

The Seven Sayings from the Cross: Forsaken

Mathew 27:46; Mark 15:34

- 1. Notice the Darkness** (Mt. 27:45; Mk. 15:33; Lk. 23:44-45a)
Both gospels that include this saying of Jesus place it during the three hour darkness that followed Jesus' interaction with the thief on the cross. Because the Jewish calendar was lunar, there is no possibility that this was a natural solar eclipse.
- 2. Darkness is often related to Judgment**
Darkness is one of the ten plagues which God sends upon the land of Egypt (Ex. 10:21-22). Darkness is often one of the tangible signs of the presence of the judgment of God (Joel 2:10-11; Amos 8:9-11; cf. Amos 5:18, 20).
- 3. The Connection Between Judgment and Sin**
The place in which God pours out His wrath upon sinners is often described as a place of outer darkness (Mt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; cf. Lk. 13:28). It makes sense that there would be darkness since the cross is the place where God deals with the just consequences of sin so that He can perfectly maintain his justice and yet be merciful (Isa. 53:10; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pt. 2:24).
- 4. The Saying of Jesus and the Father Turning His Face Away**
It is common for Christians to observe this statement and the darkness as evidences of Jesus, as the one on whom sin is being born and on whom God's wrath is being poured out, being abandoned or turned away from by the Father. While this idea may be the best for what transpired, it is important to remember that while God casts the wicked away from God (Mt. 7:23; 25:46; Lk. 12:5; 13:28) there is also nowhere that is outside of the presence of God (Ps. 139:7-12). God is not separated from the prosecution of His judgment, but as one who is personally and actively involved in it (Ez. 20:21; 21:31; 22:22, 31; Isa. 63:3-6; Rev. 14:19; 19:15).
- 5. The Saying of Jesus and Psalm 22:1**
Psalm 22 begins with David being at least unclear as to why God has abandoned Him but it goes on from there to confidently proclaim a trust in God's deliverance and his vindication. And while much of the psalm directly relates to the crucifixion, to make anything other than the contents of Ps. 22:1 the focus of Jesus' cry is to stress what is absent in favor of what is present.
- 6. What Does this Saying of Jesus Mean?**
It is best to take Jesus' recorded words as the focus of our attention. Jesus was experiencing real anguish of being the righteous One who was forsaken by God. While the Son is not separated from the presence of His Father, He is for the first and only time experiencing a different relationship with the Father: one of righteous judgment and wrath for sin.