

The Crucifixion and Burial of Christ

Luke 23:26-56

Luke 23:26-38: Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. 27 And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. 28 But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' 30 Then they will begin 'to say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!" 31 For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?" 32 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. 34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. 35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." 36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." 38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Background Notes

The first half of this chapter covered our Lord's civil trial before Pilate and Herod. Both Pilate and Herod, having examined Jesus, declared Him innocent of any crime or wrong doing. However, because of political pressure, Pilate wrongly had Jesus scourged, and then delivered Him over to be crucified. What a terrible perversion of justice!

The second half of Luke 23 is the account of the Lord's crucifixion and burial. As they led Jesus away to be crucified, the Roman soldiers conscripted a Jewish man named Simon, from Cyrene in North Africa, who had probably come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. They made him carry the crossbeam for the Lord's cross.

The Lord told the weeping women in the crowd not to weep for Him, but for themselves and their children. He was looking ahead to the coming Roman siege and conquest of Jerusalem in 70AD, when many Jews would starve to death or be slaughtered. Verse 30 is a quotation from Hosea 10:8 - "*Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?*" This was the hopeless cry of despair of Israel when the Assyrians conquered Samaria in the Old Testament, and this was the cry of the Jewish people when Rome conquered Jerusalem in 70AD. It will be the cry of unbelievers during the Tribulation Period of the End Times, according to Revelation 6:15-16.

In verse 31, what did the Lord mean when He said: *“For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?”* The Lord was saying is that if the Romans allowed such injustice to happen at that time, the unjust treatment of the Jewish people would be much worse in 70AD.

The place of the crucifixion was called the “Place of the Skull,” either because the place was shaped like a skull, or because it was a place of execution. *Golgotha* is the Aramaic word for “skull” and *Calvary* is the Latin. Only Luke records the Lord’s prayer of forgiveness for the Roman soldiers who crucified Him, who joined the others in mocking the Lord, and who gambled for His garments. This was a fulfillment of Psalm 22.

The inscription over the Lord’s cross gave the political reason why the Lord was crucified -- “This is the King of the Jews.” However, we know there was much more involved in our Lord’s crucifixion.

Doctrinal Points

1. The salvation of the thief on the cross is very instructive.

Verses 39-43: Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” 40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” 42 Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” 43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

The fact that the converted thief, who was saved on the cross and then died, went to Heaven that *very day* is very instructive concerning salvation. The thief did no good works, showing that salvation is not by good works - or even by faith plus good works. This man was involved in bad works before his crucifixion, and he didn’t have time to do any good works as he was dying. All he did was admit he was a sinner, and believed on the Lord, and was saved! He was not baptized, showing that baptism is not necessary for salvation. There was no time gap between his death and his being with the Lord in heaven. This means there is *no soul sleep*, and there is *no purgatory*.

The doctrine of *soul sleep* is not taught in the Bible, and the doctrine of *purgatory* is not taught in the Bible. 2 Corinthians 5:6 teaches that when believers die, they are *“absent from the body and present with the Lord.”* Even though the thief had lived a terrible life before his conversion, he went immediately to Heaven after his death. His body went into the grave, as did our Lord’s body, but his soul and spirit went to Heaven, to be consciously with the Lord, and to await the resurrection of his body.

Another lesson about salvation from this account is that there is no *universal salvation*; only one thief was saved. The other criminal could have turned to the Lord for salvation, but he did not, even though he was dying. Today, anyone may receive salvation from their sins, but most people do not turn to Christ for salvation. A man I spoke to a few days ago said

that he just had “too many other things going on in his life right now to even think about what the Bible says.” Those were his very words. He is typical of many unbelievers today.

So there are a number of lessons in the salvation of the thief who was crucified with the Lord Jesus. The salvation of the thief on the cross is very instructive.

2. The events surrounding the crucifixion are very instructive.

Verses 44-49: Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’” Having said this, He breathed His last. 47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Certainly this was a righteous Man!” 48 And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. 49 But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

From the sixth to the ninth hour (from noon to 3PM), the land was plunged into darkness. This was not a natural eclipse – it was supernatural darkness. This was a sign from God to the nation of Israel – the nation that had rejected her Messiah. They had rejected the Light of the World; now they would be judged with national blindness – a blindness that continues to this day. 2 Corinthians 3 indicates that this blindness will not be taken away until Israel as a nation turns to the Lord.

Another instructive event at the time of the crucifixion was the tearing of the thick curtain, or veil, of the Temple. This was the very tall, heavy, richly embroidered curtain that divided the holy place from the Holy of Holies. It was torn from the top to the bottom, showing that God Himself had torn it. Prior to this time, the heavy curtain prevented even the priests from entering the Holy of Holies - in fact they could not even look into it. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies, once a year, on the Day of Atonement. With the tearing of the dividing curtain, entry into God’s presence was now open and available for all who would come by faith - because Jesus had died for the sins of the world! Hebrews 10:19-22 clearly teaches this wonderful truth.

In Acts 6:7, we read that a great number of priests became believers. These priests would have known first hand about the miracle of the Temple veil being ripped from top to bottom. They would have realized that God had spoken in no uncertain terms by this miraculous action.

Matthew 27 tells us that there was an earthquake, and that tombs were opened at the time of the crucifixion. As a result of all the supernatural events, the Roman centurion and the other Roman soldiers (who were certainly hardened men) all testified not only to the innocence of Jesus, but to His being God! *Verse 47: “Certainly this was a righteous Man!”* And Matthew 27:54: *“Truly this was the Son of God.”* The events surrounding the crucifixion are very instructive.

Practical Application

Don't lose *sight* of the resurrection because of the *site* of the resurrection!

Verses 50-56: Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51 He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting[i] for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. 54 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. 55 And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

Don't lose sight of the fact of the resurrection just because there are some questions about the site, or the location, of the resurrection! If you go to the Holy Land today, you will be shown two different proposed locations for the resurrection of Christ. One is called the Holy Sepulcher, and the other is called the Garden Tomb. Which is the true site? We don't know for sure. There are good arguments for each site.

But here's the good news – ***both tombs are empty!*** That's the important point! The Lord is risen! The Lord's work on the cross of dying for our sins is over and finished. God's wrath against sin has been satisfied; the debt has been paid in full. The Lord died and was buried - but now He has risen! The tomb is empty!

So don't concentrate on the *site*! Don't lose sight of the vitally important truth of the resurrection, just because the exact location of the resurrection is not known for sure!