

**Text:** Matthew 27:38–50 | **Title:** The Cross And The People

**Introduction:** As we noted in our last sermon, Pilate made a true statement, whether he believed it truly or not I don't know, but over His head was the statement, "This is Jesus King of the Jews" and wrote it in all languages so all could read and understand. We spent much time looking at the ignorant wicked, Pilate, the Chief Priest and Elders. Now we move to the cross.

#### PT. 1 – THE KNOWING WICKED (Vs. 38)<sup>1</sup>

The two robbers accompanying him were notorious for their depravity. It is widely acknowledged that these individuals were not mere petty thieves. They were brutal bandits who engaged in acts of torment, abuse, and even murder against their victims. It is plausible that they possessed some knowledge of Jesus Christ. Perhaps they were provoked by His righteousness and their own sinful state.

1A – They weren't mocking Him for religious concerns. But they had a naturally wicked heart and joined the crowd to mock and jeer Him. As John MacArthur notes in his commentary, "[Like many of people today, the lives of the two robbers revolved around material possessions and fleshly satisfaction. They had as little concern for religion, common morality and justice as did the pagan Roman soldiers. Having a greater love for the things of the world than the things of God, they used their dying breath to vent their pent-up anger on the only one who could give them hope.](#)"<sup>2</sup> Note: although time does not permit, one robber had a last minute change and according to Luke he asked to be remembered and Jesus said "today you shall be with me in paradise."

#### PT. 2 – THE WICKED WHO PASSED BY (Vs. 39–40)

Also known as the "fickle" wicked, these individuals witnessed and experienced the miracles of Jesus. They likely cheered Him on as He overturned the tables at the Temple. They observed Him preach and possibly participated in His triumphal entry. However, their allegiance to Jesus was contingent upon Him fulfilling their desires. They recognized His claims to divinity and were often captivated by Him, likely expressing gratitude for His miracles, many of which they may have personally experienced. Nevertheless, they harbored no desire for Him to purify them of their sins, wash them in righteousness, or assume the role of a servant to overthrow the rulers and establish a reign. Consequently, they sought a Messiah who aligned with their preferences, and many contemporary churchgoers yearn for a god that does not demand commitment or obedience and allows them to prioritize their own interests.

2A – Let us delve deeper into this matter. As they mocked Jesus with the words in our text, we observe a striking resemblance in the church today. Many individuals have been raised in church

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<sup>1</sup> The John MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Matthew 24-28; pp. 257

<sup>2</sup> The John MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Matthew 24-28; pp. 257

environments. They have been exposed to the truth of the gospel, undergone baptism, professed their faith, and attended church services on a regular basis. However, as time passed, Jesus failed to meet their preconceived notions of worldly fulfillment, leading to a waning interest in God.

### PT. 3 – THE WICKED WHO WERE RELIGIOUS (VS. 41–43)

2B – What is most concerning is that the chief priests and elders were teaching the Old Testament scriptures that prophesied about the Messiah, the very one they had falsely accused and, in essence, executed. The statement in verse 42, “**Let Him come down from the cross, and we will believe Him,**” was not accurate. They had not believed in Jesus throughout His miracles and teachings, and therefore, they would not believe Him now. In the story of Lazarus, Luke 16:30–31, “**No, Father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent! Be he said to him, if they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.**” If Jesus had utilized His power to subdue Rome, they would have followed Him. Regrettably, many individuals today are seeking their own god in religion. They had no inclination to follow Christ, and many today share the same sentiment because Jesus does not align with their preferred Savior.

### PT. 4 – THE CROSS AND THE HOPE IN GOD (VS. 45)

Darkness fell upon the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. This was from noon to 3 p.m. Darkness always represents something morbid. At His birth in Luke 2:9, “**And the glory of the Lord shone around them.**” The Greek word for land can also be translated earth, and thus it's not possible to determine how widespread the darkness was, but God is able to do as He wills. In the plague of the locusts according to Exodus 10:15, “**For they covered the surface of the whole land, so that the land was darkened.**” Or Joshua 10:12–13, “**O sun, stand still at Gibeon, and O moon in the valley of Aijalon. So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped.**” It may be noted this darkness was a sign of a time of extreme judgement.

### PT. 5 – SOVEREIGN DEPARTURE (VS. 46–49)<sup>3</sup>

With a loud cry, Jesus exclaimed, “**My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?**” He was filled with anguish due to the separation from God. Some have interpreted this as God turning His back, and I understand why they would say that. However, I believe it is more accurate to view it as the separation that occurred as Jesus took upon sin. Just as Jesus had lamented, the Father had indeed forsaken Him. Martin Luther is said to have retreated into long seclusion in an attempt to comprehend this, but he emerged more perplexed than when he began.

5A – Jesus did not die as a martyr to a righteous cause as an innocent man wrongly accused. Jesus died as a substitute, and the heavenly Father must judge Him accordingly. The Father

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<sup>3</sup> The John MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Matthew 24–28; pp. 269

forsook the Son because the Son took upon Himself our transgressions and iniquities, Isaiah 53:5, "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed." Jesus was delivered up because of our transgressions, Romans 4:25, "He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification." Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians 15:3, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." Jesus didn't know sin but became sin for us, 2 Corinthians 5:21, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Jesus became a curse for us, Galatians 3:13, "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us." He bore our sins on the cross, 1 Peter 2:24, "And He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed." He became the propitiation for our sins, 1 John 4:10, "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

5B- Not only did Jesus bear our sins, but He became sin for us, on our behalf. This act was accomplished to save those who believed in Him from the penalty of sin. Jesus came and taught and lived as we should, yet He did not come solely for these purposes. As Matthew 20:28 states, "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." While we may not fully comprehend this, God has revealed to us this fundamental truth: He became sin for us, and God acted in accordance with His nature.

5C- As we examined last week, one of the consequences of crucifixion was a profound thirst. Jesus initially declined the wine offered to numb His senses, yet He willingly accepted sour wine. The sovereign details of God's fulfillment of His word are meticulously recorded by John in John 19:28, "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, 'I am thirsty.'" Sour wine was a common and inexpensive beverage among laborers and soldiers. It was highly diluted with water, which was a prevalent drink for the time. Its high water content and low alcohol content effectively quenched thirst.

#### PT. 6 – THE GIVING OF HIMSELF IN DEATH (VS. 50)

Jesus cried out, and this is significant because He was not merely fading away as others had. Matthew records Jesus' cry, while John provides the exact words, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The work the Father had sent Him to accomplish was completed! It was achieved through the hands of wicked men. Luke also records this event in Luke 23:46, "Father, into your hands I commit My Spirit," which quotes Psalm 31:5 once again, fulfilling Scripture.

6A – The most significant aspect of this event occurs in verse 50, where Jesus yields His Spirit. Two crucial truths emerge from this verse as we conclude: first, no one took His life. No man killed Him. No man framed Him. John 10:18 clarifies, "No one has taken it away from Me, but

I lay it down on My own initiative. I possess the authority to lay it down and the authority to take it up again.” Second, His ability to speak with a loud voice at this point serves as a testament to His voluntary surrender of life. Jesus died much sooner than the norm, which is why when Joseph of Arimathea requested His body, Pilate needed to verify, Mark 15:44–45, “Pilate inquired if He had already passed away by this time. He summoned the centurion and asked him if He was already deceased. Upon ascertaining this from the centurion, Pilate granted the body to Joseph.” Jesus gave His life according to the Father’s plan. No one took it; He willingly offered it as a sacrifice for our sins on the cross. He became sin for us. Consider these truths as we conclude:

- Are you just a passerby?
- Are you religious but lost?