

## Matthew 27:45-50

### *Jesus' Death*

(Mark 15:33–41; Luke 23:44–49; John 19:28–37)

<sup>45</sup>From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land. <sup>46</sup>About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*” which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

<sup>47</sup>When some of those standing there heard this, they said, “This fellow is calling for Elijah.”

<sup>48</sup>Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and soaked it with sour wine. Then he put it on a stick and gave him a drink. <sup>49</sup>The rest said, “Leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him.”

<sup>50</sup>After Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

## The Greatest Battle Ever Fought

### I.

Suddenly it was dark. It happened right at noon, when the sun is normally the brightest. It was so dark that there was no sunlight at all—no moon or stars could be seen. Just darkness. Everything came to a stop. It was no eclipse, either. Historians tell us that as far away as Egypt everyone was experiencing the same mysterious and frightening darkness.

The darkness came because of a crucifixion—an ugly way to put people to death. Sometimes it would take a couple days for to die, depending upon how badly the person had been whipped. How hot and long it must have been. The executed criminal’s diaphragm worked slower and slower until he was asphyxiated as his breaths became shallower and shallower.

Jesus was with two others on their crosses outside Jerusalem. Thousands of people had followed him, listening intently to him and singing his praises. Less than a week before a crowd had called him “Savior.” A few hours before this moment he had acknowledged that he was the King of the kingdom of truth. He was God’s special Soldier. But now...the Warrior was dying.

*This* was the final battle. The big one. He had come into this world and had worked every day of his life to prepare for this. Your future, my future, the future of everyone who has ever lived was hanging on the outcome of this battle. It was the greatest battle ever fought.

Websites that list “the greatest battles of all time” say their criteria is actually based on the influence of a battle on history. Battles, cultures, countries, leaders, and forms of government all have influence on history. But all of them come and go. Except for Jesus and *this* battle.

The life of Jesus is the most significant single life in all history. What happened on the cross at his death changed the entire world and everyone who has ever lived.

### II.

“From the sixth hour until the ninth hour, there was darkness over all the land. <sup>46</sup>About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:45-46, EHV). From noon until 3 p.m. the darkness reigned.

The physical agony Jesus suffered was horrendous. He had already been distressed the night before in Gethsemane. There was no sleep at all that night because of the trials. Then came the special punishment: the crown of thorns, the constant mocking, the pulling out of his beard, the blows to his face, the humiliation of having his clothing stripped off, the cruel scourging that ripped skin and flesh down to the bone with each lash of the whip.

In that weakened state he was forced to carry the heavy crossbeam of his cross until he collapsed. Only after all that did they lay him down on the cross and drive long nails through his hands and feet and hoist the cross up and into its hole in the ground as the soldiers and Jewish leaders mocked him.

How can anyone do such things to another human being? That's my Savior they are torturing! It's hard to read that account.

But Jesus withstands that pain and agony without complaint. As a matter of fact, you hear him speak some amazing words on the cross. First he offered a prayer asking the Father to forgive all those who crucified and mocked him. Next he answered the desperate prayer of the thief who believed in him with a gospel promise of heaven that very day. Then, calmly and with a tender concern for his mother, he told John to care for her.

But there was darkness. We begin to realize that all his physical suffering was perhaps like an insect sting compared to the spiritual suffering happening on the cross. The darkness shows how much God hates sin—that terrible thing that separates us from him. The darkness is “Both God’s reaction to the judicial murder of his Son and God’s dreadful judgment upon sin as suffered by his Son” (People’s Bible, Mark, p. 226).

In a way, we may be grateful for the darkness. It certainly must have shut up the mockers. It also covered up what no eyes should have to see as Jesus was on that cross, alone, against all the forces of hell.

Satan hates Jesus. This is the moment when he saw the Son of Man and the Son of God at his weakest—where he might be vulnerable. Satan will do everything to force Jesus to give up his life’s work of paying for your guilt and mine and for atoning for the whole world’s sins.

The devil’s lying reaches a fevered pitch. Perhaps he told Jesus: “You won’t make any difference, Son of God. You are not big enough to cover the whole world’s guilt and sin. The whole history of the world is on *my* side, Christ. Why care about these people? They turned on you. Even Judas and Peter did it. Thousands—*millions* will turn on you later.”

The internal pain and pressure mount higher and higher. So much darkness! What have *I* done to cause this? What have *you* done that Jesus should suffer so? The weight of the sins of billions upon billions of people are pressing down. All the massacres in the world. All the abortions. All the divorces. All the horrible things you and I have ever thought, spoken, and done.

All alone Jesus is fighting this powerful evil angel in this great darkness. Pure, holy, and faithful, he keeps on fighting. Still loving us. Still holding his ground. Even a child can understand that *this* is why Jesus is both God and man—man to be our substitute, God to pay for all the sins of humanity.

But then...the worst part. The Father’s white-hot anger is burning against him. Think of the power he had—the Creator of the universe who crushed the world with a gigantic flood. The One who smashed Sodom and Gomorrah, who made the mountain tremble and shake for Moses. *That* is the One who is directing his full anger and fury against Jesus.

You can hear it in Jesus’ voice as his tone changes. An awful and loud cry came from those tortured lungs. It may have come out even like a scream: “About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’” (Matthew 27:46, EHV).

Our Triune God is one eternal God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How impossible it is to understand the fact that the Son is now forsaken. The Father—source of all true love in the world—turns his back on the Son whom he had so clearly declared at his baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration to be his beloved.

The Father suspends his relationship with his Son so that the Warrior Son could pay for this entire world’s sins. It must have torn at the Father’s heart. His wrath is focused on the evil Jesus bore because he so *hates* the malignant tumor of sin that is causing the human race to rot.

At the beginning of this suffering Jesus called him “Father.” You can see the intimacy—the closeness. Now it is “my God, my God” as he loudly asks the big “why” question. Notice how formal that is?

While the relationship is broken, his faith is still strong, even as he is left alone—forsaken and abandoned. This is the moment of sheer horror for our Warrior. It is the worst moment of his life. His lonely suffering has reached its peak on that cross. Here is where the battle is either going to be won or lost as Jesus suffers for us.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah explains what is happening: “Surely he was taking up our weaknesses, and he was carrying our sufferings. We thought it was because of God that he was stricken, smitten, and afflicted” (Isaiah 53:4, EHV). *All* of this is because of *us*. *Jesus* remained perfect and holy in himself this entire time. Yet *our* sin was charged to *him*, and he was willingly paying for it.

No matter how old you are, by now you have noticed something about yourself. We are not always aware of how much we sin, but we are aware that something is broken inside us. Often we think we will just work harder to break that anger habit, that laziness habit, that lust habit, that greed habit, that overeating habit—and all the other sins we find ourselves falling back on. News flash! The problem is bigger. We cannot work hard enough. We need a bigger Warrior who can purchase forgiveness for us all. *This* is God’s grace in all its sweat and blood.

### III.

Perhaps the darkness began to retreat. The mockers start in again, thinking Jesus’ cry was begging Elijah to come back. “When some of those standing there heard this, they said, ‘This fellow is calling for Elijah.’<sup>48</sup> Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, and soaked it with sour wine. Then he put it on a stick and gave him a drink.<sup>49</sup> The rest said, ‘Leave him alone. Let’s see if Elijah comes to save him’” (Matthew 27:47-49, EHV).

The end is near. They wait, but not long. Things happen very quickly. Jesus was thirsty. “When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, ‘It is finished!’” (John 19:30, EHV). “After Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, he gave up his spirit” (Matthew 27:50, EHV).

Mark tells us: “The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Mark 15:38, EHV). Someone has said that was God’s way of saying “Amen” to Jesus’ words: “It is finished.” It means that there is no longer a need for sacrificing. No more sheep, goats, or bulls need to be killed. There was no more need for priests or high priests. All the restrictions that were in place to keep God’s chosen people separate were removed. Every prophecy in the Old Testament about the coming Savior has been fully kept. God has opened up access to himself for all people, nations, languages, cultures, and generations through the Lamb of God—Jesus Christ. He actually transferred the righteousness of Jesus to *us*!

Notice how we can tell that the sacrifice of Jesus is complete: he says “Father” again. God’s anger has been spent. The horrible separation between Father and Son no longer exists. That loud cry: “It is finished” says everything. In this greatest battle of all time, the work of atoning for humanity is over. Jesus has smashed Satan’s head—as predicted in Eden. Our home in heaven is prepared. There is nothing more you or I, or even *God*, still has to do to pay for our guilt and sin. We are forgiven!

His work is done. He is exhausted, but everything is just as it should be, so it is time for him to leave. The soldiers, the mockers, hell, and Satan himself could not kill him. *Now*, of his own free will, he gives his soul into his Father’s loving hands. Our holy Jesus, who remained unspotted and unblemished as he experienced our hell, now offers his pure and perfect life as the final, once-and-for-all sacrifice that had been promised ever since Eden’s garden.

It is finished. Amen.