

“But What About The Thief  
On The Cross?”

*Luke 23:32-43*

# Introduction

- Initially, both of the thieves reviled Jesus as he hung on the cross –
  - Matt. 27:39-44. “And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, 40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. 41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, 42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. 43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. 44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.
  - Mk. 15:31-32. “Likewise also the chief priests mocking said among themselves with the scribes, He saved others; himself he cannot save. 32 Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him.

# Introduction

- From Luke's account, it is clear that a change takes place in the attitude and words of one of the thieves.
  - (Lk. 23:39-43) “And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. *40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. **43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.***

# The Question...

- Do the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross provide an example of salvation for men and women today?
- Can we use to the thief on the cross, who was not instructed there by Jesus to be baptized for the remission of his sins, to justify the notion that baptism is not essential for salvation today?

# *The Words of Jesus Meant Salvation For the Thief*

- Bible shows “paradise” to be place of comfort where the souls of those who are saved await the resurrection of the body.
  - Gen. 2:8, 15; etc. – Eden is translated “paradise” in the LXX.
  - II Cor. 12:4 – Paul describes himself as being caught up to paradise.
  - Rev. 2:7 – Tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God.
- “Paradise” -- where the soul of Jesus went after his death. You will be with me.
  - (Acts 2:27-33) quote from Ps. 16:8-11. Will not leave my soul in hell (hades -- ASV) nor suffer thy holy one to see corruption (body) cf. 31.
  - (Lk. 16:19-28) 2 facets/aspects of “hades”
    - Lazarus in a place of comfort – Abraham’s bosom. (23,25)
    - Rich man in a place of torment – hades (23)
    - There is a great gulf so that one can not pass from one compartment to the other. (26)
    - The thief once in “paradise” was not going to have his fate changed.
    - Rev. 20:14 – death and hell (hades) cast into the lake of fire.

- To say that the penitent thief was not baptized at all is an argument from the silence of the scriptures. A mere assumption. Did he receive John's baptism? We simply are not told. To argue either way is erroneous.
  - John baptized: Matt. 3:5-6
  - Jesus baptized: Jn. 4:1-3 (his disciples baptized more than John)
  - Do you know that the thief, who knew who Jesus was, about his kingdom, and his resurrection, who had greater faith at this point than even the apostles, had not received John's baptism?

- Jesus while on earth had power to forgive sins, and on whatever terms he chose.
  - Mar 2:5 -11 → When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, **Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.** 6 But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, 7 Why doth this *man* thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? 8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? 9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy sins be forgiven thee*; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? 10 **But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins,** (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) 11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. (Mark 2:5-11)

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– Luke 19:6-10 → And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. 8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold. 9 And Jesus said unto him, ***This day is salvation come to this house,*** forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Lk. 19:6-10)



- Jesus while on earth had power to forgive sins, and on whatever terms he chose.
  - Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? (Mk. 10:17)
  - Mar 10:18-21 → And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.* 19 Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. 20 And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. 21 Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, **One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.**

# *The Thief On The Cross Is Not A Model For Salvation Today*

- His salvation was pronounced by Jesus before the New Testament came into force, and baptism of the great commission began to be preached. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15-16; Acts 2:38)
  - Abraham was not commanded to keep the Passover. (Did not pertain to him, instructions not yet given)
  - Moses was not commanded to eat the Lord's Supper (Did not pertain to him, instructions are part of a different covenant)
  - We are not commanded to offer animal sacrifices today (We live under a different law – the New rather than the Old)
- The thief was not subject to the baptism commanded of sinners today. It did not begin to be preached till the Day of Pentecost, and is part of a different law – The New Testament which came into effect after Christ died.

- The Old Law was taken away when Jesus died on the cross, and the New did not come into effect till after his death.
  - (Dt. 5:2-3) Given only to Israel
  - (Jer. 31:31) The O.T. prophesied its replacement.
  - (II Cor. 3:7-11) the ministration of death.
  - (Rom. 3:20-23) None justified by the deeds of the law.
  - (Rom. 7:6) Delivered from the law.
  - (Heb. 7:11-12) Change in priesthood made necessary a change in the law.
  - (Heb. 8:6-8) Better covenant with better promises.
  - (Heb. 10:9-10) Takes away the first that he may est. the second.
  - (Col. 2:14-17) nailed to the cross.

- 15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.
- 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.
- 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

The Thief On The Cross Could Not  
Have Received The Baptism of the  
Great Commission -- That Which  
Sinners are Commanded To Be  
Obedient To Today.

# Could Not Have Exercised The Required Faith...

- 9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
- 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Rom. 10:9-10)

# Could Not Have Been Raised In The Likeness of His Resurrection...

- 3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?
- 4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.
- 5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection: (Rom. 6:3-5)