

John Wesley's Explanatory Notes - Matthew 27

by John Wesley

John Wesley's sermon on Matthew 27 explores the events leading to Jesus's crucifixion, emphasizing the fulfillment of prophecy and the significance of his death and resurrection.

Scripture: Psalm 22:1, Zechariah 11:12, Matthew 27

Topics: "Fulfillment of Prophecy", "The Crucifixion"

Description

John Wesley expounds on Matthew 27, detailing the events leading to the crucifixion of Jesus, including the betrayal by Judas, the unjust condemnation by the Sanhedrin, and the role of Pilate in the trial. He emphasizes the fulfillment of prophecy and the significance of Jesus' suffering, highlighting the darkness that fell during His crucifixion as a divine testimony against the wickedness of the act. Wesley also notes the tearing of the temple veil at Jesus' death, symbolizing the new access to God for all believers, and concludes with the centurion's declaration of Jesus as the Son of God, affirming His divine identity amidst the tragedy.

Transcript

XXVII. 1. In the morning - As the sanhedrim used to meet in one of the courts of the temple, which was never opened in the night, they were forced to stay till the morning before they could proceed regularly, in the resolution they had taken to put him to death. Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66; ; John 18:28.

Verse 2. Having bound him - They had bound him when he was first apprehended. But they did it now afresh, to secure him from any danger of an escape, as he passed through the streets of Jerusalem.

Verse 3. Then Judas seeing that he was condemned - Which probably he thought Christ would have prevented by a miracle.

Verse 4. They said, what is that to us? - How easily could they digest innocent blood! And yet they had a conscience! It is not lawful (say they) to put it into the treasury - But very lawful to slay the innocent!

Verse 5. In that part of the temple where the sanhedrim met.

Verse 7. They bought with them the potter's field - Well known, it seems, by that name. This was a small price for a field so near Jerusalem. But the earth had probably been digged for potters' vessels, so that it was now neither fit for tillage nor pasture, and consequently of small value. Foreigners -Heathens especially, of whom there were then great numbers in Jerusalem.

Verse 9. Then was fulfilled - What was figuratively represented of old, was now really accomplished. What was spoken by the prophet - The word Jeremy, which was added to the text in latter copies, and thence received into many translations, is evidently a mistake: for he who spoke what St. Matthew here cites (or rather paraphrases) was not Jeremy, but Zechariah. Zechariah 11:12.

Verse 10. As the Lord commanded me - To write, to record.

Verse 11. Art thou the king of the Jews? - Jesus before Caiaphas avows himself to be the Christ, before Pilate to be a king; clearly showing thereby, that his answering no more, was not owing to any fear.

Verse 15. At every feast - Every year, at the feast of the passover. Mark 15:6; Luke 23:17; John 18:39.

Verse 18. He knew that for envy they had delivered him - As well as from malice and revenge; they envied him, because the people magnified him.

Verse 22. They all say, Let him be crucified - The punishment which Barabbas had deserved: and this probably made them think of it. But in their malice they forgot with how dangerous a precedent they furnished the Roman governor. And indeed within the compass of a few years it turned dreadfully upon themselves.

Verse 24. Then Pilate took water and washed his hands - This was a custom frequently used among the heathens as well as among the Jews, in token of innocency.

Verse 25. His blood be on us and on our children - As this imprecation was dread. fully answered in the ruin so quickly brought on the Jewish nation, and the calamities which have ever since pursued that wretched people, so it was peculiarly fulfilled by Titus the Roman general, on the Jews whom he took during the siege of Jerusalem. So many, after having been scourged in a terrible manner, were crucified all round the city, that in a while there was not room near the wall for the crosses to stand by each other. Probably this befell some of those who now joined in this cry, as it certainly did many of their children: the very finger of God thus pointing out their crime in crucifying his Son.

Verse 26. He delivered him to be crucified - The person crucified was nailed to the cross as it lay on the ground, through each hand extended to the utmost stretch, and through both the feet together. Then the cross was raised up, and the foot of it thrust with a violent shock into a hole in the ground prepared for it. This shock disjoined the body, whose whole weight hung upon the nails, till the persons expired through mere dint of pain. This kind of death was used only by the Romans, and by them inflicted only on slaves and the vilest criminals.

Verse 27. The whole troop - or cohort. This was a body of foot commanded by the governor, which was appointed to prevent disorders and tumults, especially on solemn occasions. Mark 15:16.

Verse 28. They put on him a scarlet robe - Such as kings and generals wore; probably an old tattered one.

Verse 32. Him they compelled to bear his cross - He bore it himself, till he sunk under it, John 19:17.

Verse 33. A place called Golgotha, that is, the place of a skull -Golgotha in Syriac signifies a skull or head: it was probably called so from this time; being an eminence upon Mount Calvary, not far from the king's gardens. Mark 15:22; Luke 23:33; John 19:17

Verse 34. They gave him vinegar mingled with gall - Out of derision: which, however nauseous, he received and tasted of. St. Mark mentions also a different mixture which was given him, Wine mingled with myrrh: such as it was customary to give to dying criminals, to make them less sensible of their sufferings: but this our Lord refused to taste, determining to bear the full force of his pains.

Verse 35. They parted his garments - This was the custom of the Romans. The soldiers performed the office of executioners, and divided among them the spoils of the criminals. My vesture - That is, my inner garment. Psalms 22:18.

Verse 38. Mark 15:27; Luke 23:32.

Verse 44. Mark 15:32; Luke 23:33.

Verse 45. From the sixth hour, there was darkness over all the earth unto the ninth hour - Insomuch, that even a heathen philosopher seeing it, and knowing it could not be a natural eclipse, because it was at the time of the full moon, and continued three hours together, cried out, "Either the God of nature suffers, or the frame of the world is dissolved." By this darkness God testified his abhorrence of the wickedness which was then committing. It likewise intimated Christ's sore conflicts with the Divine justice, and with all the powers of darkness.

Verse 46. About the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice - Our Lord's great agony probably continued these three whole hours, at the conclusion of which he thus cried out, while he suffered from God himself what was unutterable. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? - Our Lord hereby at once expresses his trust in God, and a most distressing sense of his letting loose the powers of darkness upon him, withdrawing the comfortable discoveries of his presence, and filling his soul with a terrible sense of the wrath due to the sins which he was bearing. Psalms 22:1.

Verse 48. One taking a sponge, filled it with vinegar - Vinegar and water was the usual drink of the Roman soldiers. It does not appear, that this was given him in derision, but rather with a friendly design, that he might not die before Elijah came. John 19:28.

Verse 50. After he had cried with a loud voice - To show that his life was still whole in him. He dismissed his spirit - So the original expression may be literally translated: an expression admirably suited to our Lord's words, John 10:18: No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. He died by a voluntary act of his own, and in a way peculiar to himself. He alone of all men that ever were, could have continued alive even in the greatest tortures, as long as he pleased, or have retired from the body whenever he had thought fit. And how does it illustrate that love which he manifested in his death? Insomuch as he did not use his power to quit his body, as soon as it was fastened to the cross, leaving only an insensible corpse, to the cruelty of his murderers: but continued his abode in it, with a steady resolution, as long as it was proper. He then retired from it, with a majesty and dignity never known or to be known in any other death: dying, if one may so express it, like the Prince of life.

Verse 51. Immediately upon his death, while the sun was still darkened, the veil of the temple, which separated the holy of holies from the court of the priests, though made of the richest and strongest tapestry, was rent in two from the top to the bottom: so that while the priest was ministering at the golden altar (it being the time of the sacrifice) the sacred oracle, by an invisible power was laid open to full view: God thereby signifying the speedy removal of the veil of the Jewish ceremonies the casting down the partition wall, so that the Jews and Gentiles were now admitted to equal privileges, and the opening a way

through the veil of his flesh for all believers into the most holy place. And the earth was shaken - There was a general earthquake through the whole globe, though chiefly near Jerusalem: God testifying thereby his wrath against the Jewish nation, for the horrid impiety they were committing.

Verse 52. Some of the tombs were shattered and laid open by the earthquake, and while they continued unclosed (and they must have stood open all the Sabbath, seeing the law would not allow any attempt to close them) many bodies of holy men were raised, (perhaps Simeon, Zacharias, John the Baptist, and others who had believed in Christ, and were known to many in Jerusalem,) And coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, went into the holy city (Jerusalem) and appeared to many - Who had probably known them before: God hereby signifying, that Christ had conquered death, and would raise all his saints in due season.

Verse 54. The centurion - The officer who commanded the guard; and they that were with him feared, saying, Truly this was the Son of God -Referring to the words of the chief priests and scribes, Matthew 27:43: He said, I am the Son of God.

Verse 56. James - The less: he was so called, to distinguish him from the other James, the brother of John; probably because he was less in stature.

Verse 57. When the evening was come - That is, after three o'clock; the time from three to six they termed the evening. Mark 15:42; Luke 23:50; John 19:38.

Verse 62. On the morrow, the day that followed the day of the preparation - The day of preparation was the day before the Sabbath, whereon they were to prepare for the celebration of it. The next day then was the Sabbath according to the Jews. But the evangelist seems to express it by this circumlocution, to show the Jewish Sabbath was then abolished.

Verse 63. That impostor said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again - We do not find that he had ever said this to them, unless when he spoke of the temple of his body, John 2:19,21. And if they here refer to what he then said, how perverse and iniquitous was their construction on these words, when he was on his trial before the council? Matthew 26:61. Then they seemed not to understand them!

Verse 65. Ye have a guard - Of your own, in the tower of Antonia, which was stationed there for the service of the temple.

Verse 66. They went and secured the sepulchre, sealing the stone, and setting a guard - They set Pilate's signet, or the public seal of the sanhedrim upon a fastening which they had put on the stone. And all this uncommon caution was overruled by the providence of God, to give the strongest proofs of Christ's ensuing resurrection; since there could be no room for the least suspicion of deceit, when it should be found, that his body was raised out of a new tomb, where there was no other corpse, and this tomb hewn out of a rock, the mouth of which was secured by a great stone, under a seal, and a guard of soldiers.

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