

"...THEY WATCHED HIM THERE"

TEXT: Matthew 27:31-36

THESIS: To examine those who were at the Cross when Jesus was crucified.

INTRO.: A. The song asks "***Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?***" Perhaps in one sense we were all there, i.e., we were in the mind of our Savior when He died in our place: "***When He was on the cross, we were on His mind.***" But historically we were not there. But our text reveals that there was quite a crowd surrounding the Cross that fateful, dark day.

B. It is His crucifixion we want to focus on today. It was a bloody scene & you might wonder why anyone who didn't have to be there, would come. But throngs would attend a public execution. (Our substitutes are bloody sport events, gory movies & TV programs, etc. The latest BIG "sport" is pro-wrestling, & it does get bloody & violent! Mankind is notoriously bloodthirsty!)

C. The text verse is v.36 where it says: "***...and sitting down, they watched Him there...***" Who were the "***they***"? Who was present at the Crucifixion & what exactly were they watching or seeing?

I. HIS FRIENDS WATCHED HIM THERE:

A. His Mother Saw Her Son There:

1. Mary no doubt felt compelled to be there, as any mother stands watch over a child in crisis.
2. She surely kept a tear-filled vigil as the prophecy of Simeon at the birth of her beloved Son, became a reality.

Luke 2:35 *(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

ILLUS.: What *were* Mary's thoughts that day? Was she aware that her Son must die as the Messiah-Redeemer of her people? Did she really understand the significance of this event? Or was her mind & heart so clouded with sorrow that she couldn't comprehend it all? (One of the strangest omissions of Christ's passion is the omission of all references to Mary, after His crucifixion! She plays no part in the accounts of the resurrection, ascension, or His post resurrection ministry, etc.!)

A really tragic fact concerns Jesus' brothers and sisters. There is no mention of them witnessing His crucifixion but rather a statement later that until His resurrection they didn't even believe in Him! **Seriously?!** Were they ashamed of their Brother? Were they in hiding?

John 7:5 *For neither did his brethren believe in him.*

Mark 6:3 *Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him.*

Luke 8:19 & 21 *And it was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee... And he answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."*

NOTE: It wasn't until after the resurrection that they "got on board" and believed His claims.

B. The Women Saw Their Hope There: v.55,56

1. I am not sure they had any greater comprehension of Who He really was than His other disciples or followers.
2. But they had learned to love & respect Him & He treated them with a tenderness & respect that they were not accustomed to.
 - a. Mary Magdelene had been saved from a wicked & sinful past & had a deep love for Him & she no doubt was mourning this unbelievable loss to her with tremendous sorrow.
 - b. Mary the mother of James & Joses saw Him as a unique Friend & her heart was breaking as she watched His suffering "afar off."

- c. Mary the mother of Zebedee's children (James & John) who had begged for her sons a position of prominence in His Kingdom had her hopes dashed that black & bleak day.

ILLUS.: They had all witnessed the horrendous events of that day & felt the earthquake & experienced the thick darkness that shrouded the ghastly scene, & were no doubt in a state of shock & wonder at it all.

C. John Saw His Beloved Friend There:

1. Jesus' brother John is alone among the Apostles & even he had to be experiencing guilt as he too had fled the very night before so as not to be identified w/Jesus.
2. But possibly His human love brought him out of hiding & drew him to the cross & his beloved Teacher & Master.

ILLUS.: What they all saw was ghastly & gory! There was the bruised, beaten, battered & bloody body of their friend hanging on the Roman cross for only doing good & serving Jehovah God. It was too much for them to fathom & the heartache was too much to bear. To see Him Who was even declared sinless & guiltless by His enemies dying the ignominious death of a common criminal was too much!

D. The Thief Saw His Redeemer There: *"Lord..."*

1. If the disciples & friends of Jesus didn't comprehend what was taking place or what was being accomplished there, this man saw something in the One on that central cross that others had missed.
2. Talk about faith!!! Trusting a dying man as your Savior & calling the One Who had been tried, condemned & convicted by the religious leaders of your own nation is beyond comprehension.
- 3.** But when others saw only a condemned man, this condemned man saw a crucified Savior – the fulfillment of all those slain animals on the Temple altar – ***"the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!"***
4. Here was a former enemy converted moments before His last breath! (Too bad His other enemies didn't learn from him!)

II. HIS ENEMIES WATCHED HIM THERE:

A. The Soldiers – Pawns of the Govt.: v.35,36

1. For their amusement, while His blood was spurting, the soldiers were gambling for His garments.

ILLUS.: What a sad commentary on the world & the degeneracy of society today! Men play while souls perish – while THEY perish!

2. But as they watched Him there & as the events of the day unfolded, something reached into their very souls. v.54

B. The Scribes & Pharisees – Pawns of Religion: v.39-43

1. It is amazing how religion hardens the heart; the same events which led to the salvation of the thief & the soldiers, mean nothing to these religionists.
2. They had access to the Scriptures & prophecies & this makes them even more culpable & they (as all) will be judged based on the amount of light received & rejected.

ILLUS.: They are condemned & judged by their own religion & their own words. They mockingly called Him: "***Son of God,***" "***King of the Jews,***" "***King of Israel,***" "***chosen of God,***" and even spoke of His resurrection. v.40,42

C. The Spectators – Pawns of Tradition: v.39

1. Religion & tradition send more people to hell than night clubs & pornography.
2. They too saw the Savior dying for their sins & because of the religious traditions & concrete-like mind-set couldn't accept Him as their Lord.

D. The Other Thief – Pawn of Satan: v.44

1. The average person doesn't think for himself – he just parrots the party line; they swallow whatever they are told by the media, leaders, etc.

2. This man mimicked what the others were saying about the Savior & he too died & went to hell!
3. Here was another dupe of the devil, a pawn of Satan, a poor deluded & damned fool.

CONCL.: Here then is what these people saw on that central Cross as **"...they watched Him there."**

But the question is **what do YOU see there?!** Do you see a criminal dying for His crimes or a Savior dying for your sins? Your viewpoint & what you see determines your eternal destiny.