

Date: 1-7-2007

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Reading Luke 23:33-43

Subject: The Cross –

1. Who is the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. The Malefactors

1. Who is the Lord Jesus Christ?

He is the Son of God, the Creator of the world. John 1 tells us that He was in the beginning with God and that He made all things. Genesis 1 tells us that this creation took place in six days. It is important to understand why the Son of God came to die because this is the basis of the Gospel message.

“They crucified Him” - Who crucified Him? The Jews crucified their Messiah. They professed to be waiting for Him to come, but when He came, they rejected Him.

Why did the Son of God come? He came because God wanted to show His love to men. Even as the Lord was crucified with long thorns piercing His brow and blunt nails hammered through His hands and feet, still He said, “Father forgive them”(v.34). His death was a fulfilment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Just as He was born where the prophet foretold (Micah 5:1), so He died in the way that David described in Psalm 22, even to the soldiers parting his raiment among themselves.

Why was this necessary? Sin had come into the world when Adam disobeyed the one commandment that God had given. He ate of the tree of knowledge but God had planned the cross to save men from their sins.

The rulers, the people and the soldiers all mocked as He suffered, “He saved others, let Him save Himself). This shows the character of man. When someone lives in a way that exposes their failure, they will want to put it out of mind rather than admit to the failure.

2. The Malefactors

What did they Deserve?

What was their Decision?

What was their Destination?

Deserve – They were dying for their sins. We might think that we are better than they, but the Word of God states that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Just like the malefactors, we deserve to die for our sins because the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23). This is not simply the body dying, but eternal punishment for sin (Rev 20:15).

Decision – They both had the same opportunity as everyone who hears the Gospel, but one accepted and one rejected. They knew time was short, but none of us can guarantee what time we have. Now is the time to be saved (2 Cor 6:2).

One used the language of the crowd. He did not believe. He was like the many who call on God in their trouble and then forget Him when the trouble passes.

The other feared God and recognised that he was condemned. He believed that the Lord could save and that He would enter into His kingdom. He fulfilled the condition of Hebrews 11:6. He believed the God is and that God rewards them that seek Him.

Destination - For the second malefactor, there was the promise of a place in Paradise. No one who calls on the Lord will ever be cast out or turned away. For the other, the destination was Hell. This is made clear in Luke 16, where the rich man who had everything in life found himself in Hell after death. In contrast, Lazarus received a reward for his faith.

The challenge comes that, while many might say they will put things right at the end, there is no guarantee of an opportunity. Life can be taken suddenly (Prov 27:1). The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came because sin had separated us from God and He is not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). As when the Lord was crucified, so today, there are only two choices and two destinations. Accept and receive life; reject and face eternal punishment.