

The Faith of the Thief

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Luke 23:32-43

Jesus tells ONE THIEF, "TODAY you will be WITH ME IN PARADISE."

- JESUS says unequivocally that there is an AFTERLIFE. There is a HEAVEN. A PARADISE. A *paradeisos*.
 - John says in Revelation 2:7 – [7] *To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of God.*
 - In other PLACES our LORD called this place the "KINGDOM of HEAVEN."
 - He says in John 14:2 – [2] *In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.*
- JESUS also warned us of a PLACE called the "GEHENNA of FIRE." FINAL PUNISHMENT. Those who reject Christ go to HADES... the place of the DEAD. Eventually they will be JUDGED into what we call HELL.
 - For example Matthew 5:22 – [22] *and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell [Gehenna] of fire.*
 - Matthew 5:29 – [29] *If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell [Gehenna].*
 - Matthew 5:30 – [30] *And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.*
 - Mark 9:48 – [48] *Where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.*
 - On the LAST DAY @ the Final Judgment... Matthew 25:41 – [41] He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.'

These are the TWO FINAL OPTIONS in terms of the AFTERLIFE.

- Either your soul goes to be with the LORD, where you await a RESURRECTION BODY and the NEW HEAVENS and NEW EARTH.
- Or your SOUL goes to HADES... where it awaits judgement to GEHENNA... The LAKE of FIRE.
- Hebrews 9:27 – [27] *It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment.*

[32] *Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.*

- Two men, who are called "criminals" accompanied JESUS.
 - To be executed under ROMAN LAW, you had to have done one of two things: murder or be a part of an act of rebellion against the empire.
 - *Kakourgos* – EVIL-DOER; One who works EVIL.
- These are men who LIVED evil LIVES. And they led away with CHRIST to face ETERNITY.
 - Their stories are SIMILAR.
 - Both EVIL MEN.
 - Both REVILING CHRIST at the BEGINNING.
 - But by the END one had REPENTED.

- And JESUS said would ENTER PARADISE.

BTW – this is fulfillment of what was prophesied. Jesus had said earlier in Luke 22:37 – [37] *For I tell you this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: “And he was numbered with the transgressors.” For what is written about me has its fulfillment.*

- Jesus was referring to Isaiah 53:12 – [12b] *because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors*
- THIS was a visual demonstration that our LORD would die a WICKED MAN’s DEATH.

The FACTS of the CRUCIFIXION

[33] *And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his rights and one on his left.*

- The Romans marched our Lord and these wicked man to a PLACE that is called the SKULL.
- There is massive speculation about why it was called “The SKULL.”
 - The Word in the common tongue Aramaic – *Golgotha*; Latin – *Calvaria*; Greek – *Kranion*
 - Some said it was *called* Golgotha – because that’s where the Romans executed people. It was a place of death.
 - Others have said it was *called* Golgoth – because one of the rocks there looked like the cranium of a skull.
- It was here, LUKE said that the CRUCIFIED HIM.
 - They PIERCED HIM.
 - Nails through your wrists. Nails through your ANKLES or HEELS.
 - It was DESIGNED to be the most PAINFUL, HUMILIATING DEATH you could possibly endure.

[34] *And Jesus said, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.”*

- Essentially as soon as the BLOOD starts to FLOW, JESUS begins his *ministry of intercession*.
- He begins PRAYING that GOD would GRANT forgiveness for what is happening... forgiveness for who... I think the SOLDIERS. The CROWDS.
 - Many would come to believe in HIM (PENTECOST).
 - The reason is – is that *they know not what they are doing*.
 - They are IGNORANT.
 - *It’s not that they aren’t culpable, they are.* They are sinning.
- So is our WORLD today.
 - Two thousand years after the fact, our world is still just as ignorant of the CROSS and the IDENTITY of our LORD.
 - Many believe that he was merely a PROPHET. Or a MISGUIDED man. Or even a LUNATIC.
- The CROSS was the center of our LORD’s MISSION from the BEGINNING.
 - John the Baptist said John 1:29 – [29] *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*
 - Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15 – [15b] *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am foremost.*
 - 2 Corinthians 5:21 – [21] *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*
 - At Caesarea Philippi... Matthew 16:21 – [21] *From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.*

God ORCHESTRATED every DETAIL of this EVENT. Even to the fact that the soldiers would gamble over his garments. *And they cast lots to divide his garments.*

- In fulfillment of Psalm 22:18 – [18] *they divide my garments among them, they cast lots for my clothing.*

While he was on the cross. 5 GROUPS of PEOPLE scoffed @ our LORD.

PEOPLE SCOFFED @ HIM.

[35] *And the people stood by, watching,*

- Other gospels tell us that everyone on the ROADSIDE mocked him.
- Mark says Mark 15:29 – [29] *And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, “And you who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, [20] save yourself and come down from that cross.”*

The RULERS SCOFFED at HIM

but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others, let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, His chosen one!”

- The RULERS – “SNEERING/RIDICULING” acknowledge that JESUS saved others... they simply attributed his powers to SATAN and not to GOD.
- Mark says they said... Mark 15:32 – [32] *Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.*
- Even if JESUS would have come down from the CROSS they would not have believed.

The SOLDIERS MOCKED HIM

[36] *The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up and offering sour wine. [37] and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”*

- The soldiers had already mocked him with the crown of thorns and the purple/crimson robe.
- They continue to MOCK him on the cross.
- The sour wine was a STRONG, REPUNGANT vinegar.

PILATE MOCKED HIM

[38] *There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”*

- An inscription was NORMAL... it was put over year head to tell the WORLD what you had done.
- PILATE put this sign above JESUS’s head to MOCK the JEWS.
 - The SIGN was written in three languages (Aramaic, Latin, and Greek)”
 - *The JEWISH leaders were very upset about this SIGN.*

One of the CRIMINALS RAILED at HIM

[39] *One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!”*

- The GREEK word is BLASPHEMO – *Legacy Standard Bible* (blaspheming him).
- NASB – HURLING ABUSE at our LORD.
- An EVILDOER takes it upon HIMSELF to lecture the SON of GOD.

The Believing Thief

What has happened during the SIX HOURS of the CROSS is REPENTANCE. Means a CHANGE of MIND... that brings a CHANGE of ACTION. SOMETHING has changed in this MAN’s OUTLOOK.

- Jesus began preaching a MESSAGE of repentance. Matthew 4:17 – [17] *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

1) *A Changed Mind about the Holiness of God*

[40] *But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”* He associates Jesus with GOD HIMSELF.

- There should be a HOLY FEAR that we possess of GOD.
- The WORD is *phobeo* (phobia) – to have a PROFOUND MEASURE of RESPECT.
- GOD AWAKENS in you a LEVEL of RIGHTEOUS FEAR before GOD.

2) *A Changed Mind about Sin*

[41] *And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds;*

- But this man says – look I am suffering JUSTLY.
- This is what I am receiving in terms of my due reward.
- And of course Romans 6:23 – [23] *The wages of Sin is death*
- *This man understands the FUTILITY of works RIGHTEOUSNESS.*

3) *A Changed Mind about Christ*

but this man has done nothing wrong.”

- No truer words have been said.
- That CHRIST is PERFECT.
- This is essentially a REALIZATION that CHRIST is indeed the MESSIAH.

4) *A Changed Mind about the Kingdom*

[42] *And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*

- This man understood something VITAL about the KINGDOM of GOD.
- The Kingdom of God is *Christ’s rule over His People.*
 - In a spiritual stage now. Both a Physical and Spiritual stage in the future.
- Jesus had demonstrated four things about His KINGDOM.
 - 1) *Jesus controls all of Creation.*
 - 2) *Jesus possesses authority over the spiritual realm.*
 - 3) *Jesus restores a broken world.*
 - 4) *Jesus forgives sins.*
 - Luke 7:48 – [48] *Then He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.”*
- He understood the NATURE of the KINGDOM.
- He makes a STATEMENT of FAITH. “REMEMBER me when you come into your KINGDOM.”

[43] *And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

Jonathan Edwards - "Christ arose as the head of believers, to deliver them from a state of death, spiritual, temporal, and eternal. He as their head and captain of salvation broke the prison, set the doors wide open, broke the seal, rolled away the stone, laid the keepers dead, and left the sepulcher open, that all the dead that he has redeemed may come forth."