**Title:** The Day the World Went Dark

**Text:** Luke 23:44-56

**Illustration:** Elvis Presley, the legendary singer and movie star who became known as the king of rock and roll – died nearly 50 years ago.

He rose to fame in the 50s, but in the 70s his personal life began falling apart. Divorced his wife Priscilla and began gaining weight and dabbling with barbiturates, tranquilizers and amphetamines…

Dead - Bathroom at his Graceland estate by his girlfriend. His death was officially ruled a casualty of heart disease – aggravated by drug use

However, despite clear statements from doctors and a coroner – some believe he faked his own death to go into hiding…

John Stott wrote the following (The Cross of Christ): “In daring to write a book about the cross, there is, of course, a great danger of presumption. This is partly because what actually happened when God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ is a mystery whose depths we shall spend eternity plumbing.

**Transition:** In today’s text we are going to look at two events (Jesus’ death & burial), who benefited from those events and lastly, what it has to do with us today.

1. **Two Events: Jesus’ Death & Burial**

**(vs. 44-46)** It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun’s light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

Darkness & a torn curtain

the sun’s light failed (at 12pm!): (to fail, to give out, to die out… the light from the sun quit…”

A darkness so all-encompassing that you could feel it.

Jesus was on the cross for 6 hours (from 9-3pm) and our text highlights the fact that darkness fell on the land for the last three hours (from 12pm – 3pm) *brightest…*

Before we move on we need to understand that throughout the OT the idea of coming darkness was synonymous with God’s judgment: (not a passing theme)

**Amos 8:9-10** “And on that day,” declares the Lord God, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. **10**I will turn your feasts into mourning and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.”

**Zeph 1:14-15** The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. **15**A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom…

**Joel 2:1-2** Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near, **2**a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness!

Jesus spent a total of 6 hours nailed to the cross, from 9am – 3pm and our text tells us that the last 3 hours (the sixth hour to the 9th hour) were spent in total darkness.

The people at that moment would have understood this to be God’s judgment.

And then 3pm lights come back on and they were all still in one piece 🡪 but the temple curtain was not…

**(vs. 45b-46)** And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

From 9 – 12pm Jesus endured the most intense torture ever known to man (Physically & emotionally) BUT then from 12 – 3pm he experienced the intense, foaming wrath of the infinitely powerful God, & at its conclusion the temple curtain was torn from top to bottom.

To appreciate this, we have to observe the temple as it was in the 1st century.

There were courtyards leading up to the temple and within the temple.

Outer court: foreigners / women

Next court: Jewish men

The next court Inside the Temple itself (the holy place) / priests stood when they did their duties

Beyond that was the Most Holy Place / separated from the Holy Place by a thick curtain.

🡪 only the high priest (chosen by lot) would enter that room once a year to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat

There was one other time where darkness fell like this and it didn’t last for 3 hours but 3 days:

9th plague in Egypt / 1st Passover / preceding that Passover there was darkness / wrath of God / but then death came / the Israelites were shielded from death – spotless, first born lamb…

And here they are now – standing empty handed / crucifying the son of God who they know is innocent and yet there he (the lamb of God dying in their place).

**(vs. 46)** Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

**Transition:** Jesus’ death was remarkable & Jesus’ burial was remarkable…

Often when contemplating the gospel, we think about Jesus’ death & resurrection all the while frequently overlooking his burial. However, the gospel writers will not let us do that. All four give detailed descriptions of his burial & Paul wrote ->

**(1 Cor 15:3-4)** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures…

Apostles Creed: “He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried”

His death (darkness & torn curtain) was important because it shows that he bore the wrath of God in our place – the burial was important because -

**It proved he was really dead: Mark 44**Joseph of Arimathea- Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. **45**And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. (spear in Jesus’ side) (pre and post burial proof)

**It served as his final humiliation:** He had to be made like his brothers in every respect

**It fulfilled scripture: (Is 53:8-9)** By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? **9**And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

**Transition:** Two events: Jesus death and burial,

1. **Who his death & burial benefited (4 groups)**

**First: It benefited the least likely**: We’ve already seen that he saved *the Thief (not a victim, he was a criminal)*

**(vs. 47)** Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent!”  *Shocking!*

The Centurion – 100 soldiers (century) / Oversaw Jesus’ entire crucifixion. Ordered the scourging, would have taken part in the mockery… (dehumanizing)

*What did he see?*

* Pilates conviction that Jesus was innocent.
* Jesus’ silent suffering.
* Father forgive them…
* Turns to the women who were mourning – don’t mourn for me but for yourselves…
* Thief who had been deriding him, forgiven (today you will be with me in paradise)
* Lights off / lights on
* Felt the earthquake & likely heard the temple curtain torn.
* And this murderous, hardened pagan – turned to and worshipped God.

**Second: It Benefited those who saw their guilt:**

**(vs. 48)** And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts.

* Exuberant when Jesus entered Jerusalem.
* Frothing at the mouth during his trial “Crucify Him!”
* Now, beating their breasts… (Think Pharisee & the Publican – beating his breast…)
* Acts 2:36 / Let all the house.

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” 3,000 souls

**Third: It benefited those who were willing to identify with Jesus:**

**(vs. 50-54) 50**Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, **51**who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. **52**This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. **53**Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. **54**It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning.

**John 12:42-43** Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

**John 19:38-39** **38**After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, **39**Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came…

**Fourth: It benefited those who were marginalized:** The women who had come with him from Galilee

Earlier these women were standing back with all the disciples at a distance watching these things…

**(vs. 55-56) 55**The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. **56**Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments.On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

1. **What this has to do with us today**

Though darkness came that day the judgment fell on Jesus – There is another day of judgment coming for those who have not put their trust in Jesus.

**Rev 6 12**When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, **13**and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. **14**The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. **15**Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%206%3A12-17&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30793a)] and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, **16**calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, **17**for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

God’s is overwhelmingly generous and his grace is being poured out on many…