

Message #122

Luke 23:44-49

Several years ago in the Swiss Alps, a man named Max Walsh got lost in the mountains. He went for a walk from the lodge he was staying and a blizzard came in and he could not see. He stumbled and was hurt and was laying out in the cold and was in serious trouble.

The owner of the lodge assumed Max was lost and he owned several dogs that were trained to track down people who were lost in the mountains. The lodge owner took out his best dog and sent him out to find Max.

The dog wandered through the hills, sniffing and searching and finally about 1 ½ miles from the lodge he found Max. Max was half-conscious and was lying on the ground. The dog had been trained to grab the person and start shaking them to wake them. As the dog was shaking Max, he started to wake up. He saw a dog shaking him and thought it was a wolf attacking him so he pulled out his knife and stabbed the dog.

When the knife entered the dog, it immediately let go of Max and ran home and when he got to the lodge owner, the dog died. The dog owner was able to follow the trail of blood all the way back to Max and Max was saved. That dog literally sacrificed his own life to save Max. It was his blood that led to Max's rescue.

This story in Luke is not a story of a lifesaving dog; it is a story of a lifesaving Savior. Jesus Christ knew that all people were lost in this wilderness world of sin. He spent His time searching out those in sin in order to rescue them. He was the Perfect Person God the Father ever sent to track down sinners. He was God's own Son.

Some of the people he tracked down had been lost in wild debauchery. Some of the people he tracked down had been lost in alcoholic drunkenness. Some of the people he tracked down had been lost in terrible immorality. Some were involved in demonic and satanic activity. Some had stolen, some had coveted, some were lost in a world of crime and vice. He tracked them down to save them.

But when He finally came to Jerusalem and tried to wake them up from the phony religious stupor, they pulled out their iron spikes and nailed Him to a cross. But it would be His blood that would save sinners and God the Father would follow the trail of the sinner back to the cross.

THE CRUCIFIXION DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST WAS LIKE NO OTHER DEATH IN ALL OF HISTORY AND THE IMPACT HIS DEATH HAS MADE PROVES THIS REALITY.

The death of Jesus Christ gives life. The death of Jesus Christ saves sinners. The death of Jesus Christ makes people as white as snow. No other death has been so impacting.

As we look down through these verses, we discover there are six impacts this death makes:

IMPACT #1 – Christ’s death made an impact on creation. **23:44-45a**

When Jesus Christ was on that cross, God the Father caused a major black out of light. The light and the sun are two distinct creative works of God. Light was created by God in Genesis 1:3, the sun was created in Genesis 1:16. When Jesus Christ was on that cross, God shut down both systems of light for this world.

There are three specific facts revealed here:

Fact #1 - The specific time of the darkness was the 6th hour to the 9th hour.

There were two sets of time systems operating in Jerusalem. The Roman time clock was from midnight to midnight with their calculations. The Jews went from 6AM to 6AM with their calculations.

Most believe this is on Jewish time, which means the 6th hour to the 9th hour would be from 12PM to 3PM. So this darkness would have occurred when light shines normally the brightest.

Fact #2 - The specific extent of the darkness was over “the whole land.”

Now it is stated that the darkness “fell over the whole land.” The Greek construction (olhn thn ghn) may in fact mean that darkness was over the whole world. In fact, Luke uses this very word “land” to refer to the whole earth and whole world (Acts 1:8).

It is very possible and probable that God shut down the entire light system for three hours world-wide. As one commentator said the death of Jesus Christ was truly “a shot heard and seen around the world.”

Fact #3 - The specific purpose of the darkness over the world.

As we examine the Scriptures, there were at least three purposes for the darkness:

(Purpose #1) - The darkness represented the judgment of God.

Darkness is closely connected to God pouring out His wrath to the Jewish mind - Joel 2:31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Zeph. 1:15; Is. 5:30; 13:9-10; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:1; 8:12; 9:2).

We must not ever forget that this crucifixion is about Jesus Christ taking the full brunt of the wrath of God, while hanging on that cross. This darkness literally and physically showed that this was, in fact, a judgment of God.

(Purpose #2) - The darkness represents the work of Satan.

Demonic activity, while sovereignly controlled by God, is sometimes associated with darkness (i.e. Rev. 9:2). Satan must have thought this is a great victory. Jesus is dying on a cross and Satan is elated.

(Purpose #3) - The darkness represents loss of light.

This darkness shows the Son of God, who was the light and life of the world, had been killed (John 1:3-11).

He was the light and He came to reflect the light; but this world loves darkness more than light and this clearly shows that.

IMPACT #2 – Christ’s death made an impact in the Temple. **23:45b**

The veil of the Temple was massive. It was approximately 60 feet high; 30 feet wide and about 3-4 inches thick.

This gigantic curtain separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Temple (26:31-35; 36:35-36). This was the place where the Holy God would meet with sinful man (Ex. 30:6).

Matthew informs us that at this very moment of Christ’s death, this awesome curtain was ripped in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51).

The purpose of ripping this curtain in two was to Divinely illustrate to all that through the death of Jesus Christ, sinful men could have direct and complete access to the Holy God (Heb. 3:9-15; 10:11-21).

We can only imagine what this would have done to the priests who were in the Temple preparing for the Passover festivities. Since it was about 3PM, the Jewish priests would have been busy with the evening sacrifices. So while they are getting ready to offer or are in the process of offering animal sacrifices, the curtain is torn in two, paving the way for sinners to have a permanent relationship with God without animal sacrifices.

There have been many people who have died and some of them have died for some good causes. Thousands in the military have laid down their own lives for our freedoms. But there is only one death that ripped that curtain in the Temple in two and that was the death of Jesus Christ. **His death is the ONLY death that will give you access to God.**

IMPACT #3 – Christ’s death was completely controlled by Jesus Christ. **23:46**

The life of Jesus Christ began with a focus on the Father (Luke 2:49) and it ended the same way. **Every gospel writer is careful to point out that Jesus Christ willed the moment of His own death.** No gospel writer says that Jesus just died.

Different Greek words are used by the Gospel writers to explain this moment:

Matthew says He “yielded up His spirit” which literally means He handed over or delivered His spirit (John 19:30).

Mark and Luke say, “He breathed His last,” which means He breathed out His Spirit (Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46). John says, “He gave up His Spirit” which means He handed over His spirit (John 19:30).

The point to see here is that Jesus Christ was in total control of the moment His spirit would leave His body, which is the Biblical definition of death. No other person in existence has control of that moment, but Jesus did. In fact, Jesus said that He is the one who has the “keys of death,” which means He is the One who controls the moment of death for every person (Rev. 1:18).

Every writer states that before He did this, He cried out with a very loud voice. Certainly the physical pain was excruciating, but the spiritual pain of having to bear the sins of humanity and wrath of God and the abandonment of His Father were horrific.

The very moment He dismissed His own spirit was a fulfillment of Biblical prophecy (Ps. 31:5). Christ’s death occurred because He willed it. In fact, His last act of His will while on this earth was to will His own death. What irony. He had willed other people back to life (John 12:17), but willed Himself to death.

The will of God for Christ’s life was Christ’s death. That is precisely why He came into this world. He willed His own death so that we might have life (John 10:7, 9-11, 15, 17, 18).

IMPACT #4 – Christ’s death made a profound impact on the centurion. 23:47

This is more amazing than one might think. As soon as Christ willed His own death, His work to save people immediately began. William Barclay said as soon as Christ died, the magnet of the cross instantly began drawing people to God.

The first convert to be drawn to the cross was a Gentile pagan, ruling Roman soldier. He was a centurion, an authoritative high-ranked Roman military leader. He would have been the one in charge of Christ’s execution. He was the one in charge of the other soldiers.

This was not some moral religious Jewish leader or priest. This was not some legalistic religious Pharisee or Scribe; this was a worldly, godless, corrupt, Roman heathen sinner.

The verb tenses indicate that all of these things were happening about the same time. In other words, having watched Jesus Christ and listened to Jesus Christ and having seen the darkness, this soldier came to realize that Jesus Christ was an innocent man and he was praising God.

He came to terms with the reality that Jesus died for sinners and that prompted him to praise God.

Now the Greek is written in such a way that the meaning as I read it is “This, the man, was actually truly and really the righteous One.” This centurion realized that Jesus Christ was perfectly righteous and had never violated any standard of God and he realized who He was and started praising God.

- 1) You do not initially have to be a good person to bring Glory to God.
- 2) You do not initially have to be a moral person to bring Glory to God.
- 3) You do not initially have to be a religious person to bring Glory to God.
- 4) You do have to come to terms with Jesus Christ to bring Glory to God.

This heathen soldier came to the cross and acknowledged Jesus Christ was the innocent, righteous Son of God and he believed on Him.

History says his name was Longinus. Tradition says he became a believer that day and lived the rest of his life for Jesus Christ, glorifying God.

IMPACT #5 – Christ’s death made an emotional impact on all the people. **23:48**

All the people looked on one pierced and they were emotionally moved (John 19:37; Zech. 12:10). The majority smote their breasts as a sign of grief and began mourning. They were sad to see Christ go, but notice the text says they “began to return.” They went right back to where they had been before.

They started beating their breasts in revved up emotionalism, but revved emotionalism is not the same as true faith in Jesus Christ. These people watched a horrible crucifixion and they saw the sky darken and then watched Christ die and then they just went right back home.

IMPACT #6 – Christ’s death made an impact on His followers. **23:49**

The word “acquaintance” (gnwstoc̄) is a word that refers to people who really did know Jesus Christ. There were some near the crucifixion scene who loved Him and stayed with Him right until the end. Many of them were the faithful “women.”

They stood “at a distance” but they were there. They loved the Lord and He loved them.

We know that Jesus’ mother, Mary, was one in this group of women (John 19:25). One cannot help but wonder what went through her mind as she watched this. Some 33 years prior to this Mary had given birth to a little Lamb and His life was as white as snow. Now she stood there looking at her Son who had been slaughtered on an “old rugged cross.”

Some of the most faithful and loyal people of God have been women. These women didn’t run and they didn’t leave. They were there when our Lord was crucified.

That blood that trickled out of His hands and feet while He hung on that cross has tremendous saving power. God is still following that trail of blood that He sent and looking for people who are lost in the mountain of sin. He is looking for you. Have you asked Him to save you?