

Date: 27th May 2012
Reading: Matthew 27:33-55
Speaker: Stephen Whitmore
Subject: Darkness

We want to concentrate on verses 45 and 46 but we have read the whole portion to see how the verses fit into the context.

The people were mocking the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God when a darkness came over the whole earth for three hours. This was something they had never seen before.

Why was there darkness? We can understand this by thinking about when we read of darkness in the Bible.

In Genesis 1, there was darkness over the face of the earth before God formed His creation into the place where He set man. This is explained in 2 Corinthians 4. It is a picture of the work of God in saving men. Their minds are darkened, blinded by the god of this world, the devil. The only answer is that the God Who commanded light to shine out of darkness in the beginning must shine into our hearts to bring a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). In this way, the darkness is a picture of sin which fills our minds from birth. The Bible is clear. **“All have sinned”** (Rom 3:23). **“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”** (Rom 5:12). **“I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”** (Psalm 51:5) In contrast, **“God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”** (1 John 1:5). Those who know the salvation of God **“walk in the light”** (1 John 1:7).

John records more about this in his Gospel. The Lord stated, **“I am the Light of the world”**(John 8:12). He warned that **“men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil”** (John 3:19). They show their true character by their response to Him. **“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved”** (John 3:20). Their answer to the Light was to crucify Him. The darkness is a way in which God demonstrates that men have refused the true Light and chosen darkness and sin.

In Exodus 10, there was darkness in Egypt for three days. Moses had asked Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave on nine occasions. Each time, God sent a plague to warn Pharaoh. The darkness was last plague before God finally delivered Israel. In this way, it stands as a warning that God has reached the end of His pleading. The same picture is seen in Joel 2:31 when God foretells what will happen when He finally judges the world. This is immediately preceded by the Sun going dark and the moon turning to blood. The Jews would have remembered the association between darkness and judgement from God. God is warning that judgement must come. In His mercy, it falls at this time on the only person Who did not deserve to be punished. This is the basis on which He can promise, **“Whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered”** (Joel 2:32). We are all sinners and God must punish sin. The place of judgement is described as **“outer darkness”** (Matt 8:12).

In Exodus 20, when God spoke to Israel to give the 10 commandments, He covered the mountain in darkness. The reason for this is that He is so holy that no one can look at Him and live (Ex 33:20). Even when they heard the voice of God from the darkness, the people quaked with fear because they knew they could not meet His demands.

These pictures combine to show a hopeless condition. There is nothing that we can do to please God. The next verse gives the answer. As we have already seen, the judgement of God did fall but on Someone Who did not deserve to be punished. He was forsaken so that we do not need to be forsaken by God. Peter describes this for all who trust Him, **“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed”** (1 Pet 2:24). Isaiah describes it, **“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all”** (Isa 53:6). Here is Someone Who trusted God from the first moments of His life, **“I was cast upon thee from**

the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly” (Psa 22:10). He always pleased God (John 8:29) but He is the One Who was punished. In verse 34, He refused the vinegar that the people offered because He would not take anything to lessen His suffering. In verse 48, He had finished the work so He takes the vinegar because He has nothing more to suffer. As soon as He had taken it, He cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30) and laid down His life. Everything that God needed had been paid in full so He can offer everlasting life to those who turn from the darkness of sin to the Light of God in Christ. There is no alternative. Peter said, “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). The choice is clear. Look to the cross and recognise that Christ has done everything or try any other way and be sure it will fail. God warns, “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation” (Heb 2:3). The word of God is clear. God must punish sin, No one needs to be judged because Christ has suffered: “The gospel of Christ.. is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom 1:16)