

## Matthew 27F

- We return this morning to our verse-by-verse, hour-by-hour study of Jesus' time on the cross in our study of Matthew
  - Our High Priest is sacrificing Himself on Passover even as the high priest of Israel was in the temple that same hour sacrificing the national lamb
    - On Passover each year, one lamb was brought to the altar, its throat cut, the blood drained, and the flesh burned on the altar
    - That national Passover lamb served as a representative sacrifice for all Israel
    - And this year at that same moment, 9 AM, the true, once-for-all-time Passover Lamb was being nailed to a cross
  - Few in Israel on that day understood the connection to Jesus' death on the cross, and certainly no one could appreciate its significance
    - As we've already studied, Jesus' death on the cross involved several periods which each held significance
    - For the first three hours from 9 AM to noon, Jesus experienced the wrath of men, otherwise known as the consequences of sin
    - Jesus experienced physical pain, emotional suffering, and psychological torment, things coming to every sinner
    - But these consequences were foreign to our sinless Savior until He took them upon Himself on our behalf
  - During those three hours, the words of the writer of Hebrews became true:

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**Heb. 4:15** For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

**Heb. 4:16** Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Jesus experienced every temptation we can know, including the temptation to escape the consequences of sin, to avoid death

- But He never gave in to His temptations as we routinely do, and in that way He qualified Himself to be our high priest
- That will be the focus of our study today...Jesus taking our place in death
  - Jesus took the place of sinners in death, which means He had to experience every aspect of death to serve as our substitute
    - The penalty for sin is both a physical death, the death of the body, and a spiritual death, the death of the spirit
    - Therefore, Jesus will experience both physical and spiritual death on the cross as He makes Himself our Passover sacrifice
  - But as I mentioned last week, Jesus will experience spiritual death first followed by physical death, which seems backwards to us
    - In our experience, we endure the physical death of the body before we experience the second, spiritual death of the body
    - But as we learn today, there is a good reason why Jesus must experience these in a different order to serve God's purpose
  - But first, we'll examine how these two experiences came to Jesus beginning with the first; spiritual death
    - And that moment is marked by darkness everywhere

**Matt. 27:45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.**

- Matthew says darkness fell at the sixth hour, and Matthew is using the Jewish system for reckoning time, which starts counting hours at sunrise at 6 AM
  - So the sixth hour begins at noon, 12 PM, and Matthew says that at that moment all the land was dark until the ninth hour, which is 3 PM
    - The word translated "land" in v.45 is *ge* (pronounced "yee"), which is literally translated as the Earth
    - So the whole earth was dark for 3 hours...Luke's account confirms it was the whole earth
  - In fact, archaeologists have discovered multiple records of other ancient cultures from that time that record this supernatural moment

- An ancient record of Dionysius, a Greek scholar, reported a strange darkness coming upon Heliopolis at that time
- Another scholar named Diogenes living in Egypt at that time, reported a blackout of several hours and offered an explanation
  - He said, “the solar darkness was such that either deity Himself suffered at that moment or sympathized with one who did”
- A third writer in Turkey wrote the day turned to night at the sixth hour and stars were visible and earthquakes shook the empire
- So remarkably, the entire planet plunges into an unexpected, unexplainable blackout lasting three hours
  - Why has God placed the earth in darkness? Because the Father has withdrawn His presence from His Son
  - For the first and only time in all eternity, God the Son and God the Father were not in fellowship
  - Jesus now hangs for three hours separated from the Father’s love, and it is a unique kind of suffering
  - Notice the next thing Matthew records in v.46

**Matt. 27:46 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?”**

- Near the end of the three hour separation from the Father, Jesus cries asking God why He has forsaken Him, which is a fulfillment of Psalm 22
  - Matthew records Jesus’ words in the original Aramaic before translating them for us for a couple of reasons
    - First, Matthew wanted us to know that Jesus addressed the Father in a unique manner at this moment
    - Jesus calls out “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”
    - This is the only time in the Gospels when Jesus addresses His Father as “My God”
    - Every other time Jesus speaks to the Father Jesus addresses Him as “My Father” so this moment is significant

- So in this moment, Jesus isn't relating to God the Father in the same way
  - The intimacy Jesus once knew with the Father is gone...the Father has become distant...He's now just God
  - For three hours, Jesus couldn't feel the Father's presence...for the first time, God the Son was separated from the Father

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- During these three hours Jesus experienced the ultimate consequence for sin: spiritual death, otherwise known as the wrath of God

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- Sin brings many devastating consequences in this life, but its ultimate consequence isn't found on earth
  - The ultimate and final consequence for sin is the wrath of God, manifested as an eternal separation from the love of God
  - The Bible calls this consequence the "Second Death" referring to the death of the spirit following the body's death
- The Second Death is not a cessation of existence or the destruction of the spirit...it is a "death" in the sense that it is a separation
  - The first death is our spirit separated from our physical body
  - The second death is our spirit separated from God
- The Second Death is the penalty God decreed for all who end this life without having received the provision of Christ
  - Those who endure the Second Death spend eternity away from the love of God, and this is far worse than the first death
    - But for those who place faith in Jesus Christ, the Father's wrath toward us is transferred to Jesus
    - Jesus took that wrath on the cross during these three hours as He experienced the wrath of God for our sin
  - Near the end of that period of separation from the Father, Jesus is in anguish and so distraught that He asks God why He is alone
    - Jesus asks why God has forsaken Jesus, and the Greek word translated forsaken literally means "to be left behind"
    - Jesus was left behind by the Father for these hours to experience the greatest suffering He ever could know

- You may remember in the Garden when Jesus prayed to the Father asking that the cup be taken away from Jesus
- That cup was the cup of wrath that Jesus is now experiencing in darkness
- And that worldwide darkness was God's way of communicating to the earth that He had removed His presence from His Son
  - The Bible frequently uses the light of the sun as a symbol for the love of God or the presence of God
  - Remember these words from the beginning of John's Gospel

[John 1:4](#) In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

[John 1:5](#) The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

[John 1:9](#) There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

- That is just one example, but across Scripture we find the same relationship...light pictures God's presence and darkness the opposite
  - In fact, we're told that in the New Heavens and the New Earth that comes to replace this world there will be no sun at all
  - Why? Because the light of that time comes entirely from the presence of God dwelling among men
  - In that day, the light of the world *will be* God, literally
- So as God withdraws His presence from Jesus, He also withdrew light from the earth, and I can't begin to explain what Jesus felt during that time
  - Nor am I suggesting that this separation meant Jesus ceased being God...Jesus remained God even as He was separated from God
    - If that confuses you, then join the club
    - After all, we can't fully understand the Trinity in the first place, much less what it means for God to be separated from God
  - In fact, none of us have *ever* experienced the complete absence of God's presence in our lives, including the time before we came to faith in Jesus

- Because the Bible says God extends common grace to every human being in the course of daily life

[Luke 6:35](#) “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

[Matt. 5:45](#) so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- Even the most ungodly people on earth still experience the love of God and the provision and goodness of God in countless ways
- James says every good thing comes from the Father of Lights
- So try imagining an existence in which there is nothing good whatsoever because God’s presence is completely absent?
- We’ve never known that experience, and although Jesus knew it for just three hours, it was enough to bring Jesus to despair
  - Can you imagine what it will be like to spend eternity apart from God?
  - We can’t imagine Jesus’ suffering and thankfully we don’t have to try...we can put the thought of it out of our mind
  - Because we have heard and believed the Gospel, the Bible assures us we have overcome death, as Jesus Himself promised

[Rev. 2:11](#) ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’

- Going back to the text, the second reason Matthew specified the Aramaic words Jesus used in v.46 is because it led to a misunderstanding

[Matt. 27:47](#) And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.”

[Matt. 27:48](#) 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.

[Matt. 27:49](#) But the rest of them said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.”

- In Aramaic, Jesus said “Eli Eli” which means My God, My God, but the word “Eli” could easily be mistaken for the name “Elijah”
  - So someone assumed Jesus was calling for Elijah to rescue Him
  - But expecting Elijah to save Him made little sense, so from one misunderstanding came another
  - The crowd concluded Jesus was delirious from shock, so they gave Jesus a drink from a sponge
  - Then they add “let’s see if Elijah does come to save Jesus”
- This crowd wasn’t giving Jesus a drink out of pity...they wanted to keep Jesus alive a little longer to see if Elijah might appear
  - Matthew includes this exchange to help us appreciate how callous and indifferent the crowd was to what was happening
  - They are like children poking at a dying animal with sticks curious to see what will happen to it next
- Jesus was utterly alone and without anyone to help Him or even sympathize with Him
  - And even the help Jesus did receive was not intended for His benefit but merely to extend His suffering
  - The irony is the sin they were committing against Jesus at that moment was the very reason He hung on the cross in the first place
- So for three hours on the cross, Jesus experienced spiritual death in our place, but because He had no sin of His own, His spiritual suffering comes to an end
  - And then at exactly 3 PM, the ninth hour, the darkness ended and Jesus and the Father were restored in fellowship
    - In a sense, we could call this a spiritual resurrection...a return from spiritual death, which is separation from the Father
    - And at that moment, the work of paying for sin had been completed
  - John tells us that at this moment Jesus uttered His next-to-last statement from the cross

[John 19:30](#) Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- In Greek Jesus spoke a single Greek word, *te-telestai*, which is an accounting term meaning "paid in full"
- God's wrath for sin was now fully appeased, fully satisfied by all that Christ had done on our behalf
- The sin debt Jesus came to pay was paid in full, and no additional payment or work of any kind is necessary
- Notice, Jesus made this statement before He died physically, which means that Jesus' physical death was not part of that payment
  - Jesus' physical death was necessary to the plan of redemption, because without a physical death there could be no resurrection
  - And by His resurrection Jesus will prove His claims to have overcome death and to possess eternal life
  - But by the time Jesus experienced physical death, the payment for our sins had been made in full
- We will study Jesus' physical death next, but before we do, you may wonder why did Jesus only experience three hours of spiritual death?
  - If we die in our sins, we spend an eternity separated from the love of God in torment, so why did Jesus only spend three hours in our place?
    - First, we need to understand unbelievers spend an eternity separated from God after death *because they are forever sinful*
    - The only way to cease being sinful is to be born again by the Spirit through faith in Jesus and to receive Christ's righteousness
    - But that opportunity ends at death, and if we die in our sins, we remain eternally in a sinful state and forever away from God
  - But Jesus is not like us...He "became" sin on our behalf, but He had no sin of His own, therefore He had no need to suffer for an eternity
    - Jesus' suffering was a propitiation for sin and the Father determined it would be an acceptable payment
    - Once God's wrath had been appeased and the debt paid, then Jesus' suffering could end

- And the Father accepts Jesus' payment in our place, instead of us suffering for an eternity – that's the deal of a lifetime...literally
- So with the debt paid in full, Jesus' suffering can now come to an end

**Matt. 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.**

- Matthew doesn't record what Jesus said, but Luke tells us that Jesus said, "Father into Your Hands I commit My Spirit"
  - The precise timing of Jesus' death and His final words confirm His earlier promise that no one takes Jesus' life but He lays it down
  - Jesus decided the exact moment of His own death by commanding His spirit's departure from His body at 3 PM
- Literally speaking, Jesus didn't die of crucifixion...the cause of Jesus' death was not due to any of His physical wounds
  - We all die as the result of some biological process, but the Bible says that the cause of death is sin and the curse God decreed
  - But Jesus was without sin so even in His wounded state, Jesus would have lived forever except that He took on the curse
- So Jesus committed His spirit into the Father's hands and His body died
  - Next time we will look at what followed Jesus' death including the burial preparations and the supernatural events that marked His death
    - But today we still need to understand the significance of Jesus' physical death and why it came after His spiritual death
    - And let's begin by setting aside some bad assumptions about what His death accomplished
  - First, some assume that Jesus' physical death was part of the payment for sin, but as we discussed earlier, our debt was paid in full before He died
    - So though His physical death is an important part of the plan of redemption, it wasn't a payment
    - Secondly, some assume that He died to go to Hell and that Jesus then suffered in Hell in our place

- But that too is wrong, and Romans tells us that God's wrath was satisfied by death alone, not by time spent in Hell

**Rom. 5:9** Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

**Rom. 5:10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- To be clear, Jesus never experienced torment or suffering or even bodily decay during His time in the grave, as Scripture testifies:

**Psa. 16:9** Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;

My flesh also will dwell securely.

**Psa. 16:10** For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;

Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

- So our debt was paid in full before He died, and therefore His time in the grave served a different purpose
- That time was preparation for His resurrection, fulfilling Scripture and ensuring no one could deny that Jesus did die
- And while Jesus' body was in the grave, Paul and Peter report that Jesus' Spirit descended to the inner parts of the earth to join the Old Testament saints
  - Those saints were held in one side of Sheol, a place of comfort where they had waited since death for their Messiah to arrive
    - These saints died with faith in a future Messiah, but they couldn't enter the Father's presence before Christ's sacrifice
    - But after Jesus died, His Spirit descends to proclaim to them that their debt has been paid in full and they were released
    - Then after three days, Paul says Jesus escorted these captive spirits free and took them to Heaven where they are now
  - But while Jesus was there, Peter says He also announced Himself to the unbelieving souls experiencing torment in the other side of Sheol
    - The point in that pronouncement was not to offer opportunity for salvation, for that time had passed

- The point of this proclamation was to confirm that the promise of the Messiah had been fulfilled despite their unbelief
- Finally, why was Jesus' physical death and spiritual death reversed from our experience?
  - The answer comes from understanding that the Bible calls Jesus the Second Adam, in the sense that Jesus restarts the Human race
    - In the Garden, God told Adam that if Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, in the very day he ate of it, he would surely die
    - But we know that when Adam ate of the fruit, he didn't die physically on that very day...in fact Adam lived 930 years
  - So the death God was promising Adam for sin was not physical death, it was spiritual death, and on that day Adam died spiritually
    - Later God came into the garden and pronounced a curse in response to Adam's sin declaring Adam's body would also die
    - So Adam's spiritual penalty came before his physical penalty
  - So all that who descend from Adam share both his spiritual penalty and physical penalty...until we are born again by faith in Jesus
    - Jesus is the Second Adam, the Man Who comes to save us from the penalty of both spiritual and physical death
    - So Jesus takes our place in suffering both, and He experiences them in the same way Adam did
    - First, Jesus dies spiritually and then Jesus dies physically, taking our place in both

[1Cor. 15:21](#) For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

[1Cor. 15:22](#) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.