

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**The Six Miracles of Calvary: "Darkness"**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - March 6, 2016**

**The Six Miracles of Calvary**

- Making Easter last
- Encouragement to invite a friend or neighbor
- New series: The Miracles of Calvary

Surrounding Christ's death on the cross was a chain of miraculous events that gave tremendous testimony to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, His claims as the Son of God, and as a result, to the fact of the redemption that comes through faith in Him. Any one of these miracles alone would be astounding, but linked together they form an unbreakable chain of evidence that authenticates and declares Jesus Christ as truly the Son of God and the redemptive Savior of the world.

1. The miraculous darkness that settled over the land.
2. The rending of the veil in the temple.
3. The shaking of the earth and the rocks splitting.
4. The opening of the tombs.
5. The raising of many saints who had died.
6. Resurrection Sunday - The empty tomb.

**The Biblical Theme of 'Darkness'**

The words for darkness and light occur approximately 390 times in Scripture (over 160 times for darkness and 229 times for light). It is not without meaning that the first act of God in Genesis was the removal of the darkness by the creation of light. Throughout Scripture, God uses darkness as a vehicle through which to express certain truth to sinful man (cf. Gen. 15:12-18; Ex. 10:21-22; 20:21; Josh. 24:7; Deut. 4:10; 11; 5:22; Prov. 4:19; Joel. 2:2; Amos 5:20; Zeph. 1:15; Mat. 8:12; 25:30).

The very first words of God in the realm of special revelation, were '**Let there be light.**' We cannot emphasize the importance of these words enough. There is a rich theological intentionality to the Scriptures opening with a focus on darkness and light. When God first formed the heavens and the earth, Moses tells us that "the earth was without form and void, and that darkness spread across the face of the deep." It was into this world of darkness that God spoke those very first words, "Let there be light!" The point of Genesis 1:3 is not for you to try to understand scientifically how there could have been light without the luminary bodies, but to learn the theological rationale for light in the world. *God made light without a sun so that man would understand that all things derived their life and preservation from God apart from the means to which we are tempted to attribute power and sustenance.* In the Damascus road experience when the apostle Paul was converted, the Savior told him, regarding the world of lost men, that He had come . . . **to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18).**

**Proverbs 4:19**

The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.

**John 12:46**

<sup>46</sup> I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

**Colossians 1:11-14**

<sup>11</sup> May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. <sup>13</sup> He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

## 'The Darkness'



*Return from Calvary* (1891) Herbert Schmalz

Six trials were now over (three Jewish and three Roman). Christ had been illegally condemned and turned over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified between the two thieves. He had been chosen in place of the notorious Barabbas who was released because Pilate gave in to the cries of the Jewish mob--all of which is a fitting picture of Christ's work as the innocent Lamb of God taking the place of the guilty.

Christ was nailed to the cross at the third hour (9 a.m.). This was a time of contrasts with a lot of activity taking place. There was the gross iniquity and activity of His malefactors who were parting his garments, casting lots for His seamless coat, watching, mocking, shaking their heads and hurled abusive language at the Lord as he hung on the cross for their sins and the sins of the whole world.

These were also busy hours for the Savior--hours of activity which stood out in striking contrast to those of His enemies. Though suffering horribly at the hands of men, His focus was on others rather than himself. It was in these first three hours of light that He utters his first three sayings:

**1.** Christ was audibly interceding on behalf of those crucifying Him, saying over and over again as the original Greek text suggests, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). This in itself is another wonder of the cross which showed the Savior's uniqueness.

For the Jews it was an eye for an eye. For the Romans revenge was God. Together these had nailed Him to the cross. They had spit on Him, slapped Him, brought false accusers against Him, mocked Him and beat His face to a pulp so that His features were unrecognizable according to Isaiah 52:14. But Christ said, "Father, forgive them . . ." Note that He did not say "Father forgive me," for He was without sin, spotless and pure. It was "forgive them." "He committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth."

Christ was aware of His mission and purpose. He had come to die for their sin so they (as well as you and I) might be forgiven. This was a request to lay their sin upon Him. Christ was there to assume their debt and ours. He was there to die judicially and literally for the moral guilt of man (Isa. 53:4-6). Indeed, it was not just the Romans and the Jews who put Him on the cross, but the sin of the world, yours and mine.

**2.** In Christ's second saying, He was also personally caring for and listening to the cry of the dying thief and answering Him with the assurance of salvation--the salvation which He was about to purchase. To the thief He said, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

**3.** In Christ's third saying, He was recognizing the presence of His beloved mother and disciple and commending her to John's care (John 19:25-27). In this He was executing His last will and testament, yet He was also thinking of you and me.

The first three hours were hours of hate, rejection, mockery and cruelty on the one hand, but on the other they were hours of love, intercession, and mercy. So it is now noon, the sun is high in the sky--and suddenly total, dismal darkness falls over the land accompanied by a somber silence.

**Matthew 27:45-53**

<sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>47</sup> And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." <sup>48</sup> And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup> But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

We can look to three things that the darkness tells us God the Father is telling us about Himself and about Christ:

**1. The darkness authenticated Christ's divine character and interpreted his death/mission.**

Christ told the people that He had come to save them from their sin and they were offended. When He said, "I Am the Son of God," they took up stones to stone Him.

Another time they said, "Show us a sign from heaven." Now they had a sign. And other signs would soon follow like reverberating peals of thunder echoing the world-wide importance of this historic event.

The Roman centurion standing close by got the picture. At the close of this event he exclaimed, "Truly, this was the Son of God," and proclaimed, "Certainly this man was innocent."

The character of Christ's sufferings, followed by the darkness, proved that Jesus Christ was without sin and qualified to bear our sins and deliver us from our own spiritual darkness.

**2. The darkness showed the cosmic magnitude of Christ's death.**

This was the death of light itself. This supernatural manifestation proved the importance of this person, and the death He was dying. His death was for man's redemption from sin and reconciliation to God. From man's standpoint, what could be more important than this?

**3. The darkness demonstrated God's holiness and the barrier that sin creates.**

As Isaiah declared, it demonstrated that Christ was judicially smitten of God. It showed that a holy God had turned His face away from His Son in a judicial sense, not a relational sense, and had poured out His wrath of divine justice on Christ who was there bearing our penalty, taking our place.

**Isaiah 59:1-2**

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,  
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;  
but your iniquities have made a separation  
between you and your God,  
and your sins have hidden his face from you  
so that he does not hear.

**John 3:19**

<sup>19</sup> And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

This was the point in time when Christ bore our sin and when God the Father and the Holy Spirit had to turn their backs on the suffering Savior.

The darkness demonstrated that:

- God is of purer eyes than to behold sin (Hab. 1:13).
- Christ was smitten of God because of God's holiness and man's sin (Isa 53:4-6).
- Christ was bearing the sin of the entire human race as man's substitute (Isa 53:10-12).

**2 Corinthians 5:21a (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

But this does not mean that Christ was utterly forsaken by the Father. He was not, for the Father heard His prayers and delivered His Son from the cross and the tomb. But for a while the darkness spoke of Christ separated from God by the sin of the world and smitten for us as He bore our sin.

**The Power of His Light in Our Lives**

The psalmist wrote,

**Psalm 107:14**

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and burst their bonds apart.

**Psalm 112:4**

Light dawns in the darkness for the upright; he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.

While the darkness portrayed the sin and darkness of man and the wrath of God upon sin, it also dramatically demonstrated the love of God acting sovereignly in history to deliver us from the darkness of Satan's kingdom and from sin and death. Thus, just as suddenly as it had come, the darkness was dispelled by the light of day and Christ was then heard to speak again. He said *tetelesthai*, meaning, "it is finished."

***Tetelesthai!* It is finished!**

He was able to say this because during those hours of darkness man's redemption had been accomplished once and for all. The words "it is finished," represent the Greek *tetelesthai*, the perfect tense of *teleo*. Interestingly, this word was used in the Papyri of a son reporting to his father that the job he had been sent to do was done, accomplished. It meant, "Mission accomplished!"

Then, crying out one last time, Christ said, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit," the Lord voluntarily, by the power of His own will, yielded up His Spirit and died. (Matt. 27:50)

Christ came to rescue us from darkness and to deliver us to the Kingdom of Light.

**John 1:4-5 4**

*In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.*

**John 12:46**

*"I have come as light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. And now we too have purpose – to be the light of the world in His place . . .*

In Ephesians we read,

**Ephesians 5:7-8**

Therefore do not become partners with them; <sup>8</sup> for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

And in Paul's letter to the church in Rome;

**Romans 13:12**

<sup>12</sup> The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.

We are now to be light in the darkness and we cannot do that apart from Christ. It is by being in Christ and He in us that this hope of lighting the world through us is realized.

**Communion/Benediction**

How deep the Father's love for us  
How vast beyond all measure  
That He should give His only Son  
To make a wretch His treasure

How great the pain of searing loss  
The Father turns His face away  
As wounds which mar the Chosen One  
Bring many sons to glory

**Community Group Discussion Questions:**

The 40 days before Easter are called 'Lent' by the church and throughout church history this season of worship is dedicated to connecting with Christ as he approaches Holy Week and the cross by considering his suffering through fasting and various sacrifices. Do you have a personal faith history of practicing Lent? How was that for you? How about now?

People talk about the "cross of Christ" - what does that term mean to you? What would you say happened on the cross on the day Christ was crucified?

What do you think of the miracles of Calvary? Five are mentioned in the passage below. Identify them and talk about each one. Which miracle seems most amazing to you? What do these miracles have to do with us?

**Matthew 27:45-53** <sup>45</sup> Now from the sixth hour there <sup>1</sup> **was darkness over all the land** until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup> And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>47</sup> And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." <sup>48</sup> And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. <sup>49</sup> But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." <sup>50</sup> And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. <sup>51</sup> And behold, <sup>2</sup> **the curtain of the temple was torn in two**, from top to bottom. <sup>3</sup> **And the earth shook**, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup> <sup>4</sup> **The tombs also were opened**. And many bodies of <sup>5</sup> **the saints who had fallen asleep were raised**, <sup>53</sup> and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

What do these miracles have to do with us?

Dave talked about darkness on Sunday. Where have you experienced darkness? One teacher and writer of the early church talked about experiencing the "dark night of the soul." What does this kind of darkness represent?

Jesus said "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."

(John 12:46) How does believing in Jesus give us light or take us out of darkness? How have you experienced this?

How can we as a Community Life group experience the light of Christ more effectively this Easter season and beyond into the new year? The Bible calls the Word of God a 'light unto our feet.' How can we make sure the Bible serves to bring light into our Community Life group experience?