

Mankind's Darkest Moments

by Chuck Smith

The sermon delves into the darkest moments of humanity as epitomized by the crucifixion of Jesus and the profound implications of this event.

Duration: 46:31

Scripture: Numbers 6:24-26, Isaiah 53:5, John 3:16, John 14:6, Acts 2:23, 1 Corinthians 15:53

Topics: "The Crucifixion", "Eternal Salvation"

Description

This sermon delves into the prophecies and events surrounding the death of Jesus Christ, highlighting the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in the New Testament. It emphasizes God's predetermined plan for Jesus' crucifixion, the symbolism in the darkness at noon, and the significance of Jesus' sacrificial death for the redemption of mankind. The sermon challenges listeners to consider the evidence of Jesus as the Son of God and the importance of accepting Him for eternal salvation.

Transcript

Tonight, we will be finishing the book of Amos, chapters 7 through 9, also tonight throwing in the book of Obadiah, which is just a short one-chapter book, and thus we will do the end of Amos and Obadiah next week, moving to Joel, as we're moving towards the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of our study in the New Testament. And so, we encourage you to read over Joel, chapters 7 through 9, the book of Obadiah, I think about 18 verses or so, and then join with us tonight as we gather together to study the Word of God. This morning, we want to draw your attention to the book of Amos, chapter 8, and beginning with verse 9, where Amos prophesied, It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and it will darken the earth in a clear day, and I will turn your feast into mourning, and all of your songs into lamentation, and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head, and I will make it as a mourning for an only sun, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

The first sin that was mentioned in the Bible was that of suicide. The first sin that was mentioned, God said to Adam, In the day that you eat of the fruit there in the midst of the garden, that tree in the midst of the garden, you will surely die. God's warning that there was a deadly poison in that tree.

It will guarantee death. And thus, when Adam ate, it was as he was committing suicide, bringing death into the world. The second mentioned sin in the Bible is that of fratricide, when Cain killed his brother Abel.

By far the most heinous sin that is mentioned in the Bible is attempted deicide that day when man sought to kill God as they nailed Jesus to the cross. The crucifixion of Jesus was an event that was known and planned by God from the foundation of the world. In Revelation 13, 8, we read concerning Jesus as the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world.

On the day of Pentecost, when a crowd had gathered because of the phenomena that accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the early church, when Peter stood up to address the people and he began to tell them concerning Jesus Christ, and as he got to the part of his crucifixion, Peter said that God, through the death of Jesus, according to the determinate counsel and the foreknowledge of God, he was crucified and slain. In other words, he refers to the death of Jesus as something that was God's determinate counsel, and it was the foreknowledge of God. They carried it out, but it was according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

This is something that Jesus had always maintained, that he was coming into this world to give his life as a ransom for sin. In the gospel of John, chapter 10, verse 17, Jesus said, Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man takes it from me.

I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it again. So Jesus is wanting to make certain that the people knew that his death was something that was imminent and that he was going to give his life.

No man was going to take his life. He was going to give his life for us. God spelled out long in advance almost every event of the crucifixion of Jesus, as in the Old Testament there were those predictions and prophecies concerning that day when Jesus would be crucified.

The prophet Zechariah, who lived in about 520 B.C., wrote in chapter 11, verse 12, I said to them, If you think good, you will be good to me. Give me my price, and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

The Lord said to me, Cast it unto the potter, a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. That was a prediction, a prophecy, seven hundred plus years before Jesus was betrayed by Judas, as Matthew tells us in chapter 26.

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priest and said, What will you give me if I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. Matthew tells us in 27 verse 3, Then Judas, who had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priest and elders. And he said, I have sinned.

I have betrayed innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? That's your problem. So Judas cast down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed and went out and hung himself.

And the chief priest took the silver pieces and said, It is not lawful for us to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and they bought with them the potter's field to bury strangers in. Look at that prophecy of Zechariah.

He would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver. That silver would be cast down into the house of the Lord and ultimately used to buy a potter's field. As it was prophesied, so did it happen.

Isaiah, who prophesied the back in the year 700 B.C. and earlier, he wrote, Isaiah 50 verse 6, I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off my hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. Matthew tells us, 26, 67.

Then they spit in his face and buffeted him, and others smote him with the palms of their hands. John 19, 1 tells us, Then Pilate therefore took Jesus and scourged him. That is, gave him the twenty-nine stripes on his back.

He gave his back to the smiters and his cheeks to those that plucked out his beard, and he hid not his face from their spitting. Isaiah 53 verse 7 declared, He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shears is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

That is, he did not speak up in his own defense. Now when Jesus was on trial before Pilate, Pilate was convinced of the innocency of Jesus, but was under tremendous pressures by the Jews to crucify him. But when he heard that Jesus was from the Galilee region, and because Herod, who was over the Galilee region, was in Jerusalem at that time for the Feast of Passover, he sent Jesus to Herod to let Herod make the judgment on Jesus, hoping to escape himself from having to judge in this case.

And so we read in Luke's Gospel 23 verse 8, When Herod saw Jesus he was very happy, for he had desired to see Jesus for a long time, because he had heard many things about him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by him. Then he began to question Jesus, but Jesus answered him nothing. So he was sent back to Pilate, and we read in John 19, 7, The Jews answered Pilate, saying, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he declared that he was the Son of God.

Now when Pilate heard that, he was even more afraid, and he went again into the judgment hall, and he said to Jesus, Where did you come from? And Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to him, Do you not speak to me? Don't you know that I have the power to crucify you, or to release you? Again, the prophecy of Isaiah, As a sheep before her shears is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. Isaiah in chapter 53 verse 12 said, He has poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bore the sins of many, and he made intercession for the transgressors or the malfactors.

Luke's Gospel tells us in chapter 23 verse 32, And there were also two malfactors that were led with him to be put to death. And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him and the malfactors, one on the right and one on the left hand. Luke 23 verse 39, One of the malfactors which was crucified were hanged and railed on him, saying, If you are the Messiah, save yourself and us.

But the other answered and rebuked him, saying, Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation? We are here justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing amiss. Then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Verily I say unto you, This day you will be with me in paradise.

So as Isaiah predicted, he was numbered with the malfactors in his death, but he made intercession for the malfactor. In Isaiah 53 verse 9, He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death. Matthew 27 verse 57 tells us, When the evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who was a disciple of Jesus, and he went to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus.

Then Pilate commanded that the body be delivered to him, and when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which was hewn out of a rock. So again were the rich in his death buried in the tomb of Joseph, the rich man from Arimathea. Isaiah 52 prophesied verse 13, Behold, my servant shall deal prudently.

He shall be exalted and extolled and lifted up. That word lifted up is an interesting word. When the translators translated the Hebrew scriptures into Greek, as they were translating this Hebrew word that is for lifted up, it was the word that Jesus used when in John 12 32 he said, If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.

John said he said this signifying that he should die by crucifixion. So the death by crucifixion prophesied by Isaiah was the death of the man over 700 years before he was crucified. Again in Isaiah 52 verse 14, Many were astonished at him, for his face was so marred that he couldn't be recognized as a man.

Matthew tells us 27 30, They spit on him. They took a reed and they smote him on the head. Mark tells us in 15 19, They smote him on the head with a reed and did spit on him and bowing their knees they pretended to worship him.

Luke 12 tells us in 22 63, And the men that held Jesus mocked him and smote him. And when they have blindfolded him, they struck him on the face and said to him, Prophecy, who is it that hit you? Matthew 27 29 tells us. And when they had twisted together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and a reed in his right hand, and they bowed their knees before him and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews.

So the prophecy, his face so marred, you would not recognize him as a man or a human being. God, when he created us, created many marvelous facets to our body, and one of those is the automatic reflexes of the body to feign from a blow. If you see a blow coming, there is a natural reflex of moving back that cushions the blow so that you don't feel the full blunt of the blow.

We watch boxers and we wonder how can they take that kind of punishment? Well, they are moving in such a way as the blow doesn't hit them directly, and when they get caught and take the full blunt of the blow is when they get knocked out or get severely damaged, cut. The same with the football players. When you see these guys pounding the quarterback, you wonder, will he ever get up, you know, the way they've really leveled him, but you see him bounce to his feet and go to the huddle and tell the next play.

You wonder, how can they take that kind of punishment? Well, the body is so designed that, again, that cushioning of the blow, you see him coming, and so you prepare for the blow, and in so doing, the blow is much less. When they blindfolded Jesus and then began to hit him in the face, there wasn't that opportunity to feign from that blow, and thus the full effect, the full force of the blow, he endured. The smiting of the beating on his head with a reed, the placing of the crown of thorns upon his head, no doubt after the beating he took, his face was so disfigured, so swollen from the blows, that you couldn't really recognize him as a human being.

Have you ever seen anybody who has been severely beaten and their eyes almost swollen shut, their faces all puffed because of the beating? That's what he looked like. You couldn't really recognize him as a man. That's exactly what Isaiah said would happen, and it did.

Around a thousand years B.C., David lived. David prophesied concerning the Messiah. In Psalm 22.7, he said, and they that see me laugh me to scorn.

They shoot out the lip. They wag their head saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him. Let him deliver him, seeing that he delighted in him.

Matthew 12 says in 27.39, and they that pass by him reviled him, wagging their heads and saying, save yourself if you are the son of God. Come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priest, mocking him, and with the scribes and elders said, he saved others, himself he cannot save.

If he is the king of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God. Let him deliver him now, if he will have him.

For he said, I am the son of God. It's almost as though the high priest was quoting the Psalm of David. David said, they would say, he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him.

Let him deliver him, seeing he delights in him. And Matthew says that priest said, he trusted in God. Let him deliver him now, if he will have him.

For he said, he is the son of God. Passed by, wagging their heads, the psalmist said. And of course Matthew tells us that they reviled him, wagging their heads.

Psalm 22.18, they departed, they parted, or divided rather, my garments among them, but they cast lots for my vesture. John tells us in John 19.23, then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. But his coat was without seam.

And they said, let's not tear it, but let's cast lots for it, to see who gets it. So even as the psalmist prophesied, so they did divide his clothes among themselves, but for his vesture, his coat, they cast lots. Psalm 22.16, the psalmist said, they pierced my hands and my feet.

When a man was crucified, he was nailed to the cross with spikes that were driven through his hands and through his feet. And so his hands and feet were pierced. John's gospel tells us, when the disciples told Thomas that Jesus was risen from the dead, Thomas responded, unless I can see the nail prints in his hands and put my finger into the nail prints, I will not believe.

So, as the psalmist prophesied, they pierced his hands and his feet. The psalmist also prophesied in 69 verse 21, in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. John's gospel tells us in John 19.28, after this Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.

Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar and they filled the sponge with vinegar and put it upon Hyssop and put it to his mouth. The prophet Zechariah said, I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced. Not only hands and feet pierced, but John tells us in 19.34, but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side and there came out blood and water.

And thus they will look upon him whom they have pierced. Zechariah said in chapter 13 verse 6, and one shall say unto him, what are these wounds in your hands? Then he will answer, these are the wounds that I received in the house of my friends. Again, I call your attention to the fact that his hands were pierced with spikes.

You say nail and we think of perhaps a 16 penny sinker type nail. No, it was a spike. It was more like a railroad spike in size that was driven through his hands and through his feet.

Zechariah also said, smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. In Mark 14.27 he tells us that Jesus said to his disciples, all of you will be offended tonight because of me, because it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered. So Jesus said that this was a reference to him and we are told in Mark 14.50 that when Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane that they all forsook him and fled.

The prophet Amos in the year 787 wrote, it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon and I will darken the earth on a clear day. An amazing thing. The Lord wills it.

Luke wrote, chapter 23 verse 44, it was about noon and there was a darkness over all the earth until three in the afternoon. The sun was darkened. The veil of the temple was rent in the middle and when Jesus had cried with a loud voice he said, Father into your hands I commend my spirit and having said thus he quit breathing.

Now there are some that would try to explain the sky becoming dark at noon as an eclipse took place at that time. And they tried to rationalize this saying it was a solar eclipse that took place. In reality, Passover takes place on the full moon.

Now the full moon rises in the east as the sun is setting in the west. Thus it would be impossible to have a solar eclipse during a full moon because they are at opposite ends of the sky. And thus the only explanation for it becoming dark at noon would be an action, a supernatural action of God.

You cannot pass it off as an eclipse of the sun, some kind of a natural event that took place. It was a supernatural event. Isaac Watts wrote, well might the sun in darkness hide and shut her glories in when Christ the mighty maker died for man the creature's sin.

Jesus said that he was the light of the world. Man was at this point attempting to put out the light of the world. How symbolic that God allowed the darkness to come over the whole land there at noon on a clear day.

It was the darkness of the world having its day and thus God allowed the darkness. Jesus said men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil and surely this was the darkest day in the history of mankind. Amos wants to say verse 10, I will turn your feast into mourning.

This was the feast of Passover, usually a very joyous feast as they were celebrating the fact that God delivered them out of their bondage in Egypt and brought them into the promised land. A joyous feast but now it was turned into mourning. And your songs into lamentation rather than the joyful psalms of praise sung at Passover songs of lamentation.

I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins. When a person had a tragic experience, one that just really ripped them emotionally, they would put on sackcloth. It was sort of to express the discomfort that was going on in their heart as they wore this sticky sackcloth upon their skin.

The discomfort outwardly was only a symbol of the discomfort in their heart. And then baldness, he said, upon every man. Now even though the present day in a traditional Jewish home when a close relative dies, the adult males will shave their heads.

And thus it's the symbol of the death of a close loved one and thus at the death of Jesus, the baldness upon every head. It brings up the question, who really crucified Jesus? How foolish and how unbiblical it is

to blame the Jews for the crucifixion. My heart pains for the Jews because of the needless suffering that they have experienced through the centuries from the misguided Christians who sought to blame the Jews for crucifying Jesus.

You say, well, was it then the Romans? Again, the scriptures would answer no. A resounding no. It wasn't the Romans that crucified Jesus.

You want to know who did? Look in the mirror. It was for your sins he died. It was his love for us that nailed him to the tree to die in agony for all my sin.

For my own guilt and blame, the great Redeemer came to save me, to bear the blame of all my sin. Oh, what a Savior is mine. In him God's mercies combine.

His love will never decline and he loves me. What put Jesus on the cross? It was God's love for you and for me in spite of the fact that we were sinners and rebelling against him. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever would believe in him would not perish but have everlasting life.

John wrote here in his love, not that we love God but that God loves us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Paul wrote, God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. It was God's love for you and for me that put his Son there upon the cross.

Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 1.12, is it nothing to you, O you that pass by? Behold and see if there is any sorrow like unto my sorrow which is done unto me wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. Can you look at the cross dispassionately? Can you see Jesus suffering and dying there without feeling some kind of gratitude that he would take such suffering in order to redeem you from your sin? Is it nothing to you, O ye that pass by? And see the suffering that he bore for me and for you. The greatest sin and the only sin for which a man will be judged before God is the sin of rejecting the only provision that God has made for you to have forgiveness of your sins.

That makes sense. If God has provided only one means by which your sins can be forgiven, if you reject that means, then there is no hope for your salvation because God has made only one way. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life, and no man comes to the Father but by me.

So God has made one provision for your sin, and that is through the death of Jesus Christ God has provided the means whereby your sins can be forgiven because God put on him the iniquities of us all and he died in our place. Again as Isaiah is prophesying concerning the cross, he said, all of us like sheep have gone astray. We turned every one of us to our own ways, but God laid on him the iniquities of us all.

Further down, again still referring to the cross, God cries out, for the transgression of my people was he sinned. God's love put Jesus there on the cross. God let you know hundreds of years in advance that this would be his plan for the redemption of mankind.

It was spelled out by the prophets hundreds of years before the events took place. Now Peter was with Jesus from the time that he was baptized until the time that he ascended into heaven. He was an eyewitness to the miracles that Jesus had wrought through his lifetime.

He was an eyewitness to the many healings. He was an eyewitness to the baptism of Jesus and to the voice that came from heaven saying, this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. He was an

eyewitness of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus was transfigured before them.

Moses and Elijah appeared and talked to him about his death in Jerusalem. But Peter, who was an eyewitness of all of these events, and he said, I was an eyewitness to these things, but we have a more sure word of prophecy. In other words, you may not want to take my word for it, but we have something that is more certain than my eyewitness of these events.

We have the sure word of prophecy. When we look at these prophecies that we looked at today, let me say it is not exhaustive. There are other prophecies concerning the death of Jesus that we did not have the time to enumerate for you.

But when you look at all of these prophecies that were fulfilled in his death, then you must agree with Peter when on the day of Pentecost he declared, as he talked to the people about their putting Jesus to death, he said, who through God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge with your wicked hands you have crucified and slain. But acknowledging it was God's plan from the beginning, God's plan to redeem sinful man who would surrender their lives to his love. You may try to say that it was only a coincidence that these things happened at the death of Jesus, that all of these prophecies were fulfilled.

But that position can only be taken by a person who deliberately and willfully does not want to believe, because if they would acknowledge that this were true, that Jesus did die according to the will and the purposes of God, that if they would accept that it would demand their lifestyle be changed. But they love living in sin. As Jesus said, this is the condemnation, men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.

And you only take the position of, I don't believe it, not because it is a rational, but it is a very irrational position considering all of the prophecies that were made and fulfilled in the death of Jesus Christ. The evidence is indisputable. Jesus is the Son of God.

He came to this world and he died for the world. To have everlasting life and to not believe is to condemn yourself to eternal separation from God's love. Your choice.

The ball is in your court. What will you do with it? Let's pray. Father, we're so grateful that you have taught this whole experience without giving place for doubt.

As we read these prophecies and predictions, and as we see them fulfilled in the death of Jesus, we realize, Lord, that you were in control. It was your plan to redeem lost man from his sinful state. And so, Lord, today, there are many today that have questioned whether or not Jesus was truly the Son of God.

But in looking at the evidence, we can't deny that these prophecies were fulfilled by him, indisputable evidence, and we can only reject it by wanting to continue in sin, wanting to continue in rebellion against you. But, Lord, I pray that today your Holy Spirit will take your word, burn it deep on the hearts and in the minds of the people that they might realize that it is their destiny that's at stake. As they judge the evidence, they are the ones who will be condemned if they make the wrong choice.

It won't affect you. You are who you are. But, Lord, it will affect their own destiny in their choosing not to believe in spite of the evidence.

So may they surrender. May they give their hearts and lives to you that they might discover why they were created, to live in a loving relationship with you both now and forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Shall we stand? The pastors are down here at the front to minister to you today who would like to receive Jesus as your own Savior and Lord of your life. That you might have that blessed assurance that when you die, it won't be dead. It will just be entering into the presence of the Lord that we might live with Him forever.

Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. And he that believes in me, though he were dead yet, he will live. And if you live and believe in me, you will never die.

All change, yes. Necessary, desirable. This corruption must put on incorruption.

This mortal must put on immortality. And as my body is falling apart, I'm looking forward to that change. That new body, that building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

But I don't want you passing by my casket and saying, oh, too bad Chuck died. Uh-uh. I moved out of a worn-out tent into a beautiful mansion that he's gone to prepare for me.

And that's desirable. And that is not just a hope. That's a desire.

That's a living hope guaranteed by the Word of God that cannot change. And you can have that same hope. These men are here to pray for you.

So as soon as we're dismissed, I would encourage you, come on forward. Make your commitment of your life to Jesus Christ. Find out why you exist.

The Lord bless thee. And keep thee. The Lord make his way.

The Lord make his way. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee. And be gracious unto thee.

And be gracious unto thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee. And give thee peace.

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