

Community Group Discussion Questions

“Midnight at Mid-day” Matthew 27:45-47 March 17/18

Getting Started

The moments in your life when you feel as if you haven't done anything wrong, but yet you feel despair, disjointed, and dejection by God is considered a “dark night of the soul”. Your life is filled with questions that center around God's lack of presence in a situation or stretch of road that seems like you are on the way to nowhere from somewhere. You may not feel like this now, but most likely there will be a moment, or you know someone going through it. Allow these words today to be comfort for you or someone near you.

Jesus' words in these verses are a quotation of Psalm 22, which is a Psalm of lament. The normal progression of these types of Psalms is to start with a lament (crying out to God in our pain), then move to a statement of trust, and then an ending of praise. Share with us about a time when you or someone close to you experienced a 'dark night of the soul.' Were you able to express your trust in God during this hard time? Was there a good resolution to it? Did you see God prove Himself faithful and worthy of praise?

Going Deeper

- I. Divine Darkness: (Vs. 45)
 - a. Scientific Miracle: “sixth hour to ninth hour”
 - b. Symbolic Message: “darkness”
 - i. Judgment: Exodus 10:22
 - ii. Juxtaposition: John 8:12

What was the 3 hours of darkness? It was high noon, and yet darkness suddenly fell over all the land, a darkness that lasted for three hours. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all call attention to this darkness, yet none of them attempts to explain how it happened. There really is no simple explanation.

The most likely biblical parallel is found in Exodus. “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Extend your hand toward heaven so that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness that can be felt.’” Exodus 10:21

I suspect that a hush fell over the crowd, and that all that could be heard were gasps of fear and terror.

Why do you think God the Father caused this blackness? What lesson was He trying to teach? (*Hint: sin is so evil, awful, and destructive, that it takes all light and life away*)

II. Sacred Separation: (Vs. 46)

- a. Significant Shout: “cried out”
- b. Strategic Statement: (Direct quote from Psalm 22:1 in Aramaic)
- c. Shift in Standing: “my God, my God”

Special Note: This is the only time Jesus ever refers to God not in the terms of “Abba” or “Father”.

- d. Substitutionary Sacrifice: “forsaken”
 - i. Sin Separates: Isaiah 59:2
 - ii. Cross was a Curse: Galatians 3:13
 - iii. Freedom in Forgiveness: Romans 3:24-25

Jesus expressed His feelings of abandonment. God placed the sins of the world on His Son, and Jesus felt the desolation of being unconscious of His Father’s presence. It was the manifestation of God’s hatred of sin that Jesus experienced in those 3 hours. Eternal existence in perfect community has been broken by 3 hours on the cross as the Father has to turn His face away from the sin that Jesus has taken upon Himself.

Read 1 Peter 2:24. When you consider what Jesus went through for you, how does that change your attitude toward sin?

III. Meaningful Misunderstanding: (Vs. 47)

- a. Rational Ridicule: "Elijah"
- i. Confusion: "Eli, Eli"
- ii. Connection: Malachi 4:5-6
- b. Refused Rescue: Matthew 26:53

BECAUSE JESUS WAS FORSAKEN YOU CAN KNOW THAT:

- THE DARKNESS IS GONE
- THE SILENCE IS BROKEN
- THE ABSENCE IS FILLED

Take Away: Jesus was willing to fulfill Psalm 22 so you could build your life on the foundation of Psalm 23.

In spite of the unimaginable pain of being separated from the Father and Holy Spirit for those 3 hours, Jesus did not call down angels to stop it, but stayed on the cross so He could die for our sins. **What was the most meaningful thing about this message to you? How did God speak to you? What changes will you make in your thinking, faith, or behavior?**

Leaders, for a music devotion, you could go to Youtube and play the song "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" by Tim Hughes.

Prayer Requests

Who are you praying for that will accept your invitation to join you at CBC for Easter weekend?