

Journey to Jerusalem (Pt 2) Jesus Completes the Will of His Father Luke 23:32-46 (and various)

“There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 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. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” And they divided His garments and cast lots. 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.” The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.” And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 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.” (Luke 23:32–46, NKJV)

About this moment Jesus had spoken many times. Three times, we read in Mark’s gospel that Jesus told His closest followers about what He was destined to suffer in Jerusalem [Mark 10:32-34]:

“Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.”

Jesus had no doubt what laid in store for Him in Jerusalem and the Apostle John tells us in His gospel [12:27]: *“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose, I came to this hour.”* Jesus was troubled in His soul not because of the cross He was soon to face nor of the other humiliations that he would have to bear but because the people before whom He was about to die had no idea that it was for them that he was dying. We read in [Luke 19:41-42]:

“Now as He drew near, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, “If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.”

Jesus did not enter that city pridefully or victoriously rather He humbly came into the city and even though much would happen during the final week known as His “Passion,” I believe that from the time He entered into the city the cross loomed in the distance in His mind’s eye – to finish His father’s work was why He had taken flesh upon Himself at His incarnation (at His birth, see Phil. 2:5-11) because only in His flesh could the sinless Son of God atone for the sinful works of men.

So today we fast forward from the Lord’s entry into Jerusalem to His exit on Calvary’s cross.

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The Unmerited and Unequalled Compassion of the Lord...

[v.32-33] ***“There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 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.”***

The Bible declares in the first chapter of the gospel of John that ***“the word became flesh and dwelt among us...”*** later in his letter to the Philippian church Paul stated [Phil. 2:7-8] ***“(Jesus came) in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”***

In nearly every way imaginable Jesus Christ became like you and me. Two ways in which He was not like most of us is that He never had a wife and He never sinned (Heb. 4:15); yet on the cross He hung between two thieves as a common criminal.

What were His crimes?

The Jews and the high-priests said “blasphemy”

[John 10:33]: ***“The Jews answered Him, saying, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.”***

[Matt. 26:65] ***“Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!”***

The inscription over the Lords cross [v.38] declared that Jesus was ***“The King of the Jews”*** suggests that the official charge from Rome was sedition against Caesar (see Luke 23:2). But in reality, Jesus was really only guilty of being a revolutionary as both He and His gospel turned the world upside down (see Acts 17:6).

The prophet Isaiah, in his prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant (an obvious reference to the Lord Jesus Christ) said in [Isa. 53:12] that the Servant would be numbered among the transgressors – a prophecy which Jesus fulfilled as he hung between two thieves on His cross. This is both the greatest demonstration of compassion for sinners and the greatest injustice ever perpetrated in that the innocent died for the guilty.

It would be an injustice were it not for the fact that Jesus Christ willingly presented Himself to die in our place – ***“the just for the unjust”*** (1Peter 3:18).

The writer of Hebrews wrote in [Heb. 2:17]:

“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

He became like us for our sakes, in no other way could the sins of men be propitiated, appeased or atoned for; Jesus Christ became a man who died as a man between sinful men for their sinful deeds to appease the wrath and satisfy the judgement of a holy God.

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The Lords Suffering for His Enemies...

If the Lord's compassion is surpassed by anything it is surpassed by His suffering.

Consider for a moment what Jesus endured BEFORE He was crucified:

[Matt. 27:27-31]:

“Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” Then they spat on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.”

After Jesus had been “*scourged*” (see v. 26) mercilessly which is to be beaten with a whip laced with bone and metal fragments solely for the purpose of tearing the flesh from a persons body a crowd of Roman soldiers surrounded the Lord, stripped Him of whatever garment He had been wearing, picked up an old faded and discarded soldiers robe and placed it upon His torn flesh. Then they twisted a crown of thorns and cruelly forced it upon His head and placed a reed in His right hand as if it were a king's scepter.

Then, they knelt before Him and mocked the Holy Son of God to His face; sneering out, “Hail, King of the Jews” and they spat on His face and hit Him over the head with the reed He had held; earlier during His trial before the high-priest [Mark 14:65] “*some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, “Prophecy!” And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands.*” – they slapped His face and after they had finished mocking Him in such a way they redressed Him and led Him away to be crucified while a man named Simon, whom the Romans had conscripted for the purpose bore the Lord's cross to Golgotha (v.32-33).

Once on location, the Bible says in (v.33) that they crucified Him – that is, they nailed Him to the cross.

It was with the blood mixed with spit still drying on His face and the pain of the nails just hammered into His hands and feet searing through His body that he prayed: [Luke 23: 34]

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”

He was betrayed to the chief priests, condemned to death and delivered to the gentiles who mocked Him, beat Him, spat upon Him and killed Him just as He had told His disciples.

The Bible also says in [Deut. 21:22-23] “***If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.***”

Jesus was accursed and forsaken of God; the bible says in our text [v.46] that Jesus cried out with a loud voice after which He committed His Spirit to His Father and died.

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Matthew suggests that the Lord's cry was because He had been forsaken [Matt 27:46] ***“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”***”

I want to ask you – Who is worthy to benefit from such suffering?!

Jesus had to suffer this way – it was His Father's will (see Isa. 53:6,10 and 2 Cor. 5:21); in order to redeem us from the curse of the Law which is death Jesus became accursed (see Gal 3:13)

But none of us is worthy of the Lord's life.

The Prerequisite of Faith...

You need to understand that Jesus Christ, who became in every way like we are yet without sin, who gave His life as the perfect sacrifice for our sins must be approached in faith if one is to have what He grants through His death.

The two men on either side of the Lord as He hung on the cross dying to redeem sinners are representative of all mankind and there is no doubt that today you will see yourself in either one or the other.

According to the Bible in both (Matt. 27:44) and (Mark 15:32) both men reviled or expressed hatred for the Lord through their mutual taunting and mockery of the Lord. But then, something happened to one of them and it comes out in the exchange between them presented in [v.39-41] of Luke's gospel:

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.” But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.”

One of the men had a change of heart but it is not given to us to understand what prompted it so I'd like to suggest that nothing which we read of the life of Jesus happened in a vacuum. Many of the Lord's miracles were public knowledge as were His teachings because what He did, for the most part He did in the presence of and for the benefit of others. Might it be that this thief who was likely in the same jail as Barabbas (see Luke 23:14-19) heard about the exchange which was made for the notorious felon and about the words of Pilate declaring the Lord's innocence? Whatever other influences were at work in this man's heart, the Holy Spirit of God enabled him to see both himself and the Lord in a new light; and in that new light he expressed faith [v.42]:

“Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

To which the Lord replied [v.43]:

“And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

On the basis of the believing thief's dash of faith expressed in his acknowledgment of who Jesus was and the apparent repentance of his heart the Lord granted what is the equivalent of eternal life. We could spend a good deal of time speaking of the place to which they were going.

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Paradise, in the Old Testament was one of two compartments in Hades – the place of the dead (see Luke 16:19-31); Paradise or Abraham's bosom was the place where those destined to spend eternity with God went but within Hades was a place of torments where those destined for eternal punishment will reside until final judgment takes place. The important thing for us to grasp right now is that because of the dying man's little faith he would BE WITH JESUS.

Three crosses:

One was a cross of rejection upon which the non-believing thief died in his sin.

One was a cross of redemption upon which the Lord of all creation died for our sin.

One was a cross of reception upon which the believing thief died as if he had never sinned.

These crosses serve as a stark reminder that salvation is not universal – there is a choice upon which a person's eternity is determined and there is no middle ground. For the one who died in sin there would be no further recourse only a certain expectation of judgement. But consider that the one who died forgiven was not baptized – there was no time. Nor was there time to do good works in order to prove that conversion had taken place. This man who had been a sinner bound for hell became a heaven bound saint through simple faith in Jesus Christ.

In [v.45] we read, "***Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two.***" Much can be said of the darkness of that moment when the sun's light was hidden; but as I conclude I want us to consider the veil of the temple which was torn in two. Matthew (27:51) and Mark (15:38) tell us that it was torn from the top to the bottom. This veil concealed the holiest place in the temple – the place where God met with a priest whom He chose. It was by some accounts 4" thick. It is unlikely that any natural force would have torn it and it is believed that the unseen hand of God tore it to give us all equal access to Himself – equal access through Jesus' death for your sin and mine.

Through the Lord's death God has invited us to boldly come to Him in faith. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we all have equal access to the salvation which He made possible by the giving of His life and the shedding of His blood. Will you, like the reviling thief continue in your rejection of the Christ or will you like the believing thief finally trust in the Lord?

Only one choice leads to life.

Have you made the right choice?