

The Three Hours of Darkness

Introduction; Many curious things happened when Jesus died.

- A. One of those is the ‘three hours of darkness.’
1. *Luke 23:44* Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.
 2. Many have tried to understand exactly why this occurred and what caused it. Was it all the earth or just all the land of Palestine? The Greek words mean either whole earth or whole land.
 3. Some think this is supernatural and therefore unexplainable. Others think a very heavy cloud cover blocked the sun from noon to 3:00 PM. Two astronomers have recently offered another explanation — though it is not unique to them.
 4. *Two Romanian astronomers claim to have pinpointed the exact time and date of the Crucifixion of Jesus, the Internet news service Ananova has reported. According to Liviu Mircea and Tiberiu Oproiu of the Astronomic Observatory Institute in Cluj, Romania, Jesus died at 3 p.m. on Friday, April 3, 33 A.D. According to their reading of the New Testament data, Jesus was crucified on the day after the first night with a full moon after the vernal equinox. If the Crucifixion took place some time between the years 26 and 35, this could mean either Friday, April 7, 30, or Friday, April 3, 33. But it was only in the latter year that records show a solar eclipse as having occurred in Jerusalem.*
 5. This is probably not true. While the date would fit with what most Bible students expect the Passover occurs on a Full Moon. There can be no solar eclipse because the moon is on the wrong side of the earth.
- B. However knowing what caused the darkness does not explain why it occurred.
1. Matthew, Mark and Luke all mention it. It came quickly and lifted when Jesus died. It was important. It seems to have been sent by God.
 2. In whatever way God caused the darkness it seems to have meant something. We need to discover what the purpose of the darkness was.
- C. We will consider the “Three Hours of Darkness” today.

I. Several curious things happened at this time.

- A. The darkness was just one thing that made this crucifixion different from thousands of others.
1. Crucifixion was a common punishment among the Italian race. They probably crucified tens of thousands and perhaps many more.
 2. However there is no question that this one was different. They were crucifying the divine Son of God. Both heaven and earth testified to this fact.
- B. Matthew 27 gives many details of this event.
1. **Matthew 27:45-49**; Nothing is told of the events during these three hours. None of the N.T. writers tell anything that happened during the darkness or about it, except the very end.
 2. Whether an eclipse or a heavy cloud cover or a supernatural darkness, the people would no doubt be bothered by this. They would have to use torches in the middle of the day.
 3. We notice that after three hours of silence Jesus cries out in the Hebrew language. Some evidently were Greek and thought He was crying for Elijah. What did Jesus mean about God forsaking Him?
 4. **Matt 27:50-54**; Jesus cries out again and dies. The veil of the temple is torn in two. The curtain between the holy place and most holy place is torn by an earthquake. This would upset the Jews, especially at the beginning of their Passover.
 5. The earthquake is strong enough to tear the veil, split rocks and open many tombs. After Jesus’ resurrection the bodies of many of the saints were raised.
 6. The result of this is that the Roman centurion in charge recognized that Jesus was not a mere man but the Son of God.
- C. The other Gospels add a few details to this.
1. **Mark 15:33-39**; Mark gives a briefer report than Matthew. However he testifies that Matthew was accurate.

2. **Luke 22:44-49;** Luke tells us what Jesus cried out after drinking the sour wine. He said, "**Father, into your hands I commit My spirit**" —Psa 31:5. Even though the Father had forsaken Him He still trusted in Him.
3. After seeing all of this the people left beating their chests. This was often a sign of mourning. They seemed to have had a sense of foreboding. They may be wondering about what they have done.
4. **John 19:28-30;** John tells several more things Jesus said. The things Jesus said are probably in this order.
 - a. "**Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?**" that is, "**My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?**" —Matt 27:46, Psa 22:1.
 - b. "**I thirst!**" —John 19:28.
 - c. These were probably said about the same time. It is at this time that they bring Him sour wine to drink.
 - d. "**It is finished!**" —John 19:30.
 - e. "**Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'**" —Luke 23:46, Psa 31:5.
 - f. These go together also. After drinking the sour wine Jesus cries out with a loud voice and breathes His last.
5. These are some of the events that make this a most unique time. Matthew, Mark and Luke all stress the time of the darkness. It came at a certain time and left at a certain time.

D. The darkness and other events were important to what happened at this time.

II. Darkness and sin are often intertwined.

A. The earth was in darkness before the creation.

1. *Gen 1:1-2 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.*
2. There was no light. Evidently Jehovah first make the material of the universe. Later He forms it into what He wants.
3. *Gen 1:3-4 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good; and God divided the light from the darkness.*
4. The first thing that God makes is light. The light is good. We recognize this. We go to great trouble to light our homes and cities and so forth.
5. The universe will return to darkness at the end of the age. It will be burned up and destroyed and there will be a new and different heaven and earth —2 Pet 3:13.
6. *2 Pet 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

B. As there is physical light, there is also spiritual light.

1. The Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters. The H.S. was observing all that was done to record it for mankind. We can know creation because the H.S. inspired men to record what He saw. This is spiritual light.
2. *John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*
3. *John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*
4. Jesus was not physical light but spiritual. He came to reveal God and His word to mankind. He is the light because He reveals life, truth, righteousness and spiritual wisdom —Matt 4:6. Yet many men reject Him.
5. *John 3:19-21 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."*
6. Those who reject the light of Christ return to darkness in the end. Hell is described in several ways. One way is 'outer darkness' —Matt 22:11-13, 25:30.

7. *Matt 8:11-12 "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."*

C. Part of the reason for the darkness was the great sin in killing Jesus Christ.

1. Jesus came as the light of the world. He revealed God (John 14:7-9) and the word of God —John 3:34, 12:47-50. However men killed Him.
2. *Luke 22:52-53 Then Jesus said to the chief priests, captains of the temple, and the elders who had come to Him, "Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? 53 When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."*
3. In crucifying Jesus the people were rejecting Him. However in rejecting Jesus Christ they were also rejecting the Father whom they claimed to serve. Since they were rejecting Jehovah, the darkness could symbolize His displeasure with the people and His rejection of them.
4. *Luke 10:16 "He who hears you hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me."*
5. *Zech 12:10 "And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced."*
6. The Jews (as a nation) rejected the Son of God. They did not listen to Him. The darkness symbolizes their rejection of God and His departure from them. This darkness continued to this day upon both the Jews and the Gentiles.
7. *Rom 10:3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.*

D. The darkness showed the sin of the Jews in killing Jesus Christ.

III. Jesus felt the sin of that day.

A. Jesus was offered as a sacrifice for sin. He willingly accepted sin in our behalf.

1. All of us sin —Rom 3:23. We are sinners and lost because of sin. The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin —Heb 10:4. We cannot pay the price for sin ourselves. We are all condemned to be lost.
2. *Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
3. Jesus took on sin for us. He became sin in our behalf. He offered His body for ours. He gave His life that we might live. This was a very important sacrifice.
4. *2 Cor 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*
5. *Gal 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"),*
6. *Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*
7. *Heb 10:10 By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*
8. Jesus became sin for us. This is a hard concept to accept. How could God become sin? How could a man without sin be a sin sacrifice? Yet Jesus did this and more.

B. Because Jesus became sin, Jehovah turned from Him.

1. Jesus cried out, *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"* He was forsaken by God because he bore the sins of men. He came into the world to do this.
2. *John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*
3. Jesus came into the world to die. This was the work of God from the beginning. Jesus helped with that work. He showed His deity in helping God with what He was doing.
4. *John 5:17-18 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working." 18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.*

5. Jesus is doing the will of God. He is fulfilling God's plan to save mankind. Yet Jehovah turned from Him. Why would He do this?
6. Jesus takes on man's sin. He becomes the sin sacrifice. He could do this as man even though He was still God. Yet Jehovah in heaven could not associate with sin.
7. *Hab 1:13 You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness.*
8. *Prov 6:16-19 These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: 17 A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, 18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, 19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.*
9. Jehovah, God cannot look on sin. So, "Finally God removed Himself from the scene and darkness immediately engulfed the total area. For three hours Jesus suffered not only the excruciating physical pain of the cross, but also the pain of utter loneliness in total darkness" —Homer Hailey; **God's Judgments**; pg 205
10. 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me', is verse 1 of Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is a Psalm of the innocent sufferer. Jesus typifies this person. He is absolutely innocent. He is not suffering for His sins but the sins of others.
11. Jesus was separated from the Father and felt the despair and loneliness of being in sin. He cried out from the spiritual pain of being separated from God. We must learn from this. God withdrew His light because of sin. This is the destiny of the wicked.

C. The light does return at the ninth hour.

1. Jesus says, "**It is finished**", and the light returns. Several things are finished.
 - a. The darkness is over,
 - b. Jesus' pain and suffering are over,
 - c. His separation from the Father is over; He commended His spirit into God's hands,
 - d. His work and mission are finished; the price for sin is paid and man can be forgiven of his sins.
2. Jesus paid the price for sin and is victorious. His mission was successful. His cry of 'It is finished' was not a cry of despair but of victory. He has done His work and accomplished His task.
3. *Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.*
4. *Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, 2 in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,*
5. Men can now be saved because of what Jesus has done. His victory is our victory. We can be forgiven of our sins and not fear the outer darkness after the Judgment of that great day.

D. The darkness also showed the sin of mankind that Jesus was dying for.

Conclusion; A third mystery of that day was the resurrection of the dead.

A. The veil was torn in two. The barrier between God and man was removed.

1. The righteous dead that were raised when Jesus was raised showed that man's victory had arrived. Man's hope was fulfilled.
2. The ultimate sacrifice for sin the O.T. saints were looking for had arrived. They are raised to go with Jesus to the Father —see Eph 4:7-11, Phil 1:21-24, 2 Cor 5:6-8, etc.
3. We can all have victory through Christ today if we reject the darkness of the world.

B. We can become children of God today by faith, repentance and baptism.

1. We must believe in Jesus as God's Divine Son who died for us. We must believe we can be raised with Him at the resurrection of the last great day.
2. We must then repent of our sins and turn to following the Lord. We are then buried with Him in baptism to share His death, burial and resurrection. We are raised a new creature in Christ Jesus. We are forgiven —Act 22:16.
3. *Mark 16:15-16 And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*
4. *Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*

5. *Rom 6:3-4 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

C. If we can help anyone in their service to God today, please let us.