



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #326
Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement

Jesus' Atoning Sacrifice On the Cross

A Variety of Witnesses Testify to Jesus' Death
MT 27.51-56 (Parallel Texts: MK 15.38-41; LK 23.45B, 47-49)

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51 At that moment (when Jesus died) the curtain of the temple was ripped in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, huge rocks split 52 and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion ^Mwho stood there in front of Jesus, ^{MT}and those with him who were guarding Jesus ^Mheard his cry, and saw how he died, ^{MT}the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, ^Land praised God, exclaiming, "Surely ^Lthis was a righteous man--^{MT}the Son of God!"

^LWhen all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what had taken place, they beat their breasts as they went away.

55 ^{MT}Many women were there, watching from a distance. ^MIn Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. ^{MT}Then they had followed Jesus from Galilee to care for his needs. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, ^MSolome, ^{MT}and the mother of Zebedee's sons. ^MMany other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Golgotha, Outside the Western City Gates of Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement
	Jesus' Atoning Sacrifice on the Cross
Title:	A Variety of Witnesses Testify to Jesus' Death

Today's reading shows us the matchless significance of Jesus' death by the great variety of witnesses that attested to it. No other death in history has created a response like this. We will list them in the order the gospel writers presented them.

(1) God bore witness to the results of Jesus' death by ripping the curtain in the Temple that separated the Holy place from the Holy of Holies in two, from top to bottom. The fact that it was done top down showed that no person had done this. Only God could do such a thing.

The wall separating us from dwelling in God's most intimate presence was now removed, because the death of Jesus had accomplished complete atonement for our sins. Jesus' death wrapped us in his own righteousness by removing all of our sins forever, and qualified us to live in fellowship of the Trinity as priests under Jesus, our Great High Priest.

(2) Nature testified to the transformation of spiritual reality created by Jesus' atonement, by shaking the earth with a great earthquake. Rocks split open, and the shaking opened up many graves. This was necessary to release the resurrected saints who were within those tombs!

(3) Resurrected believers testified about Jesus' death and resurrection after Jesus himself rose from the dead. We do not know how many were raised when Jesus died, but Matthew wrote noted they were "many." Just as the death of Jesus opened up the way to forgiveness and God's presence, it also qualified every believer to attain to the resurrection with Jesus. This was the significance of the resurrection of many Old Covenant believers.

(4) The centurion who stood watch at the base of the cross, and all the others in the band testified that Jesus was surely a righteous man, and the Son of God. These were some of the hardest men on earth. They had seen countless people die in numerous ways, and many on the cross. They had NEVER seen anybody die like Jesus, especially on the cross. They had never witnessed the love and grace that Jesus demonstrated for his enemies, nor had they seen the sky turn dark at mid-day, or huge earthquakes split the earth at the moment someone died. They were terrified by it all, yet they had to praise God for what they had seen and heard. Jesus' death was truly like none other.

(5) The people who had stood by at Golgotha to mock Jesus, and watched him die were also shaken to the core by what they experienced. They went home beating their breasts in repentance and shame for being part of the death of the Son of God.

(6) Many women who had been following Jesus since the great Galilean ministry, and traveled with him to Jerusalem for Passion Week stood by the cross and witnessed all of these events, from start to finish. They had cared for his needs, and those of the entire larger group of about 120 disciples since Galilee. They had honored Jesus by standing by him to the end, even though it broke their hearts to do so. Men were conspicuously absent in the record, other than the Apostle John.

(7) The apostle John was the sole male disciple specifically mentioned at the cross when Jesus died. His testimony is an integral part of the next DJN reading, so we will comment on his presence and role there.

There has never been a birth, life, nor death in the same league with Jesus. He stands utterly alone and unique as the Son of God. This brief description of what happened when he died caused his glory to shine in his atonement. There is none like our God!

APPLICATION:

Jesus' death in our behalf makes us rich beyond compare with everything that really matters. We have God's love, presence, eternal life, fellowship, truth, joy, and peace that passes understanding poured out within us by the Holy Spirit because Jesus died for us. We will never stop experiencing the infinite benefits of what Jesus accomplished for us in eternity.

What part of what Jesus died to purchase for you are you most grateful for today? How are you going to express your praise and thanksgiving to him?

How will you join the witnesses who testified to the power of Jesus' death? Who will you share the wonders of his death with?