

**NEWS AND VIEWS**  
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**“Southern Baptists with the Full  
Gospel for the Whole World”**

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*It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” Having said this, He breathed His last.  
(Luke 23:44-46)*

It can get mighty dark when the light goes out. When small children and old preachers wake up in the middle of the night and the nightlight in the hallway has gone out it can be a scary time. Young children cry for their mamas while old preachers wake up their wives...they aren't afraid of very much! But seriously it seems that people instinctively have a dread of darkness. Dwelling in darkness does not bode well with most people. It seems to affect us tremendously. Even a popular television commercial promised to “leave the light on for you.” That promise was the best part of that motel experience for me.

As we begin to experience the autumn season and the shortening of daylight hours it seems to be more than appropriate to look at the passage before us and try to make some meaning out of it as we enter the fall, preparing for winter. The light had gone out in Israel...darkness had settled in on the land as the life of Jesus the Nazarene came to an end. The people who had followed Him closely now stood at a distance. They saw what had taken place...and could not comprehend why. And for three hours in the middle of the day it was the darkest of nights. I think much worse than never having light is to have it and then be extinguished. Without the light we can no longer know the right way to travel. There are too many things hidden in the dark that can hurt us. Traveling through this world in darkness is hazardous. It can get too dark to travel. We need light to live.

These that followed the Light of the world had no doubt begun to live life according to His light and it was a welcome change. Life was not so scary and hopeless as long as the light was on. Matthew's gospel said that these people who were *SITTING IN DARKNESS SAW A GREAT LIGHT, AND THOSE WHO WERE SITTING IN THE LAND AND SHADOW OF DEATH, UPON THEM A LIGHT DAWNED*. These words are capitalized not because the author is angry with the readers but because the New Testament writer is referring to an Old Testament text. This one is from Isaiah. God's people are promised a light for dark and dreadful times. Matthew tells us immediately that From *that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17)* Mark's account says that *...Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14)* The natural explanation that the text gives us for the darkness at the death of Jesus was that the sun was obscured. Theologically, I believe the word of God is telling us this is a *here we go again* moment. In the beginning...in the nothingness and lifelessness of total darkness, God spoke and light shone forth into creation. Now with the Light of the world extinguished...it would only be a few hours and God would speak again...and Light would live again. The real reason the sun was obscured was that God had died...and unless we know why He died...for us to live in His light...and His light to live in us, we will be in darkness that is colder than a winter solstice and darker than an eternal solar eclipse. God died...so I can live. He now lives in me so I can live in Him. This is the core of the gospel...God died...and lives forever. This is the basis of my life. I can now enjoy the Light of the gospel... the Life of Christ...no matter how dark it is out there. And this is how we can know that. The text gives us this confirmation that when God died, Christ drew His last breath the darkness came. But the veil of the temple was torn in two...giving us access to the Light of God's presence once again. We are promised full access to the Gospel Light...the Lord God Almighty in the Person of Christ Jesus. Believe it. Trust that God has called you into His marvelous light. Stop sitting in that darkness. You can't live long in there. Come into the Light. Spend your life, not just a night or two, with the Lord...He's left the Light on for you.

Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam