**Surely This Was a Righteous Man**

Luke 23:44-56

Key Verse 47

“The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.”

**Introduction**

 In this passage we can see what happened while Jesus was dying on the cross and how people responded seeing how he died. We can also see how Jesus was buried in a tomb. Through his death and burial, Jesus still fulfilled the words of God for his work of salvation.

As we remembered, Luke 1 began with a statement that this writing was based on eyewitnesses from beginning to the end. Luke mentioned witnesses like the centurion, the people, the women, and so on. In particular, Luke’s writing here is somewhat unique, pointing out that the centurion uttered different words than in Mark or Matthew, “This man was a righteous man.” Luke emphasized that Jesus is innocent according to a Roman soldier. In this way he wanted to present his roman witness to make it clear. Again Jesus is the word of God who came and fulfilled God’s words.

1. Read verses 44-46. What happened while Jesus was dying on the cross? (44, 45). Why was the curtain of the temple torn in two? What did Jesus say before He breathed His last and what can we learn from His words? (46).

1-1. Read verse 44-46.

 It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, 45 for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. 46 Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”[e] When he had said this, he breathed his last.

1-2. What happened while Jesus was dying on the cross? (44, 45).

 **It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two.**

* The sun stopped shining – It was about noon time, but the darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon because the sun stopped shining.

- It was about 12 o’clock noon. Under normal circumstances, the sun would shine most brightly at this time. But on this day, the sun stopped shining and darkness covered the whole land.

- This was done by God. In the past God stopped the sun while the Israelites were engaged in battle with their enemies. God let darkness cover all of Egypt for three days. (Ex10:23,24)

- In today’s passage, it might have been an expression of God’s sadness due to His Son’s death. It also could have been an indication of God’s judgment upon sinners being taken by Jesus on the cross. God was pouring out his wrath and judgment upon Jesus while he died on the cross.

- A Roman historian named Phlegon wrote: In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake.

- The crucifixion took place during Passover season, and Passover is always held at a full moon. A natural eclipse of the sun is impossible during a full moon.

* The curtain of the temple was torn in two.

- The curtain was between the holy place and the most holy place in the temple.

- Only the priest was allowed to enter The Most Holy Place once a year (Leviticus 16:1,2)

- There was the ark in The Most Holy Place which was a symbol of God’s presence. God appeared in the cloud over the atonement cover on top of the ark.

1-3. Why was the curtain of the temple torn in two?

* The tearing of the curtain had two meanings; the barrier between God and men was destroyed, and a new way for sinners to come directly to God was opened (Hebrews 10:19-20). We can come to God directly at any time and present ourselves before His holy presence.

 **Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10:19-20)**

- We can draw near to God any time with full assurance in Jesus.

1-4. What did Jesus say before He breathed His last and what can we learn from His words? (46).



 **Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”**

* Jesus called God ‘Father’. When he complained of being forsaken, he cried, Eli, Eli, My God, my God; but, to show that dreadful agony of his soul was now over, he here calls God Father. When he was giving up his life and soul for us, he called God, Father, that we through him might receive our adoption as sons.
* He was now to make his soul an offering for our sin (Isa. 53:10), to give his life as a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28), by the eternal Spirit to offer himself, (Heb. 9:14). The price of our sin had to be paid into the hands of God, the party offended by sin; to him he had undertaken to make full payment. Now by these words he offered up the sacrifice, – “I pay it into thy hands. Father, accept of my life and soul instead of the lives and souls of the sinners I die for."
* Jesus expressed his dependence upon his Father for his resurrection. He commends his spirit into his Father's hand, to be received into paradise, and returned on the third day.
* Jesus shows an example of how to commit our soul into God’s hands when we die. We can commit our souls into God’s hands with full confidence and trust by calling him.
* Also we firmly believe in another life after our death by saying, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit”

**When he had said this, he breathed his last.**

* This shows that Jesus gave up His life when He wanted to and how He wanted to. No one took His life from Him; He gave it up when His work was finished. Jesus is not a victim we should pity, but a conqueror we should admire.
* Once the work of the cross was accomplished, Jesus felt no further need to endure suffering. He yielded His living spirit to God the Father and He yielded His body to death on the cross and breathed His last.
* In Gen 2:7, God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul. The one God breathed into the breath of life - Adam; the other breathed out the breath of life - Jesus who is the Creator and the redeemer.

2. Read verses 47-49. What did the centurion do after witnessing Jesus die on the cross? (47). What did the people do? (48) How did those who knew and followed Jesus respond to Jesus’ death on the cross? (49)

2-1. Reave verses 47-49

 The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.” 48 When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. 49 But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

2-2. What did the centurion do after witnessing Jesus die on the cross? (47).



 **The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, “Surely this was a righteous man.”**

* The Centurion praised God

- The centurion was a Roman, a Gentile, a stranger to the consolation of Israel; and yet he glorified God.

- After seeing what had happened, especially when the sun stopped shining, the centurion realized that all things were done by God’s mighty power and that God was with Jesus. He never saw such an amazing display of divine power. At this He recognized God as the Almighty.

 ***“Surely this was a righteous man.”***

- He realized that Jesus was a righteous man, and was unjustly put to death. The manifestation of God’s power was the evidence of Jesus’ innocence.

- It was proved that Jesus died unjustly through the centurion’s objective confession. Through the centurion’s confession Jesus was proclaimed as a ‘righteous man’

- Jesus died even though he was righteous to set us free from our sins. He didn’t need to be crucified at all but for sinners like us he suffered and died.

* Matthew, Mark, and Luke draw special attention to the centurion in charge of carrying out of Jesus’ crucifixion. They give an account of how he was impressed at the presence of the Crucified.
* According to Matthew he said, "Truly this was a Son of God." According to Mark, "Truly this Man was a Son of God." According to Luke, ***"Certainly this was a righteous Man."***
* This confession reminds us of John 12:30, And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

* **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UPQvYpesiAM**
* Just like the centurion, when the darkness lifted and our eyes were opened. We saw Him already loving us, willing to forgive us, and wanting to welcome us into His kingdom.
* Just like the centurion, we heard God speak, we heard Jesus speak. We also saw ourselves, our unrighteousness, our sins, and our need for a Saviour.
* When we trusted in Jesus’ finished work on the cross, we too glorified God and declared Jesus is the only Righteous Man.
* We also pray that the eyes of our Bible students and children will be **enlightened** (Eph 1:18), that they would hear what the centurion heard, and hear what we have heard.
* Pray that they will see what the centurion saw, and see what we have seen. Pray that they will see the Righteous Man, who gave Himself that they might be saved. And pray that they will respond in the same way that the centurion did.

2-3. What did the people do? (48)

 **they beat their breasts and went away**

* They realized that it was a wicked thing to put him to death, and could not but think that some judgment of God would come upon their nation for it.
* Probably these very people were the very ones who had cried out, Crucify him, crucify him. They were probably the very ones who reviled and blasphemed him while he was dying on the cross. Terrified by the darkness and the earthquake, their consciences were startled. Now they felt remorse for what they had done.
* They beat upon their hearts, as those who felt indignation towards themselves. - - They beat their breasts, and returned. They did not show any further token of respect for Christ, nor inquire more concerning him, but went home. They forgot what manner of a man he was, and what reason they had to believe Him.

2-4. How did those who knew and followed Jesus respond to Jesus’ death on the cross? (49)

 **Stood at a distance, watching these things.**

* Because of fear they couldn’t come near to Jesus yet. They were not ready to participate in Jesus’ suffering.
* They didn’t believe and remember Jesus’ word about his resurrection.
* They couldn’t do anything except stand at a distance and watch these things because of their fear and lack of faith.
* But they still stayed around Jesus and watched, Later they were able to testify about what they had witnessed.

3. Read verses 50-56. Who was Joseph? (50, 51) What did he do? (52, 53) How did Jesus’ burial fulfill prophecy? (Isa 53:9) When was the time of Jesus’ burial? (54) Who witnessed Jesus’ burial to the last moment? (55) What did they prepare? (56)

3-1. Read verses 50-56

 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. 54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. 55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

3-2.Who was Joseph? (50, 51)

 **a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea, and he himself was waiting for the kingdom of God.**

* Joseph didn’t follow the evil deeds of the majority, but resisted evil even though he was alone.
* He believed the Old-Testament prophecies of the Messiah and his kingdom, and expected their fulfillment. This was a man who appeared for this occasion out of true respect for the Lord Jesus.
* He was the one who would truly serve the Lord instead of just being a listener of the Word only. There are many who desire to serve Christ's interests, but fail to follow through with outward acts of service.
* Joseph was ready to engage in real service, when there was opportunity. He was not just a man of mere words.

3-3. What did he do? (52, 53)

 **Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’ body. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.**

* Customarily, the bodies of crucified criminals were left on their crosses to rot or to be eaten by wild animals. But the Jews wanted no such horror displayed during the Passover. The Romans were known to release the corpses to friends or relatives for proper burial.
* Again Joseph did not serve Jesus in many ways, but he did serve Him in ways no one else did or could. It was not possible for Peter, James, John, or even the many women who served Jesus to provide a tomb, but Joseph could and did. We must serve God in whatever way we can.
* He went to Pilate and pleaded for the body of Jesus.
* He took Jesus’ body down and wrapped it in linen. It was according to Jewish tradition to prepare the bodies of the dead.
* Joseph could have been attacked by other Jews because of what he did for Jesus. But he did what he thought was right before God. He was righteous man before God.

3-4. How did Jesus’ burial fulfill prophecy? (Isa 53:9)

 **placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.**

* The tomb was well made in the rock. This was the manner in which only the wealthy could be buried, in a tomb.
* **He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. (Isa 53:9)**
* He was buried in a new tomb alone. According to Jewish custom in those days, many dead bodies were placed in the same tomb as the first stage before being transferred to a small box at the complete decay of bodies with their bones.
* But here Luke pointed out that it was a new tomb where Jesus’ body was placed by itself. Therefore there was no way to confuse Jesus’ body with that of another person who had died.
* Just as Jesus’ death was sure, so too His resurrection will surely happen. He was buried in this manner, only to rise again on the third day by his power; and he would triumph over the grave as no man ever did.

3-5 When was the time of Jesus’ burial? (54)



**It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.**

* This was the reason why they hurried for the burial, because the Sabbath drew near, which required their attendance and preparation.
* Weeping must not hinder sowing. Though they were in tears for the death of Christ, yet they still prepared for the Sabbath.

3-6.Who witnessed Jesus’ burial to the last moment? (55)

 **The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.**

* Not any of the disciples, but only the women who came with him from Galilee.
* They stayed by Jesus while he hung on the cross, so they followed him, all in tears no doubt
* They saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.
* They did these not by their curiosity, but by their love and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus. Their love was as strong as death. This love empowered them to overcome any loss or hardship.

3-7.What did they prepare? (56)

 **prepared spices and perfumes**

* What they prepared was made for the embalming of Jesus’ body after he was buried. They prepared all things through their love for Jesus. Yet because they lacked faith in Jesus’ resurrection, they were overcome by their sorrow.
* But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to God’s commandment- Even though they were sad, they were still faithful in obedience to God.

**Conclusion**

 Through his death Jesus opened the way for sinners to access the throne of God’s grace. He died on the cross for our sins even though he was righteous man. This was again the very cup of God’s righteous wrath. On the cross, Jesus became an enemy of God who was judged and forced to drink the cup of the Father’s wrath. He did it so we wouldn’t have to. The Centurion who witnessed Jesus’ death at first hand couldn’t but come to the conclusion that Jesus was the Christ. He confessed, “Surely this was a righteous man.” Jesus’ death was not just another horrible death, but the hope of the world, for He was innocent. There were people who served him after his death based on their faith and love for him. Jesus was buried in an new tomb only to rise again. Amen!

**One word: Surely this was a righteous man!**