

Episode #945 - Matthew 27 Part 7-God Dies on the Cross

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord was hung on the cross, to the great delight of His enemies who mocked Him. Even the robbers crucified with Him reviled Him. The soldiers, having divided His garments among them, watched Him there. Now, we come to the actual death of our Lord on the cross.

III. The Lord’s Death. Matthew 27:45-50.

- A. Verse 46. *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani* is the Aramaic translation of Psalm 22:1. Notice how many references there are to Psalm 22 in Matthew 27 (mockery of the religious leaders, parting of the garments, etc). Matthew translates His words into Greek, after giving them in Aramaic. This is plentiful evidence that the Lord probably spoke mostly in Aramaic, though we have it rendered in Greek in the inspired Word. These words were spoken partly to inform us that God forsook Him. Some would love to use this as evidence against the Deity of Christ. No! As the Living Word (*Logos*) goes into death, He cannot express or represent or declare the living One. As He becomes sin for us, He cannot express the sinless One. This One could be cut off from God, and He was. Yet this does not prove that He was not God. My arm can be cut off from me, but that does not prove that it was not part of me. The severing of God from His Son was violent and unnatural, yet it had to be done, for if He was to take on Himself sin and death, He had to be cut off from and cease expressing perfectly the source of sinlessness and life. Yet He was and is God, the eternal *Logos* of God, Who was in the beginning and Who is God in human form, was cut off from the God He perfectly represents and died, and remained dead for three days. This was what He did for us! Yet remember Acts 2:27/Psalm 16:10: God did not forsake (same word) His soul in hell (Hades), but brought Him out of it.
- B. Verse 47. These were not native Aramaic speakers, for it hardly seems they could not have heard Him well since He cried with a loud voice. The Aramaic for “my God,” *Eli*, sounds like the Greek for Elijah, *Elias*. For them to not know that *El* is *Theos* or God and *Eliyah* Elias clearly marks them out. These were probably the Romans who crucified Him. This is borne out by the fact that they were able to give Him a drink. It is interesting that these Romans had heard of Elias. Perhaps the fantastic Jewish story of a man who went to heaven in a whirlwind without dying caught their fancy.
- C. Verse 48. “Immediately” is a favorite word of Mark, who uses it 40 times. Matthew is second, using it 15. Sponge, *spoggos* or *spongos*, is used only in this context. This is probably the sour wine that they were used to drinking. It is the same word as what they tried to give Him as they crucified Him, but He wouldn’t take it. That was drugged with gall, whereas this is just the vinegar. Earlier in Matthew we had the word “reed” in Lord’s question if, when they went out to John, they went to see a reed shaken with the wind? Then, the prophecy that “a bruised reed shall He not break” until He sends forth judgment unto victory. Then the reed, mentioned twice, that the soldiers gave Him as a makeshift scepter as they mocked Him. Now a reed is used to give Him drink.
- D. Verse 49. These, also not understanding His words, are not ready to help or hinder Him, but just want to wait and see whether Elijah will show up or not. This “wait and

see” attitude is one that many will try to adopt when it comes to the matter of faith. They are not courageous enough to step out in belief, nor brave enough to simply turn away in unbelief. They decide to watch like spectators, and when they see the way the wind blows, then to get on board the winning side. God takes little pleasure in people like this. Of course, Elias never showed up, since this was not the plan, and the Lord had not called on Elias at all. These men might have said afterwards, “He called for Elias, and he never came. I guess He was nothing special after all.” But their conclusion would have been faulty, for He had never called on Elijah to come at all.

- E. Verse 50. “Yielded up” could be sent away or dismissed. After nearly dying in the garden, He received the strength He asked for so that, in spite of all He went through, He did not die until He Himself dismissed His spirit. His request was not only granted, but granted to the full! His spirit is the Greek *pneuma*. Giving up the spirit is the same thing as dying. No one took His life; He gave it up!

IV. After the Death. Matthew 27:51-54.

- A. Verse 51. This “veil” in Greek is *katapetasma*, that which flies (or hangs) down along certain lines or is spread out downward, a great veil or curtain. This veil of the temple was an enormous thing. It was woven and it was very, very thick indeed. “Temple” is the Greek word *naos*, meaning the inner sanctuary; the central, important building, and not just the grounds. This giant, thick curtain was torn in two from the top to the bottom. The Holy of holies was 30 feet high, so a very tall curtain. Men would have started the tear from the bottom, but God started it from the top, to show that a Divine hand had done this. “From the top” is the Greek *anōthen*, from above. “To bottom” or downwards. People make a big deal about this. This inner curtain increased access, but not to all. “Split” is the same word for the veil or curtain “tearing,” meaning the rocks tore apart!
- B. Verse 52. The tombs or sepulchers opened up! “Bodies” of course means dead bodies or corpses. “Fallen asleep” is *koimaō*, the Greek word for falling asleep involuntarily, like when one faints. Death might be viewed as a sleep you fall into against your will, and so *koimaō* is used as a figure for death.

V. Conclusion: God and His Logos, Who had always been together, were violently separated when Christ took on sin and death on the cross, things which do not represent and reflect the God He had always represented and reflected. What a great sacrifice the Lord made for us! At last, He died, as He said He would do, and great signs accompanied His death. Do we believe in this One Who died? Do we see, in this suffering victim, this rejected King, a mighty Savior?