

Parted

Introduction. As the sun set on our Lord's life, three events recorded in Matthew 27:34-51 are mentioned as "parted" or separated. We are going to examine each of these and comment on the importance each holds in the final moments of Lord's life.

I. ***The Parted Garments -- The Shame Of The Cross (Matthew 27:34-35)***

- A. It was terrible that they publicly humiliated Jesus with the lowest possible form of execution -- crucifixion. It was an accursed death because He was treated as if He were a criminal (Galatians 3:13). This practice was deemed the most disgraceful and shameful that was practiced among the Romans.
 1. Originally a cross was a wooden pointed stake used to build a wall or to erect fortifications around a town. Beginning with the Assyrians and Persians, it began to be used to display the heads of captured foes or of particularly heinous criminals on the palisades above the gateway into a city. Later crucifixion developed into a form of capital punishment, as enemies of the state were impaled on the stake itself.
 2. The Greeks and Romans at first reserved the punishment only for slaves, saying it was too barbaric for freeborn or citizens. By the first century, however, it was used for any enemy of the state, though citizens could only be crucified by direct edict of Caesar. As time went on, the Romans began to use crucifixion more and more as a deterrent to criminal activity, so that by Jesus' time it was a common sight. The practice continued in vogue in the Roman Empire until the reign of Constantine, when it was abolished as an insult to Christians.
- B. To add insult, the soldiers parted His garments or divided them among themselves. A quaternion or band of four soldiers did the work of the actual crucifixion. The Roman law awarded them the garments of the condemned. John says that they divided His garments between the four soldiers but cast lots for His tunic or undergarment, which was by far the most valuable piece of clothing (John 19:23-24; cf. Luke 9:58).
- C. These events were in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18. Even the small part of the soldiers was the subject of minute prophecy. This fulfillment not only reveals the shame of the cross, but the fantastic verification of the story of the cross.

II. ***The Parted Prophecy -- The Sorrow Of The Cross (Matthew 27:45-49)***

- A. These words, cried with a loud voice, marked the climax and the end of the sufferings of Christ. This was the only time Jesus called the Father "My God." This was the combination of the Old Testament idea of sacrifice, and the idea of the willing suffering of God's Servant. It found its fullest expression in the language of Psalm 22.
- B. It is commonly believed that Jesus' statement indicates God abandoned or turned His back on His Son, because Jesus while on the cross, took on the sins of the whole world, and thereby became the greatest sinner the world has ever known.
 - 1. It would seem to those who were onlookers of both the persecution of David and the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, that God had abandoned David and Jesus because He allowed their enemies to carry out their evil schemes. However, the psalm declares that God does not turn away from those who praise and glorify Him (vss. 23-24).
 - 2. The second line of Psalm 22:1 holds the clue to the interpretation. As God allowed David to suffer, so He allowed Jesus to be delivered up and suffer at the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23).
 - 3. It is not as though Jesus was asking the Father for an answer to the question, for Jesus knew everything (John 12:27; 13:3; 18:4).
 - a) The shout of Jesus on the cross was not a statement that the Father had forsaken Him, but rather a shout to get the attention of the great multitude to recall the prophecies unfolding right before their very eyes!
 - b) Jesus citing the opening words of Psalm 22 was equivalent to citing the entire passage as a reference made to Him, which was a common practice in ancient times.

III. ***The Parted Veil -- The Success Of The Cross (Matthew 27:50-51)***

- A. A thick veil separated the holy place from the most holy place in the tabernacle and the temple (Exodus 26:31-34). Inside represented the place where God dwelt. By shutting out from the most holy place all persons except the high priest, who alone was permitted to pass through it once a year, it signified that the way into the holiest place -- which signified heaven -- was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing (Leviticus 16:1-3, 12-17; Hebrews 9:7-8).
- B. The moment Jesus died, thus making the way manifest, the veil was appropriately rent in two from top to bottom, disclosing the most holy place to the priests who were at the time offering the evening incense in the holy place. The rending from top to bottom demonstrated that it was accomplished by the hand of God Himself.

C. With the symbolism of the torn veil, Christ's death symbolized open access to the presence of God for all that come through His Son (Hebrews 10:19-20). The Lord Jesus, our great high priest, had entered heaven as a forerunner of His people and had torn down the middle wall of partition (Ephesians 2:11-17; Colossians 2:11-15; Hebrews 6:18-20).

Conclusion. With Jesus's final statements, "It is finished" (John 19:30) and "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46), the Lord passed from this life. With this action, the Lord Jesus Christ became our Savior. But success did not first come without shame and sorrow. It would always be my prayer that God's children understand and remember the significance of the cross of Christ.