Sermon, Easter 6, 2020

In the +Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Today, I want to talk a little about the key events of the day of the execution of Christ ... but about items we hear little about.

We’ve heard about what led to His crucifixion ... and we’ve heard about His resurrection and what He did afterwards ... appearing to the disciples and so on ... but we’ve missed three really important events.

We know from gospel writings that the actual act of crucifixion started around the middle of the day ... top heat, when the human body would be dehydrated very quickly. This didn’t suit the Romans, who always wanted to keep the victim alive as long as possible so as to prolong His pain; however, Passover was coming, and it’d be very poor form to have the King of the Jews hanging up there on a cross during Passover ... so the Jews asked that He brought down now He was dead. Remember those who offered him drink ... vinegar ... poor quality wine ... so as to dry Him out more quickly, and actually hasten death.

But it’s not the 12-o’clock aspect I want to talk about ... it’s the three o’clock aspect ... when He died. That’s when things got really serious.

All the Gospels record this ... so let’s look at Luke as he tells us about this time period. After all ... it’s only three hours in the history of mankind ... right ?

No ... as Luke says ... in C 23, v 44-45, *it was about twelve o’clock when the sun stopped shining, and darkness covered the whole country until three o’clock* ... what we know as a total eclipse of the sun ... *and the curtain hanging in the temple was torn in two*. And Jesus said those immortal words ... it is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit. When it’s my time, I want to have the cognisance about me to be able to do the same.

But it’s the curtain I want to talk about today. Just a curtain. Matthew in c27 v 51 says it rather well ... *And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom, and the earth did quake and the rocks rent.*

A curtain got messed up. Seriously ! Well yes ... cos this was no ordinary curtain ... not a flimsy slip of nylon designed to let those in what we call the Nave see a little ... shadows moving behind the veil. No ... this was a serious piece ... several feet thick, many many layers, mainly of wool. Have you ever tried ripping a knitted woollen jumper ? Now try it in multiple layers, all interwoven together. This thing was tougher than 318 stainless. And it was rent ... from top ... to bottom. Top first.

So ... in the last few weeks we’ve been unfolding the idea that the Bible is a series of books, all making a huge library, and all full of imagery ... so what’s the imagery here ? A curtain got torn. Of all the things that could have happened at the moment of His death ... why worry about a curtain ?

It’s what this curtain represented that’s important here ... not the material. The curtain veiled us all from God, and His Glory. Only the chief priests and elders could go behind the curtain. They had the connectedness, the power, the authority. The rest of us ... wallowed in the mire.

Remember what Jesus said ... there are only two laws which matter ... Love God, love your neighbour as yourself ... and on those two laws hang all the rest. Comply with these, and you fulfil the rest. The rending of the curtain was meant to symbolise that the doors to heaven were now open to all of us ... not just those self-appointed few who could go behind the curtain ... we can all walk right through it ! Straight thru the middle of this barrier ... you and I together ... we can do this.

And so this is the final message I have for you this Easter ... while He died, He showed us ... how to live. The doors ... the barricades ... the curtains ... separating us from the love of God ... are rent asunder, and all we have to do is walk thru. If we just have the courage to simply follow Him thru the curtain.

And now to +God the Father, God the Son, and god the Holy Ghost, three Persons in One God, be ascribed as is justly due, all honour, might, majesty, power and dominion, now henceforth and forever more. Amen.