

The Miracles of Jesus
Miracle # 32

"The Miracles of Calvary"

While Jesus performed no miracles while on the Cross there are a number of miraculous things that transpire during this time. Although it could be argued that the miraculous signs associated with Calvary are not miracles performed by Christ they are however, supernatural events with a religious purpose caused by God.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE MIRACLE(S)

After his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane and the miracle healing of Malchus's severed ear, (Luke 22:50-51) He is taken through a series of unjust trials where He is condemned to be crucified. He and the two men who will be crucified at the same time are led out to place called Golgotha (Matt 27:33). Once there the condemned were stripped and nailed to a cross while the crowd waited from them to die.

THE ELEMENTS OF THE MIRACLE(S)

1. The Miracle of Fulfilled **Prophecies**

Hundreds of years before Jesus came to the earth his crucifixion had already been predicted in great detail.

- Cast **Lots** For His Garments

Predicted – (Psalm 22:18)

"They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots."

Fulfilled - (John 19:23-24)

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. (24) They said therefore among themselves, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be," that the Scripture might be fulfilled"

- He will be offered **vinegar** to drink

Predicted – (Psalm 69:21)

“for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.”

Fulfilled – (John 19:28-29)

“After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, “I thirst!” (29) Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.”

- Jesus will die in the company of **criminals**.

Predicted – (Isaiah 53:12)

“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.”

Fulfilled – (Matthew 27:38)

“Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.”

- Jesus would be buried with the **rich**

Predicted - (Psalm 53:9) “And they made His grave with the wicked-- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.”

Fulfilled – (Matt 27:57-60)

“Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. (58) This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. (59) When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.”

- None of His **Bones** would be broken.

Predicted – (Psalm 34:20)

“He guards all his bones; Not one of them is broken.”

Fulfilled – (John 19:32-33)

In mark contrast to what was the usual custom and to what happened to the two men crucified at the same time as Jesus.

“Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. (33) But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.”

2. **Darkness** Covers the Land (Matt 27:45)

"Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land."

When Jesus was born the night sky of Bethlehem was filled with a supernatural light (Luke 2:9). In marked contrast His death was accompanied by three **hours** of terrifying darkness.

Jesus is put on the cross at 9 o'clock in the morning. At noon an utter darkness settled in. I don't believe this was a sandstorm or an eclipse (after all it continued for three hours) but a **supernatural** darkness.

3. Jesus **Dismissed** His Spirit (Matt 27:50)

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

Jesus was not killed; he dismissed his spirit as an act of His will. Speaking of his life Jesus said in John 10:18, "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again...." Jesus' life was not taken from Him by men, but rather He surrendered His Spirit as a conscious act of His sovereign will.

4. The **Veil** was torn in two. (Matt 27:51)

Matthew reports that at very moment of the **death** of Jesus the veil in the Temple was torn in two. "Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,"

The veil that hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the temple was a thickly woven tapestry. Only once per year, the **high priest** could go beyond this veil – to make the sacrificial atonement for the sins of the people upon the cover of the sacred "Ark of the Covenant."

The significance of the veil was that it cut off not only the access of the people but of even the priest from direct access to God. "It was the symbol of the reality that no avenue of approach to God existed in the Old Testament." [Larry Richards. Every Miracle of the Bible. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998) p. 239]

To understand the how miraculous the tearing of the veil is we need to understand its construction. This veil was as thick as a man's hand is wide (4-5 inches thick) and woven of 72 twisted plaits, each plait consisting of 24 threads. It was sixty feet long and thirty feet wide. Two of them were made each year and it took **400** priests to manipulate a veil. [Herbert Lockyer. All the Miracles of the Bible. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961) p. 244]

Yet at the moment of Jesus death the veil was torn into "from the top to the bottom" meaning of course that it was torn by **God** and not by man. The wonder of the torn veil symbolizes the end of one age and the beginning of a new and better age. The Temple and the old sacrificial system were no longer needed. When Christ gave up His spirit, the once-for-all-time sacrifice for sin was now completed and the need for the veil no longer existed. A new and living way was opened into the presence of God through His son. The writer of Hebrews says (4:16)

“Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

This dramatic tearing of the veil occurred when the Temple was full of worshippers celebrating the Passover sacrifice. Unfortunately the Jews restored the veil and resumed sacrifices that no longer had any meaning. And they continued to do so until the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

5. An **Earthquake** Shook the Earth

(Matt 27:51) “and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split.”

The earthquake occurred at the instant of Christ final great shout of **victory** “IT IS FINISHED” (John 19:30) and his subsequent death.

John MacArthur states in his commentary on Matthew “...when God shook the earth at the death of His Son, He gave the world a foretaste of what He will do when one day He shakes the earth in judgment at the come of the King of Kings.” [John MacArthur. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Matthew 24-28. (Chicago:Moody Press, 1989) p. 275]

6. **Graves** Opened (Matt 27:52-53)

“and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; (53) and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

Of all the miraculous events associated with Calvary these verses are without a doubt the most difficult to come to a definitive understanding of.

The miracle here is that those who emerged from the broken sepulchres were raised from the dead. Although “many . . . saints who had fallen asleep” were raised, not all were. These were select representatives of the multitude of saints buried in and around Jerusalem.

Notice, in fact, that those who rose from the dead did not appear in Jerusalem until **after** Jesus’ resurrection. Where these resurrected saints were in the days after they were loosed from the grave and before they appeared in Jerusalem is not specified. But the fact that they waited until after Christ’s resurrection to appear to anyone reminds us that He is the firstfruits of those risen from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20).

These risen saints most likely came forth from the dead in **glorified** bodies already fit for heaven (rather than being restored to life in unglorified mortal bodies, as Lazarus had been). They “appeared to many” (v. 53). Again, how many is not specified, but there were enough eyewitnesses to verify the miracle! Their appearance proved that Christ had conquered death, not merely for Himself, but for all the saints. One day “all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth” (John 5:28-29).

It would seem that after an unspecified period God took them to be with Him in Heaven.

THE EFFECT OF THE MIRACLE(S)

The Centurion **believed**

The occurrence of so many miraculous things surrounding the death of Jesus has an overwhelming effect on the Roman centurion who witnessed it all. His confession is seen in Matt 27:54, "So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

The centurion was probably the officer given the responsibility of supervising three crucifixions. He would have first been unnerved by the sudden darkness and then this would have been compounded by the earthquake and the violent splitting of rocks. This was a terrifying experience even for hardened legionaries. When it says that they "feared greatly" the term is (***phobeo***) and it is the word we get phobia from and refers to absolute **panic** that causes rapid heart beat and profuse sweating. They no doubt sensed that these natural phenomena had a **supernatural** cause. The parallel account in Mark (15:39) tells us that it was the centurion who actually spoke the words, "Truly this was the Son of God!" but it may be that he spoke for the other soldiers as well.

The people were **terrified**

There is a marked contrast between the response of the people around the cross and the response of the soldiers. Luke 23:48 says, "And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned."

Like the soldiers the people were terrified by the darkness and the earthquake. And like the soldiers they no doubt realized that these events had a supernatural cause. But as they turned to return to their homes "beating their breast" in **remorse** and **fear** they showed no signs of **repentance** or **faith**. It can be hoped that some of these individuals are among the crowd a few weeks later when Peter gives his great sermon and 3,000 people were saved (Acts 2:36-41)