

## Exhortation 18 – Nature Responds to Christ

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Luke 23:44-45

### I. The Text Opened

#### A. Luke 23:44-45

1. “And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst,” (Luke 23:44-45).

a) The enemies of Christ, those scribes and pharisees that wanted him silenced, were ever taunting him to give them a “sign from heaven” – some miraculous indication that he was truly the Son of God (Matt. 12:38, Luke 11:29).

b) Of course, as Luke describes them, this was an “evil generation,” for if they had truly wanted to see and believe, Jesus gave them more signs and miracles in his brief earthly ministry than could be recorded by man (John 21:25).

c) But even aside from his many miracles, what better “sign from heaven” could they ask for than his creation, the heavens themselves? (Psa. 19:1).

*(1) God himself said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs...”*

*(2) And the apostle John in the first chapter of his gospel makes it plain that the Word that became flesh before their eyes was the same who was “in the beginning with God,” and that “all things were made by him,” (John 1:1-3).*

*(3) Further, his creation as witness to divine power and majesty was common in the Old Testament, as Moses often called upon “heaven and earth to witness against Israel,” (Deut. 30:19), and the psalmist refers to the moon as “a faithful witness in heaven,” (Psa. 89:37).*

### II. The Doctrine from the Text

#### A. Doctrine: The Son of God has natural mourners.

1. The Son of God most High now hangs cursed for the sins of his people on a tree, suspended between the same heaven and earth he created.

a) And in response, the heavens who before wept for the sins of man with a flood, now drape themselves in black garments of mourning for the murder of their Maker, and the earth quakes under the weight of his accursed cross.

b) The sun turns its eye from beholding the Lamb of God, brutally mutilated by his enemies, by transforming the day into night.

c) For the one who spreads out the heavens as a curtain, (Psa. 104:2), the heavens, in turn, spread out a curtain of darkness between his holy manhood and the wicked eyes of men.

*(1) This is no wonder, for it is from that Sun of righteousness, (Mal. 4:2) that the natural sun borrows its light.*

*(2) How can this “lesser sun” not also lose its light then, when that greater Sun has lost his life?*

*(3) How could it bear to shine when the rays of its Maker have gone out?*

2. At Joshua’s command the sun stood still, (Joshua 10:12), and at Hezekiah’s prayer it went backward, (2 Kings 20:10).

- a) But utterly to lose its light as the sun did here is an event of much greater significance.
- b) Was it not a deeper mystery that this same sun did not, in defense of its Lord, rain down fire from heaven and consume his murderers?
- c) And yet, in utter obedience to its Maker, it did not.
  - (1) *In the day of judgment it will be so (Rev. 20:9).*
  - (2) *But this day was a day of grace, mercy, redemption.*
- d) How ready is every aspect of God's creation to do his bidding and give him glory except man, who was made specifically for that purpose?
  - (1) *The heavens always respond as God intends and directs.*
  - (2) *The heavens declare his glory.*
  - (3) *Cannot we who are made in his image do likewise?*

**B. "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour," (Luke 23:44).**

1. There are many instances recorded in Scripture where elements of nature responded to direct commands of God and God's people contrary to their natural course.
  - a) So, it should come at no surprise that at the most pivotal point in the history of the world – the death of Christ – unnatural events occurred that could not be explained outside of divine intervention.
  - b) One such event was when darkness struck at midday, covering the face of the earth for the final three hours of Christ's life.
    - (1) *It could be said that God covered his Son in this blanket of darkness to silence those who were railing and mocking and daring him from the foot of his cross.*
  - c) Another consideration is that God used the earth's natural light source to demonstrate on a grand scale the significance of what was happening on that hill right outside Jerusalem as the light of the world was dying.
  - d) Yet another possible explanation may be that as he was unleashing the full force of his wrath on the sins of the world, God wanted to be alone with his Son.
  - e) Still another aspect of this unnatural event could represent the shadows of ceremonial law that began in darkness with Moses on Mount Sinai now coming full circle in the darkness that covered Christ on Mount Calvary.
    - (1) *In his life Christ fulfilled all the law and the prophets, and through his death he abolished the ceremonial law by fulfilling it and established fully the law under Christ, which is to say, the new covenant and new Testator, (Gal. 6:2).*
2. A second unnatural occurrence at the death of Christ was an earthquake so violent that it split boulders and moved huge stones that covered graves in and around the city.
  - a) Though earthquakes may be a more common natural event, this one occurred at the exact moment Christ cried out, "It is finished!" and gave up the ghost.
  - b) The very earth that held his cross in place and received his spilt blood could do no less than writhe and tremble, knowing its Maker's shoulders at that very moment broke under the double burden of man's sin and God's wrath.
  - c) No power in heaven or earth can shake the earth from its foundation but the one whose word alone made it and hung it, (Psa. 104:1-5, Job 26:7), and yet the very breath of his nostrils can shake it out of its place.
    - (1) *As David notes, the earth trembles at "the presence of the Lord, the mighty God of Jacob," (Psa. 114:7).*

(2) And in another place the psalmist explains what happened here at the moment Christ died, "The earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken," because God was executing his wrath on the sin in which Christ atoned. God's wrath at man's sin is more than sufficient to shake the earth and threaten its foundations, (Psa. 18:15).

(3) All of nature, in truth, groans under the weight of sin and longs for redemption, (Rom. 8:22-23), for sin cursed the earth that drowned it after, that shakes it here, and that shall burn it at last.

### III. The Text Applied

#### A. How do we consider the darkness and the light?

1. In our walk through life, we often find ourselves oscillating between moments of light and darkness.

a) We witness how Christ's birth brings light into our world, turning our darkest nights into day, as depicted in the narrative of the shepherds in Luke 2:8, 11.

b) Yet, at his crucifixion, we see this light taken away, fulfilling the prophecy of Amos 5:8.

(1) This interplay of light and darkness serves as a powerful tool that teaches many insights.

c) In our quest for understanding, we yearn for this divine light to illuminate our hearts and dispel our ignorance.

(1) We seek guidance and solace during times when we feel lost or abandoned, longing for the "dayspring from on high" (Luke 1:78) to visit us once more.

(2) We reflect on how the divine has made itself known in various ways, such as through a guiding cloud to the Israelites and a star to the wise men.

(3) We realize that we are called to walk in this light, embracing the teachings of the Gospel, as encouraged in 1 John 1.

(4) We also contemplate our own reactions to divine interventions, questioning whether we tremble in awe and reverence as did the earth, Felix (Acts 24:25), and Belshazzar (Dan. 5:6) in the face of divine judgment.

(a) Do we feel the disconnect from our original purpose and creation?

(b) Are we moved by the Savior's passion and death?

d) As we ponder these questions, we acknowledge the lessons of humility, allegiance, obedience, and gratitude that creation teaches us.

(1) We recognize the natural world's response to the divine, and we are reminded to similarly respond with reverence and awe.

e) We are called to reflect on our own responses to the divine interplay of light and darkness in our lives.

(1) Do we allow the light of understanding, compassion, and divine guidance to illuminate our path?

(2) By contemplating these questions, we find a deeper, more personal connection to these profound narratives, allowing us to navigate our journey with renewed purpose and insight.