

# THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

## The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28

### STUDY NINETEEN

## ... And Then, What Happened?

*Matthew 27:51–66*

*The tearing of the veil of the Holy of Holies was an announcement: “No longer is there a barrier between sinners and their holy God.” We are now free to come through the open veil right into the presence of God.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

**I**t is *finished!*” (John 19:30). After Jesus said these words in His final moments on the cross, “he released his spirit” into the outstretched hands of His Father and died (Matthew 27:50). Christ’s suffering was finally over . . . but suffering wasn’t the only thing that was finished.

In those awful hours of darkness, God made His sinless Son “to be sin on our behalf” (2 Corinthians 5:21 NASB). Jesus became our substitute when “the LORD laid on him the sins of us all” (Isaiah 53:6).

Imagine that! The sum of all sins was accounted for at the cross, and Jesus bore them all—just as the writer to the Hebrews declared:

*“With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever. . . . Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.”* (Hebrews 9:12, 14)

Through His death, Jesus had accomplished the *work of salvation* that God had sent Him to do. **It was finished!**

The impact of Christ’s accomplishment sent shockwaves through the land in the form of three supernatural phenomena occurring in rapid succession. What incredible events occurred after Jesus died? Let’s find out in this *Searching the Scriptures* study.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

## ... And Then, What Happened?

*Matthew 27:51–66*



### PREPARE YOUR HEART

Through Christ, we can come directly into God's presence. As you open His Word, thank the Lord for the access we have in Christ and ask Him to open your eyes to the wonders of His grace.

*Father, in the aftermath of Your Son's death, some life-changing, earth-shaking, events took place. Help me understand the meaning of these events and fill my heart with a deeper love and appreciation for Jesus who leads me into Your presence and makes me dwell in Your grace. In His name, amen.*



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you read [Matthew 27:50–66](#), you'll notice the setting begins in the place of Christ's crucifixion (Matthew 27:51–56) and shifts to the site of the tomb (27:57–66). The tomb was in a garden, perhaps a stone's throw away from the cross (John 19:41). In his commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll helps us imagine the garden scene.

We often picture the tomb of Jesus as out in the middle of nowhere, surrounded by a wooded area off the beaten path. Instead, we should picture a walled garden within sight of Golgotha itself, perhaps just across the street, with a door or gate and a staff of gardeners working inside.<sup>1</sup>

Such a beautiful, serene location for Jesus' tomb. But before leading us into the garden where Jesus' body was laid to rest, Matthew's account carries at the foot of the cross.



### Observation: Events Surrounding the Cross and the Tomb

Scripture comes to life when we can put ourselves into the scenes.<sup>2</sup> A shadow of death still shrouded the land in a kind of grief after Christ died. However, just as God's Spirit was hovering over the deep waters at creation to call forth new life, He was also moving in the darkness after Christ's death.



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### Events Surrounding the Cross—Matthew 27:51–56

What three supernatural events occurred the moment Christ died, according to *Matthew 27:50–53*?

In the interpretation phase, we'll explore the significance of the tearing of the veil, the earthquake, and the raised bodies. For now, according to *27:54–56*, what life-changing impact did Christ's death have on the soldiers? Who witnessed the action from a distance?

How does the Roman soldiers' pronouncement about Jesus contrast with the Jewish leaders' charges in the mock trials and accusations (*Matthew 26:63–66; 27:41–43*)? How does the Roman soldiers' statement reflect a central theme in Matthew's gospel?

The soldiers' confession still rings in the hearts of countless millions who have also experienced the Savior's power. Only one explanation makes sense: Jesus "truly was [and is] the Son of God!" (27:54).



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### Events Surrounding the Tomb—Matthew 27:57–66

What specifics does Matthew give regarding the *who*, *how*, *where*, and *when* of the removal and burial of Jesus' body, according to [Matthew 27:57–61](#)? Why do you think these details are important?

Joseph was an “honored member of the high council” (Mark 15:43) and “had not agreed with the decision and actions of the other religious leaders” (Luke 23:51). The next day, other members of the Sanhedrin went to Pilate. How do their motives and actions contrast with Joseph's, according to [Matthew 27:62–66](#)?

*They sealed the tomb, and they posted guards to protect it. Are you kidding? We're talking about a God who can create something out of nothing and the Lord who is able to do the impossible. They put a few puny guards at the entrance and a little wax on the stone, and they think that's going to keep Jesus in! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Interpretation: Rending the Veil, Splitting the Rocks, and Raising the Dead

The tearing of the veil from top to bottom symbolized God opening access to His holy presence through the sacrificial death of His Son. This massive, inches-thick veil hung at the entrance to the Most Holy Place, the innermost sanctuary of the temple. At the time of Moses, around 1500 years earlier, a similar veil divided the tabernacle. What was hidden behind that veil, and what did it signify (*Exodus 25:22; 40:18–21*)?

Only the high priest could enter the Most Holy Place and only annually on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). On this day, the high priest atoned for the people's sins by sprinkling the blood of a sacrifice there.

How did Christ's death on the cross accomplish a similar work of atonement—only better? For help with the answer, read page 296 of Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*. For an online resource, consult *Constable's Notes* at [netbible.org](http://netbible.org).



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The second sign was an earthquake that split apart rocks (Matthew 27:51). What do you think God was announcing about Himself and His Son's earthshaking accomplishment? *Isaiah 29:5–6* gives insight into the answer, and the soldiers model the appropriate response (*Matthew 27:54*).

Finally, as the earth shook, “tombs opened” and “the bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead” (Matthew 27:52). How do we understand this sign? Read pages 297–298 in Pastor Chuck's commentary to find two possible interpretations. Based on your research, what do you think happened and why?

*You do not need anyone to represent you when you go before the Lord other than Jesus Himself. We go to God through Christ, and we go instantly, boldly, and frequently because—thanks to the torn veil—we now have an open relationship with God.*  
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



### Correlation: A Heavenly Tabernacle and a Better Covenant

The writer to the Hebrews gives us a closer look behind the scenes of Christ's accomplishment. Christ's atonement not only gave us access to God, but it also ended the old sacrificial system, which was “only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come” (Hebrews 10:1).



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How was the offering of Christ better than the offerings made by the Jewish priests, according to *Hebrews 10:11–12*?

Through His once-for-all sacrifice, Christ cancelled “the first covenant in order to put the second into effect” (10:9). According to *10:15–18*, what amazing blessings do we enjoy under Christ’s new covenant?

*How close is the Son of God to His Father? We are just as close in Christ. In the person of His Son—as we are when we come to Jesus as Savior—we are as near as the Son to the Father. The same access the Son has, we have. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Application: Where Are We in the Scene?

Like the women present in the aftermath of Christ’s death, we’ve witnessed the miracles, the changed lives of the Roman soldiers, and the entombment of Jesus. What lessons do we learn?

First, *when we come to the end of all hope, remember what happened right after Jesus died.* In their hopelessness, most of Jesus’ disciples had left the site of Jesus’ death. But by leaving, they missed God’s power! When all seems lost, even when a loved one dies, remember God is still present. He is still working in our lives.

Second, *when you think that someone you love is too lost for God to save,* remember the Roman soldiers. If the Lord saved those hardened men’s souls, then He can reach your lost loved one too.



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Third, *when anyone tries to hinder God's plan, remember the resurrection!* How futile it was for the authorities to seal the tomb and put a guard at the entrance. God can overcome any human barrier to accomplish His will.

Which of these principles can you apply most directly to your situation? What can you do right now in response?

In your mind's eye, walk again through the scenes of the aftermath of Jesus' death and burial. What other principle from the passage can you draw? How can this truth guide your way today?

The burial of Christ set the stage for the resurrection, the Sunday-morning miracle that changed everything. Death no longer has the last word; instead, life now has the final say! The darkness has passed, and light from Christ's dawn streaks across the horizon. In the next *Searching the Scriptures* study, we'll step into that new day with our resurrected Lord.



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*Matthew 27:51–66*



### A FINAL PRAYER

*Father, before Christ died, all humanity sat under the ominous shadow of death. But then, Jesus bore sin's curse in His body on the cross, and now the light of a new day has dawned. Through Him, I come near to You. In Him, I live eternally in Your presence. With Him, I will walk through every trial in my life. In His name I pray, amen.*

### ENDNOTES

1. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 302.
2. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](https://www.insight.org/how-to-study-the-bible-for-yourself)" at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org).

