**Calvary Part 2: The Thief On The Cross**

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday April 5th, 2020

Text: Luke 23:39-43

### Intro

1. The Scriptures make clear the conditions for salvation: Baptism for the forgiveness of sins!
   1. *Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; I Pet. 3:21*
2. ***Is there an exception to this rule?***
   1. Many people attempt to dismiss all these passages with one question: “But what about the thief on the cross?”
3. The thief on the cross is thought by some to be the exception that would justify salvation at the point of confession of Christ as Lord alone today *(Rom. 3:28: Luther’s trans. “alone”).*
   1. Mankind has elevated the thief to a position to steal the truth of the gospel from the hearts of many men.
4. There is no doubt that the remorseful thief on the cross was saved, but the question is, “Can people today be saved in the same manner?”

#### At Calvary

* 1. All four gospels record that Jesus Christ was crucified with two thieves on either side of Him – Mt. 27:38; Mk. 15:27; Lk. 23:33; Jn. 19:18
     1. At one point, both thieves insulted Jesus (Mt. 27:44) as the people did (Mt. 27:39-43)
     2. One of them hurled insults like the masses below and is recorded in Lk. 23:39.
     3. One of them rebuked the other, admitted guilt, confessed Jesus as innocent, and asked to be remembered in Christ’s kingdom (Lk. 23:39-43), to which plea for mercy Jesus responded, “Today, you will be with Me in Paradise.”
  2. “But what about the thief on the cross?”
     1. The quick answer is it was under the Old Law so doesn’t apply today!
     2. However, some are equally quick to point out that Jesus died before the thief, thus fulfilling the Old Covenant *(Jn. 19:31-34).*
     3. Heb. 9:15-17: A testament (will) is made while one is alive. Christ died to fulfill the Old Testament.
     4. Heb. 7:22; 8:6, 13: Christ rose from the dead and became the “mediator” of a new covenant, making the old one obsolete, or fulfilled.
     5. Thus the New Testament began *after* His death *and* resurrection.
     6. His words in Mark 16:16 on baptism were *after* His resurrection and fully carried out on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, under the New Covenant.
  3. However, still some are unsatisfied with the thief being under the Old Law!
  4. The events at Calvary were under the Old Law and do not apply today!

#### Was the Thief Saved?

* 1. The thief asked to be remembered when Jesus came into His kingdom:
     1. Could have been mistakenly thinking of a physical kingdom:
        1. Jesus spoke of the church as His earthly kingdom – Mk. 9:1
        2. The Jews believed the Messiah would establish an earthly kingdom.
        3. Acts 1:6: The disciples and apostles were still under that misconception all the way up to Christ’s ascension! *(Jn. 18:36: Jesus said not earthly)*
     2. Could have been thinking of Christ’s eternal kingdom:
        1. Mt. 7:21: Jesus spoke of Heaven as His kingdom.
        2. Lk. 23:43: Jesus’ response was that they both would be in “Paradise,” answering the thief’s question, perhaps showing he meant eternal.
  2. “Paradise” *(paradeisos = G3857:* A park, an Eden, place of future happiness, paradise)
     1. Evidences for “realm of departed spirits” *(Hades G86:* place of the dead):
        1. Jesus did not go to Heaven the day He died. On the day of resurrection He said to Mary, “I have not yet ascended to the Father” *(Jn. 20:17).*
        2. *Lk. 16:19-31:* Jesus told an account of a rich man and poor man named Lazarus who died and were sent to the Hadean world *(II Pet. 2:4: Hell: tartaroō [Tartarus] G5020: deepest abyss of Hades, eternal torment).*
           1. The rich man went to “Torments” – Lk. 16:23
           2. Lazarus went to “Abraham’s bosom” – Lk. 16:22
        3. Many believe those 3 days was when “He Led Captive a Host of Captives” *(Eph. 4:8)* from Hades (righteous dead) to Heaven.
     2. Evidences for “Heaven”:
        1. *II Cor. 5:6-8:* Paul says to be absent from body is “home with the Lord.”
        2. *II Cor. 12:2, 4:* “Paradise” is the 3rd Heaven (beyond space?)
        3. Heb. 4:14: Jesus, when He ascended, “passed through the heavens.”
        4. Rev. 2:7: A metaphor for an eternal Garden of Eden.
     3. Whether it was Heaven or “Abraham’s bosom” it was with the Lord Jesus!
     4. Whether it was Heaven or “Abraham’s bosom” has no bearing on our salvation today!
  3. The thief was saved because only Jesus has the power to forgive and save and He did promise the thief that he would be with Him in Paradise! *(With Jesus)*

#### Can We Be Saved the Same Way as the Thief?

* 1. Even though we agree the thief was saved, we cannot be saved in the same way today!
  2. The thief lived in a time when Christ on earth personally forgave sins:
     1. *Lk. 5:17-20:* The paralyzed man.
     2. *Lk. 7:36-50:* The sinful woman.
     3. Jesus personally forgave their sins and if we had lived then our sins might have been forgiven in similar circumstances.

#### What does the word of God teach about salvation this side of the cross?

* + 1. We live under a different covenant *(better covenant with better promises – Heb. 8:6)* than those who lived during Jesus’ time on earth.
    2. *Heb. 9:15-17:* A new covenant that became effective at the death of Christ and after His resurrection; He is the Testator.
    3. Mk. 16:16; Acts 22:16: Those who believe in Christ as the Son of God are to confess Him as Lord and be baptized into His name *(Acts 8:37-38; 10:47-48)!*
  1. Baptism is now required as an act of obedient faith for salvation! *(I Pet. 3:21)*

## Conclusion

1. Instead of the question, “But what about the thief on the cross?” it should be asked, “But how am I saved today?”
   1. We are baptized into the body of Christ – I Cor. 12:13
   2. Christ is the Savior of the body – Eph. 5:23
   3. Christ saves those who are obedient to Him – Heb. 5:9
   4. *There is no promise of salvation to those outside the body of Christ!!!!*
   5. Baptism was required in all cases of conversion under the New Covenant:
      1. *Acts 2:38; 8:12-18; 10:47-48; 16:15; 16:33; 18:8; 19:3-5; 22:16*
2. Those who attempt to find an exception to baptism in the experience of the thief on the cross do so to try to justify that baptism isn’t required of men today!
3. Those who teach such doctrines ignore the Scriptures and allow the thief on the cross to remain a thief by stealing the truth from the hearts of individuals who are seeking salvation!
4. Those with a heart for truth will see the context of *Lk. 23:43* as belonging to the O.T.
5. Heaven is too wonderful and Hell too terrible for us to risk being misled by false beliefs concerning the thief on the cross!
6. Obey the gospel today Christ’s way! *(Mk. 16:16)*
7. If you are not a Christian, you need to be. Repent and be baptized into His name!
8. If a Christian in error, don’t wait till it’s eternally too late. Repent and be renewed!
9. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!