

### WARM-UP

- Are you more likely to prepare carefully or stay basic when going on a trip? Give one example.
- Have you ever experienced something that was beyond your control and seemed bad, but turned out well? What happened?
- Tell about a memorable loss or victory you experienced.

**WORD** *<sup>51</sup>And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup>and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup>When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"* **MATTHEW 27:51-54**

(Read also **MATTHEW 27:45-50**.)

The word "miracles" often brings to mind events that amaze, astonish, and defy the laws of nature. And this does describe many of the miracles Jesus performed on earth. But a less flashy miracle is that of fulfilled prophecies. While many miraculous events surrounded the death of Christ on the cross, one great miracle was that death itself died. This had been foretold before it was fulfilled.

## 1 | The death of Christ is a fulfillment of God's plan.

*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* **MATTHEW 27:46**

(Read also **PSALM 22; 69:21.**)

Psalm 22, which was written long before the crucifixion, contains specific details that only came to pass during the crucifixion and death of Jesus: the picture of being surrounded by Gentiles; His hands and feet being pierced; and His garments being divided by casting lots. When Jesus cried, "*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*" He was not announcing that the Father's presence had left Him. Instead, Jesus was pointing back to the prophecy. This was God's plan all along; it was not an accident. The Father had never left Jesus' side. What does this tell us about God's sovereignty?

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## 2 | The death of Christ opened the way to God's presence.

*And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.*

**MATTHEW 27:51**

At the moment that Jesus died, the *curtain of the temple was torn* in half. In Jesus' time, this curtain divided the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, where only the high priest could enter once a year at the risk of his own death, because God's glory rested in the Most Holy Place. When the curtain was torn, it symbolized the opening of the way into God's presence for anyone, not just the high priest. Because of

Jesus' death, we can approach God daily in our personal lives. Are there times you still feel like you need to prepare yourself to talk to God? How does Hebrews 10:19–22 speak into this?

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### 3 | The death of Christ opened the door for resurrection.

*<sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup>and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. MATTHEW 27:52–53*

The death of Jesus on the cross opened the way for all of us to also rise again. At His death, the tombs of dead saints were opened. When Jesus died, not only was it a fulfillment of the entire Old Testament and opened the way to God's presence; He showed us that our final end would not be death, but glory. Ultimately, the miraculous events that took place at Jesus' death pointed to the true miracle that even bystanders couldn't deny: that Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 27:54). How can this change our perspective on death? What does Paul say about the victory won over death on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:54–57)?

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## APPLICATION

- Have you witnessed events that just don't seem to make sense? How can you take steps to trust in God's ways and purposes that are higher than ours?
- Are there times you felt or feel alone? In spite of difficult situations, how should Christ's death affect how you live today?
- What is the mindset you grew up with on approaching God (if any)? What have you learned about approaching God from this lesson?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for the miraculous events that surrounded Jesus' death on the cross. Thank Him for the assurance of His plans that are better than our own and are for our good.
- Pray that as you live your daily life, you will submit to God and approach Him freely.
- Pray for the grace to tell others about Jesus, who won the victory over death for us.



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