

THE THIEF ON THE CROSS

TEXT: Lk. 23:32-43.

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Isaiah described the death of our Lord in Isa. 53:.
- B. Vs. 10-12 predicted that Jesus would be "Numbered with the Transgressors." Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, And the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong, Because He poured out His soul unto death, And He was numbered with the transgressors, And He bore the sin of many, And made intercession for the transgressors.
- C. Let us look at this man and learn from him.

BODY:

I. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT THIS MAN.

- A. Legend says his name was Pismas.
- B. He is called a malefactor (KJV) NKJV calls him a criminal.
- C. He was a thief, a robber, a plunderer.
- D. Could have been a radical Jewish patriot who engaged in a violent gorilla war with the Romans.
- E. He was a guilty lawbreaker, justly condemned- Lk. 23:41 "**And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.**". Much like those on death row, 1000's in the U.S.
- F. He was a dying man.
 - 1. His blood was flowing from his wounds.
 - 2. He had at best a few hours to live.
- G. He was a doomed man.

1. He was a sinner, unforgiven- Rom. 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
2. He had only damnation to look forward to- Jn. 8:21- 24. Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, `Where I go you cannot come'?" And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins."

H. He still had a conscience crying out to him. Some no longer have such 1 Tim. 4: 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

II. HIS AWFUL CIRCUMSTANCES.

A. Crucified, impaled upon a wooden cross and left to die.

1. Roman practice learned from Phoenicians.
2. Some hung for a week or more before dying.
3. Three kinds of crosses.
 - a. The x now called St. Andrew's cross.
 - b. One like a T.
 - c. And the type we see all the time the t cross.
 - d. Christ most likely on the t cross because of the superscription Lk. 23:38. **And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**
4. No other death was comparable to the cross in horror and ghastly pain.
5. Romans reserved this for slaves and the vilest of criminals.

B. The place of his execution was outside the walls of Jerusalem on the hill of Golgotha- Matt. 27:33 **And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull,**

1. Shaped like a skull?
2. Many skulls there?

C. The mob stood at the foot of the cross insulting and taunting Jesus, even the thieves both, at first- Matt. 27:44. **44 Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.**

D. Only a few were even sad- Jn. 19:25-27 Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

E. Late in the day the thief died when the soldiers broke his legs to hasten his death- Jn. 19:31-32. Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him.

III. WHAT HE DID THAT DAY- LK. 23:40-42.

A. He rebuked his companion for failure to fear God.

1. He recognized God's existence and power Lk. 23:40 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"

2. For railing against this innocent man, Jesus.

B. He humbly acknowledged his guilt.

1. He obviously repented of his deeds.

2. He saw his true plight.

C. He saw Jesus' real royalty even when it was hidden from others.

D. He believed in the mercy as well as the power of the Savior.

1. He had heard Christ pray- V. 34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

2. He eagerly sought for salvation.

3. Maybe he had heard Jesus preach before.

E. He courageously confessed Christ once he was with the crowd now he is against the crowd.

F. He did all he could do for Christ- he rebuked his companion's taunts.

G. We see faith, repentance, confession and service.

IV. HIS REQUEST- 23: 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom."

A. He knew two things.

1. He was a great sinner.
2. Beside him was a great Savior.

B. His request caused Joy.

1. Must have made Christ feel a little better.
2. Lk. 15:7 Angels rejoiced "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance

V. THE PROMISE HE RECEIVED LK. 23:43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

A. The Lord did more than the thief asked or thought- Eph. 3:20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

B. Not some day in the future but that very day.

C. Promised no place in an earthly kingdom but in Paradise.

1. The place where the righteous dead await the resurrection.
2. Lk. 16:22-25 "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. "And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. "Then he cried and said, `Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.' "But Abraham said, `Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

3. Acts 2:31 "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

VI. THE THIEF AND THE TWO COVENANTS.

A. This thief lived and died under the Old Covenant of Moses.

1. Same one Christ died under- Gal. 4:4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,
2. Old was nailed to the cross- Col. 2:14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

B. The new Covenant became effective only after Christ died- Heb. 9:16 For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

C. Before His death Christ could bestow salvation upon any condition.

1. After death must be in compliance with the will.
2. Like a man giving away things before he dies.

D. The New Covenant Will of Christ (N.T.) makes baptism a condition of salvation.

1. Mk. 16:15-16 And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.
2. Acts 10:48. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

CONCLUSION:

A. One day made a great difference in this man's life.

1. At the beginning of day-condemned to die lost.
2. At end of day-was saved forever.

B. Like the thief, one day in our life can be the difference in damnation and salvation.

C. To whom else can we appeal for salvation but Christ-
Jn. 6:68 But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.

D. The "lifted up" Christ draws men- Jn. 12:32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.

E. It is never too late to turn to God in repentance.

F. Some repent when they think they are dying and then when they are spared they revert to their old ways.

G. No part of Scripture has suffered more distortion nor been used to mislead more people than this about the thief.

H. We need to rightly divide the truth. 2 Tim. 2:15 Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth

I. New Covenant plan of salvation:

1. Believe- Heb. 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.
2. Repent- Lk. 13:3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.
3. Confess- Rom. 10:9-10 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.
4. Baptized- Mk. 16:16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.