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Matthew 27:45-54

45. “Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

46. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?’ that is, ‘MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?’

47. And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, *began* saying, ‘This man is calling for Elijah.’

48. Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

49. But the rest *of them* said, ‘Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.’

50. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

51. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

52. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised;

53. and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

54. Now the centurion, and those who were with him

keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’”

This morning’s text begins as Jesus hung on the cross. At the sixth hour, which is the equivalent of our 12:00 noon,--when the sun should be at its highest point--darkness fell upon the land. This darkness lasted three hours, until the Biblical ninth hour, which would be our 3:00 in the afternoon.

Many believe, and I concur, that this physical manifestation of the sun going dark at mid-day was a reflection and response of the spiritual separation of God the Father from Jesus His Son, as He took on all the sins of the world.

At about 3:00 Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken Me?” Then He cried out, “It is finished!” according to the parallel account given in John’s gospel. Then Jesus yielded up His spirit and so physically died.

But what is most fascinating is what happened immediately following Jesus’ death, according to Matthew’s account. “And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.”

Note: “The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints (that is the Old Testament prophets and men of God buried in the Jerusalem area) were raised to life! That means that the afternoon of Jesus’ death many people were resurrected bodily from their graves!

We don’t know what they did for three days, but verse 53 records that they came “out of their tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and entered Jerusalem and appeared to many.”

Just think of it--John the Baptist may have gone into Jerusalem and addressed Herod again; as the adulterous ruler had earlier feared!

One thing is for sure, as Paul would later preach concerning the resurrection of the dead to King Agrippa and many rulers, “For the king knows about these matters, and I speak also to him in confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice: for this has not been done in a corner.”