10 gates, through which only Jews could enter. Inside there were several chambers and a courtyard where sacrifices were made. At one end was the holy place—a two-room sanctuary used by Jewish priests. The expansive building project of Herod's Second Temple and Temple Mount was completed in approximately AD 62–64, only to be destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

GRAPHIC BY KARBEL MULTIMEDIA, COPYRIGHT 2008 LOGOS BIBLE SOFTWARE

He was the only one who could get close to the raw presence of God. Anyone else who would enter the Holy of Holies or come near the raw presence of God and wasn't clean would die. But when Jesus died, the curtain was rent in two.

Access to God was ripped open, and now anyone could come before the raw presence of God, and not just that, but humans to whom Jesus' blood is applied becomes clean, and they are now the Holy of Holies that can house the Holy Spirit — the raw presence of God.

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, v he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 9:11–12.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Heb 10:19–22.



The language used here by the author of Hebrews is familial — anyone who receives the cleansing of Jesus' blood becomes brother and sister. God's presence that used to kill us can now live inside us and heal us.

This move decentralized the location of worship, and we are the mobile Holy of Holies, taking God's presence wherever we go. Are you living in the meaning of the death of Jesus?

Or do you avoid his presence and do the same thing as your Father Adam did and hide?

The Confession

Jesus didn't die as a normal criminal. He called upon God to forgive the Romans and the Jews who put him there. He called out to his Father.

In this ironic reversal, this Centurion is one of the few in Mark's gospel who gets who Jesus is — he is the first human in Mark's gospel to call Jesus the Son of God.

This hits different because on every coin this Roman centurion ever held, Tiberius Caesar was the Son of God. But this Roman rejected Caesar's divinity and accepted Jesus' divinity.

And it was this non-Jewish battle-hardened pagan who got it. None of the disciples got it.

What does this mean? That sometimes, the people farthest from the Holy of Holies get the gospel before those closest to the temple.

The Meaning of the Death of Jesus

Jesus died to take the cosmic darkness from everybody. He placed his Spirit, his life-giving, healing presence in our lives, and validated himself as the Son of God.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus

Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 1 Jn 2:1–2.

He went into the darkness for you and now faces the darkness with us, never leaving us, placing his raw presence in our lives 24/7 and inviting us to walk confidently into his royal court, delegating authority to us.

Do you live in the reality of God's presence in your life?

Do you understand the meaning of the death of Jesus?



Do you realize that you're safe? But sometimes we don't live like that, do we? Do we walk around motivated to give that safety to our neighbors, classmates, and coworkers?