

Episode #944 Matthew 27 Part 6-Mocked 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 had been crucified and was hanging on the cross. The soldiers gambled for his undergarments, fulfilling a prophecy of Scripture. A new accusation, outlining His “crimes,” was added to the cross at this point. Now, we continue studying His time on the cross.

III. The Lord Jesus Crucified. Matthew 27:32-38.

- A. Verse 38. These thieves (Greek *lestai*) were crucified after the Lord had been crucified and His garments had been parted by the soldiers. Yet according to Luke 23:32-33, there were two malefactors (Greek *kakourgoi*, evil-doers or rebels, insurrectionists) who were led with Him to be crucified and crucified with Him at the same time.
1. This should convince us of the truth: that there were five crucified at Golgotha that day: the Lord; two malefactors crucified at the same time and next to Him, one right and one left; and two thieves crucified later and further out from Him, one right and one left.
 2. The two thieves both mocked Him with the religious leaders (Matthew 27:44), whereas only one of the malefactors did (Luke 23:39-43), and the other believed in Him and received the Lord’s promise. The malefactors, being nearer the Lord, had a conversation with Him. This all fits.
 3. The Greek of John 19:18 fits this: “Where Him they-crucified and with Him others two on-this-side and on-that-side but in-the-middle the Jesus.” We could make this in English, “Where they crucified Him, and with Him others, two on this side and (two) on that, and Jesus in the middle.”
 4. When they broke their legs, they broke the legs of two others before they came to Jesus in the middle, as John 19:32-33 tells us. Why would they have broken the legs on one side, passed Jesus, broken the legs on the other, and then come back to Him in the middle? This shows us that there were five there, not three. The Greek word for “left” is literally “good name.” Since one reclined to the right, one trusted the one on one’s left, and so one wanted a “good name” there.

IV. Mocked on the Cross. Matthew 27:39-44.

- A. Verse 39. Those who passed by would be the Jerusalemites, His enemies. The common people who watched smote their breasts in grief when He died, Luke 23:48. Bullinger says this indicates it was not Passover day. Yet Passover was not a Sabbath; the day after was. “Blasphemed” means they spoke slanderously against Him.
- B. Verse 40. This shows an intimate acquaintance with what went on at His trial, since this was the false accusation made against Him then in Matthew 26:61. These who passed by, therefore, are His enemies, the religious leaders who plotted His murder, and their henchmen. We should not think it was His loyal followers among the people. If He saves Himself, He cannot save me. If He saves Himself, He cannot save you. The reason He did not save Himself is so that you and I might be saved. He is going to see this through to the very end, for this is why He came. If anyone looked

for miracles to sustain his faith, the miracles dried up here. Faith required more than a faith in miracles here.

- C. Verse 41. They were mocking as the Romans soldiers did, though here of course only with words. They are gloating over the success of their murderous plan. The scribes were the underlings and flunkies of the chief priests and elders. They were mentioned in 26:3 at the assembly to plan His framing; in 26:57, when they were assembled with the Sanhedrin to try Him; and then here. Yet they are not mentioned, but just the chief priests and elders, in 26:47, 26:59, 27:1, 27:3, 27:12, 27:20, and 28:12. This is because the scribes were subservient, and just did as their superiors bade them do.
- D. Verse 42. They admit the fact He saved others, and indeed they could not deny it. Remember that “saved” includes from sickness and disease, and they had watched Him do this many times. Their statement was clearly stupid, as the One Who had power to save others could easily have saved Himself. They are the mad vineyard keepers who imagine they can kill the son and the inheritance will be theirs. He warned them of their insanity, but they would not hear. “Cannot” is the Greek *dunatai*, meaning He has not the inherent power to save. The reason He could not save Himself is that He wanted to save others. If He saved Himself, others could not be saved. This of course is said in mockery, and assuming it would not happen. They would not have bowed the knee in awe and belief if He came down. These words are no more sincere than those of Goliath, claiming that Philistia would serve Israel if he was defeated. When he was defeated, Philistia did not line up to be enslaved. Instead, they ran for their lives. These mockers would have done the same. They would have fled in fear and nursed their disappointment and hatred in hiding.
- E. Verse 43. He trusted or was confident in God. This seems to be an inadvertent quotation of Psalm 22:8. These were the very wicked men David was speaking of. Yet they would not have wanted to think of themselves as those wicked men, and so were no doubt quoting the verse without realizing it. “Will” is the Greek *thelō*, if He wishes or desires to have Him. Again this shows knowledge of His trial. Of course, He had not said this, but the high priest asked it, and He said, “It is as you said,” strongly affirming it, which results in the same thing as if He said it. Here in Greek it is “of God I am Son.”
- F. Verse 44. We consider the gyrations some try to do to harmonize this with Luke 23:39-43, which tells us of the believing criminal. The way it is usually done is to say that at first he reviled Him too, but later changed his mind. Yet that slanders a man who did no such thing. He did not revile Him, but chided the one who did, and instead believed in Him. The robbers are different from the malefactors. Matthew says nothing about the malefactors, including the one who believed. “Reviled” means to defame, rail at, chide, or taunt.

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

- A. Verse 45. The “sixth hour” would be noon, since they reckoned their days by counting the hours from sunrise to sunset. The “ninth hour” would be 3:00PM, again by the same method. No reason is given for this darkness, though of course it was a great sign. What did it signify, however? Was God drawing a veil over the sad scene? Was it a sign of the horrible darkness of the sin of the world from all time being laid on Him all at once? Was it symbolizing the darkest deed men ever did in murdering their Creator? Was it symbolizing the darkness of ignorance that put Him there? Was

it an effect of the forces of darkness gathering to vent all their fury on the One they rebelled against in the beginning? Was it symbolizing the darkness of death the God Who is light was about to pass into before the light of resurrection would break? Or did it have to do with many or all of these things? Whatever it meant, it was most appropriate. But why was He crucified at 9:00AM, and the darkness did not come until noon? Why did it stay dark then until His death, and then lighten once He was dead? We cannot answer these questions for sure. Whether this was just the land of Judea, the land of Israel, the land of the Roman Empire, or the whole earth (which *gE* can also mean), we cannot say.

- B. Verse 46. Bullinger points out that the Lord spoke seven times from the cross. This is the only time words are recorded in Matthew (though His final cry is mentioned in verse 50). This was the fourth or middle utterance. They are, in order: Luke 23:34, Luke 23:43, John 19:26-27, Matthew 27:46/Mark 15:34, John 19:28, John 19:30, Luke 23:46.

VI. Conclusion: The Lord was crucified with four others: two criminals crucified with Him, and two thieves crucified later. Those passing by from Jerusalem, His enemies, mocked Him on the cross, as did the religious leaders. Yet inadvertently they used the words of Psalm 22:8, showing themselves to be the wicked enemies of that passage. The two thieves jointed in with the mockery. Then darkness came over the earth, and the Lord cried out. Do we see what God saw in that darkness. Do we see just a man dying there, or do we see the living God, our Savior, dying in our place?