

The Thief on the Cross – Lk. 23:39-43

- “Thief on the cross” is widely known, but don’t know his name or hardly any details about him
 - Mt. 27:38 – Was a robber/thief, sentenced to death
 - Mt. 27:39-44 – Apparently both joined with everyone else in mocking Jesus
- 23:40 – Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?
 - Thief seems to have a change of heart & rebukes other thief
 - While hanging on cross, moments to reflect on his wasted life and what lies ahead...
- 23:41 – We indeed justly
 - Admits his guilt and that they are receiving justice – Lk. 23:40
 - Doesn’t complain (or at least stops complaining) or bemoan how unfair life is
 - Honest acknowledgement that crucifixion is his due reward
- 23:41 – This Man has done nothing wrong
 - How did he know? Could he have witnessed any of Jesus’ trial?
 - Was likely free a few days or weeks earlier, working as a thief
 - Could have witnessed Jesus teaching, performing miracles; heard reputation
 - If he heard Jesus speak, he may have been convinced... yet didn’t repent (Mt. 11:20-24)
 - BUT NOW... sees things differently—his own faults, attitude of Jesus on cross
- 23:42 – Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.
 - Addresses Jesus as Lord, acknowledging Him as greater than himself
 - If you were being executed for your crimes, would you want to be remembered at all? Shame and honesty would likely make us tell people to forget about me...
 - Why does he want to be remembered? Why should Jesus remember him?
 - Why not, “Lord, please forget about me at judgment...” ??
 - ***Remember me, not as a thief, but as a penitent sinner.
 - How could he know that Jesus would come into His kingdom?
 - This dying, penitent sinner had Faith! Seemingly more faith than the disciples
 - Lk. 24:11-12 – Disciples didn’t believe that Jesus was raised
 - His faith must have been based on whatever he had seen and heard
 - He must have heard Jesus talk about His kingdom, e.g., Jn. 18:36-37
 - Must have known death would not stop Jesus from receiving it
 - Must have believed in something after death and that Jesus could help him avoid eternal punishment
 - Must have understood Jesus could forgive penitent sinners
- 23:43 – This day, you’ll be with me in Paradise.
 - Not some vague future occurrence thousands of years away... This day!
 - Jesus had the power to save and bring a thief, justly executed for his crimes, to Paradise
 - What about the other non-penitent thief? No words for him...
- Can we be saved like the thief on the cross?
 - No, because we aren’t being crucified with Jesus where He could tell us such...
 - Yes, if we have faith of penitent sinner – proclaimed His faith when no one else would!
 - Faith produces obedience
 - Heb. 9:15-18 – testator still alive, kingdom not yet open.