



THE EXHORTER

“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

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JUMP START # 61

Matt. 27:54- *“Now the centurion, and those who was with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, ‘truly this was the son of God!’”*

Matthew’s account of the death of Jesus adds this statement and perspective from one of the Roman soldiers. This is one of the tiny tidbits of information that adds further evidence and proof of the claims of Jesus Christ.

A little bit of background observation will add even more to this passage. A “centurion” is an officer in the Roman army. They are generally in charge of 100 men. Many remember, that Cornelius in Acts 10, was also a centurion.

The centurion in this passage was on the “death squad,” not a job for the faint of heart. Rome had many forms of putting people to death, the cross was slow and painful. It was a form of torture. But more than that it was a statement to the world that you don’t mess with Rome. Those who tried to overthrow Rome were executed on the cross and often on the main roads so everyone could see. Putting Jews to death was a difficult job. There were so many Jews and they wanted independence from Rome. Soldiers flooded the area when Jews were put to death to keep riots from starting. The men dying the slow death on the cross often scream for mercy and curse Rome at the same time.

On this particular day, three Jews were being executed. Two of them criminals against Rome, and the third one, most unusual, Jesus Christ. The Roman officials trying him could not find anything worthy of death, yet a riot was taking place and the crowds were demanding his execution. So Pilate appeased the crowds. It was one less Jew in his mind and it calmed people down.

(over)

So, to the cross Jesus went. The execution squad nailed him to the cross and watched over him. This centurion had witnessed many deaths and many executions. This one was different. The sky became dark. An earthquake took place. Rocks were split. Graves opened up, and the dead were resurrected. You couldn't imagine a better setting for a horror movie. These things didn't normally happen. Generally the sun shined, the birds sang, and the executed simply died. Not this time.

And the "criminal" being executed didn't beg for mercy. He didn't curse Rome. He prayed for their forgiveness. He died calm and in peace, even though his death was painful. His nature, his character was so different from every execution witnessed before. So shocking were these events that the centurion proclaimed, "truly this was the son of God." Interesting observation. The sign above Jesus' head stated that he was the king of the Jews. The crowd that taunted him to come off the cross, but no one had openly said he was the son of God. I believe that these were the whispers racing through the crowds. The Jews rejected Jesus on the basis of blasphemy. These soldiers would have heard this. They too must have thought at the beginning of the execution, he sure doesn't look like the son of a god. He doesn't have powers like the son of a god. If he is, where is his father, a god, to save him? But as Jesus dies, everything changes. These seasoned soldiers who kill every day, became frightened. It seems as if a god was angry. This led to the statement, "truly, this was the son of God!"

I wonder what happened to this centurion after this? I expect he never forgot that day. I wonder if he ever became a disciple? How has the death of Jesus affected you?

Roger Shouse

Some further thoughts on this:

Monday- Gal. 2:20

Tuesday – Rom. 6:6

Wednesday- 1 Cor. 2:2

Thursday- 2 Cor. 13:4

Friday- Gal. 6:14

Saturday- Acts 4:9,10

