

# NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 27 (PART 5)

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## Matthew 27:45-66

Last time we looked at Jesus' words from the cross, quoting Psalm 22 and discovered how the heart of a Psalm of David reveals the heart of Jesus in his final moments. Today we're going to focus on some of the details of the final verses as it relates to cosmic happenings and the logistics happening just beyond the main scene.

### Matthew 27:45, 51-54 - Cosmic Happenings

- 1 - Darkness from Noon-3pm (v. 45)
- 2 - Veil Of Temple Torn (v. 51)
- 3 - Earth Shakes, Rocks Split (v. 51, 54)
- 4 - Tombs Opened, Resurrection of saints (v. 52)
- 5 - Centurion's (and others?) confession of Jesus as son of God (v. 54)

This is a critical moment in all of history and creation. It's a dark moment, it's a powerful moment, it's a moment with implications on salvation, forgiveness, eternity, and humanity. And so in some ways the creation itself is experiencing and personifying this moment.

**Darkness** - Matthew tells us that it was dark from noon-3pm, a time that the sky should be brightest. Readers will likely think about the plagues in Egypt as another time of great darkness over the land during a time of judgment and the power of God on display (Exodus 10:21-23). Here is what the prophet Amos spoke about the time of judgement:

**Amos 8:8-10** - "Because of this will not the land quake And everyone who dwells in it mourn? Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile, And it will be tossed about And subside like the Nile of Egypt. 9 "It will come about in that day," declares the Lord GOD, "That I will make the sun go down at noon And make the earth dark in broad daylight. 10 "Then I will turn your festivals into mourning And all your songs into lamentation; And I will bring sackcloth on everyone's loins And baldness on every head. And I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son, And the end of it will be like a bitter day.

### Q - What does the darkness communicate?

**Veil** - "The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (51). That curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Holy Place. It was 18 metres high, and made of thick material. It was an eloquent symbol saying, 'No access'. Access to God was restricted to one man, the high priest; once a year, on the Day of Atonement; and then only when he carried the fresh blood of animals sacrificed for his sins and for those of the rest of the people. This tearing of the temple curtain on Good Friday, and from top to bottom at that, suggests that it is God's work: human beings would have torn it from the bottom upwards. The perfect high priest has entered the Holy of Holies in

God's presence. He went in, not with the blood of animals but with his own blood which he shed for the sins of the world: he had no need to atone for any sins of his own. He had none. Such is the implication.

And that torn curtain spelt access. God was no longer unapproachable. Anyone who trusted in Jesus could approach the divine presence with confidence.” (Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven, The Bible Speaks Today*, page 300.)

### **Q - What does the tearing of the veil communicate?**

**Earthquake** - Mount Sinai trembled when God descended (Exodus 19:18). The earth shakes when God appears in judgment (Psalm 18:7). Prophetic descriptions of the Day of the LORD often include earthquakes.

### **Q - What does the earth quaking communicate?**

**Tombs Opened, Resurrection** - This is a curious and peculiar passage. Apparently, as Jesus is dying, people who had already died came back to life. The phrasing is kind of strange, for either this happened after his resurrection, or they resurrected saints came back to life and made their appearance to others after Jesus' resurrection. But the exact timing of this event aside, this is a remarkable occurrence that Matthew includes. Matthew gives us a glimpse of resurrection life bursting into a world dominated by death. The death of Jesus is not merely an ending; it is the beginning of a new creation.

### **Q - What does the resurrection of some of the saints communicate?**

One thing that it tells us is that even though there is darkness and shaking, there is great power on display. The shockwaves of the death of the Messiah bring life to where there is death. And not only for these revived saints, but also for a former enemy at the foot of the cross.

**Centurion** - We don't know much more about this man, but we do know that he was a front row eyewitness of all that we have read, and his conclusion is that Jesus is truly the “son of God”. Now, we don't know if he knew the deep Davidic meaning of this title or not, but we know that his mind and heart were affected to the point of this confession overflowing from his mouth.

This man, party to the crucifixion of Jesus, a Gentile, Roman soldier, declares the truth of who Jesus is.

Notice who is responding to Jesus' death. The sun grows dark. The temple veil tears. The earth shakes. The tombs open. The dead are raised. A Roman soldier confesses faith. It is as though heaven, earth, the temple, the dead, and the nations are all testifying together: Jesus truly is the Son of God.

## **Matthew 27:55-61 - Those Who Remained & Burial**

### **Joseph Of Arimathea**

Joseph was a member of the Jewish leadership (the Sanhedrin) who did not agree with the decision to kill Jesus (Luke 23:50–51). Initially Joseph is not public about his discipleship to Jesus (John 19:38), but in this moment, he takes bold and courageous actions to declare his devotion to Christ. It's possible that his leadership position gave him the ability to approach Pilate with this request.

Jewish burial customs in the first century emphasized treating the dead with dignity and burying them as soon as possible, often on the same day as death (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). The body would typically be washed, wrapped in clean linen cloths, and placed in a tomb. Sometimes spices and aromatic substances would be added to both honor the deceased and help offset the odor of decomposition.

Wealthier families often owned rock-hewn tombs carved into the hillside, with a large stone rolled across the entrance. Joseph of Arimathea is identified as a “rich man” (27:57) and appears to follow these customs carefully and respectfully, wrapping Jesus in a clean linen shroud and placing him in his own new tomb. In doing so, Joseph publicly honored Jesus at a moment when many others had abandoned him. It is also fulfilling the words of Isaiah of the suffering servant:

**Isaiah 53:9** - His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth.

Think about the love Joseph shows in this moment. This was not a quick or distant act of kindness. It required time, effort, and physical closeness. Joseph is caring not merely for a deceased person, but for a body that had been beaten, scourged, bloodied, and crucified. While others kept their distance, Joseph personally honors Jesus with dignity, tenderness, and courage.

It is striking that a man named Joseph appears at both the birth and burial of Jesus. Joseph, the husband of Mary, cared for Jesus as he entered the world and was wrapped in swaddling cloths. Now Joseph of Arimathea cares for Jesus as he is prepared for burial and wrapped in linen cloths.

Both men demonstrate that faithfulness and love are often expressed through simple acts of care, honor, and obedience. Though neither is the main character in the story, both provide a compelling example of humble faithfulness to God.

### **The Witness Of The Women**

Matthew also highlights the presence of several women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (James and John). Then in verse 61 he specifically mentions: Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary”.

Matthew's repeated mention of these women is not accidental. Their presence serves both a devotional and an evidential purpose. First, it speaks to their personal devotion to and love for Jesus,

despite any risks they might run aligning themselves with Jesus. The male disciples have all run, the women remain. That's significant and special. They are an example to all of us.

Secondly, notice how often he mentions these women: They watched the crucifixion (v. 55), they are named (v. 56), they observe the burial (v. 61), and they will return to the tomb (Matthew 28:1) and ultimately be the first to see it empty and it's temporary occupant alive again! (28:5-6, John 20:11-18) Matthew is establishing them as eyewitnesses to everything. They saw Jesus die and be buried. They saw the location of the tomb and its sealing and they saw the empty tomb later. This all becomes very important for the resurrection account, and here's why:

In the ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman world, women generally possessed lower legal and social standing than men. Their testimony was often given less weight in formal settings. So if someone were inventing a resurrection story to persuade skeptics, women would be an unlikely choice for primary witnesses. Yet all four Gospels repeatedly place women at the center of these events.

The testimony of these women is one of the strongest historical evidences for the authenticity of the resurrection accounts. In the first-century world, a fabricated story intended to persuade skeptics would almost certainly have featured prominent male witnesses. Yet all four Gospels repeatedly place women at the center of the death, burial, and resurrection narratives. The reason the Gospel writers tell us that women witnessed these events is simple: that is what actually happened!

### **Matthew 27:62-66 - Guarding A Tomb**

There is some irony here: while Jesus' followers seem confused and discouraged, His enemies are still carefully considering his words. They remember that Jesus had predicted he would rise again after three days and fear that his disciples might steal his body and falsely claim that he had been resurrected. Pilate grants their request and a tomb with a dead body inside is guarded.

Throughout this chapter, Matthew has established that Jesus truly died, that he was buried in a known location, and that eyewitnesses saw where he was laid. Now he adds that the tomb itself was secured and guarded. Every reasonable precaution was taken to ensure that Jesus remained in the tomb.

These details become important when we reach the resurrection account. Matthew is showing that the empty tomb cannot simply be explained away by confusion, carelessness, or theft. And God uses the very people who sought to prevent belief in the resurrection end up helping establish the credibility of the resurrection story.

From a human perspective, the story appears finished. Jesus is dead, buried, sealed behind a stone, and guarded by soldiers. Yet while the religious leaders believe they have finally silenced Him, God is preparing to do what no stone, seal, or guard could ever prevent. The chapter ends with a secured tomb, but God's plan is still moving forward.

The story seems to be concluded from a human perspective, but we've only come to the end of Matthew 27, there's still a final chapter to go.