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***8 Astonishing Events When Jesus Died***

Jesus died on the cross, a brutal form of execution by crucifixion, on Friday, April 3, AD 33, at 3 PM; Only a few hours before the beginning of Passover day and the Sabbath.

At the exact moment when Jesus gave up His spirit several astonishing supernatural events occurred; with these events instantly startling those who witnessed them and confirming that His death was no ordinary occurrence. The sky grew dark, the earth shook, and other divine signs appeared before everyone that day; believers and non-believers alike. So, what exactly happened? What is the significance behind these events? And why do these events continue to puzzle scholars even today?

I’ll begin by stating that these events proved Jesus’s death was the most important moment in human history, and what happened after that day changed everything forever!

Starting that day, every kind of evil, sin, cruelty and depravity of man was poured out upon Him, and continued after being crucified; hands and feet nailed to the cross.

At noon of that day, when the sun should have been shining brightly, something that can’t be explained happened suddenly. The light of the day disappeared, and a dense darkness covered the entire land. This phenomenon lasted about 3 hours. From noon until 3:00 in the afternoon; precisely while Jesus was suffering on the cross. The Gospel of Matthew 27:45 (NLT) clearly describes this event: “At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock.”

From noon until 3:00 in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. But what caused this darkness? Many try to explain it as a solar eclipse, but there’s a problem; the Jewish Passover always occurs during a full moon making a total eclipse impossible during that time! So if it wasn’t the common or typical astronomical phenomenon, what was it?

The answer may lie in the spiritual significance of the event itself. In Jewish culture darkness was often associated with divine judgment. In the Old Testament the prophet Amos had already prophesied something similar.

Amos 8:9 “And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight;

The connection between this prophecy and Jesus’s death is striking! The darkness was not just a sign but a demonstration of judgment upon sin and the sin of humanity, which Jesus was bearing at that moment. ”For the wages of sin is death,…” (Romans 6:23)

I can’t imagine being in Jerusalem that day watching the sun suddenly vanish. People must have panicked unsure of what was happening.

The Jewish Talmud, one of the main records of Rabbinic tradition, mentions an unusual darkness around the time of the crucifixion suggesting this phenomenon was widely witnessed, including by Jesus’s own opponents.

Shortly before surrendering His spirit Jesus cried out: “My God my God why have you forsaken Me.” (Matthew 27:46 NKJV)

This cry echoes the same cry from Psalm 22! A messianic prophecy describing the suffering of God’s anointed One. The Father was showing the world the weight of sin His Son was carrying.

After those three hours of darkness something even more impressive took place. The very temple in Jerusalem was affected by an undeniable divine sign. At the exact moment Jesus gave up His spirit something happened inside the Jerusalem temple that left the priests in shock. The veil that separated the holy of Holies from the rest of the temple was torn from Top to Bottom without any human intervention. The veil was not just a thin piece of cloth, it was a thick curtain, about 18 meters high (approx. 59 feet) woven from extremely sturdy fabrics. For it to tear in that way would require tremendous power! Something beyond human ability.

In the Bible Matthew 27:51, it clearly reports this event about that moment of the curtain being torn in two, from top to bottom. The detail: from ‘Top to Bottom,’ is crucial. If it had been torn from bottom to top someone might suggest a person had done it but the fact it ripped from top to bottom shows it was an act of God. What does this mean? In the Old Testament the temple was where God dwelt among His people, and at the center of the temple was a place called the holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. This area was so sacred that only the high priest could enter, and even then only once a year, on the day of atonement, to offer sacrifices for the sins of the people. The veil represented the separation between God and humankind, since sin prevented direct access to His divine presence. But, in that instant when Jesus died, that separation came to an end! That torn veil symbolized that through Christ’s sacrifice everyone now had direct access to God! No longer was a human high priest necessary to intercede for the people, because Jesus became the perfect eternal High Priest!

Hebrews10:19-20 confirms this truth! 19 And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven’s Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus.

20 By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.

Imagine the impact on the priests in the temple at that moment! They had grown up believing the veil was the boundary between God and humanity, and suddenly that boundary was destroyed before their eyes. Their religious system based on sacrifices and rituals was coming to an end because the perfect sacrifice had been offered. This event was no mere accident! It was a powerful sign something greater was happening. God himself was announcing that the path into his presence was open to everyone!

But that wasn’t the only supernatural sign! At that final moment, upon Jesus taking His last breath, and as the veil tore, Matthew 27:51-52 describes: the earth shook violently, rocks split apart and graves opened.

Jerusalem had experienced tremors before but this was different. It happened precisely when Jesus died and was so intense it split rocks, destroyed parts of the city and did something even more astounding; it opened tombs! The impact of all of these events happening simultaneously was so great that even Roman soldiers accustomed to the brutality of war were frightened by what they witnessed.

In the Old Testament earthquakes often symbolized the presence and judgment of God. For instance when God gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, the mountain shook violently. (Exodus 19:18)

The Prophet Nahum 1:5 “The mountains quake before Him, The hills melt, And the earth heaves at His presence, Yes, the world and all who dwell in it.

Now at the moment of Jesus’s death the earth once again responded to divine intervention. This earthquake carried profound meaning. It represented the shaking of the old system; the break between the old and the new. The temple with its sacrifices and the ceremonial laws were being replaced by the new covenant in Christ’s blood. Something tremendous had happened in the spiritual realm and creation itself was reacting. Furthermore, this earthquake was a sign that Jesus’s death did not mean defeat, but victory! The earth shook not just in response to Christ sufferings but as a proclamation of what was to come. Three days later another quake would be recorded; this time at the moment of the resurrection. (Matthew 28:2)

Imagine being in Jerusalem at that time, especially the religious leaders who had condemned Jesus. They could no longer deny that something extraordinary was happening.

As if the sudden darkness, the torn veil, the earth being shook and rocks splitting wasn’t enough, something even more extraordinarily supernatural occurred!

Tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus’s resurrection and went into the holy city of Jerusalem and appeared to many people. (Matthew 27:52-53

This event has to be one of the most mysterious occurrences of that day! Who were these people who rose from the dead? How did it happen and what was the significance of this supernatural sign? First we must understand that these people were not merely the dead, but holy people; that is, those who had lived faithfully before God! The fact that their tombs were opened indicates something greater was happening. the victory of Jesus over death was already being demonstrated and even before His own resurrection, the resurrection of these individuals was a clear sign of Christ’s power. Jesus had said “I am the resurrection and the life the one who believes in me will live even though they die.” (John 11:25) At the moment Jesus died this power began to visibly manifest, but there’s an interesting detail in Matthew’s account, the text says these people came out of the tombs after Jesus’s resurrection. This shows us that Christ’s resurrection was the main event and that these resurrected individuals served as witnesses to this new era. They went into Jerusalem and appeared to many, confirming that something extraordinary was taking place! Imagine the impact this must have had. Family members and friends seeing people who had been dead for years walking through the streets. Some of these people may have been known to the priests and religious leaders themselves. How could anyone deny such an obvious sign. The symbolism here is profound. In the Old Testament, the prophet Ezekiel chapter 37 spoke of a time when God would restore the dead. Ezekiel had a vision of a valley of dry bones coming back to life. Now at Jesus’s death that power was being literally manifested. This event serves as a preview of what would happen to all who believe in Christ. The resurrection was not just a distant promise it was a reality, already beginning to be fulfilled. These resurrected Saints were pointing to the future when all who belonged to Christ will also be raised to eternal life.

Raising of the dead was not the final sign that impacted those present that day. While all of this was happening, an unlikely man, a Roman soldier, a Centurion, a commander responsible for about 100 men, made a surprising declaration that completely changed his life. The Roman centurion recognized and proclaimed Jesus as the son of God. (Matthew 27:54) Roman soldiers were used to executions. For them, crucifying criminals was just a part of the job, but on that day something was different. What started as another routine execution soon turned into a supernatural event that terrified even the most hardened warriors. Among these soldiers was this centurion;. He likely had overseen the entire process, from the condemnation to Jesus’s crucifixion. He may very well have seen Jesus being beaten, humiliated and crowned with thorns. Taken a little further, maybe he was the one who gave the order to drive the nails into Jesus’s hands and feet. Truth be told, I don’t know. But as time went on something began to change. That centurion, and those with him who were guarding Jesus, after hearing Jesus’s final words and being on hand to witness these supernatural occurrences, realized that unlike other condemned men who died cursing or begging for mercy, Jesus gave up his spirit with dignity and authority saying “it is finished.” (John 19:30). Something happened in the soldier’s heart. The centurion’s statement is astonishing considering a Roman soldier serving the most powerful empire in the world and probably worshipping Pagan gods suddenly recognized that Jesus was more than just a man. He did not say Jesus was merely a prophet or teacher, he declared Him to be the Son of God. That moment was a turning point. Until that moment the soldiers mocked Jesus. They had dressed Him in a scarlet robe placed a crown of thorns on His head and ridiculed Him as a false king. But now in light of everything they had witnessed their hearts changed. The centurions acknowledgement shows something powerful. Even those who took part in the crucifixion itself could find redemption. Only moments earlier Jesus had prayed “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:34). This prayer was answered immediately in the life of this soldier. A Roman commander, a man used to battles and executions now looking at the cross in fear and reverence; his hardened heart was broken. He saw with his own eyes that Jesus was no mere criminal; he was exactly who he claimed to be.

The ripple effect of Jesus’s s death was not limited to the soldiers. The crowds who had mocked him also began to realize that something extraordinary had happened. Remember, that morning Jerusalem was in celebration. The city was filled with people who had traveled from different regions to celebrate the Passover; yet amid this celebration a parallel event took place. The crucifixion of Jesus! many gathered to watch, some came out of curiosity, others to swear against Him, and a small group like the disciples, and Mary his mother, looked on in sorrow. During the hours Jesus hung on the cross the crowd ridiculed him, people shouted things like: “if you are the son of God come down from the cross.” (Matthew 27:40) the religious leaders, pleased to have secured his condemnation, scoffed saying: “He saved others but he can’t save himself.” (Matthew 27:42). To them it seemed like the final defeat of the man who claimed to be the Messiah, but as the supernatural signs began to unfold mockery turned to fear. Luke 23:48 describes the crowd’s reaction at the end of the crucifixion: ‘when all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place they beat their breasts and went away.' The expression “beat their breasts” was a sign of deep remorse and anguish. The same people who had shouted crucify him just hours earlier were now fleeing in terror. They realized that something far greater than they had imagined had taken place. Remorse began to appear, but for many it was too late. Those who had rejected Jesus now understood they were not facing just any preacher but the very son of God. They had witnessed undeniable signs, but what would they do with this revelation. I can only imagine an overwhelming scene of streets filled with people running and weeping, trying to make sense of what they had just witnessed. Some religious leaders tried to maintain a semblance of control but deep down they knew something was amiss; had they made a mistake in condemning this man?! Jesus’s death did not bring the peace they had expected, but rather a feeling of guilt and unease. This moment was a turning point for some. It was the beginning of a sincere repentance that would lead them to faith in Christ! Later, on the day of Pentecost (May 25, A.D.33 - 50 days after Jesus’s resurrection) Peter would preach to this same crowd and approximately 3,000 people would be converted. (Acts 2:41).

For others however it was a missed opportunity. Even with all those signs they chose to harden their hearts. But what happened to the religious leaders and those who ignored these signs? How did their decisions that day alter the course of history?

Even in the face of such supernatural events not everyone acknowledged what had truly happened. Some religious leaders, soldiers, and members of the crowd hardened their hearts and refused to admit Jesus was the Messiah! They saw some of, or heard reports of all of those events, yet they still chose to disregard the signs. The religious leaders who had plotted Jesus’s death were uneasy. The temple being the ultimate symbol of religious power had been directly affected by the earthquakes, moreover the torn veil was a clear indication that something had changed forever! The problem was that admitting this meant recognizing they had unjustly condemned the Son of God. So, to preserve their positions and reputations they chose a different strategy; cover up the truth! Shortly after the crucifixion, when the guards reported Jesus’s resurrection (disappearance), the priests bribed the soldiers to spread the lie that Christ’s body had been stolen. (Matthew 28:11-15). This showed just how resistant they were to the truth. Even with all the evidence, they refused to accept what was right before their eyes; but refusing to acknowledge Jesus had consequences. Only a few decades later (in A.D. 70) Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman army! The temple, the center of Jewish worship was burned and never rebuilt! This tragic event was prophetic confirmation of Jesus’s own words: "Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down. (Matthew 24:2). The religious system that had rejected the Messiah came to a tragic end.

It is among my highest hope that the centurion along with some of the soldiers who took part in the crucifixion, having had the change of heart, and recognized Jesus as the Son of God, had their lives forever transformed. Undoubtedly, others likely remained hardened, failing to realize they had participated in the most important event in history. Regarding the crowd, some genuinely repented as mentioned earlier and later became followers of Christ; others though returned to their routines and chose to forget what they had seen and experienced.

History shows that signs and miracles, however impactful, are not always enough to change a hardened heart. Only a true inner transformation can lead a person to recognize Jesus as Savior. All that had happened that afternoon was a warning to all humanity. God clearly demonstrated that Jesus’s death was no ordinary event but a landmark in the spiritual history of the world. Those who ignored the signs lost the greatest opportunity of their lives; the chance to recognize and follow the son of God. Now the question is: What do these events mean for us today? What can we learn from those who recognize the truth, and from those who rejected it?

***ECLIPSE FACTOID:***

A solar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, blocking the Sun’s light and casting a shadow on Earth.

A lunar eclipse happens when the Earth passes between the Sun and Moon, blocking sunlight from reaching the Moon and casting a shadow on it.

**Eclipse detailed breakdown:**

**What happens:**

Solar Eclipse: The Moon blocks the Sun’s light, casting a shadow on Earth.

Lunar Eclipse: The Earth blocks the Sun’s light from reaching the Moon, casting a shadow on the Moon.

**When it occurs:**

**Solar:** During a **new moon**, when the Moon is between the Sun and Earth.

**Lunar:** During a **full moon**, when the Earth is between the Sun and Moon.

A full moon occurs when the Earth is positioned between the Sun and the Moon, causing the entire moon’s face to be illuminated by the Sun, and it appears as a bright, circular disk in the night sky.

The Lunar Cycle: The Moon orbits Earth roughly every 29.5 days, completing a full cycle of phases.

Phases:

These phases include new moon, waxing crescent, first quarter, waxing gibbous, full moon, waning gibbous, third quarter, and waning crescent.

Timing:

Full moons occur roughly once a month, **about 15 days after a new moon**, marking the midpoint of the lunar cycle.