

## *The Other Resurrection – (at Easter)*

Excerpt from - *A Closer Look at the Cross - Matthew 27:45-53* – John MacArthur

And then at the very moment of His death a fourth phenomena. In Verse 51. "*And behold the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*" We'll stop at that point. Here is a miracle that took place at the moment of the Savior's death and in which God again makes commentary on the cross. God again speaks to the significance of the cross. The darkness was gone. The light was back. Jesus' lips are silent in death. He has dismissed His spirit. The body is slumped without His presence in it. On the cross. And then God makes some commentary on the cross that is absolutely astounding. And He proclaims the significance of the death of Christ.

First of all, "*Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom.*" The word temple - maos - means sanctuary. There was the Holy of Holies into which the high priest could only go once a year and sprinkle blood for the atonement of the people and the nation. On the day of atonement, Yom Kippur. And he had to be sure he was purified before he went in or he could die. That inner Holy of Holies represented the throne of God, the presence of God. And no one ever had access to it. A huge, heavy and very large veil according to Josephus or a curtain, hung over that separating it from the holy place where priests could minister. And when Jesus died on the cross that curtain was ripped from top to bottom. Very importantly not from bottom to top as if men did it. Top to bottom. God did it from the top down.

That inner curtain that hung between the holy place in the Holy of Holies in Herod's temple was symbolic of the alienation between men and God and them not having access to God's presence. God had designed it that way. It was a symbol of the fact that God was holy and men were sinners. And there was no way that men could have access to Him. There was nothing that could provide that access no matter how many millions of sacrifices under the old covenant. The veil was never opened for men to come in. God dwelled in the Holy of Holies and men dwelled outside. It shut men out of God's holy presence. Full access to God was never possible until Christ died.

And when Christ died God ripped that thing from the top to the bottom and exposed the Holy of Holies to everybody. And you have to understand what this is. This is Passover Day. And this is when all the lambs are being slaughtered and the temple is jammed with tens of thousands of people and the full blown priesthood is in operation. And this is the high point of the religious season. And they're all into their sacrificial system. The place is flowing with blood and sacrifices. It's all happening. And in one split second the whole system is destroyed. As to the horror and shock and fear of the people the Holy of Holies is instantaneously exposed to everyone. The place where no one would go for fear of their life.

And even today if you visit Jerusalem you will see on the Temple Mount where the temple once stood walled off now and signs to the Orthodox Jews forbidding them to ever go in that area. They don't know where the Holy of Holies was when the temple was there and they don't want any Jews up there who might step inadvertently on what was the Holy of Holies. They're afraid of that.

They're in fear of ever coming into the presence of God. By entering the Holy of Holies. And here the whole thing was exposed. To everybody. Three in the afternoon on Passover. The temple would have been jammed with people. And in one moment no more priesthood. No more temple. No more sacrifices. No more barrier between God and man. Salvation completed. Symbols done. Reality is present. The old covenant is over. The temple has no place. And soon was trampled by the Gentiles.

The devastation of that den of thieves which Jesus himself had begun when he cleansed it was about to be completed. And so from top to bottom miraculously God ripped open the way to Himself. **And what do we learn by what God did here? That the cross opens the way to God.** That's the simple truth. Sin is finally judged. Atonement is finally and fully made. No more sacrifices. No more priesthood. No more veil. No more Holy of Holies. The way to God is open.

Read *Hebrews 9, Hebrews 10*. How that the perfect sacrifice made by the perfect priest has provided perfect access to a perfect God. Redemption is accomplished. You see the cross? You see there supernatural darkness which means God is judging sin. You see there the sovereign separation between Father and Son which means that the Son has literally become sin and the Father must turn His back. He, therefore, if our substitute, He's dying our death in our place. And then you see that self-giving death where He gives of His own life and you see the mercy and the grace and the love in that sacrifice. And now in the ripping of the temple curtain the way to God is made open. The sanctuary is devastated. The system is ended.

And then comes the fifth point. Soil disturbance we'll call it. It says in Verse 51, "*The earth shook and the rocks were split.*" Now, earthquakes aren't anything special for us. We're kind of used to little rumblings here and there. And they have been a part of God's economy, too. God in the past has moved through earthquakes. You can read *Exodus 19, 1 Kings 19, 2 Samuel 28, Psalm 18, Psalm 77*, several illusions in the Old Testament and direct statements. *Isaiah 29, Jeremiah 10:10, Nahum* writes about God moving in the earthquake. *Chapter 1, Verses 2 and 5*.

God has moved through earthquakes. You can also read if you look ahead to the future that God is going to move ahead in the future. *Isaiah Chapter 13 and Isaiah Chapter 24 Verse 18* following very graphic Scriptures which speak about the end time when God begins to shake the earth. I might just read those two in *Isaiah* so you'll identify with them. *Isaiah 13:13* says, "*Therefore, I shall make the heavens tremble and the earth will be shaken from its place at the fury of the Lord of Hosts in the day of His burning anger.*" There is coming a day of God's judgment when He will shake the earth.

Then in the 24th Chapter starting at Verse 18 he says, "*The foundations of the earth will shake,*" at the end of Verse 18. "*The earth is broken asunder. The earth is split through. The earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard. It totters like a shack for its transgression is heavy upon it. It will fall never to rise again. So it will happen in that day that the Lord will punish the host of heaven on high and the kings of the earth on earth and they shall be gathered together like prisoners in the dungeon. And will be confined in prison. And after many days they will be punished. And then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed for the Lord of Hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and His glory will be before His elders.*" That seems to indicate the millennial time period when the Lord comes to set up His kingdom. He's going to shake the earth. I believe there will be a renewed earth going into the

millennium and then a new heaven and a new earth in the eternal state at the end of that 1,000 year period. *Read Revelation 6. Read Revelation 8:5. Revelation 11 I think around Verse 10, 12, 13.* You're going to see there more of the future earthquakes in God's judgment.

What does this miracle mean? I believe this is a preview of judgment on the earth. When that earth shook that day I believe that God was saying, "This is My Son who is king who will someday shake the earth." There will come a day when the whole earth will be destroyed and a judgment and an earthquake and I believe at that time the Lord Jesus will take back from the usurper the title deed to the earth as indicated in *Revelation 6* and reign as the ruler of this world. The earthquake on that day was a taste of the fact that Christ had just bruised the serpent's head, Satan, and would be taking back the earth in a devastating, cataclysmic judgment yet to come in the future described in detail in *Revelation 6 through 19*.

And so what God was saying was this was just a preview folks. The earth is going to shake. My Son has died but My Son is king. And here's a taste of the shaking that's going to come when He takes over His kingdom. So you see in the act of God here the hope, the promise of the future reign of Jesus Christ.

But there's more to it. Look in Verse 52. Here's another point. Subduing death. Subduing death. The last of these several features. It says, "*And the tombs were opened.*" And let me read it to you the way it makes most sense - from the original. "*And the tombs were opened and many bodies of the saints that slept were raised and came out of the graves.*" So, to read the sentence right the flow goes into Verse 53 and stops after the word graves or tombs. The graves were opened. An earthquake could have done that. An earthquake can split caves, split rocks, roll stones away. But an earthquake can't raise the dead. And so God acts. Many bodies - somatof - physical bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep that were co mi oh mi is used mainly of death though occasionally of sleep. Many of the dead are resurrected. Literal, bodily, physical resurrection. Did you get that?

**Did you know that happened?** Did you know that at the very moment in time when Jesus died the earthquake hit and graves split open and dead - Old Testament, old covenant saints - came out? In bodies. This is a real resurrection. It's my personal belief that they came out in their glorified bodies. They came out in resurrection bodies. They sure didn't come out in the original one. A real resurrection. And what is this saying? This is saying you may have thought you killed the Son of God but all you've done is crack open the graves because He will rise just like these. You may have thought that this is a victory for death but this is a victory for life. And God makes another commentary on the cross. The immediate effect of Jesus is a mini resurrection. Actual bodily resurrection of certain selected saints who received their eternal immortal and glorified form right on the spot. Their spirits came from heaven, were joined with their bodies and they were alive. This is a pre-enactment of the final resurrection.

And the reality of it is unanswerable. Unmistakable. Look what it says. "*After His resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many.*" People saw them. They went and talked to people. They went in and said, I'm so and so's great, great, great, great grandfather. I just came out of the grave. That is incredible. That must have been some interesting discussions going on. Actual visible, physical resurrections. They didn't appear until the Lord was resurrected. He being the first one risen from the dead. The chief one. They stayed out of the city until Jesus

arose, and then He sort of led the parade. Out of the grave. And here was God's testimony to the fact that killing Jesus Christ opens the graves. Why? Because the sin penalty's paid. And that gives life to all who were dead. No one would ever rise from the dead if Christ hadn't paid for sin. The resurrection began then at the moment Jesus died.

What an incredible scene. Jesus dies. In that split second the veil of the temple rips from top to bottom. In that same split second the earth begins to shake. The rocks are split. And the tombs open. And out of the tombs come resurrected people. And God is saying this is a victory for life. Not death.

Is the meaning of the cross clear now? Do you see it? The wrath of God against sin is depicted in the supernatural darkness. The holiness of God in turning away from sin is depicted in the sovereign departure as He separated Himself from the sin-bearing, substitute Christ. The loving grace and mercy and tenderness of the Lord is seen in the self-giving death of God incarnate as He gives up His own spirit. Dismisses it. Not that it's taken from Him. The open arms of God who calls the saved sinner to Himself is seen by the sanctuary being devastated and the curtain being ripped and the Holy of Holies opened to all. The coming promise new glorious kingdom with blessing and joy is promised as God shakes the earth. And the hope of resurrection is guaranteed as death is subdued in the case of some saints who are raised to glorious life. That's the cross.

The meaning of the cross? God has to punish sin. Christ becomes the substitutionary sin-bearer who takes that punishment. And because He loves you and wants to be merciful and gracious to you, He gives up His life. He is no victim. He gave His life for you and me. And as a result of that, access to the presence of God is wide open to all who will come through Christ. And entering the presence of God means that we receive with Christ the kingdom yet to come, the glorious blessing and joy that is promised as Christ rules and reigns over His own redeemed community. And we shall enter into the hope of resurrection. That's all right there. These things that happened around the very moments of the death of Christ speak to the significance of the cross. Do you see it? What does it mean to you?

What does it mean to you? Do you understand it? Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you followed in obedience embracing Him as Savior? Can you look at the cross and walk away? Is it nothing to you all you who pass by? Do you wag your head at it? Do you mock at it? Does it draw you irresistibly to it? The cross. The cross. God forbid that you should exist in any church for any length of time and not understand the cross.

Let's pray together. Father, we do thank you for the cross. The death of your dear Son. We thank you for making so clear the commentary on its meaning that we might understand it. Lord God, make us grateful. Turn the hearts of any here who have not yet come to the foot of the cross to receive Christ toward Him. Save sinners Lord today. Save sinners. Apply the work of Christ to every life here. Amen