**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

**On KTTR (99.7 FM) Every Sunday at 8:30 a.m.**

**Rolla, Missouri**

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**Surveying The Wondrous Cross**

There is a man in the Bible who witnessed one of the most dramatic events in all of human history. This man was an eyewitness to the death of Jesus. He was not a disciple of Jesus, yet he may have become one. Do you know who this man is?

I’m talking about the centurion who was in charge of guarding the body of Jesus at His crucifixion. He is mentioned in three of the accounts of the crucifixion of Christ. (**Matt. 27:54; Mark 15:39,44-45; Luke 23:47**). When he and others with him saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, it says *“they feared greatly, saying, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’”* (Mt. 27:54). Luke 23:47 says, *“So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, ‘Certainly this was a righteous Man!’”*

The centurion had, no doubt, beheld the darkness over the land from 12 noon to 3:00 PM. He hadprobably felt the earth tremble beneath his feet.He had seen Jesus die. He heard the words of Jesus as He entrusted His spirit unto the Father, *“Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.”* (Lk. 23:46) Having said this, Jesus breathed His last. The centurion, evidently, observed the calm resolve with which Jesus approached death. All that he saw caused him to speak as he did. What happened at the crucifixion of Christ has tremendous power. It is something that can move a man. The centurion is convinced that he witnessed not only the crucifixion of a righteous man, but that this man is the Son of God. We don’t know what happened to this soldier. He is not mentioned again. We only know that as he stood at the cross he saw the Son of God die.

When I look at the cross, do I see what the centurion saw? I suggest to you that from our perspective, we can see much more. What do we see when we survey the wondrous cross? That is what I want to talk about on our program today.

When we observe the crucifixion of Jesus we see the power of God. The crucifixion of Jesus was accompanied by supernatural acts of God. The purpose of miracles was to cause men to know that God acted. Consider some of the supernatural acts of God at the crucifixion. There were three hours of darkness associated with the crucifixion. Luke 23:44-45 says, *“And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, the sun being obscured…”* The sixth hour is 12:00 noon, and so from noon to 3:00 p.m. the sun did not shine and there was darkness over the whole land. Also the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. I have read that the veil was made of very heavy fabric that may have been up to 3 inches thick. Not only could man not have torn it, it was torn from the top. God did this. How do you think the priests in the temple who observed this event would have been affected? Also the earth quaked and the rocks were split (Matt. 27:51). Imagine the effect this would have had on the centurion and the other soldiers there at the cross. It must have produced fear in their hearts. This was just one more sign of God’s working in conjunction with Christ’s death.

Could all this that happened be attributed to coincidence? No logical thinking person would say so. Some of these things, if not all of them caused the centurion to speak as he did, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

Also when we observe the crucifixion of Jesus we see the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. The Centurion, at the time of the crucifixion probably did not understand this event to be the fulfillment of prophecy, but we can see this very clearly. The Old Testament was written and completed hundreds of years before Jesus was ever born. The Old Testament contains hundreds of prophecies of the coming Messiah and Jesus fulfills every one of them. Several of the prophecies foretell of the crucifixion and events that took place at that time. It was foretold that His hands and his feet would be pierced (Ps. 22:16). In a crucifixion one’s hands and feet are pierced. It was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah 700 years before Jesus was born that He would be numbered with the transgressors (Isa. 53:12). Mark records that when Jesus was crucified that *“with Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘And He was numbered with the transgressors.’”* (Mark 15:27-28).

At His crucifixion the soldiers divided Jesus’ garments and each soldier took a part. Concerning his tunic, since it was without seam in one piece they cast lots for it. That was prophesied by David in Psalm 22:18. Matthew record, *“Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: ‘They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.’”* (Matt. 27:35) It was prophesied that His bones would not be broken (Psalm 34: 20), and also that He would be pierced (Zech. 12:10) John records concerning the crucifixion of Jesus,

*“But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, ‘Not one of His bones shall be broken.’ And again another Scripture says, ‘They shall look on Him whom they pierced.’”* (Jn. 19:33-37)

The crucifixion of Jesus was no accident. God was not taken by surprise. It was a part of God’s plan to save man from their sins. It was foretold by the prophets. Peter told the Jews, *"Him* [that is Jesus], *being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you**have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death* (Acts 2:23). The centurion concluded that Jesus was the Son of God by witnessing Jesus’ death.We were not witnesses of that event, and yet we draw the same conclusion. The fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament scriptures force us to that same conclusion.

When we see the crucifixion of Jesus we see the end of the Law of Moses. The Covenant that God made with the children Israel at Mt. Sinai and the law of that Covenant came to an end. The means by which that covenant and its law came to an end was the death of Jesus. Paul said in Colossians 2:14, *“having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”* The “handwriting of requirements” in this verse is talking about the law of Moses. Paul says it was “taken out of the way,” “nailed to the cross.” Jesus’ death on the cross brought an end to that law. Christ’s blood that was shed at His death dedicated a New Covenant with a new law. When Jesus was instituting the Lord’s Supper He took the cup, the fruit of the vine and He said *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”* (Matt. 26:28). So Jesus’ blood, that was shed at His death, dedicated a New Covenant. Now that we are under a New Covenant, the Covenant God made with the children of Israel became Old and it vanished away. The Hebrew writer says in Hebrews 8:13, *“In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”* And that is what happened to that Old Covenant. It vanished away.

Now that we are under a New Covenant we are under a new law, the law of Christ. Hebrews 7:12 says there was a change of the law. Paul said in 1 Cor. 9:21 that he was not without law toward God, *“but under law toward Christ.”* When the law of Moses was taken out of the way, that does not mean we are without any law. We are not under the law of Moses, but we are under the law of Christ given in the New Testament. Therefore, we do not go to the Old Testament to find God’s will for Christians today. That is the reason we do not offer animal sacrifices, or burn incense in our worship to God. Those practices were a part of a covenant that we are not under. When we see the crucifixion of Jesus we see the end of the Law of Moses and the beginning of a New Covenant and a new law, the law of Christ.

But also, when we see the crucifixion of Jesus, we see a sacrifice for sin. We must not fail to comprehend who the man was who died on the cross. John says He was in the beginning with God and was God. He made all things. (John 1:1-4) John says that this One became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). John the Baptist said, He is *“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). Jesus partook of flesh and blood to be a sacrifice for sin. Hebrews 10:10 says, *“we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”* On the cross, Jesus was offering Himself as a sacrifice for sin. Read Heb. 9:24-28. What an amazing thing that the sacrifice was made even for the centurion who participated in His death. And that sacrifice was made for you and me. The apostle Paul said, *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”*  (1 Tim. 1:15)

And also, when we see the crucifixion of Jesus, we see the greatest expression of love. Jesus’ death is a scene filled with anger, hate, and murder on the part of those who killed Him. But we also see the greatest expression of love on the part of Him who died. It was because of Jesus’ love for us that He died for us. Ephesians 5:2 says, *“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.”* We see Jesus’ love in His words while on the cross, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.*” (Luke 23:34) He is dying for the very ones who are killing Him. There is no greater love than this.

Yes, after observing the things that took place at the crucifixion of Jesus, the centurion was compelled to say, “Truly this was the Son of God!” and “Certainly this was a righteous Man!” The evidence was overwhelming of who this Man was on the cross. Now, we did not see Jesus on the cross, but I suggest that from our perspective we see much more than what the centurion saw. Yes, we see that Jesus is the Son of God, a righteous man who died. We see the power of God at the crucifixion. We see that Jesus fulfilled prophecy. But we also see the end of the Law of Moses and the bringing in of the Law of Christ. We see Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins. We see the greatest expression of love.

How can we help but to be thankful? How can we resist loving such a Savior? How can we not be loyal to Him?

Why not give your life to Jesus today?

Our time is gone for today.

But before we close we want to invite you to check out our website. On this website you are able to hear sermons on a variety of Bible topics, and you also are able to hear previous Bible Talk radio broadcasts. The web address is sjchurchofchrist.com, that’s sjchurchofchrist.com.

Our time is gone for today, but before we close I want to announce a special series of meetings that will be conducted by the St. James church of Christ in St. James. This series of meetings begins today and continues through Wednesday night of this week Colly Caldwell from Temple Terrace, Florida, is with us and will present lessons from the Book of Ephesians. The Theme of these lessons is, “What Is My Purpose for Being and How is it fulfilled in Christ?” That’s April 10-13. We will be meeting at our regular times today and then at 7:00 each evening Monday through Wednesday. Come and be with us. The church’s building is located at 685 Sidney Street in St. James, where Sidney Street and Highway B intersect.