

The Wonders of Calvary

John 19:35–36

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. *The Wonders of Calvary*

1. There are several things that occurred during the 24 hours of the Passover day on which Jesus was arrested and crucified that are little noticed or discussed.
2. Some of these are of a miraculous nature, while others are not strictly “miracles” as we would define them, but they are nonetheless events possessing a supernatural character.
3. These events have a definite and real significance as evidence establishing the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth and the importance of His death in Jerusalem nearly two millennia ago.

B. *The Text in Context*—

1. This statement is made in direct reference to the OT prophecies concerning Exodus 12:46 and Zechariah 12:10–15 that John later applies to the scenes he has just witnessed.
2. However, Jesus says Himself that everything that transpired with respect to His crucifixion and resurrection did so according to what the prophets had prophesied about Him (Luke 24:44–46).
3. Thus, it is certainly correct to say, “These things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled” respecting all that occurred in connection with the death of Jesus.

C. *An Approximate Chronology for the Day Christ Died*—

1. **6:00 PM**—Passover begins in the upper room (Matthew 26:20).
2. **11:00 PM**—Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:20; John 13:30).
3. **12:00 AM**—Jesus comes to Gethsemane to pray (Luke 23:38–40).
4. **2:00 AM**—He is arrested and taken before Annas (John 18:13).
5. **3:00 AM**—Jesus is brought before Caiaphas (John 18:24; Matthew 26:57).
6. **5:30 AM**—Jesus condemned by the Sanhedrin in the Temple (Matthew 27:1–2).
7. **6:00 AM**—Jesus is brought before Pilate the first time at Palace of Herod the Great (John 18:28).
8. **6:30 AM**—Jesus before Herod Antipas where He is examined and mocked (Luke 23:7–11).
9. **7:30 AM**—Jesus is returned to Pilate, accused, beaten and condemned (John 18:39–19:16).
10. **9:00 AM**—Jesus is crucified between two thieves at Golgotha (Luke 23:26–33; Mark 15:25).
11. **Noon**—Darkness comes over the whole land (Mark 15:34)
12. **3:00 PM**—Jesus dies on the cross (Matthew 27:50; John 19:30, 33)
13. **3:00 PM**—Veil of the Temple is rent from the top downward (Mark 15:34–38).
14. **3:00 PM**—There is an earthquake so severe that the tombs are opened (Matthew 27:51–52).
15. **3:30 PM**—The legs of the two thieves broken in order to hasten death (John 19:31–32).
16. **3:45 PM**—Jesus’ side pierced by a Roman soldier (John 19:33–36).
17. **4:00 PM**—Joseph of Arimathæa requests the release of Jesus’ body (Mark 15:43–45).
18. **4:30 PM**—The body of Jesus removed hastily to a nearby garden (John 19:41).
19. **5:30 PM**—The burial of Jesus before sundown on Friday (John 19:42).
20. **6:01 PM**—The Jewish leaders request a guard be placed on the tomb (Matthew 27:62).

II. DISCUSSION:

A. *The First Wonder: An Angel Appears from Heaven (Luke 22:43–45)*—

1. The Angels have always been curious about the redemption of mankind (1 Peter 1:12; Ephesians 3:10; I Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 12:22).
 - a. They appear at significant events associated with man's falling away and return:
 - (1) Angels were involved in significant events in the history of Israel:
 - (a) They are stationed at the entrance to Eden to guard the Tree of Life (Genesis 3:24).
 - (b) They were God's instrument for delivering the Law to Moses (Acts 7:53).
 - (c) They were at times the messengers of God in revelation to the prophets (Daniel 10:13; Jude 1:9; Zechariah 1:9-11).
 - (2) Angels are intimately involved with Christ:
 - (a) An angel announced the birth of Jesus (Matthew 1:20-21; Luke 1:28-38; 2:7-15).
 - (b) An angel warned Joseph to escape to Egypt (Matthew 2:13)
 - (c) Angels ministered to Jesus after the temptation (Matthew 4:11; Mark 1:13; John 1:51).
 - (d) This angel ministered to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:43).
 - (e) Angels were present at the tomb of Jesus (Matthew 28:2-6).
 - (f) They were present at the ascension (Acts 1:11).
 - (g) They worship Christ in Heaven (I Peter 3:22; Revelation 5:11).
 - (h) They will be with Christ at his second coming (Matthew 25:31; Mark 8:38; II Thessalonians 1:7; Jude 1:14-15).
 - (i) They will be with Christ at the judgment (Matthew 13:39, 41, 49; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31; Mark 13:27).
 - b. They are said to minister on behalf of the saints (Hebrews 1:14).
 - (1) I will not presume to say I know what they do (Deuteronomy 29:29; cf. Hebrews 13:2).
 - (2) However, they are "our" angels (Matthew 18:10).
 - (3) They are "with us" in the spiritual war (Daniel 10:12-13; 2 Kings 6:16-17; cf. 1 John 4:4).
 - (4) I know that they minister "for them" who shall be heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14).
 - (5) The angels rejoice when sinners are saved (Luke 15:7, 10).
 - (6) They carry the spirits of the righteous into Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22).
 - c. Therefore, I am not surprised to find angels involved at this critical moment in the development of the scheme of redemption.
2. However, I am curious to know: "Why now?"
 - a. The course of the evening's events:
 - (1) After observing the Passover with the Twelve Jesus retires to Gethsemane, an olive yard near the base of the western slope of the Mt. of Olives (Luke 22:39; John 18:1-2).
 - (2) Jesus enters the garden and takes His three most intimate friends to a place of prayer (Matthew 26:36).
 - (3) Three times Jesus prays: "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (26:39).
 - b. The observations of the Gospel authors:
 - (1) "And [He] began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death...'" (Matthew 26:37-38).
 - (a) "Sorrowful" — λυπεω [loo-peh'-o]: according to **Strong (3076)** "to distress; reflexively or passively, to be sad;" according to **Thayer**: "to make sorrowful; to affect with sadness, cause grief; to throw into sorrow."
 - (b) "Very heavy" — αδημονεω [ad-ay-mon-eh'-o]: according to **Strong (0085)** "to be sated to loathing; to be in distress (of mind);" according to **Thayer**: "to be troubled,

distressed.”

- (c) “Exceeding sorrowful” — περιλυπό [per-il'-oo-pos]: according to *Strong (4036)* “grieved all around, i.e. intensely sad;” according to *Thayer* “properly, encompassed with grief, very sad, exceedingly sorrowful.”
 - (2) “And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy...” (Mark 14:33).
 - (a) “Sore amazed” — εκψαμβεω [ek-tham-beh'-o]: according to *Strong (1568)* “to astonish utterly;” according to *Thayer* “to be struck with terror.”
 - (b) Robertson observes in *Word Pictures*: “Mark has the startling phrase *greatly amazed and sore troubled* (*ekthambeisthai kai adeemonein*), a “feeling of terrified surprise.”
 - (c) Vincent cross references other occurrences of the word unique to Mark (9:15; 16:5, 6).
 - (3) “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:43).
 - (a) “Agony” — αγωνια [ag-o-nee'-ah]: according to *Strong (0074)* “a struggle (properly, the state), i.e. (figuratively) anguish;” according to *Thayer* “It is often used, from Demosthenes down, of severe mental struggles and emotions, ‘agony, anguish.’”
 - (b) “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”
 - [1] Of this phenomenon Robertson says, “Thick, clotted blood. An old word (thromboi) common in medical works, but here only in the N.T. This passage (verses Lu 22:43–44) is absent from some ancient documents. Aristotle speaks of a bloody sweat as does Theophrastus.”
 - [2] Alexander Metherell, MD, PhD notes: “This is a known medical condition called hematuria. It’s not very common, but it is associated with a high degree of psychological stress. What happens is that severe anxiety causes the release of chemicals that break down the capillaries in the sweat glands. As a result, there’s a small amount of bleeding into these glands, and the sweat comes out tinged with blood” (*The Case for Easter*, pp.14–15).
- c. It is at this moment that the angel comes from heaven to strengthen Jesus (Luke 22:43).
- (1) We should not be surprised to see this angel here with Jesus for all the aforementioned reasons (see under A.1. above).
 - (2) We may be puzzled to see Him here because this is the Son of God, how could an angel possibly strengthen Him?
 - (a) However, remember, this is the Son of God who humbled himself by stepping down from the glories of Heaven and “was found in fashion as a man” (Philippians 2:8) “in all things...made like unto His brethren” (Hebrews 2:17) to be “in all points tempted like as [they] are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).
 - (b) This angel was not there to strengthen anything in the Divine, but to minister (Hebrews 1:14) to one “made a little lower than the angels” (Hebrews 2:9).
 - (c) The word “strengthen” means, according to *Thayer (1765)*, “to make strong, to strengthen,” to strengthen one in soul, “to inspire.”
 - [1] I do not know what the angel said or did, but I imagine it was much the same as the angel who came to Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Daniel 3:28), or that one that came to Daniel (Daniel 6:22), or that one who came to Joshua (Joshua 5:14–15).
 - [2] In none of these cases did the angel compel these men to obey God, or to accept the inevitability of death, or to march into battle. I rather think that he spoke to Jesus in much the same way as the angel spoke to Paul, “Fear not” (Acts 27:23–25).
 - [3] It is quite evident that our Lord was strengthened believing God that it would be even as He had promised (John 18:4).

3. What does this first “wonder” of Calvary reveal?
 - a. The full humanity of Jesus.
 - (1) The sufferings of Christ were real. He is not above or beyond us. He is “of us” (Hebrews 2:9–11; 4:15; 5:2; II Corinthians 13:4).
 - (2) We see Him in the midst of a great contest with Satan coming through victorious (Hebrews 2:10; 5:7).
 - (3) Arising from prayer, confident in God, Christ stepped forward to face His enemies (Hebrews 2:13; Matthew 27:43).
 - b. Belief in and involvement with the supernatural or spiritual does not negate or override the natural or the flesh.
 - (1) The angels of God in their ministry for the heirs of salvation (Hebrews 1:14) do not deny, thwart or suppress the will of men.
 - (2) The presence of this angel is the “exception that proves the rule.” By this I mean, that while I have never had an angel come to me, I cannot claim that Jesus is different or had help which I cannot have.
 - (3) We have the promise of God that no temptation or trial will come upon us that is greater than we can bear and that the means to endure is always provided (I Corinthians 10:13).

B. The Second Wonder: They Fell to the Ground (John 18:3–6)—

1. “Jesus went forth” (John 18:4).
 - a. Scarcely had the angel left Him before the Tempter came to test Him (Luke 22:43–44).
 - (1) Literally, “went forward” or “went to meet them.”
 - (2) Jesus came out from the darkness among the trees and strode up to meet them.
 - b. What a contrast to the low opinion of the Traitor (Mark. 14:44–45).
2. “Whom seek ye?” (John 18:4b–5a)
 - a. Jesus is in control of the situation (Matthew 26:45, 46).
 - b. Why ask this question?
3. “They fell to the ground” (John 18:5b–6).
 - a. Jesus’ answer:
 - (1) “I AM” (Exodus 3:14).
 - (2) This is a self-declaration of divinity (John 8:24, 28, 58; 10:31–38; 13:19; 18:5–8).
 - b. See the picture, the Good Shepherd standing alone defending the helpless flock against the hirelings, thieves, robbers and wolves which would consume them (John 10:7–14).
 - (1) In this context, we can understand the purpose of the miracle (cf. John 8:59; 7:44–46; 10:39; Luke 4:30).
 - (2) Jesus was not “captured” or “taken;” He surrendered or “gave” Himself up to them (John 10:17–18; Philippians 2:8).
4. What does this second wonder of Calvary reveal?
 - a. It is a demonstration of great faith—
 - (1) Jesus had committed Himself to His Father in prayer in the Garden (Matthew 26:39, 42).
 - (2) Confident in God’s assurances (John 10:17, 18), He strode up eye to eye with His enemy.
 - b. There is a display of true wisdom—
 - (1) Jesus handled His enemy with great care and skill.
 - (2) Taking the offensive, He robbed them of the element of surprise putting them on the defensive.
 - (3) His quick maneuvering created a situation in which His disciples were given a better view of the Kingdom of Heaven (John 18:10–12).
 - c. There is a bold declaration of deity—

- (1) Jesus to the very end maintains His claim to be the Son of God—"I AM."
- (2) The veracity of His claim is confirmed by a miraculous event (Hebrews 2:3-4).
- (3) God compelled these men to acknowledge it (Romans 14:11).
- d. It demonstrates genuine selflessness—
 - (1) He could have called twelve legions of angels (Matthew 26:53) and continued his escape.
 - (a) According to *Smith* a legion is equivalent to 6,000 infantrymen and a contingent of cavalry. *Easton* agrees and specifies that the cavalry unit would consist of at least 600 men and horses.
 - (b) Angels are generally "numbered" in the Scripture as "an innumerable company" ("myriads" or "ten thousand times ten thousand," see: Hebrews 12:22; Deuteronomy 33:2; Daniel 7:10; Jude 1:14).
 - (c) This is why Jesus is called "the Lord of Sabaoth" or Lord of Hosts (James 5:4).
 - (2) However, Jesus chose rather to suffer (Philippians 2:8).

C. The Third Wonder: The Cock Crowing (John 13:36–38)—

1. The prediction of Jesus concerning Peter (Matthew 26:31–35; Mark 14:26–31; Luke 22:31–34, 38; John 13:36–38).
2. The sorrowful sequence of events:
 - a. The "Good Shepherd" smitten according to Zechariah 13:7 and "the sheep" scattered.
 - b. The twelve Apostles and other disciples forsake Jesus (cf. Matthew 26:56b; Mark 14:50–52).
 - c. However, Peter and John follow Jesus and the mob, at a distance, to the palace of the High Priest Caiaphas (John 18:15; cf. Matthew 26:57–58; Mark 14:53–54; Luke 22:54).
 - (1) John was admitted because he was known in the High Priests house.
 - (2) Peter was admitted upon the basis of his being with John (18:16).
 - (3) Peter's admission to the courtyard sets in motion the series of events that result in the fulfillment of Jesus' words.
3. Peter's threefold denial of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:55–64; John 18:17–18, 25–27).
 - a. Upon being admitted, Peter is immediately questioned by the woman keeping the door.
 - (1) Peter did not go in immediately with John, not being recognized (John 18:16); however, once John vouched for Peter, he too was admitted.
 - (2) It seems that Peter and John separate; John, perhaps, enters where the pre-trial is being held. We know Peter remained in the courtyard and sat among the servants where a fire had been kindled (Matthew 26:69; Luke 22:55).
 - (3) The maid who kept the door and had seen Peter enter with John is curious about him and approaches the fire.
 - (a) She draws closer to Peter and looking at him intently says: "You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus" (Mark 14:67).
 - (b) This prompts the maid and those that are standing around the fire with Peter to ask, "You are not one of His disciples are you?" (John 18:17, 25).
 - (c) Peter denies the accusation saying, "I am not! I don't know what you are talking about!" (Mark 14:68; Matthew 26:69; John 18:25b).
 - (4) Peter leaves the fire and walks back to the entryway arch of the courtyard to the "palace" (Mark 14:68b; Matthew 26:71).
 - (a) As soon as Peter walks away the cock crows for the first time (Mark 14:68).
 - (b) Imagine the shock of the reality! (Mark 14:30).
 - (c) He is "headed for the door".
 - b. The first maid (Mark 14:69) and "another maid" (Matthew 26:71) follow Peter into the

- entryway and continue the accusation before those that are standing there (Mark 14:69b).
- (1) Peter was on his way out of the “palace”; but, the woman was not willing to let him get away so easily.
 - (2) She continues making her charge that Peter “is one of them” (Mark 14:69). All the while, Peter is denying it. She is joined in her accusation by a second maid saying, “This man also was with Jesus the Nazarene” (Matthew 26:71).
 - (3) Now, a male bystander begins to join in; he may think he recognizes Peter from the garden scuffle earlier. He says, “You are one of them” (Luke 22:58).
 - (4) Peter becomes emphatic in his denial: “Man, I am not.” He then swears with an oath to God that “I know not the man!” (Matthew 26:72; cf., Hebrews 6:16).
 - (a) Peter has lied, and now he is forsworn (Leviticus 19:12; Matthew 5:33–37; 23:16–22).
 - (b) He has taken the Lord’s name in vain (Exodus 20:7; Deuteronomy 6:13; James 5:12).
 - (c) Perjury was, and is, a serious crime (Jeremiah 7:9; Zechariah 5:2–4; 8:17; Malachi 3:5).
- c. Rather than leave under duress, Peter returns to the fire (cf. John 18:25–27). Things are quiet for about an hour (Luke 22:59). Then, there is a third barrage of accusations (John 18:26).
- (1) Someone arrives on the scene who is a relative of Malchus (John 18:10). This man was in the garden during the arrest and could definitely identify Peter as the man who cut off his relative’s ear (18:26b).
 - (2) With this new identification the bystanders are convinced that Peter is a disciple of Jesus. With confidence they begin to say, “Surely, you are one of them, for you are a Galilean” (Mark 14:71).
 - (a) The evidence is overwhelming. Peter is found out. His tongue has entrapped him. Not the lie *per se*, but now he is found out. His accent makes it certain that he is one of the Galileans (cf. Acts 2:7).
 - (b) Fearful of being taken, perhaps even delivered up as was his Master, Peter begins to curse and to swear saying: “Man, I do not know what you are talking about; I do not know this man (Mark 14:71b; Matthew 26:73; Luke 22:60; John 18:27).
- d. In the nearly two hours that pass Jesus has been examined by Annas and Caiaphas (John 18:13, 19–24). It after the examination was ended and while Jesus was being taken to Pilate (John 18:28) that the cock crowed the second time.
- (1) It was as the words dropped from Peter’s lips that the rooster crowed fulfilling the words of Christ (Mark 14:72).
 - (2) In that moment, Providence caused the Lord to be at such a place in the courtyard so that as he turned, His eyes and those of Peter meet (Luke 22:60b–61).
 - (a) I can only imagine the look upon the Savior’s face—the tears that must have moistened his eyes—the disappointment that must have been etched in his countenance—the sorrow and love He had for this dear disciple reflected in His piercing stare.
 - (b) In that moment, with just one look, the world came crashing in on Peter as he turned and fled from the scene of his denial in bitter tears of remorse (Luke 22:62).
4. What does this third wonder of Calvary reveal?
- a. It reveals that boldness is not necessarily bravery.
 - (1) Peter was certainly bold when he assured the Lord he would never deny Him even unto death (Mark 14:33).
 - (2) Peter was certainly bold in his denials of Jesus.
 - (3) His returning to the fire demonstrates a certain disregard for danger.
 - (a) However, this is not bravery in Peter, but the cowardice of shame and fear.
 - (b) He stayed because by doing so he gave credibility to his denial.

- (c) Surely, only an innocent man would protest so.
- b. It reveals the true character of godly sorrow (II Corinthians 7:10).
 - (1) This is best illustrated by contrasting Peter with Judas.
 - (a) Peter's sorrow proceeds upon his sin; Judas' upon the consequences of his sin.
 - (b) Peter's sorrow turns him from the world; Judas' turns him towards the world.
 - (c) Peter's sorrow helped him convert others; Judas' emboldened sinners.
 - (d) Peter's sorrow leads him to life; Judas' leads him to death.
 - (2) "A sharp conscience is like a dagger to a sinful heart."
 - (a) Peter's heart was tender and could be moved by the truth of what he had done and the love of Christ (Hebrews 4:12; Romans 2:5).
 - (b) Judas' heart had grown cold (cf. Matthew 24:12), his heart had turned to stone (cf. Ezekiel 3:7) and he could no longer be pricked in his conscience (I Timothy 4:2).
- c. It demonstrates the role of providence in the conversion of the sinner.
 - (1) There is no denying the supernatural character of the events of this night (Mark 14:30).
 - (a) It was prophesied that Peter would do as he did before the evening was out.
 - (b) There is no natural explanation for Jesus knowing what would transpire and when; the Spirit of God revealed it to Him (Isaiah 11:2-4).
 - (c) Clearly, the miraculous was involved.
 - (2) However, there was nothing miraculous about Peter following Christ to the palace, his being admitted, his being by the fire or any other thing that transpired in the courtyard that night—including the rooster crowing.
 - (a) There was no irresistible force compelling Peter to lie, swear and curse.
 - (b) There was nothing miraculous about the queries and questions posed by the men and women in the courtyard that night.
 - (c) There is no miracle in Peter being precisely where Jesus could turn and see Him.
 - (d) However, will any deny that "the hand of God" was in it?
 - (3) The cock crowing was not so much a sign as it was an alarm to arouse Peter to flee from the clutches of Satan calling Him back to true discipleship (Mark 14:72).
- d. Warns against the deceitfulness of sin.
 - (1) It is difficult for me to understand why Peter did not bolt the very moment he heard the cock crow the first time (Mark 14:68).
 - (a) I am not suggesting he had not already sinned; indeed, he had (Mark 14:68a).
 - (b) But, he was headed for the gate (14:68b); he knew what he had done.
 - (c) His persistence in the lie, his adding perjury to falsehood and his return to the fire indict Peter not in a rash act, but an intentional, willful sin. There is no minimizing what he did. I fail to see how at that moment he is any "better" than Judas.
 - (2) On closer inspection, I can see how Satan manipulated the circumstances.
 - (a) He pursued Peter (Mark 14:69).
 - (b) He backed off enough to give Peter a false sense of success in his deceit (Luke 22:59a).
 - (c) He pushed Peter to commit even a greater sin (Matthew 26:74).
 - (3) It was Peter's impetuous nature, pride, weak faith, curiosity and lack of spiritual discernment that got him into trouble that woeful night.

D. The Fourth Wonder: The Act of Crucifixion (John 19:23-37)—

- 1. Christ clearly predicted His death at the hands of the Jews (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:18-19).
 - a. Jesus informed His disciples of His demise.
 - (1) He specified the manner of His death as crucifixion (Matthew 20:19).
 - (2) He promised that He would rise from the dead (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19).

- b. Yet, Jesus did not begin His ministry with a forthright declaration of His appointed end; rather, He made a few veiled references to it gradually preparing the Twelve for the reality of His mission.
- (1) Had Jesus openly declared His purposes in the beginning none would have followed Him (cf. John 2:18-25; 6:52, 60, 66–69; John 8:22; et.al.).
 - (2) Even at this first open declaration, the Twelve objected (Matthew 16:23; cf. Mark 8:33).
 - (3) They continued not to understand what He meant and were for a long while even afraid to ask Him (Luke 9:44–45; 18:31–34).
- c. However, He did convince them that He was indeed their Messiah, the Christ (John 6:68–69; 11:27; Matthew 16:16). It is this faith that buoyed them in the time of trial (Luke 24:21-35).
2. In the context of the first century, it is not remarkable that Jesus might contemplate the possibility of crucifixion; this was the common practice of the Romans at the time. Furthermore, the Jews were no strangers to crucifixion being introduced to the evil by the Syrians during the inter-testamental period (see: Josephus, *Antiquities* XII, v, 4; XX, vi, 2; *Wars* I, iv, 6; *ISBE*, p. 761).
- a. However, since the giving of the Law, crucifixion—which was unknown at that time—and other like methods of execution would have been abhorred by the Jews as that which would defile the land (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13; Joshua 8:29; 10:26–27). This concern is revealed in their regard for Passover Sabbath when Jesus was crucified (John 19:31).
 - b. The Jews’ manipulation of the Romans in putting Jesus to death, while politically motivated to a degree, says a great deal about their hatred of Him as well as their rejection of His claims and their intent to destroy any influence He had with the nation.
 - c. Their actions against Christ were the result of a well thought out conspiracy to murder Him (Matthew 14:5; John 11:53; Mark 14:1, 10–11). It is unlikely that without the insistence of Jewish leaders Rome would have taken notice of Jesus as they did (1 Corinthians 2:8).
 - d. Therefore, the probability of Jesus being crucified seems rather remote. We should not marvel that His disciples were troubled and even frightened by these kinds of statements. What had their Master done that would rise to the level of that kind of governmental response? What had He ever said that would lead prompt Rome to strike against Him?
3. However, the fact that Jesus was crucified is itself a “marvelous” thing. While it is not a miracle that it was done, it never the less must be considered as reflecting a supernatural involvement in His death—God’s eternal purpose, Divine Providence and inspired prophecy converge in the crucifixion of Christ.
- a. When Jesus affirmed that He would be crucified he affirmed what had been before attested to by the prophets concerning Him (Luke 24:25–26, 46; Acts 17:3; I Peter 1:11).
 - b. Let’s consider some of the specific prophecies that relate to the crucifixion of Jesus that confirm the supernatural character of His death and verify that He is the Messiah.
 - (1) Psalm 22
 - (a) David is generally regarded as the author of this psalm. Upon examining the psalm, one is forced to the conclusion that David is not speaking of himself but the Messiah. This is the application which the Spirit makes of the passage (Hebrews 2:12).
 - (b) Verses 14 and 15 are vividly descriptive of the physical anxiety and pain of crucifixion (cf. John 19:28–34; 20:25). The reference to the “melting heart” poetically describes the horrible physiological stress which the pulmonary system endures during crucifixion (Shier, Cathleen, “The Science of Crucifixion,” *In Focus*, www.apu.edu/infocus; Davis, C. Truman, “The Crucifixion of Jesus,” *Arizona Medicine*, 22, no. 3 (1965): 183–187. Edwards, William D., et. al. “On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ,” *The Journal of the American Medical Association* 255, no.11 (1986): 1455–1463).

- (c) Verse 18 is quoted by John as being fulfilled in the gaming of the soldiers for Jesus' garment (John 19:23–24). This event is remarkable from several perspectives. Obviously, neither Jesus nor his disciples had anything to do with instigating the game. These soldiers certainly did not know anything about the Hebrew Scriptures. Neither were they sympathetic to any conspiracy concerning Jesus, of which there is no evidence.
- (d) Verse 16 is the most compelling. Consider that crucifixion as a method of execution was unknown to David and would never have been used by the Jews. While they did expose bodies on a gibbet, the "piercing" of those bodies would not be attendant with that practice. Furthermore, that such would involve only the hands and feet cannot be explained by any method of execution known to David or in use in Israel. The peculiar mention of it here only suggests crucifixion after the fact to a careful student. The prophet Zechariah had this very scene revealed to him (Zechariah 12:10). Again, the Spirit is revealing to us exactly what He meant (cf. I Peter 1:11).
- (2) Isaiah 53
- (a) The Holy Spirit gave Isaiah a glimpse of the Messiah as the sin offering for the world (cf. I Peter 2:22-25). Clearly the prophet saw the Messiah being put to death for the sins of his people, the very ones that executed Him (vv. 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12).
- (b) Isaiah does not detail the method of Messiah's execution, but he does describe with deft detail the character of the events which when viewed through the interpreting eye of the Holy Spirit must point to Jesus of Nazareth. Note how the prophet characterizes the entire process by which the Messiah is brought to execution: marred visage (52:14), rejection (v. 2), misjudged Him as smitten of God (v. 4), brutally beaten and executed as punishment for sins (v. 5), made no defense of Himself (v. 7), denied justice (vv. 7–8), innocent (v.9), numbered with transgressors (v. 12).
- (c) This last prophetic statement (v. 12) finds literal fulfillment in the fact that Jesus was crucified between two thieves (Mark 15:27–28). This is an interesting fact which again destroys any possibility of conspiracy and heightens the ignorance of the Jews regarding their Scriptures concerning their Messiah.
- (3) Exodus 12:46
- (a) John 19:36 is not an exact quotation of any Old Testament verse, but that does not mean it is not intended to be so because John says "the Scripture should be fulfilled." I believe the context of the original verse will determine how we should proceed.
- (b) Is Psalm 34:20 the passage John has in mind as fulfilled?
- [1] Psalm 34:18 seems to make the case to my mind that it is not Messianic and should be applied to David alone. The Psalm is written by a penitent man for penitent men (vv. 3–9, 12–14). That won't do for Jesus.
- [2] The promise of 34:20 is one of escape from death; that hardly applies to the Messiah either. David is speaking generally of god's providence in helping the righteous man. David is urging men to learn the lesson of repentance in order to find God's help.
- (c) Is Exodus 12:46 the text in view?
- [1] That passage refers to the Passover lamb and the regulations that pertained to its being prepared and eaten.
- [2] Jesus is compared to the Passover lamb in several passages (1 Corinthians 5:7; I Peter 1:18–19; John 1:29, 36; Hebrews 9:14; cf. Isaiah 53).
- [3] In that the prophet Isaiah clearly describes the Messiah as a sacrifice for sin and the Holy Spirit through the pen of mark applied his prophecy to these events, it is

difficult not to think that John has also seen the connection and through the Spirit enhances our view of Jesus on the cross.

[4] Exodus 12:46 is not predictive prophecy, but the significance of not breaking the bone of the actual Passover lamb is not made known until Christ comes. He is distinguished from the others at Calvary by not having His bones broken. It was a sign that he was the Lamb of God.

4. What does this fourth wonder reveal?
 - a. The death of Jesus was extraordinary, not in its methods, per se, but that these methods were the objects of prediction from men who were ignorant of the means and methods that were under consideration. This can only be explained by accepting supernatural guidance in making their predictions.
 - b. The death of Jesus cannot be explained by a conspiracy among his disciples. The predicted events were outside both Jesus and their control. Coincidence and perfect hindsight cannot account for the facts in the case. Again these things can only be explained by a supernatural intervention which guided them to their completion.
 - c. When the facts of Jesus' death are considered under the light of these Old Testament prophecies then it is apparent that he is indeed the Christ of God, the true Passover Lamb that takes away the sins of the world.

E. The Fifth Wonder: Darkness over the Land (Luke 23:44–46)—

1. Among the more striking of the wonders that occurred when Christ was crucified is the darkness which fell over all the land (Luke 23:44-46; Matthew 27:45–46, 50; Mark 15:33, 37).
2. This darkness is generally explained by skeptics as a natural occurring phenomenon, an eclipse of some sort that just coincidentally happened at the exact moment that Christ was hanging on the cross.
 - a. *The Ancient Mysteries Website* offers this explanation: “The traditional dates for the Crucifixion are 29 AD and 33 AD. I discovered there were solar eclipses in these years, both visible from Jerusalem. As 33 AD is the most common date used for Jesus' death, I analyzed that eclipse first. It occurred on 12 December, but was annular... While in 33 AD, over Jerusalem, the Moon's shadow barely clipped the Sun, the 29 AD eclipse was total. At 10:40 am local time, the line of totality passed through Nicosia, Cyprus. In Damascus, Syria, the maximum eclipse was experienced at 10:48 A.M. The Moon's shadow had first appeared on the solar disc at 9:18 A.M. and its transition ended at 12:38 P.M. Over Jerusalem at 10:45 A.M., I would say there was a 97–98%.”
 - b. Dr. Sten Odenwald writes in the *Archive of Astronomy Questions and Answers*, “In Acts 2:20 it was reported that the Moon would be turned to blood and the Sun turned to darkness at the time of the Resurrection... Predictions show that there was only one lunar eclipse visible from Jerusalem at the time of Passover in the period from 26–36 AD. It occurred on Friday April 3, AD 33. The Moon rose above the horizon already in the midst of eclipse and would have progressively ‘turned to blood’ as the eclipse continued.”
3. Facts about Solar and Lunar Eclipses:
 - a. A solar eclipse can only occur when the moon passes between the sun and the earth. When this happens, the moon is referred to as a “new moon.” When the moon passes between the sun and the earth the sun's rays are blocked and part of the earth is darkened. The maximum length of a “total” eclipse is \pm 12 minutes, not three hours.
 - (1) Jesus was crucified on Friday morning of the Passover week (Luke 22:15; 24:1, 13, 21), thus, He died on the first day of Unleavened bread (Leviticus 23:5–7).
 - (2) The Jews followed a lunar calendar. Each new month began with a new moon (Numbers

- 28:11–15). Therefore, Passover would occur during the middle of the cycle, the time of “full” moon (Leviticus 23:4–8).
- (3) Since Christ was crucified during the Passover, it is impossible to explain the darkness that occurred as a natural phenomenon, i.e., a total solar eclipse.
- b. A lunar eclipse only occurs during a full moon when the earth’s shadow is cast upon the moon (because the moon is behind earth facing the sun). However, this event cannot correspond to what was described in the Gospels since a lunar eclipse occurs only at night.
 - (1) In the first place, Acts 2:20 has nothing to do with the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter applies it to the events of Pentecost which was fifty days later.
 - (2) In the second place, any attempt to equate the darkening of the sun with a lunar eclipse is a denial of the text. The sun was darkened at noon until 3:00 PM, neither Matthew, Mark or Luke said anything about the moon.
 - (3) What happened cannot be explained by any naturally occurring astronomical phenomenon.
 - c. Only a miracle will explain what happened that day as Christ was being crucified. A miracle is not out of character either with the event (the Son only begotten of God is for sin) or God who would have wrought it. Consider:
 - (1) The Plague (Exodus 10:21–23)
 - (2) The Extended Day (Joshua 10:12–14)
 - (4) The Reversed Day (II Kings 20:8–11)
 - d. Was this a local or a worldwide event?
 - (1) In favor of a local event-
 - (a) Time specific (Matthew 27:45)
 - (b) Limited hours (only these three)
 - (c) Language (Luke 4:25; Acts 7:11)
 - (2) In favor of universal event-
 - (a) Significance (John 3:16)
 - (b) Language (Romans 10:18; cf. Psalm 19:1–4)
 - (3) A local event seems more in keeping w/ the facts—the darkness seems to have been for those observing the crucifixion (Luke 23:47–48).
4. What does this fifth wonder reveal?
- a. The Power of God—
 - (1) Miracles are attributable to God alone; certainly He who made the stars and planets can move them where and how He wills (Colossians 1:17 and Hebrews 1:3).
 - (2) These events can be assigned to no other source than God (Acts 4:16).
 - (3) One purpose of miracles is to confirm the prophet with whom the sign is associated (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3-4). This miracle upheld Jesus as God’s messenger (Matthew 27:54).
 - b. A Horrified Creation—
 - (1) As in the Words of the Hymn, “Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in, when Christ the Mighty Maker died for man the creature’s sin.”
 - (a) It is a poetic application (personification)
 - (b) Similar applications (Isaiah 1:3; 13:10-11; 24:23; Jeremiah 4:28; 12:4; Hosea 4:3; Joel 1:14-20; Jonah 3:8).
 - (2) Nature mourns her Creator’s treatment—
 - (a) All nature praises God as her Creator (Psalms 148:2–6).
 - (b) Why then should it not mourn, recoil and tremble at the evil treatment man heaped upon their Maker?

- c. A Judgment upon Israel—
 - (1) It was a sign of condemnation.
 - (a) The prophets use the imagery of the sun being darkened to indicate the removal of a world power (Isaiah 13:10; Joel 2:31; 3:15; Acts 2:20)
 - (b) Heavenly miracles associated with judgment (Isaiah 7:11; 2 Kings 20:11; Judges 5:20; Joshua 10:12–13).
 - (2) Israel Was Rejected—
 - (a) Though reclaimed they were not fully restored (Matthew 12:43–45).
 - (b) Their “house” was empty (Matthew 23:37–39).
 - (c) They were God’s people no more (Romans 2:28–29).
- d. As an Emblem of Sin—
 - (1) Darkness Is an Emblem of Sin—
 - (a) Sinful man is in “darkness” (John 3:19)
 - (b) They are under the power of darkness (John 3:19; Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 5:19; Acts 26:18)
 - (c) W/o light we stumble (Proverbs 4:19)
 - (2) Jesus is the means to escape the darkness of sin—
 - (a) The darkness ended w/ Jesus’ cry (Mark 15:34–38)
 - (b) Jesus can deliver us from the power of darkness (John 12:46; Colossians 1:13)
 - (c) By the Gospel (Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4–6)
 - (d) Will you come into the light? (John 3:20–21)

F. The Sixth Wonder: The Veil of the Temple Is Rent (Matthew 27:50–51)—

1. Of the things that occurred on the day in which Christ died, the rending of the veil of the Temple is perhaps one of the more significant from a spiritual perspective. Yet, its significance is not explained in the context, but rather it is left for the reader to infer from other passages. Three of the four evangelists record the miracle (Matthew 27:50–51; Mark 15:37–38; Luke 23:44–46), John alone fails to mention it.
2. The Veil of the Temple:
 - a. Moses indicates that there were two veils associated with the Tabernacle or Temple.
 - (1) According to the *ISBE*, “In Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, the veil that hung between the two holy chambers of the tabernacle is mentioned 23 times (Exodus 26:31, etc.). In several places it is termed “the veil of the screen” and it is distinguished from “the screen for the door of the tabernacle” (Exodus 35:12, 15; 39:34, 38). By the latter is meant the curtain that hung outside the holy place, i.e. at the tabernacle entrance.
 - (2) “Exodus 26:31 informs us that the veil was made of fine-twined linen, and that its colors were blue and purple and scarlet. It was embroidered with cherubim. At each removal of the tabernacle the veil was used to enwrap the ark of the testimony (Numbers 4:5).
 - (3) “From its proximity to this central object of the Hebrew ceremonial system, the veil is termed “the veil of the testimony” (Leviticus 24:3), “the veil which is before the testimony” (Exodus 27:21), etc.
 - (4) “In Solomon’s Temple the veil is mentioned but once (II Chronicles 3:14). It was protected by doors of olive wood (1Kings 6:31). In the later temple [of the restoration] it is alluded to in 1 Maccabees 1:22.”
 - b. The dimensions of this veil reveal that it was of great proportions:
 - (1) According to Alfred Edersheim the veil in Herod’s Temple was immense, “The Veils before the Most Holy Place were 40 cubits (60 feet) long, and 20 (30 feet) wide, of the thickness of the palm of the hand, and wrought in 72 squares, which were joined

together; and these Veils were so heavy, that, in the exaggerated language of the time, it needed 3000 priests to manipulate each" (*The Life & Times of Jesus the Messiah*; Vol. 2, p. 481).

- (2) Josephus gives some sense of the size of the veil in his description of the Temple, "When any person entered into the temple, its floor received them. This part of the temple therefore was in height sixty cubits, and its length the same; whereas its breadth was but twenty cubits: but still that sixty cubits in length was divided again, and the first part of it cut off at forty cubits, and had in it three things that were very wonderful and famous among all mankind; the candlestick, the table [of shew bread], and the altar of incense... But the inmost part of the temple of all was of twenty cubits. This was also separated from the outer part by a veil. In this there was nothing at all. It was inaccessible and inviolable, and not to be seen by any; and was called the Holy of Holies" (*Wars of the Jews*, V.v.207–221).
- (3) The *ISBE* also comments on the veil's size and design based upon Josephus and other sources: "The holy place was separated from the holiest by a partition one cubit in thickness, before which hung an embroidered curtain or 'veil' — that which was rent at the death of Jesus (Matthew 27:51 and parallel's; *Midrash*, iv.7, makes two veils, with a space of a cubit between them). The Holy of Holies was empty; only a stone stood, as in the temple of Zerubbabel, on which the high priest placed his censer on the Day of Atonement (*Mishna*, *Yoma'*, v.2). In the holy place were the altar of incense, the table of shewbread (North), and the seven-branched golden candlestick (South). Representations of the two latter are seen in the carvings on the Arch of Titus. The spacious entrance to the holy place had folding doors, before which hung a richly variegated Babylonian curtain. Above the entrance was a golden vine with clusters as large as a man (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XV, xi, 3; *Wars of the Jews*, V, v, 4)."

c. The function of this veil in the Temple worship:

- (1) The veil was clearly intended to mark a separation between the Holy and the Most Holy Places of the Temple (Exodus 26:31–35).
- (2) The Ark of the Covenant with its Mercy Seat was to be concealed from the view of all by the veil, whether when in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:3, 21) or when it was moved (Numbers 4:5).
- (3) The veil served to conceal the visible Presence of Jehovah above the Mercy Seat from the view of any man (Exodus 25:22; 29:43–44; 30:6; Leviticus 16:2, 12–17).
- (4) The only man allowed to pass within the veil was the high priest in order to make atonement once a year for himself and the nation (Leviticus 16:cf. Hebrews 9:7).
- (5) To act in violation of these commandments resulted in death (Leviticus 16:2; I Samuel 6:19; Numbers 4:15, 19).

3. What happened to the veil?

- a. There had been darkness over the land from noon until 3:00 p.m. (Matthew 27:45). As the ninth hour passed, the sun returned, but the Son of Man gave up the ghost and died (27:50). It is at this moment that the veil in the Temple was rent from top to bottom (27:51).
- b. When this occurred a priest was in the Holy Place ministering at the altar of incense as it was the time of the evening prayers (Luke 1:8-10; II Chronicles 31:2; Exodus 30:7–8), other priests were officiating at the altar offering the evening sacrifice (Exodus 29:38–39).
- c. The court before the Temple, as well as others within the Temple complex, were filled with people praying (Luke 1:10, 21; Acts 3:1, 9). This is an event that did not pass unnoticed.
- d. None of the NT writers associate the rending of the veil with the earthquake. (However, Jerome erroneously did so in the fourth century A.D. upon reading a spurious account of it

in the *Gospel of the Nazarene*.) They all specifically mention the veil being rent before the quake, and are careful identify the tear as being made from top to bottom, an impossible matter for a human agency and wholly improbable by any natural phenomenon.

4. What does the sixth wonder signify?

- a. In order to understand what this incredible miracle signifies we must spend a moment making certain we understand what the great veil in the Temple signified to the Jew.
- (1) Within the veil was the ark, in which was placed “the testimony” and upon that the covering of “the mercy-seat” (Exodus 26:16–22; cf. Hebrews 9:1–4).
 - (2) The testimony was the Book of the Law, and it was put into the ark as a witness against the people because of their sinfulness (Exodus 25:16, 21; 30:6; Deuteronomy 31:26–27).
 - (3) This symbolized the great truth that the first relation into which Jehovah comes with the sinner is that of a ruler whose law testifies against the transgressor (Deuteronomy 27:26; Jeremiah 11:3; Leviticus 18:5; Galatians 3:10–14).
 - (4) But, as noted, this testimony was covered by the mercy-seat, on which the blood of atonement was sprinkled by the high-priest when he entered within the veil (Leviticus 16:1–15), and above which the visible emblem of Jehovah’s presence between the cherubim of glory was enthroned; and in this there was an attestation of the fact that the condemning and accusing power of the Law was taken away by the propitiatory covering which God had appointed (cf. Colossians 2:13–14).
 - (5) By all this was indicated the grand truth that Jehovah dwelt among his people as a justly offended but, nevertheless, merciful and propitiated sovereign, who, having received atonement for their sins, had put these out of His sight (Psalm 32:1; 51:1, 9; 85:2).
 - (6) However, there hung this veil, hiding all of these wonders from the people, the priests and the Levites. None but the high priest, and he only once a year under a cloud of incense, could actually *see* what was done before the glory of God. The great mystery concealed by the veil was the Holy Spirit’s method of teaching the Jew that these things were only types and shadows of greater spiritual realities yet to be revealed and actualized (Hebrews 9:6–10).
 - (7) The constant repetition day by day, morning and evening, continually offering animal sacrifices as an atonement must have led the spiritual Jew to realize that the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin (Hebrews 10:1–4). There must be something better!
- b. In the rending of the veil of the Temple something better is signaled as having come.
- (1) For while the priest of Israel was kneeling before the altar of incense and praying for the atonement of his and the nations sins, and his brother priest was standing at the base of the great altar pouring out, yet again, the blood of another evening sacrifice, the sinless Son of God was praying from the altar of Golgotha, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do...it is finished...into Thy hands I commend My Spirit.”
 - (2) Then, upon a great cry of anguish and the cold shudder of death, the earth quaked and the unseen hand of God reached down from heaven and tore the veil in two signifying what they had done and what God had finished.
 - (3) With the death of Messiah the “way into the holiest of all was made manifest” (Hebrews 9:8) because “the forerunner Jesus” entered into that within the veil (Hebrews 6:19–20) with His own blood once for all to obtain eternal redemption for us (Hebrews 9:11–14).
 - (4) The earthly Tabernacle and Temple was a shadowy pattern of the heavenly realities (Hebrews 9:8–11; 8:2). Just as the veil obscured the view into the holiest of all, the entire Mosaic system obscured our view into the spiritual realities of God’s eternal plan. Yet with the death of Jesus these realities are made known (Hebrews 10:19–23), and that which had once been a mystery and caused men to turn away in fear now gives them the

assurance to draw near with boldness by the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19; 4:16).

- (5) The death of Jesus Christ opened for all permanently the way into the presence of God; by the power of His endless life He mediates in heaven for every true believer.

G. The Seventh Wonder: The Earthquake on Friday

1. Perhaps one of the least considered and properly understood of the wonders associated with the Passion of Christ is the earthquake that occurred on Friday, the day that Jesus was crucified (Matthew 27:50–54).
 - a. Matthew is the only one that records the occurrence of this earthquake in connection with the miraculous darkness and the rending of the Temple veil at the moment that Christ gave up the ghost (Matthew 27:50; cf. Mark 15:37–38; Luke 23:44–45).
 - b. This earthquake is not to be confused with a second quake (“a great earthquake”) which occurred on Sunday morning in connection with the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:2).
 - (1) This second quake was caused by the “angel of the Lord”
 - (a) See Matthew 28:2 (*γὰρ* is a primary particle; properly, assigning a reason).
 - (b) This quake is associated with the rolling of the stone away from the opening of Christ’s sepulcher.
 - (2) The earthquake on Friday was, seemingly, of greater magnitude than the quake on Sunday
 - (a) It had the effect of actually rending the rocks (Matthew 27:51).
 - (b) The same word is used of the rending of the veil; both the veil and the rocks were “split.”
 - (c) That God should cause “earthquakes” or other phenomenon to accomplish His purpose can be easily established. He has on prior occasion miraculously caused the earth to quake for specific purposes (I Kings 19:11–12; Acts 16:26; Hebrews 12:26; I Samuel 14:15).
 - (3) Matthew employs the figure of speech known as hysteron proteron (Bullinger; *Figures of Speech*, p. 707).
 - (a) In this figure two events connected as antecedent and consequence are joined together out of chronological order (see: Matthew 27:54).
 - (b) In this case, the earthquake, which was antecedent and necessary to the resurrection saints joined with it out of chronological sequence because of the impression it made upon the centurion (27:54).
 - (c) The earthquake and the opening of their graves occurred on Friday near the time of Jesus’ death as the darkness was being dispelled; however, the saints themselves were not raised until *after* Jesus was raised.
 - (d) While the centurion and his squadron “saw the earthquake” on Friday (Matthew 27:54), it is doubtful they saw the resurrected saints on Sunday, but they may have (27:53). The things he saw from Calvary while attending Jesus’ crucifixion were sufficient to lead him to the conclusion that “Truly this was the Son of God.”
2. As a result of this first earthquake, Matthew reports that every grave, sepulcher and tomb in Jerusalem was opened: “*And the graves were opened*” (Matthew 27:52).
 - a. What graves and where? It seems reasonable that the graves in and around Jerusalem are meant, especially those near and adjacent to where Christ was crucified and buried (John 19:41; cf. Deuteronomy 21:23).
 - b. The timing of this event is significant.
 - (1) As noted, the earthquake of Matthew 27:51 occurred on Friday at about 3:00 PM (“the ninth hour” of 27:45–46).

- (2) It is the evening of the “Day of Preparation” (Matthew 27:57; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31).
 - (3) The Sabbath that was drawing on was arguably the most significant of the year (John 19:31) because it was the Sabbath of the Passover week (Exodus 12, 13).
 - (4) The Jews were all busy completing their preparations for this Sabbath Day in which no work at all could be done (Leviticus 23:1–8).
 - (5) An open grave, about which it is doubtful many would have known at the moment, did not likely attract attention for repair at that late and busy hour (Luke 24:54; John 19:42). Such repair work would not have been attempted on the Sabbath as it would have been prohibited.
 - (6) Therefore, the graves of all the dead in Jerusalem lay open as Friday came to a close with the exception of one, the tomb of Jesus (Mark 15:46).
- c. It is important to take note who was raised and when: “*Many bodies of the saints...came out of the graves after His resurrection*” (Matthew 27:52–53).
- (1) It is probable these “saints” were persons who had recently died, and would be recognized in Jerusalem by those to whom they appeared.
 - (2) There is no reason to think that any OT saints of renown were raised (Acts 2:29).
 - (3) In that they are called “saints” I suspect that they were some who became disciples of Jesus, like Lazarus (John 12:1, 11), the widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:14–16), Tabitha (Acts 9:36–43).
 - (4) It is important to note that “the saints which slept” (27:52) did not come out of the graves that were opened until “*after His resurrection*” (27:53).
 - (a) Jesus was not raised until after 6:00 AM on Sunday morning. He appeared to several of the disciples that morning (Matthew 28:9–10; Mark 16:9–11; John 20:14–18; Luke 24:34) and to others later in the day (Luke 24:13–42; John 20:19–25).
 - (b) Their appearance in Jerusalem was directly attributable to Jesus’ resurrection. They probably testified to that fact (cf. John 12:17).
 - (5) Matthew is careful not equate the resurrection of these saints to that of Christ.
 - (a) This is evident from his careful noting of the time and sequence of events.
 - (b) This is evident from the descriptive language used.
 - (c) This is evident by his precise indication that their coming out of the graves was dependent upon His being raised.
 - (d) Matthew clearly understands that this is a miraculous sign of something.
3. What does the seventh wonder signify?
- a. The most important and most obvious, yet the least commented upon, is the significance of the earthquake as a proof of Jesus’ own resurrection.
 - (1) The fact that all the graves in Jerusalem were opened on Friday remarkably identifies Jesus’ tomb as the only tomb sealed that entire three days.
 - (2) The earthquake makes it *impossible* to have misidentified the tomb of Jesus.
 - (3) Furthermore, it was not possible to have gone to the wrong tomb on Sunday and found it empty since all other tombs which were possessed of bodies were open and their bodies were yet in them.
 - b. It was one of many signs whose power and character were sufficient to convince the honest non-believer that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47).
 - (1) The centurion was not only convicted that Jesus was the Son of God, but that it was by his own hands the Christ had died (Acts 2:23).
 - (2) Imagine if you can, as well you should, the overwhelming power of that conviction.

- (3) So, this man and his comrades “feared greatly” which arguably can convey the idea of belief and repentance (Colossians 3:22; I Peter 2:17).
- c. Symbolically, the earthquake at the moment of Jesus’ death gives a visual image to the reality that it is His death upon the cross that overthrows the power of the grave (Hebrews 2:9–15) and His resurrection that identifies Him as the firstborn from the dead among many brethren (Colossians 1:18; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:13).

III. CONCLUSION:

A. *The Seven Wonders of Calvary—*

1. The Angel that came and strengthened Jesus (Luke 22:43–45)
2. The mob was knocked to the ground in the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:3–6)
3. The cock crowed three times in conjunction with Peter’s lies (John 13:36–38)
4. The manner of Jesus’ death by crucifixion (John 19:23–37)
5. The darkness over all the land (Luke 23:44–46; Matthew 27:45–46, 50; Mark 15:33, 37)
6. The Veil of the Temple is torn in two (Matthew 27:50–51)
7. The earthquake at the moment of Jesus’ death (Matthew 27:51–54)

B. *Will These Wonders Affect You as They Have Others?*

1. Judas and the mob were unmoved and betrayed Jesus.
2. Peter repented, wept great tears of remorse and lived in order to die for Jesus.
3. The centurion and his comrades feared greatly and confessed that Jesus was the Son of God.
4. Many in Jerusalem saw the dead saints raised and marveled at the signs that were done.
5. Many others continued to plot and scheme against Jesus in unbelief.