

Episode #515 Easter 2019 2: Faith of a Criminal

I. The death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ were the pivotal events in the history of God's work to redeem fallen mankind. All before these events was marked by man's failure in spite of all God did for them. After these events is marked by God's success in spite of all man can do against Him. Our salvation was granted to us by these great events.

II. We have been examining the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ as presented in Luke 23.

III. Luke 23:39-43. The criminals on the cross.

- A. Verse 39. One evildoer speaks up, mocking Him with the religious leaders and the soldiers. He did not really believe He could deliver them. This is often the way of human beings: in the midst of humiliation, we look for someone to look down on.
- B. Verse 40. The other criminal is different. He rebukes him. He is dying under the same condemnation as the Lord, and even now does he not fear God?
- C. Verse 41. This criminal was familiar with the Lord, and knew He was innocent.
- D. Verse 42. His faith is probably based on previous knowledge of the Lord's teaching. He had fallen in with a radical group and committed crimes for which he is now dying. Yet now he realizes he should have followed the Lord all along! Even while Christ is dying on the cross, he believes in His kingdom. True faith in God!
- E. Verse 43. Did they both go to Paradise that day?
 - 1. This does not mean the Lord went to heaven that day. Matthew 12:40. Not for three days and nights! John 20:17. Not yet!
 - 2. There is no punctuation in the original Greek, so all is added since the original. "Today" or "this day" was a common Hebrew figure, like our "right now." Deuteronomy 4:39, 4:40, 6:6, 7:11, 8:1, 8:11, 8:19, 10:13, 11:2, 11:13, 11:26,27, 11:32. This was not just Old Testament: Acts 20:26, Acts 26:2.
 - 3. Some argue against this from Luke 4:21, Luke 19:9. Yet in both these cases the phrase is *hoti semeron*. *Hoti* acts like quotation marks. No such phrase occurs here. This should be compared to the two Acts verses, not the Luke verses.
 - 4. Even while the King of the Kingdom hung on the cross, this man believed in His kingdom, and even at that most unlikely moment, Christ promised him that he would be there in His future Paradise.

IV. Luke 23:44-46. The death.

- A. Verse 44. A darkness covers the scene. Sin? A veil? From noon to 3:00PM.
- B. Verse 45. The sun itself is darkened. This veil divided the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. An extremely thick curtain: a man could not have ripped it. Not to mention from the top down! Access was opened, but not yet to all as in Acts 28:28. Ephesians 3:12: in Christ we have boldness and access with confidence.
- C. Verse 46. His words in other gospels. Spirit = *ruach*, His life. He expired, or ex-spirited, Greek *exepneusen*.

V. Luke 23:47-49. Others react to the death.

- A. Verse 47. The Roman in charge of the crucifixion notes these signs and comes to this conclusion. He was right, but He was far more than he knew!
- B. Verse 48. The crowd is sorry. It was only the jealous religious leaders who rejoiced!

- C. Verse 49. Those who knew Him and His faithful women followers stood by and saw. Perhaps some of the fleeing disciples returned, like John, to see? None came near. Too afraid for their own lives? Or not daring to from grief?

VI. Luke 2:50-54. The burial.

- D. Verse 50. Joseph = Let Him Add. A common name in Israel. This Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, yet a good and just man, unlike those who schemed to put the Lord to death.
- E. Verse 51. He had not consented to their travesty of justice. Probably they never called him to their illegal night trial. He was from Arimathea (Heights), probably the one near Mount Ephraim (there were several). Waiting for the kingdom of God. Shows that this is God's government on earth, not His universal and eternal sovereignty.
- F. Verse 52. He does not want the Lord's body treated like that of a common criminal. He asks Pilate for the body. This took courage, since He had been executed like a traitor. Pilate felt cornered by the leaders, and probably wanted to get back at them.
- G. Verse 53. Linen are the grave clothes of the rich. A new tomb was also the burial place of a rich person. He had Nicodemus to help him, John 19:39. This was his own tomb, Matthew 27:60.
- H. Verse 54. The Preparation was for the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The first day of that feast (day after Passover) was a Feast Sabbath: Leviticus 23:5-8. This helps us locate the year of His death as AD 29.
- I. Verse 55. We learn of these women from Luke 8:1-3. They were the ones who monetarily supported His ministry! Now they observe all.
- J. Verse 56. They probably prepared on the Friday between the feast Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath. Thus He was three days and nights in the tomb, Matthew 12:40. Nights and days added together means 24 days. Now, all was ready for the next day's resurrection.

VI. The criminals on the cross provide a great contrast. One mocked like the Lord's enemies, but the other believed, even in the most unlikely of circumstances. Do we see the same thing he saw in the One Who died there: a Savior? Do we see our sins on Him, or do we reject Him and retain our sins on ourselves? Either He must die for our sins, or we must do it! Joseph of Arimathea was also a believer, siding with the Lord bravely even after His death. Do we believe as strongly as this bold man? Let us believe, even as these two men of faith did in the world's darkest hour.