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INTERNATIONAL

TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

Matthew - Lesson 27F

Chapter 27:45-50

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- We return this morning to our verse-by-verse, hour-by-hour study of Jesus' time on the cross in our study of Matthew
 - Our High Priest is sacrificing Himself on Passover even as the high priest of Israel was in the temple that same hour sacrificing the national lamb
 - On Passover each year, one lamb was brought to the altar, its throat cut, the blood drained, and the flesh burned on the altar
 - That national Passover lamb served as a representative sacrifice for all Israel
 - And this year at that same moment, 9 AM, the true, once-for-all-time Passover Lamb was being nailed to a cross
 - Few in Israel on that day understood the connection to Jesus' death on the cross, and certainly no one could appreciate its significance
 - As we've already studied, Jesus' death on the cross involved several periods which each held significance
 - For the first three hours from 9 AM to noon, Jesus experienced the wrath of men, otherwise known as the consequences of sin
 - Jesus experienced physical pain, emotional suffering, and psychological torment, things coming to every sinner
 - But these consequences were foreign to our sinless Savior until He took them upon Himself on our behalf
 - During those three hours, the words of the writer of Hebrews became true:

Heb. 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.

Heb. 4:16 Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Jesus experienced every temptation we can know, including the temptation to escape the consequences of sin, to avoid death
- But He never gave in to His temptations as we routinely do, and in that way He qualified Himself to be our high priest
- That will be the focus of our study today...Jesus taking our place in death
 - Jesus took the place of sinners in death, which means He had to experience every aspect of death to serve as our substitute
 - The penalty for sin is both a physical death, the death of the body, and a spiritual death, the death of the spirit
 - Therefore, Jesus will experience both physical and spiritual death on the cross as He makes Himself our Passover sacrifice
 - But as I mentioned last week, Jesus will experience spiritual death first followed by physical death, which seems backwards to us
 - In our experience, we endure the physical death of the body before we experience the second, spiritual death of the body

- But as we learn today, there is a good reason why Jesus must experience these in a different order to serve God's purpose
- But first, we'll examine how these two experiences came to Jesus beginning with the first; spiritual death
 - And that moment is marked by darkness everywhere

Matt. 27:45 Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour.

- Matthew says darkness fell at the sixth hour, and Matthew is using the Jewish system for reckoning time, which starts counting hours at sunrise at 6 AM
 - So the sixth hour begins at noon, 12 PM, and Matthew says that at that moment all the land was dark until the ninth hour, which is 3 PM
 - The word translated "land" in v.45 is *ge* (pronounced "yee"), which is literally translated as the Earth
 - So the whole earth was dark for 3 hours...Luke's account confirms it was the whole earth
 - In fact, archaeologists have discovered multiple records of other ancient cultures from that time that record this supernatural moment
 - An ancient record of Dionysius, a Greek scholar, reported a strange darkness coming upon Heliopolis at that time
 - Another scholar named Diogenes living in Egypt at that time, reported a blackout of several hours and offered an explanation
 - He said, "the solar darkness was such that either deity Himself suffered at that moment or sympathized with one who did"
 - A third writer in Turkey wrote the day turned to night at the sixth hour and stars were visible and earthquakes shook the empire
 - So remarkably, the entire planet plunges into an unexpected, unexplainable blackout lasting three hours
 - Why has God placed the earth in darkness? Because the Father has withdrawn His presence from His Son
 - For the first and only time in all eternity, God the Son and God the Father were not in fellowship
 - Jesus now hangs for three hours separated from the Father's love, and it is a unique kind of suffering
 - Notice the next thing Matthew records in v.46

Matt. 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

- Near the end of the three hour separation from the Father, Jesus cries asking God why He has forsaken Him, which is a fulfillment of Psalm 22

- Matthew records Jesus' words in the original Aramaic before translating them for us for a couple of reasons
 - First, Matthew wanted us to know that Jesus addressed the Father in a unique manner at this moment
 - Jesus calls out "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?"
 - This is the only time in the Gospels when Jesus addresses His Father as "My God"
 - Every other time Jesus speaks to the Father Jesus addresses Him as "My Father" so this moment is significant
- So in this moment, Jesus isn't relating to God the Father in the same way
 - The intimacy Jesus once knew with the Father is gone...the Father has become distant...He's now just God
 - For three hours, Jesus couldn't feel the Father's presence...for the first time, God the Son was separated from the Father
- During these three hours Jesus experienced the ultimate consequence for sin: spiritual death, otherwise known as the wrath of God
 - Sin brings many devastating consequences in this life, but its ultimate consequence isn't found on earth
 - The ultimate and final consequence for sin is the wrath of God, manifested as an eternal separation from the love of God
 - The Bible calls this consequence the "Second Death" referring to the death of the spirit following the body's death
- The Second Death is not a cessation of existence or the destruction of the spirit... it is a "death" in the sense that it is a separation
 - The first death is our spirit separated from our physical body
 - The second death is our spirit separated from God
- The Second Death is the penalty God decreed for all who end this life without having received the provision of Christ
 - Those who endure the Second Death spend eternity away from the love of God, and this is far worse than the first death
 - But for those who place faith in Jesus Christ, the Father's wrath toward us is transferred to Jesus
 - Jesus took that wrath on the cross during these three hours as He experienced the wrath of God for our sin
 - Near the end of that period of separation from the Father, Jesus is in anguish and so distraught that He asks God why He is alone
 - Jesus asks why God has forsaken Jesus, and the Greek word translated forsaken literally means "to be left behind"
 - Jesus was left behind by the Father for these hours to experience the greatest suffering He ever could know
 - You may remember in the Garden when Jesus prayed to the Father asking that the cup be taken away from Jesus

- That cup was the cup of wrath that Jesus is now experiencing in darkness
- And that worldwide darkness was God's way of communicating to the earth that He had removed His presence from His Son
 - The Bible frequently uses the light of the sun as a symbol for the love of God or the presence of God
 - Remember these words from the beginning of John's Gospel

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.

John 1:5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

John 1:9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.

- That is just one example, but across Scripture we find the same relationship...light pictures God's presence and darkness the opposite
 - In fact, we're told that in the New Heavens and the New Earth that comes to replace this world there will be no sun at all
 - Why? Because the light of that time comes entirely from the presence of God dwelling among men
 - In that day, the light of the world *will be* God, literally
- So as God withdraws His presence from Jesus, He also withdrew light from the earth, and I can't begin to explain what Jesus felt during that time
 - Nor am I suggesting that this separation meant Jesus ceased being God...Jesus remained God even as He was separated from God
 - If that confuses you, then join the club
 - After all, we can't fully understand the Trinity in the first place, much less what it means for God to be separated from God
 - In fact, none of us have *ever* experienced the complete absence of God's presence in our lives, including the time before we came to faith in Jesus
 - Because the Bible says God extends common grace to every human being in the course of daily life

Luke 6:35 "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

Matt. 5:45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

- Even the most ungodly people on earth still experience the love of God and the

provision and goodness of God in countless ways

- James says every good thing comes from the Father of Lights
- So try imagining an existence in which there is nothing good whatsoever because God's presence is completely absent?
- We've never known that experience, and although Jesus knew it for just three hours, it was enough to bring Jesus to despair
 - Can you imagine what it will be like to spend eternity apart from God?
 - We can't imagine Jesus' suffering and thankfully we don't have to try...we can put the thought of it out of our mind
 - Because we have heard and believed the Gospel, the Bible assures us we have overcome death, as Jesus Himself promised

Rev. 2:11 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.'

- Going back to the text, the second reason Matthew specified the Aramaic words Jesus used in v.46 is because it led to a misunderstanding

Matt. 27:47 And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah."

Matt. 27:48 Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

Matt. 27:49 But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

- In Aramaic, Jesus said "Eli Eli" which means My God, My God, but the word "Eli" could easily be mistaken for the name "Elijah"
 - So someone assumed Jesus was calling for Elijah to rescue Him
 - But expecting Elijah to save Him made little sense, so from one misunderstanding came another
 - The crowd concluded Jesus was delirious from shock, so they gave Jesus a drink from a sponge
 - Then they add "let's see if Elijah does come to save Jesus"
- This crowd wasn't giving Jesus a drink out of pity...they wanted to keep Jesus alive a little longer to see if Elijah might appear
 - Matthew includes this exchange to help us appreciate how callous and indifferent the crowd was to what was happening
 - They are like children poking at a dying animal with sticks curious to see what will happen to it next
- Jesus was utterly alone and without anyone to help Him or even sympathize with Him
 - And even the help Jesus did receive was not intended for His benefit but merely to extend His suffering

- The irony is the sin they were committing against Jesus at that moment was the very reason He hung on the cross in the first place
- So for three hours on the cross, Jesus experienced spiritual death in our place, but because He had no sin of His own, His spiritual suffering comes to an end
 - And then at exactly 3 PM, the ninth hour, the darkness ended and Jesus and the Father were restored in fellowship
 - In a sense, we could call this a spiritual resurrection...a return from spiritual death, which is separation from the Father
 - And at that moment, the work of paying for sin had been completed
 - John tells us that at this moment Jesus uttered His next-to-last statement from the cross

John 19:30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- In Greek Jesus spoke a single Greek word, *te-telestai*, which is an accounting term meaning “paid in full”
- God’s wrath for sin was now fully appeased, fully satisfied by all that Christ had done on our behalf
- The sin debt Jesus came to pay was paid in full, and no additional payment or work of any kind is necessary
- Notice, Jesus made this statement before He died physically, which means that Jesus’ physical death was not part of that payment
 - Jesus’ physical death was necessary to the plan of redemption, because without a physical death there could be no resurrection
 - And by His resurrection Jesus will prove His claims to have overcome death and to possess eternal life
 - But by the time Jesus experienced physical death, the payment for our sins had been made in full
- We will study Jesus’ physical death next, but before we do, you may wonder why did Jesus only experience three hours of spiritual death?
 - If we die in our sins, we spend an eternity separated from the love of God in torment, so why did Jesus only spend three hours in our place?
 - First, we need to understand unbelievers spend an eternity separated from God after death *because they are forever sinful*
 - The only way to cease being sinful is to be born again by the Spirit through faith in Jesus and to receive Christ’s righteousness
 - But that opportunity ends at death, and if we die in our sins, we remain eternally in a sinful state and forever away from God
 - But Jesus is not like us...He “became” sin on our behalf, but He had no sin of His own, therefore He had no need to suffer for an eternity
 - Jesus’ suffering was a propitiation for sin and the Father determined it would be an acceptable payment

- Once God's wrath had been appeased and the debt paid, then Jesus' suffering could end
 - And the Father accepts Jesus' payment in our place, instead of us suffering for an eternity – that's the deal of a lifetime...literally
- So with the debt paid in full, Jesus' suffering can now come to an end

Matt. 27:50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

- Matthew doesn't record what Jesus said, but Luke tells us that Jesus said, "Father into Your Hands I commit My Spirit"
 - The precise timing of Jesus' death and His final words confirm His earlier promise that no one takes Jesus' life but He lays it down
 - Jesus decided the exact moment of His own death by commanding His spirit's departure from His body at 3 PM
- Literally speaking, Jesus didn't die of crucifixion...the cause of Jesus' death was not due to any of His physical wounds
 - We all die as the result of some biological process, but the Bible says that the cause of death is sin and the curse God decreed
 - But Jesus was without sin so even in His wounded state, Jesus would have lived forever except that He took on the curse
- So Jesus committed His spirit into the Father's hands and His body died
 - Next time we will look at what followed Jesus' death including the burial preparations and the supernatural events that marked His death
 - But today we still need to understand the significance of Jesus' physical death and why it came after His spiritual death
 - And let's begin by setting aside some bad assumptions about what His death accomplished
 - First, some assume that Jesus' physical death was part of the payment for sin, but as we discussed earlier, our debt was paid in full before He died
 - So though His physical death is an important part of the plan of redemption, it wasn't a payment
 - Secondly, some assume that He died to go to Hell and that Jesus then suffered in Hell in our place
 - But that too is wrong, and Romans tells us that God's wrath was satisfied by death alone, not by time spent in Hell

Rom. 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Rom. 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- To be clear, Jesus never experienced torment or suffering or even bodily decay during His time in the grave, as Scripture testifies:

**Psa. 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.**

**Psa. 16:10 For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.**

- So our debt was paid in full before He died, and therefore His time in the grave served a different purpose
- That time was preparation for His resurrection, fulfilling Scripture and ensuring no one could deny that Jesus did die
- And while Jesus' body was in the grave, Paul and Peter report that Jesus' Spirit descended to the inner parts of the earth to join the Old Testament saints (see Ephesians 4:9, 1 Peter 3:19)
 - Those saints were held in one side of Sheol, a place of comfort where they had waited since death for their Messiah to arrive
 - These saints died with faith in a future Messiah, but they couldn't enter the Father's presence before Christ's sacrifice
 - But after Jesus died, His Spirit descends to proclaim to them that their debt has been paid in full and they were released
 - Then after three days, Paul says Jesus escorted these captive spirits free and took them to Heaven where they are now
 - But while Jesus was there, Peter says He also announced Himself to the unbelieving souls experiencing torment in the other side of Sheol
 - The point in that pronouncement was not to offer opportunity for salvation, for that time had passed
 - The point of this proclamation was to confirm that the promise of the Messiah had been fulfilled despite their unbelief
- Finally, why was Jesus' physical death and spiritual death reversed from our experience?
 - The answer comes from understanding that the Bible calls Jesus the Second Adam, in the sense that Jesus restarts the Human race
 - In the Garden, God told Adam that if Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, in the very day he ate of it, he would surely die
 - But we know that when Adam ate of the fruit, he didn't die physically on that very day...in fact Adam lived 930 years
 - So the death God was promising Adam for sin was not physical death, it was spiritual death, and on that day Adam died spiritually
 - Later God came into the garden and pronounced a curse in response to Adam's sin declaring Adam's body would also die
 - So Adam's spiritual penalty came before his physical penalty
 - So all that who descend from Adam share both his spiritual penalty and physical

penalty...until we are born again by faith in Jesus

- Jesus is the Second Adam, the Man Who comes to save us from the penalty of both spiritual and physical death
- So Jesus takes our place in suffering both, and He experiences them in the same way Adam did
- First, Jesus dies spiritually and then Jesus dies physically, taking our place in both

1Cor. 15:21 For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead.

1Cor. 15:22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.