

37And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

38At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. 39And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." 41In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 42"He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. 43 "HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

45Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. 46About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?" 47And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." 48Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. 49But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." 50And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. 51And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 52The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. 54Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

The awful deed is done. Jesus is crucified.

37And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

I purposely stopped at this verse because it transitions us into the section of miracles that happen, not because of Jesus, but they are directly related to His sovereign Father in heaven.

Putting Him on a cross doesn't stop God from accomplishing things that are not normal to our natural world.

We need to look at John's account for a moment just here, because it sheds light on this verse for us.

John 19:17 They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. 18 There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. 19 Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." 20 Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. 21 So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'" 22 Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

Pilate wrote the inscription in 3 languages. Any one visiting Jerusalem from almost anywhere else in the known world would be able to read what Pilate wrote.

The Jews protested the words. They demanded clarity for their position. He claimed to be King of the Jews. Actually, He claimed to be the Son of God. But the Jews would accept this clarification. Say that "**He said** He was King of the Jews, not that in any way, He is.

How interesting that we watch the 24 hour news cycle spinning words. They take words and twist and turn them and insist on this meaning or that meaning. Nothing new under the sun. That's what the Jewish politicians are doing here.

Pilate has had a belly full of these Jews and knows they've strong armed

him into giving them what they want. The riot situation is quelled. He turned an innocent man over to these murderers and said, go ahead with Rome's blessing. They aren't going to win this final quibble.

Pilate says *"What I have written I have written."* In other words, in our vernacular, *back off. You're not getting another inch out of me.*

Here is the irony. The jews said; your sign goes too far! But listen to scriptures from their own Holy writings;

6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. So saith Isaiah the prophet.

13 "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. 14" And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed. So saith Daniel the prophet

The King of Kings hangs on a cross with a charge written that is incomplete. He is the King of everything created.

In John 18 Pilate asks Him if He is a king. He says, it is as you say. But then He says; My kingdom, my authority to reign, is bigger than this world. Not of this world.

Satan is the god of this world. Satan has authority to rule over fallen men. Jesus has the rule over the entire universe, and, as we've seen in other places, He is coming soon to depose Satan. He will rule this world, and all of His Saints with Him.

So much for Pilate's sign. It was partially correct. He is indeed, King of the Jews. But in reality, He is King over all creation. Everything created belongs to this man nailed to a cross.

38At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. 39And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads 40and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."

This is the fickle crowd. Some of them are the same people who spread palm branches and said Hosannas. *Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.* Same bunch.

We have them today. All about Jesus, until Jesus doesn't give them what they want.

These folks wanted a Messiah. But they wanted a messiah on their terms. They want a messiah who will take on Rome. Take Pontius Pilate out and put the roman soldiers to flight. Set up a throne in Israel and tell the rest of the world how it's going to go down.

Jesus simply didn't produce. Disillusionment turns to hatred. Fast!

The taunts are based in their disillusionment. Where's the power Jesus? *"You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross."*

You didn't produce. You're ordinary. Just a guy with a lot of claims who dashed our hopes. Let's see some messiah like powers Jesus. Come down from the cross. If you're the messiah, save yourself. Should be easy for a messiah to do.

Psalm 22 again; *For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; And Psalm 69 20 Reproach has broken my heart and I am so sick. And I looked for sympathy, but there was none, And for comforters, but I found none.*

41In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, 42" He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the

cross, and we will believe in Him. 43 “HE TRUSTS IN GOD; LET GOD RESCUE Him now, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’”

The chief priests and the scribes and the elders. This is the cream of Israel. These are the spiritual guides of the people and the nation. Jesus called them blind guides of the blind.

In their fury they have failed to recognize their very words echo Psalm 22 to the word and letter. We read some of that Psalm a couple of weeks ago. Listen to vss. 7 and 8 and you will hear the very words of this wicked mob, but written 1000 years before the event. Chilling.

*7 All who see me sneer at me;
They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,*

*8 “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him;
Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him.”*

For them, the proof that He is not who He claims He is, is in the fact that He's up on that cross, powerless. No messiah they will accept would let that happen. Only a powerless phony.

They are ignorant of the double picture in their own book. Suffering Servant. Conquering King.

They're all in for the Conquering King. They have no use for a suffering Servant.

What about all the miracles. No one can deny them. They all witnessed this man doing mighty miracles. Why wasn't that enough for them? How do they reason away the miracles.

Luke 11 holds a key. 15 *but some of them said, “It is by Beelzebul, the prince of the demons, that He drives out demons.”* 16 *And others tested Him by demanding a sign from heaven.*

The miracles are from Satan. Satan can do miracles. Satan is the

source. If He's really the Son of God, watch this, Do a sign from heaven. Do signs in the heavens.

Joel 2:30

"I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire and columns of smoke. "The sun will be turned into darkness And the moon into blood Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes.

Zechariah 14:6

In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.

And there are many such references in the Old Testament about the "Day of the Lord".

This guy is a fake. If He was the messiah, we'd see signs in the sky. Not a few wimpy miracles Satan could do.

This taunting while He hangs on the cross is based here. He didn't measure up to our expectations based in the book. Blood, Fire. Vapor of smoke. The sun turned dark. Give us some of that if you're the Son of God.

Well, hold the phone, because God is about to vindicate His son, but it's a little late for these folks.

44The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

At this point, both of the other men crucified with Him are right there with the crowd. Same taunts. But very shortly, we'll see one of them change. Possibly because of what happens next.

45Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. 46About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

This is where I must choose my words carefully. On the cross, Jesus

takes all of the sins of fallen men, upon Himself. Somehow that trade takes place. My sin upon Him. His righteousness given to me.

Sin demands a separation from God whose eyes are too pure to look on evil.

Jesus isn't asking a question here. He's letting us know, the transaction has happened. In some sense, the sin of the world has separated the Son from the Father. He cries out in agony; *“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”*

Paul in his letter to the Romans explains how one man's act caused sin to reign over all, and how through this one man's action, Jesus, freedom from sin is offered to all.

Romans 5:18 So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

The sun has gone out. Jesus cries out in agony. There are reactions, even at this juncture.

What is interesting to me is God's sovereignty at work, even here, in the different reactions. Tenderness in some. Hardness in others. God reigns over men.

47And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, “This man is calling for Elijah.” 48Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink.

Many present would not have understood the cry of Psalm 22 in the original language. Thus the reference to Elijah. He's calling for Elijah.

Those who should have known just chuckle in their rock hardness and say

49But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him."

So we see impossible rock hard hearts and yet there are some who are impressed enough to have sympathy. The drink on the sponge was actually an act of sympathy. That wine mixture was not different than what workers in fields would get.

Just here, we need to look for a moment in Luke's account and witness the sovereignty of God over human hearts. Luke 23;

39One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" 40But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41" "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." 42And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" 43And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Where did that come from? This man was hurling abuse at Jesus an hour ago with his friend.

The answer is unpopular these days. The answer is the same as it was when later on Saul of Tarsus is going to Damascus to persecute christians and he gets knocked to the ground, stopped dead in his tracks by Jesus himself.

God elects and saves whomever He desires. This God who says I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy. Out of nowhere. A light comes on and this thief on the cross says, wait a minute, and intantly he believes. He was dead, God made him alive. No other explanation but the grace of God for whomever He wills to have grace.

In that mob that day, there may have been others. When Peter preaches for the first time, 3,000 were saved! Some of them may have been quickened, made alive together with Christ, since this time. Waiting for

Peter to preach, and bam, the church is born.

Initially we are troubled by this doctrine. God chooses? That can only mean He chooses others for destruction then. Our natural reaction is; how can that possibly be fair.

But the other side of that coin is this. If free will and choice is the cause, then man's free will has become god over God. God has no control then, it's all teetering on man's choices.

Paul argues this in Romans 9. 19 *You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"* 20 *On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?*

After you get to know and love this God, and learn of His everlasting justice and mercy and grace towards us, these ideas become exciting to us. Of course God is in ultimate control. Anything less would not be God.

OK, back on track here. The sovereignty of God over hearts also explains the level of hardness in these Jewish leaders against evidence that our minds would think would be completely overwhelming.

It explains both the tenderness and new life, out of nowhere, of a thief up on a cross, and it explains the hatred and vitriol of these leaders. God is sovereign and just, over all of it.

Some are saying "remember me in Your kingdom, Jesus" Some are trying to give Him some little comfort. A drink of sour wine. And those who should have known when their messiah would visit are chiding, we'll just see if Elijah will come and help this phony baloney messiah

Now, we are going to witness some miraculous intervention. God is going to stick his finger in the world and do some things, only He can do. I count at least four.

50And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

This is the first miracle. Jesus, unlike any other man, has control over His own death. He decides the moment. He walks out of this world and into the next, at His will. At His time, His choice.

This has become an issue in our modern times, with the culture of death that surrounds us.

We will decide which baby lives and which baby dies. And the logical next step. We will decide if we want to live or die. The left always re-names things. Death with dignity. Choice. We are little sovereign gods. Those choices should be ours.

And close on the heels, history instructs us, the next logical step is; we will decide who are the weeds in the human garden, and we will weed them out. Lebensunwertes Leben. Life unworthy of life. We'll do it by deciding which old people are worth spending money on, and which are not.

And the next step is easy. Entire groups of people who are unworthy of life. They are just weeds in the garden.

Yet, in this book, all of that is condemned. God gives life and takes it away. With one exception. God, in human flesh, is sovereign over His own death. God is God, even here. Jesus decides the moment. Jesus yields up His life. Jesus declares it "Finished" and yields up His Spirit.

For men to do that is to usurp the place of God. Nothing new here. That's what Satan has tried to do from the beginning.

51And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split. 52The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; 53and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many.

At that moment a great miracle occurs. A great symbol. The curtain in

the temple that separates God's space from men's space is ripped open.

Sin is adjured. A pathway to God is open for all men.

At that moment, the religion of the Jews with all of its symbolic gestures and symbolism is finished. All of those symbols are complete in Jesus' death. No more priests between God and men. The great High Priest has opened the way, and the old covenant is rendered obsolete. Over. Complete. Removed.

Other miracles attest to the importance of this moment. A great earthquake. A precursor to what we will see when Jesus returns. Rocks are split open. The sky is black. Tombs are opened and some of the bodies of some of the saints are raised. There were many witnesses.

And finally, one more miracle that is present to this day.

Those who were invited to the wedding are hardened like flint. But those who are from other nations who were not part of the original promises to Israel, are the first to believe.

54 Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

God is in control of it all. He arranges the hearts of men. He gives hardness to some and belief to others, all for His glory. And we love it so.