

Luke Chapter 23 Continued

Luke 23:26 "And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear [it] after Jesus."

“Simon, a Cyrenian”: All 3 synoptic gospels mention Simon.

Cyrene was associated with Africa, so this means that Simon was a black man. This was not a voluntary act of Simon, but rather this job was thrust upon him. There was no evidence that he was forced. I believe when they told him to do this, that he willingly did it.

Condemned prisoners were required to carry the heavy crossbeam of their cross to the execution site. Exhausted from a sleepless night and severely wounded and weakened by His scourging, Jesus was unable to continue. The Roman guards conscripted, Simon, apparently at random, to carry Jesus' crossbeam the rest of the way.

Simon, from the North African city of Cyrene, was on his way into Jerusalem. The identification of him as “the father of Alexander and Rufus” (Rom. 16:13), is evidence of Mark's connection with the church at Rome.

Most people who were crucified carried their own cross, but the cruelty with which they had scourged Jesus had left His physical body so weak that there was a need for someone to carry this heavy cross for Him. Cyrene was a part of northern Africa. There were Jews living in that area and many believe Simon was a Jew, as well as being an African.

God uses little things like this to show His acceptance of different races of people. Even though they seemed to force this on Simon, we see no protest on his part. He will have a crown in glory for helping the Lord.

There is a great deal of spiritual meaning here, as well. Jesus said all believers must take up their cross daily and follow Him. It may not be a wooden cross, but we too have one to bear. Simon took up the cross and followed Jesus.

Luke 23:27 "And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him."

These women loved Jesus and showed open grief for the things that were happening that day. It seems many of His followers had found out about it by now and some were following.

Luke 23:28 "But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children."

“Daughters of Jerusalem”: There is nothing to suggest that these women were Christ's disciples. They may have been professional mourners, obligatory at Jewish funerals, and probably present at high-profile executions as well.

“Weep for yourselves”: Christ’s reply to them was a prophetic warning. Only Luke recorded this incident.

Jesus has compassion on these women. His thoughts even now in His great physical agony, is not for Himself, but for these women. Jesus' problems will soon be over. He tells them to weep for themselves and their children.

In the very near future, Jerusalem would be under siege. The war will destroy this city. I believe it goes much further, too. Jesus knows the persecution His followers will face.

Luke 23:29 "For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed [are] the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck."

Blessed are the barren”: I.e., a time is coming when those who have no children to mourn will be considered blessed.

Again, this is spoken for that near future overthrow of Jerusalem, but it goes on also, until the end when the last terrible war will come. Then will these Hebrew women, who thought it a curse from God not to have children, be happy not to have a child to go through all the problems.

Luke 23:30 "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us."

“To say” (Quoted from Hosea 10:8 and Rev. 6:15-17 and 9:6).

“Then shall they begin to say”: The Syriac, Arabic, and Persian versions read, "then shall ye begin to say". The tribulation being so great, as never was the like since the creation of the world, nor never will be to the end of it; and being so sore pressed with the sword and famine; with the enemy without, and divisions, robberies, and murders within.

And their miseries being inexpressible, and intolerable, they will seek to go into the holes of the rocks, and caves of the earth, as is prophesied of them (Isaiah 2:19). And as Josephus says, many of them did, when the city was taken. And, like those (in Hosea 10:8), will say, "to the mountains fall on us, and to the hills cover us"; will choose rather that the mountains and hills round about Jerusalem, should fall upon them. And they be buried under the ruins of them, than live in such terrible distress, or fall into the hands of their enemies!

Isaiah 2:19 "Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to shake the earth."

Hosea 10:8 "The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us."

This perhaps, was speaking of the terrors of the soon overthrow of Jerusalem, but also the Jewish women, even until now, have seen so much terror (as in World War 2). Even now, it is not safe for a Hebrew to walk along the streets around Jerusalem.

Luke 23:31 "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

“Green tree ... dry”: This was probably a common proverb. Jesus’ meaning seems to be this: If the Romans would perpetrate such atrocities on Jesus (the “green” wood, young, strong, and a source of life), what would they do to the Jewish nation (the “dry” wood, old, barren, and ripe for judgment)?

The green tree signifies life. That is what Jesus offered, life. When this offer of life is gone (the dead tree), what then?

Luke 23:32 "And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death."

“Two other”: Or “robbers”. Denoting a rebel or brigand who plunders as he steals. Mere thieves were not usually crucified. They were probably involved with Barabbas in the rebellion, since robbery itself was not a capital offense under Roman law.

These malefactors were truly criminals, guilty and deserving punishment.

Luke 23:33 "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left."

“Called Calvary”: In Latin, called the Skull the Latin equivalent of Golgotha.

This place was called Calvary, Golgotha, and a place of a skull. They crucified Him. This we say so quickly, when in fact, they nailed Him to the wooden cross. They put a nail in each of His hands and nailed His feet to the cross, as well. I would like to say, right here, that even at this moment, Jesus was in complete control.

The only reason they could do this, is because He chose to die for you and me. His death on that cross for each of us was so that we might live. At no time was Satan, or any of his demons, forcing Jesus to do anything He didn't want to.

He was looking down through time and seeing you and me. He knew if He got off the cross, we would go to hell. Our faces are what kept Him on the cross.

Luke 23:34 "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots."

“Forgive them”: I.e., His tormentors, both Jews and Romans (Acts 7:60). Some of the fruit of this prayer can be in the salvation of thousands of people in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2:41).

“They know not what they do”: I.e., they were not aware of the full scope of their wickedness. They did not recognize Him as the true Messiah (Acts 13:27-28). They were blind to the light of divine truth, “for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8).

Still, their ignorance certainly did not mean that they deserved forgiveness. Rather, their spiritual blindness itself was a manifestation of their guilt (John 3:19). But Christ’s prayer while they were in the very act of mocking Him is an expression of the boundless compassion of divine grace.

“Cast lots”: This was in fulfillment of (Psalm 22:18). The executioners customarily divided the victim’s clothes among themselves. The garments of the victim were the customary spoils of the executioners. (John 19:23-24), gives a fuller account.

We see from this statement Jesus makes that He takes no thought for Himself, but as usual, is thinking of others. The two thieves by His side have need to pray; "Father forgive me", but Jesus has no sin. His prayer, "Father forgive them" denotes a need for all of us for forgiveness for our part in this terrible punishment.

These soldiers did not even have the courtesy to wait until He was dead. They divided His belongings right before Him. The one garment which had no seam was desired of all, so they cast lots for it. The movie "The robe" is based upon this garment which had no seam. It was taken from an ancient book other than the Bible.

Luke 23:35 "And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided [him], saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God."

“Deride him”: All they that see me laugh me to scorn - The meaning here is to mock, to deride, to treat with scorn.

The idea of laughing is not properly in the word, nor would that necessarily occur in the treatment here referred to. How completely this was fulfilled in the case of the Savior, it is not necessary to say.

They shoot out the lip. The Hebrew word means properly "to split, to burst open;" then, as in this place, it means to open wide the mouth; to stretch the mouth in derision and scorn (see Psalm 35:21), "They opened their mouth wide against me." (Job 16:10), "they have gaped upon me with their mouth."

They shake the head, In contempt and derision. See (Matthew 27:39), "Wagging their heads."

Notice, it is not the people deriding Him, it is these religious rulers. They mocked Jesus as if he had to prove something to them. I believe they knew all the time that He was the Messiah. There had been too many miracles done in their presence for them not to know.

Luke 23:36 "And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,"

Psalms 69:21: "They gave me also gall for my food; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

“Vinegar”: Wine that was mingled with gall”: “Gall” simply refers to something bitter. (Mark 15:23), identifies it as myrrh, a narcotic. The Jews had a custom, based on (Prov. 31:6), of administering a pain-deadening medication mixed with wine to victims of crucifixion, in order to deaden the pain.

But Jesus refuses; wanting to go through this for all of us. Their mocking will be turned to sorrow when the earth starts to quake and darkness covers the land at noonday.

Luke 23:37 "And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself."

They had no idea of the whole purpose of the crucifixion. The sad thing is that Jesus was dying for their sins, too.

Luke 23:38 "And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

“A superscription”: All 4 gospel writers mentioned the inscription, but each reported a slightly different variation. Both Luke and John (19:20), said that the inscription was translated on the placard itself. It is ever more likely that all 4 evangelists simply reported the substance of the inscription elliptically, with each one omitting different parts of the full inscription.

All 4 concur with Mark that the inscription said The King of Jews (Matt. 27:37; John 19:19). Luke added “this is” at the beginning, and Matthew started with “This is Jesus”. John’s version began “Jesus Of Nazareth” Putting them all together, the full inscription would read “This Is Jesus Of Nazareth, The King Of The Jews.”

The Jews had tried to get Pilate to change this to say that He said He was the King of the Jews. Pilate would not do it. He was the King of the Jews.

Luke 23:39 "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us."

“One of the malefactors”: (Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32), report that both criminals were mocking Christ along with the crowd. As the hours wore on, however, this criminal’s conscience was smitten and he repented. When the impenitent thief resumed his mocking (verse 39), this thief rebuked him and refused to participate again.

Luke 23:40 "But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?"

The one thief on the right became very different. First, he began to fear God which is the beginning of wisdom. He had faith that Jesus was sinless, as well. This thief said he deserved punishment, and we will see the Lord forgives him.

Luke 23:41 "And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss."

“This man hath done nothing amiss”: Even the thief hanging to the right of Jesus began to testify of Jesus’ innocence.

These two men, the one on the left and the other on the right, had very little in common, except that they were both guilty of committing a crime. The one on the left, I believe, fussed at Jesus and said, "if you are Christ, save us". You see, he had no faith at all. He would die in his sin.

Luke 23:42 "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

“Jesus, Lord, remember me”: The penitent thief’s prayer reflected his belief that the soul lives on after death; that Christ had a right to rule over a kingdom of the souls of men, and that He would soon enter that kingdom despite His impending death.

His request to be remembered was a plea for mercy, which also reveals that the thief understood he had no hope but divine grace, and that the dispensing of that grace lay in Jesus’ power. All of this demonstrates true faith on the part of the dying thief, and Christ graciously affirmed the man’s salvation (verse 43).

He makes Jesus Savior and Lord in this one statement. (In Romans 10:9), we see that we must believe in our heart and confess with our mouth, and he has done both here.

Luke 23:43 "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

“Paradise”: The only other places this word is used in the New Testament are (2 Cor. 12:4 and Rev. 2:7). The word suggests a garden (it is the word used of Eden in the LXX), but in all 3 New Testament uses it speaks of heaven.

We read (in Revelation 2:7), about the paradise of God. This is heaven. Jesus' Spirit and man's spirit will be in heaven that day. Jesus will dismiss His Spirit from His body on the cross and command it to go to the Father. Then He goes to hell, preaches, and brings back captivity captive.

Luke 23:44 "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour."

“Sixth hour ... until the ninth hour”: From noon to 3:00 p.m. Luke was using the Jewish method of reckoning time.

“Darkness”: This could not have been caused by an eclipse, because the Jews used a lunar calendar, and Passover always fell on the full moon, making a solar eclipse out of the question. This was a supernatural darkness.

Luke 23:45 "And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst."

In (Matthew 27:51), we find that this veil was rent from the top to the bottom. God tore the curtain. Jesus opened the way to the very throne of God to all believers in Christ. This also symbolizes the wall being removed between Jew and Gentile. Both must believe in Jesus. Jesus opened the way to God for us.

Luke 23:46 "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost."

“Into thy hands”: This quotes (Psalm 31:5), and the manner of His death accords with (John 10:18). Normally victims of crucifixion died much slower deaths. He, being in control, simply yielded up His soul (John 10:18; 19:30), committing it to God. Thus, He “offered” Himself without blemish to God” (Heb. 9:14).

Notice, He did not say I commend my body. This is where Jesus sent His Spirit to God. His body goes to the tomb, not His Spirit. The third day after He had preached in hades (the abode of the dead), His Spirit rejoins His body and comes out of the tomb.

Luke 23:47 "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man."

“The centurion ... saw what was done”: (Mark 15:39), says the centurion was the one who uttered the words of confession, but he evidently spoke for his men as well. Their fear speaks of an awareness of their sin, and the word “truly” suggests a certainly and conviction that bespeaks genuine faith.

He was sorry, but it was a little late.

Luke 23:48 "And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."

“Smote their breasts”: Luke alone records this expression of remorse and anguish (18:13).

These people have realized that this was truly their Messiah! The smiting of the breasts shows that they are truly sorrowful.

Luke 23:49 "And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things."

“The women ... from Galilee”: (Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40-41), report that this included Mary Magdalene; Mary, mother of James (the less), and Joses; Salome, mother of James and John, and many others.

The same women were present at His burial (verse 55; Matt. 27:61; Mark 15:47), and His resurrection (24:1; Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1), so they were eyewitnesses to all the crucial events of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

The happenings of this day reassured all of them of the fact that Jesus Christ was truly Messiah.

Luke 23:50 "And, behold, [there was] a man named Joseph, a counsellor; [and he was] a good man, and a just:"

“Joseph”: All four evangelists mention him; Mark and Luke identified him as a member of the Sanhedrin; only Luke noted that he dissented from the council’s verdict against Jesus (verse 51).

Luke 23:51 "(The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) [he was] of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God."

“Waited for the kingdom of God”: I.e., he believed Jesus’ claims. (John 19:38), refers to him as a secret disciple.

This Joseph had been of the very religious group who had Jesus killed. Joseph had not consented to the crucifixion. He had gone against the rest of the Sanhedrin. He had accepted Jesus as Messiah.

Luke 23:52-53 "This [man] went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus." "And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulcher that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid."

This happened immediately, because they had to get Jesus' body in the tomb before 6 P.M., the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath. Joseph was a rich man and had this beautiful tomb already. This fulfilled Scriptures that said Jesus would be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9). The linen was symbolic of righteousness.

Luke 23:54 "And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on."

“Day ... preparation”: I.e., Friday, the day before the Sabbath.

This just means they were in a hurry. There were about three hours between His death and burial.

Luke 23:55 "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid."

“Beheld ... how his body was laid”: According to (John 19:39), Nicodemus brought a hundred pounds of spices and aloes (probably obtained while Joseph was negotiating with Pilate for Jesus’ body), and he and Joseph wrapped the body with linen and the spices. These women, from Galilee, were probably unfamiliar with Joseph and Nicodemus, who were Judeans.

After all, both men were associated with the Jewish leaders who orchestrated the conspiracy against Jesus (verse 50; John 3:1). So, the women were determined to prepare Jesus' body for burial themselves. They returned (i.e. went to their homes) to prepare their own spices and perfumes (verse 56).

They had to have Jesus' body placed in the tomb before sunset, when the Sabbath began, so they were not able to finish preparing the body. (Mark 16:1), says they purchased more spices "when the Sabbath was over," I.e., after sundown Saturday.

Then they returned Sunday morning with the spices (24:1), expecting to finish the task that had been interrupted by the Sabbath.

Notice the love of the women for Jesus. They were not anxious to be separated from Him. They followed to the tomb.

Luke 23:56 "And thy returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment."

These women knew how strict the law was about the Sabbath. Had they gone on the Sabbath day, they would have been stoned to death. They did have everything prepared to be there the first thing on Sunday. The loyalty of the women is not overlooked in Luke.

Luke Chapter 23 Continued Questions

1. Who carried Jesus' cross for Him?
2. What country was he from?
3. Did he carry it before or after Jesus?
4. Why did they need someone to carry His cross?
5. What two men were his offspring?
6. Why was this particular man chosen?
7. All believers must take up their cross _____ and follow Him?
8. Who bewailed and lamented Jesus' crucifixion?
9. Who did Jesus call these women?
10. Who did He tell them to weep for?
11. What would these women say that was not natural for Hebrew women to say?

12. What will they say to the mountains?
13. What was meant by the green tree in verse 31?
14. Who would be put to death with Jesus?
15. What was the place called where Jesus was crucified?
16. What is very important to remember about who is in control?
17. His death was so that we might _____.
18. What prayer did Jesus say to the Father for them?
19. What should be the prayer of the two thieves?
20. Who derided Jesus saying, save yourself?
21. Who mocked Him and offered Him vinegar?
22. What was written over Him?
23. What 3 languages was it written in?
24. What different attitudes did the two thieves have?
25. The one said to Jesus, _____ remember me.
26. Where did Jesus say He would be that day with Him?
27. Where is this place?
28. When was the darkness over the face of the earth?
29. What does the author believe the three hours of darkness symbolize?
30. What happened to the veil in the temple?
31. Why is this important?
32. What did Jesus say, exactly, when He commanded His Spirit to leave His body and go to the Father?
33. What did the Centurion say after all this?
34. What did the people do that shows they knew they sinned?
35. Who, besides His acquaintance, watched this?
36. Who went and begged Pilate for Jesus' body?

37. What group was he a part of?
38. Did he agree with them about Jesus?
39. Why did he have to be a rich man?
40. Where did they bury Jesus?
41. Why were they in a hurry to bury Him?
42. Who followed after Joseph to see where the tomb was?
43. What did the women do on Saturday to get ready to go to the tomb Sunday?
44. What would have happened to them, if they had gone on Saturday?