

The thief on the cross

Crucifixion was a barbaric death sentence used in the time of the Romans. It was so bad that Roman citizens were spared such a punishment. On the day that Jesus was crucified, at least two other men died. We read about them in Luke's gospel.



1.

Read Luke 23 v 32. Who died on the same day as Jesus and why?

Read Luke 23 v 39. What does one of them say to Jesus? Why do you think he says this?

2.

Read Luke 23 v 40-41. What does the other criminal say is the reason they are both being crucified?

What does he say about Jesus?

3.

Read Luke 23 v 42. What did the second criminal say to Jesus?

What had he recognised about Jesus?

Read Luke 23 v 43. What was Jesus' response?

4.

Jesus was crucified between two criminals. They were being crucified as an act of justice, in punishment for their crimes. The crowd, the soldiers and one of the criminals mocked Jesus and told Him to save Himself if He is really the Messiah. They were challenging Him to prove His identity.

The second criminal recognised his own sin, and that his punishment was just. He had also recognised that Jesus really is the Messiah, who had done no wrong and did not deserve to die. With this in mind he asked King Jesus to remember him in His kingdom, meaning to give him eternal life. Jesus replied that, because the man trusted in Jesus as his King, his place in God's kingdom was guaranteed!

The criminal who trusted Jesus died a few hours later. He had no opportunity to change his behaviour or show his love for Jesus, but he had repented before it was too late. And so Jesus said they would meet in heaven!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for what you have done for me. Thank you that, in your compassion and love for me, you died an agonising death in order to pay for my sins. Please help me to understand, as the criminal on the cross did, that when I put my trust in you to pay for my sins, my place in eternity with you is guaranteed. Amen.

Luke 23 v 32-43

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

³⁵ The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, ‘He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.’

³⁶ The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar ³⁷ and said, ‘If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.’

³⁸ There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

³⁹ One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: ‘Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!’

⁴⁰ But the other criminal rebuked him. ‘Don’t you fear God,’ he said, ‘since you are under the same sentence? ⁴¹ We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.’

⁴² Then he said, ‘Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.’

⁴³ Jesus answered him, ‘Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.’