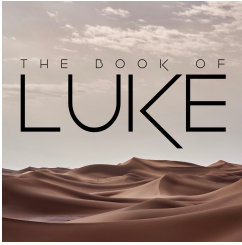


## “The Crucifixion”

*Luke 23:33-43*



**Theme:** Jesus suffered on the cross to save sinners like us.

**Introduction:**

### **I. The Place of the Crucifixion – 23:33**

#### **A. THE CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PLACE**

1. Luke’s narrative brings us now to the place of the Crucifixion – *“When they came to the place called The Skull ...”*
2. *“The Skull”* [κρανίον] – is the word from which we get our word “cranium” – referring to the top of the head.
3. It appears that the location of the crucifixion is a domed hillside since the Romans always crucified people in the most elevated location near a major road or gate.
4. It is always a hillside outside of the city walls where such an event occurred – – cp. *John 19:17; Hebrews 13:12*.
5. The specific location is uncertain although tradition marks it under the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem where there is a large boulder in which there is a split allegedly caused by the earthquake at Jesus’ death.




6. There is another elevated spot identified near an olive press that would be consistent with the tomb nearby in a garden where they would have hastily buried Jesus.

#### **B. THE CRUELTY AT THE PLACE**

1. Luke, with simplicity as most of his audience had personally witnessed crucifixions and knew the details states: *“... there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the*

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*other on the left.”*

2. The details of a crucifixion are as follows fairly well-known – having originated with the Persians under King Darius, used extensively by Alexander the Great, and then by the Romans as well.
3. The condemned is forced to lay on his back with arms stretched out across the horizontal portion of the cross known as the patibulum (likely the part that was carried by Simon).
4. The Roman soldier feels for the depression at the front of the wrist and drives a heavy, square, wrought iron nail through the wrist and deep into the wood. He repeats this on the other side of the patibulum.
5. The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees moderately flexed so that the victim could extend the legs to get relief. Another method is to nail the ankles to the sides of the post as demonstrated by this picture.
6. The cross is then lifted into place and dropped into the hole prepared to receive it with the force of gravity ripping the wounds of the victim as he plunges to the forceful stop at the end of the hole.
7. As he slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating, fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain – the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves.
8. As Jesus pushed Himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, He placed His full weight on the nail through His feet.
9. As the arms fatigue, great waves of cramps sweep over the

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muscles, knotting them in deep, relentless, throbbing pain.

10. With these cramps comes the inability to push Himself upward ... air can be drawn into the lungs but cannot be exhaled.
11. He would fight to raise Himself to get even one small breath.
12. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream and the cramps partially subside.
13. Intermittently, He can push Himself upward to exhale and bring in the oxygen.
14. Hours of this limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rending cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from His lacerated back as He moves up and down against the rough timber.
15. Finally, a deep crushing pain deep in the chest begins as the pericardium slowly fills with serum and begins to compress the heart.
16. Because of the loss of fluid, the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues – the tortured lungs are making a frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air ... until it's over.
17. This could take up to four days to kill the victim, which is why after a time, the soldiers would break the legs to hasten the death – cp. ***John 19:31-33***.

## II. The Priority in the Crucifixion – **23:34**

### A. THE PRIORITY OF THE SAVIOR

1. As Jesus is struggling, his heart for sinners is placed on display: *“But Jesus was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’”*
2. This is the first of the Lord’s seven sayings on the cross and displays the very purpose for His suffering – the desire for

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men to be freed from the consequences of their sin.

3. The word “*forgive*” [ἀφίημι] – literally means to dismiss or release and it emphasizes that Jesus aspired that through what He was doing, the application of redemption would be applied to them so that they could be disassociated from their sin.
4. His mercy extends toward them since Jesus was aware that they had no idea of the extent of their depraved activities – “... *for they do not know what they are doing*” – cp. **1 Corinthians 2:8**.
5. Jesus knew the consequences that were coming because of their rejection of Him as the Messiah – having just admonished the “daughters of Jerusalem” to mourn for themselves.
6. However, Jesus’ prayer for their forgiveness demonstrates that He did not come into the world to condemn the world but to save it – **John 3:17**.
7. Again, the Father answers the prayer of His Son and enables this prayer for forgiveness to be answered – to whom does “*them*” and “*they*” refer:
  - a. The immediate context of the Romans soldiers who did the act of crucifixion – **Luke 23:47**.
  - b. Those who are in the crowd mocking Him – **Acts 2:37-41**.
  - c. Those of the religious leadership – **Acts 6:7**.

### **B. THE PRIORITY OF THE SOLDIERS**

1. However, the hardened hearts of the soldiers – before the piercing and quickening power of God’s grace was exerted – the soldiers were only interested in selfish gain.
2. We’re told elsewhere that they were stationed at the foot of the cross – presumably to prevent and rescue attempt by His followers – cp. **Matthew 27:36**.

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3. We are told that *“they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.”*
4. The four of them each desired something of Jesus who had been stripped down to his loin cloth and hung above them without a need for his clothing – cp. ***John 19:23.***
5. Their crass sporting at the foot of the cross was a fulfillment of Messianic prophecy – cp. ***Psalms 22:14-18.***
6. We too benefit from the “clothing” of Jesus – not a physical garment, but His *“garment”* of righteousness in which the believer is wrapped through the imputation of that very righteousness by God in response to our faith – ***Romans 13:14; Isaiah 61:10.***

### So What?

1. Some unsaved people turn to Jesus to save them when they consider what Jesus did for them when He died for their sins.
2. Some unsaved people have suppressed that their lives are offensive to God and they face eternal punishment.
3. No Sinner can “beat death” – sin brings condemnation.

**Jesus suffered on the cross to save sinners**

## Part 2

### III. The Proclamations at the Crucifixion – ***23:35-42***

#### A. THE PROFANITY BY THE RULERS – ***v. 35***

1. This travesty, this lampoon of justice, was truly a spectacle – *“... and the people stood by, looking on”* – only a few hours previous they had called for the blood of Jesus to be upon them and their children – cp. ***Matthew 27:24-25.***
2. Their culpability was palpable as they stood watching the agony of Christ on the cross and were *“sneering”* at Christ

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[ἐκμυκτηρίζω] – lit. “out of a nostril” – and refers to using the nose to ridicule someone.

3. We know this because of the intensification of what was happening “... *and even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, ‘He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.’*”
4. It is interesting that they knew full well what Jesus was claiming – there wasn’t any obfuscation, mystery, riddle, or enigma – Jesus had made it clear to them and they understood.
5. They merely rejected what they knew and exhibited their disdain for the Son of God as He suffered for the very sins they were committing – cp. *Psalm 22:7-8*.

### **B. THE PARODY BY THE ROMANS – vv. 36-38**

1. In addition, the pagan Romans who had no concerns whatsoever about the Jewish notions of Messianic hope were mocking Him – “*The soldiers also mocked Him ...*” [ἐμπαίζω] – to “trick someone so as to make a fool of the person” or “to make fun of a person.”
2. They had already been doing this through the crown of thorns, reed for a scepter, and the “royal robe” they had put upon Him.
3. Now they feigned “service” to the King by serving as pretend cup-bearers – “... *coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine.*”
4. Picking up on the profane treatment of Jesus from the Jews, these soldiers joined “*saying, ‘If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!’*”
5. Additionally, “*there was also an inscription above Him, ‘This is the King of the Jews.’*”
  - a. This was the accusation that would have been carried in front of Jesus as He made His way to Golgotha.
  - b. The complete reading was “This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King

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of the Jews” – having been an obstinate jab at the religious leaders – cp. [John 19:19](#).

- c. It was written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek so that everyone would see the charge for which He was dying – [John 19:20](#).
- d. The Jews protested demanding that Pilate change it to reflect that Jesus merely claimed this – but it wasn't true; Pilate refused – cp. [John 19:21-22](#).

### C. THE PLEA BY THE REPENTANT – [vv. 39-42](#)

1. Another source of mockery were the two men who were being crucified with Jesus - – *“One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, ‘Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’”*
2. We are told that both of them were saying this from the beginning – cp. [Matthew 27:44](#); [Mark 15:32](#).
3. However, at some point the Father chose to begin His answer to Jesus' plea for God's grace to be exercised toward the forgiveness of those abusing Him.
4. He did it by quickening the hardened heart of one of those being crucified – *“But the other answered, and rebuking him said, ‘Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds;’ ...”*
5. This is the most significant proclamation at the cross by anyone involved in the hostility toward Jesus – indicating that God was at work drawing this man, sensitizing him of his guilt and accountability to God for his sin.
6. God opened the eyes of this sinner by enabling him to see that by dying, Jesus would be saving them in contrast to asking Him to save Himself and them.
7. He understood that Jesus, the innocent dying Messiah, would be how this sinner's soul would be delivered – *“... ‘but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’”*

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8. This is nothing less than a confession of sin and a plea for forgiveness without which no one can enter Christ's kingdom.
9. In referring to Jesus being able to *“remember me when You come in Your kingdom”* – he demonstrates some comprehension that Jesus will have to rise from the dead, perhaps aware of ***Daniel 12:2***.
10. Perhaps God had opened this criminal's eyes to the meaning of Jesus' prophecy of His resurrection – cp. ***Matthew 27:39-40***; cp. ***John 2:19-22***.
11. However, it was that the Spirit of God worked to quicken His heart through the truth, this sinner understood that his only hope of being reconciled to God was through what Jesus was doing for Him on that very cross at that very moment.

## **IV. The Promise at the Crucifixion – 23:43**

### **A. THE READINESS TO REDEEM**

1. Jesus delight in the Father's first answer to the prayer of Jesus was evidenced in the immediacy of His response – *“And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”*
2. By saying *“today”* Jesus indicates that the ordeal of the cross would be over by the end of the day.
3. Even this demonstrates the sovereign control that God possessed over the suffering of Jesus.
4. Yet, Jesus displays the heart of redemption – the readiness to redeem, to forgive those who come to Him in confession, repentance, and faith.
5. This is evidence that we confess our sin, God is ready to forgive – cp. ***Psalm 32:5***; ***1 John 1:9***.
6. This readiness is the disposition of God's grace as He looks



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for the opportunity to put it on display – cp. [Isaiah 30:18](#).

## B. THE RECONCILIATION IN REDEMPTION

1. Jesus assures this repentant sinner that He would indeed save him – “... *you will be with Me in Paradise.*”
2. The essence of condemnation is spiritual & eternal death – separation of soul from God because of sin – cp. [Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23](#).
3. “... *with Me ...*” - when eternal life is given by God as a gift, it brings reconciliation between the sinner and God through the work of Jesus Christ – [Ephesians 2:12-13](#).
4. In contrast to death – which is separation from God - the essence of eternal life is to know God and His Son Jesus Christ – cp. [John 17:3](#).
5. “*Paradise*” is the destination of the righteous – before the ascension of Christ, it was Abraham’s Bosom and was a place where the righteous went in Hades or when they went to “the grave.”
  - a. Since no one can be in the presence of God independently of the risen Lord Jesus Christ, “*Paradise*” was not heaven until the ascension of Christ – cp. [John 14:6; Luke 16:22-23; Ephesians 4:8-10](#).
  - b. Now that Jesus has ascended and is seated at the right hand of the Father, “*Paradise*” is Heaven itself – cp. [2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7](#).
  - c. This is what is referenced in the Apostle’s Creed: “*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*”
6. Being “*with Me*” – with Jesus – is the essence of the hope of every believer – cp. [Matthew 28:20; John 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:17](#).

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### **So What?**

- 1. There is a distinction between knowing that Jesus died for sins and comprehending that it was for your sin He died.**
- 2. Jesus responds to the expression of personal faith with a promise of hope and the gift of eternal life.**
- 3. Regardless of how guilty you are before God, God's mercy is poised and ready to forgive you because of what Jesus did for you.**

**Jesus suffered on the cross to save sinners like us.**