SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Luke 23

The Innocent One Crucified — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Every judge in the chapter finds Jesus innocent, and He is crucified anyway — in the place of a murderer, between two criminals, praying for the men who nailed Him there. The Innocent One died for the guilty, and the first man to go with Him into Paradise was a thief who simply asked to be remembered.

00 The Text

LUKE 23 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

3 So Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And He answered him and said, "It is as you say."

4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "I find no guilt in this man."

5 But they kept on insisting, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place."

6 When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

7 And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.

11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

13 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

14 and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.

15 "No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, △ nothing deserving death has been done by Him.

16 "Therefore I will punish Him and ⟲ release Him."

17 [Now he was obliged to ⟲ release to them at the feast one prisoner.]

18 But they cried out all together, saying, "⚠ Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!"

19 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.)

20 Pilate, wanting to ⟲ release Jesus, addressed them again,

21 but they kept on calling out, saying, "⚠ Crucify, crucify Him!"

22 And he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has ⟲ this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and ⟲ release Him."

23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.

24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.

25 And he ⟲ released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but ⚠ he delivered Jesus to their will.

26 When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and 🖉 placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

27 And following Him was a large crowd of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him.

28 But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but 🖉 weep for yourselves and for your children.

29 "For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never nursed.'

30 "Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE MOUNTAINS, 'FALL ON US,' AND TO THE HILLS, 'COVER US.'

31 "For if they do these things 🕒 when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

33 When they came to 🕒 the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

34 But Jesus was saying, "△ Father, forgive them; for ⚠ they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

35 And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, "⚠ He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One."

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to Him, offering Him sour wine,

37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, ⟲ save Yourself!"

38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, "△ THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? ⟲ Save Yourself and us!"

40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?

41 "And we indeed are suffering justly, for ⚠ we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but △ this man has done nothing wrong."

42 And he was saying, "🖉 Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

43 And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, ☆ today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

44 It was now 🕒 about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land 🕒 until the ninth hour,

45 because the sun was obscured; and △ the veil of the temple was torn in two.

46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, △ INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last.

47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "△ Certainly this man was innocent."

48 And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts.

49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man

51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;

52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.

54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.

55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

Marked in the text

- **v4** “I find no guilt in this man” — God — His character & actions
- **v9** “He answered him nothing” — God — His character & actions
- **v12** “Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “I have found no guilt in this man” — God — His character & actions
- **v15** “nothing deserving death has been done by Him” — God — His character & actions
- **v18** “Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas” — Sin / warning
- **v21** “Crucify, crucify Him” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “he delivered Jesus to their will” — Sin / warning
- **v26** “placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus” — Command / instruction
- **v28** “weep for yourselves and for your children” — Command / instruction
- **v31** “when the tree is green” — Time / place / contrast
- **v33** “the place called The Skull” — Time / place / contrast
- **v34** “Father, forgive them” — God — His character & actions
- **v34** “they do not know what they are doing” — Sin / warning
- **v35** “He saved others; let Him save Himself” — Sin / warning
- **v38** “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS” — God — His character & actions
- **v41** “we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds” — Sin / warning
- **v41** “this man has done nothing wrong” — God — His character & actions
- **v42** “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom” — Command / instruction
- **v43** “today you shall be with Me in Paradise” — Promise / blessing
- **v44** “about the sixth hour” — Time / place / contrast
- **v44** “until the ninth hour” — Time / place / contrast
- **v45** “the veil of the temple was torn in two” — God — His character & actions
- **v46** “INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT” — God — His character & actions
- **v47** “Certainly this man was innocent” — God — His character & actions
- **v48** “beating their breasts” — Sin / warning
- **v51** “waiting for the kingdom of God” — Promise / blessing
- **v53** “where no one had ever lain” — Time / place / contrast
- **v56** “on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment” — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** “this man” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v16** “release” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v25** “released” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v35** “save” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v35** “saved” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 23:4

"Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, "△I find no guilt in this man.""

FIGURE · SIX VERDICTS OF INNOCENCE



Read down the left: governor, king, criminal and soldier all say Jesus is innocent — and on the right, the only voice that prevails is the crowd's.

Setting. Friday of Passover week in Jerusalem, from early morning to sunset. The Council brings Jesus to Pilate (v1); Pilate sends Him to Herod Antipas, who is in the city for the feast (v7); Herod sends Him back (v11). Pilate gives way to the crowd (vv24–25). Jesus is led out to "the place called The Skull" (v33), dies at the ninth hour (vv44–46), and is buried in Joseph's rock tomb as the Sabbath begins (vv53–54).

Structure:

- vv1–12 — **Pilate and Herod:** three charges (v2); "Are You the King of the Jews?" — "It is as you say" (v3); "I find no guilt in this man" (v4); sent to Herod, who hopes for a sign and gets no answer (vv7–9); mocked in a gorgeous robe (v11); Herod and Pilate become friends (v12).

- vv13–25 — **Barabbas:** “no guilt … nor has Herod” (vv14–15); “I will punish Him and release Him” (v16); “Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!” (v18); “Crucify, crucify Him!” (v21); the third verdict (v22); their voices prevail (v23); the murderer released, Jesus delivered to their will (v25).
- vv26–31 — **the road:** Simon of Cyrene carries the cross behind Jesus (v26); the women mourning (v27); “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me” (v28); the barren blessed, the mountains and hills (vv29–30); the green tree and the dry (v31).
- vv32–43 — **the cross and the thief:** crucified between two criminals (vv32–33); “Father, forgive them” (v34); rulers, soldiers and an inscription — “save Yourself” (vv35–38); one criminal reviles, the other rebukes him and asks to be remembered (vv39–42); “today you shall be with Me in Paradise” (v43).
- vv44–49 — **darkness and death:** darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour (v44); the veil torn (v45); “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT” (v46); the centurion praises God (v47); the crowds beat their breasts (v48); the women watch from a distance (v49).
- vv50–56 — **the burial:** Joseph of Arimathea, good and righteous, waiting for the kingdom (vv50–51); asks for the body, wraps it, lays it in a new rock tomb (vv52–53); preparation day (v54); the women see the tomb, prepare spices, rest on the Sabbath (vv55–56).

Repeated words, with counts:

- “Pilate” ×10 — vv1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 20, 24, 52; “Herod” ×6 — vv7 (×2), 8, 11, 12, 15.
- “this man” ×9 — vv2, 4, 14 (×2), 18, 22, 41, 47, 52.
- “Jesus” ×9 — vv8, 20, 25, 26, 28, 34, 42, 46, 52.
- “see / saw / seeing / looking / observed” ×8 — vv8 (×3), 35, 47, 48, 49, 55.
- innocence — “no guilt” / “nothing deserving death” / “nothing wrong” / “innocent” ×6 — vv4, 14, 15, 22, 41, 47.
- “release / released” ×6 — vv16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25.
- “people” ×5 — vv5, 13, 14, 27, 35; “crowd(s)” ×3 — vv4, 27, 48.
- “mocking / contempt / sneering / mocked / abuse” ×5 — vv11 (×2), 35, 36, 39.
- “crucify / crucified” ×4 — vv21 (×2), 23, 33.
- “save / saved” ×4 — vv35 (×2), 37, 39.
- “King” ×4 — vv2, 3, 37, 38; “kingdom” ×2 — vv42, 51.
- “God” ×4 — vv35, 40, 47, 51; “Father” ×2 — vv34, 46.
- “Galilee / Galilean” ×4 — vv5, 6, 49, 55; “women” ×3 — vv27, 49, 55.
- “Christ” ×3 — vv2, 35, 39; “chief priests” ×3 — vv4, 10, 13.
- “prison / prisoner” ×3 — vv17, 19, 25; “voice(s)” ×3 — vv23 (×2), 46.
- “Sabbath” ×2 — vv54, 56; “hour” ×2 — v44 (×2); “tomb” ×2 — vv53, 55.

Contrasts: The charges (v2) ⟷ “no guilt” (vv4, 14, 22). Herod’s many questions ⟷ Jesus’ silence (v9). Enemies ⟷ friends that very day (v12). Barabbas, a murderer, released ⟷ Jesus, innocent, delivered (v25). Weep for Me ⟷ weep for yourselves (v28). Green tree ⟷ dry (v31). “Save Yourself” ×3 ⟷ He saves a thief (vv35–43). One criminal reviles ⟷ the other fears God (vv39–40). Noon ⟷ darkness (v44). The Council’s plan ⟷ Joseph, who had not consented (vv50–51).

Shape of the chapter: Two trials, a road, a cross, a death and a grave. The first half is noisy — accusing, shouting, mocking; the second half grows quiet — darkness, a last prayer, linen and spices and Sabbath rest. Through all of it the verdict of "innocent" keeps repeating, from a governor at dawn to a soldier at three in the afternoon.

Chapter theme (my words): Jesus is condemned though every witness calls Him innocent, so that the guilty — Barabbas, the thief, the crowd, and me — could go free. He goes to the cross forgiving, saving and trusting His Father to the end.

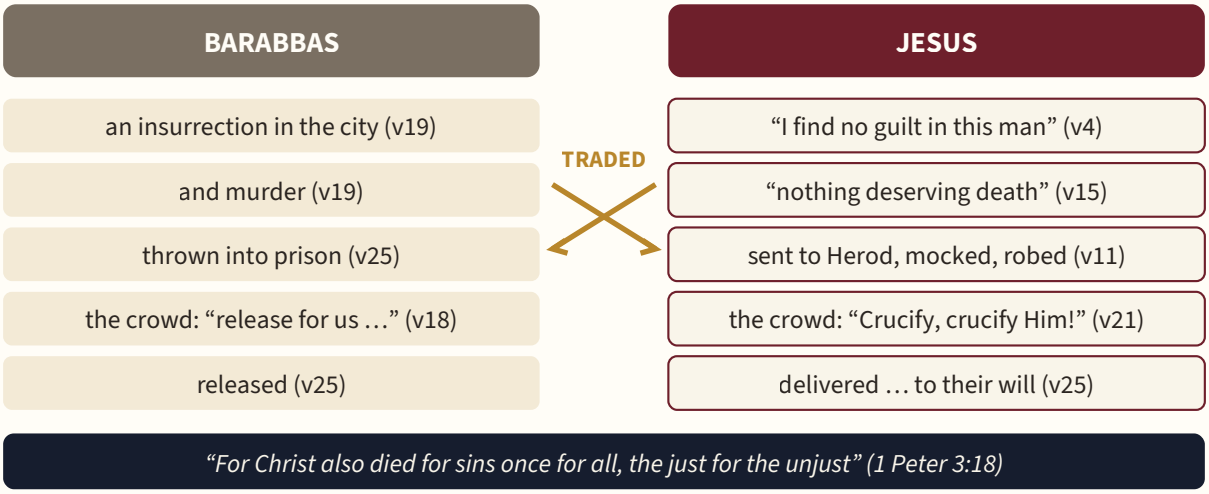
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 23:46

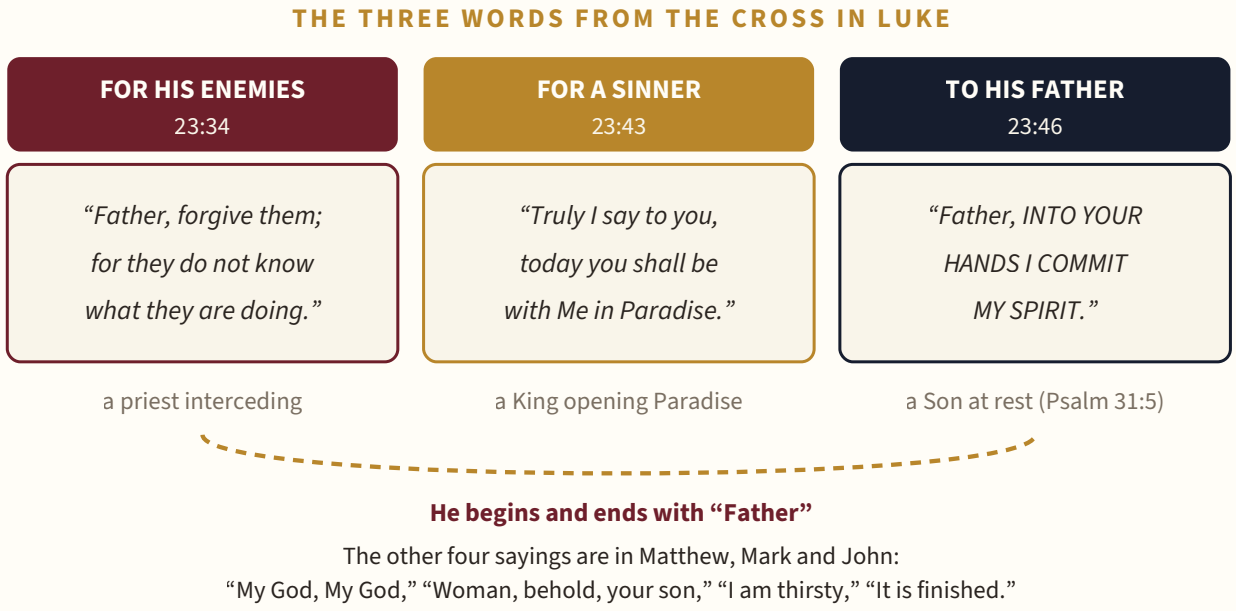
"And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, △ INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." ◷ Having said this, He breathed His last."

FIGURE · THE EXCHANGE



Follow the crossed arrows: the guilty rebel walks out of prison, and the innocent Jesus takes the cross that was waiting for him.

FIGURE · THREE WORDS FROM THE CROSS



Luke records three of Jesus' seven sayings on the cross — one for His enemies, one for a sinner, one to His Father — and two of them begin with "Father."

Why take Jesus to Pilate? Guzik: "The Roman government did not allow the Jewish leaders the authority to execute a criminal." The Council had condemned Him for blasphemy (22:70–71), but before Rome they turned it into treason — misleading the nation, forbidding taxes, claiming to be a king (v2). Sproul on the tax charge: "That was not true" (20:20–25).

Why was Jesus silent before Herod? Herod wanted entertainment, not truth; Sproul pictures him asking for a miracle on demand. Guzik: Herod's interest "was not sincere and was to his condemnation." Henry calls Herod "ringleader in that abuse." Jesus had nothing to say to a man who had silenced John the Baptist (9:9) and wanted only a sign.

Is verse 17 part of Luke? The NASB brackets it because the oldest manuscripts do not have it here. The Passover custom itself is clear from Matthew 27:15, Mark 15:6 and John 18:39, so nothing in the story depends on the verse.

Who was Barabbas, and why does it matter? A rebel and murderer (vv19, 25) whose name means "son of the father" — Sproul: "Ironically, the name meant "son of the father."" Peter preached it later: "you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer" (Acts 3:14). The guilty man went free because the innocent Son took his place. That is substitution in a single scene (1 Peter 3:18).

Why did Pilate give in? Guzik: he "did not find the courage to oppose both the religious leaders and the crowd." Sproul: "the supreme act of cowardice." Henry: Pilate was "sick of the cause." He knew the truth three times over and still let "their voices" prevail (v23).

What do the green and dry trees mean (v31)? Sproul: Jesus is the green wood — "He was not kindling for God's wrath" — and "We are the dry wood." Henry reads it from lesser to greater: if the innocent suffer so, how much worse for the guilty. Guzik and Sproul both see the near fulfillment in Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70. Sproul also

connects verse 30 with Revelation 6:16. I read it both ways: a judgment that fell on Jerusalem then, and a picture of the wrath still to come at the end of the age, before the Lamb returns to reign.

Whom did Jesus forgive in verse 34? He prayed for those crucifying Him. Sproul: "He was acting in intercession as a priest for His tormentors," and their ignorance was real but not innocent (1 Cor 2:8). The prayer was answered in part at Pentecost, when thousands from that same city repented (Acts 2:36–41). Spurgeon: "The Lamb of God was silent to men, but he was not silent to God."

What does the thief teach us? That salvation is by grace through faith, with nothing in our hands. He feared God, owned his guilt, confessed Christ's innocence and asked (vv40–42). Spurgeon: "Never did a poor sinner trust Christ too much." Sproul: "this very day" leaves no room for soul sleep — to be absent from the body is to be with the Lord. Henry adds the warning: "This gives no encouragement to any to put off their repentance to their death-bed."

Why the darkness and the torn veil? Sproul: "God turned out the lights" — darkness means judgment, and the Son bore it. Then "He tore down the sign that said no admittance." Guzik: creation in agony at its Creator's suffering. Henry: the end of the ceremonial law. Hebrews 10:19–20 gives the meaning: we may enter the holy place "through the veil, that is, His flesh."

Did Jesus die as a victim? No. He cried out "with a loud voice" and committed His spirit (v46). Guzik: "No one took His life from Him; He gave it up when His work was finished." Sproul: He committed His spirit to the Father who had just poured out wrath upon Him. Spurgeon: dying, for the believer, is going home.

Why does the burial matter? Sproul: the exaltation begins here — God would not let His Son's body be thrown away. Joseph, a Council member who "had not consented" (v51), gave a new tomb (Isaiah 53:9). Henry: "That evil counsel or deed to which we have not consented shall not be reckoned our act." And the women who watched where He was laid (v55) will be the first at the empty tomb (24:1).

Word study (Greek):

- **guilt — *aition* (G159; Strong's noun G158):** legal ground for a charge; vv4, 14, 22.
- **treating with contempt — *exoutheneō* (G1848):** to make nothing of; v11; Acts 4:11.
- **Barabbas — *Barabbas* (G912):** Aramaic "son of the father."
- **crucify — *stauroō* (G4717):** "Crucify, crucify Him!" (v21).
- **prevail — *katischyō* (G2729):** to overpower; v23.
- **behind — *opisthen* (G3693):** Simon carried it "behind Jesus" (v26; cf. 9:23).
- **green / dry — *hygros* (G5200) / *xēros* (G3584):** v31; *hygros* only here in the NT.
- **forgive — *aphiēmi* (G863):** "Father, forgive them" (v34).
- **sneering — *ekmyktērizō* (G1592):** to turn up the nose; v35.
- **today — *sēmeron* (G4594) / Paradise — *paradeisos* (G3857):** v43; 2 Cor 12:4; Rev 2:7.
- **veil — *katapetasma* (G2665):** v45; Heb 10:20.
- **commit — *paratithēmi* (G3908) / breathed His last — *ekpneō* (G1606):** v46.
- **innocent, righteous — *dikaios* (G1342):** vv47, 50; 1 Pet 3:18.
- **waiting for — *prosdechomai* (G4327) / preparation — *paraskeuē* (G3904):** vv51, 54.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Six witnesses say "innocent"** — vv4, 14, 15, 22, 41, 47.
2. **The charge sheet is empty** — *aition*; "That was not true" (Sproul).
3. **Enemies make friends over Jesus** (v12; Guzik).
4. **A son of the father goes free** — Barabbas (Sproul).
5. **Cowardice is a choice** — Pilate knew and gave in.
6. **The light end of the cross** — Simon walks behind Jesus (Spurgeon).
7. **Love kept Him there** — not nails (Guzik); the covenant of redemption (Sproul).
8. **He prayed for the men driving the nails** (v34).
9. **Today, Paradise** — the thief's date, company and place (v43).
10. **The veil came down from God's side** — no more "no admittance" (Sproul).

Cross-references: Gen 1:3; Exod 26:31–33; Lev 16; Ps 22:18; 31:5; Isa 53:7, 9, 12; Hos 10:8; Matt 27:15, 44; Mark 15:6, 21; Luke 9:9, 23; 20:20–25; 22:37, 70; John 18:39; 19:38–41; Acts 2:36–41; 3:14–15; 7:60; 13:28–29; 1 Cor 2:8; 2 Cor 5:8; 12:4; Heb 10:19–20; 13:12; 1 Pet 3:18; Rev 2:7; 6:16.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 23:43

"And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, ☆today you shall be with Me in Paradise."""

Sin to confess — Pilate in me. Pilate knew the truth and said it three times, and then let the loudest voices win (v23). I have done that — known what was right at work, at home, with the guys, and gone along to keep the peace or keep my standing. I confess it by name. Knowing the truth is not the same as standing on it.

Truth to face — I am Barabbas. Barabbas did not choose to go free; he was in a cell, guilty, and someone else's cross became his door out. That is my story. Many of the men I sit with know exactly what a cell and a sentence feel like. The gospel is not that we were innocent; it is that the Innocent One took our place — "the just for the unjust" (1 Pet 3:18).

Example to follow — Simon, walking behind. Simon did not volunteer, but he carried the cross "behind Jesus" (v26). This week I will pick up the burden in front of me — the hard conversation, the man who needs a ride, the job I don't want — and carry it behind Jesus, remembering that I carry the light end.

Command to obey — forgive as He forgave. Jesus prayed "Father, forgive them" while they were still driving the nails, and they had not said sorry (v34). I name the person I have refused to forgive, and I pray that same prayer for him out loud today, even before my feelings agree.

Promise to trust — "today you shall be with Me in Paradise." The thief brought nothing but a prayer: "Jesus, remember me." Jesus gave him a day, a Companion and a home (v43). No man is too far gone and no record too long. If I trust Him, I will be with Him — and so will any man in my group who asks.

Example to follow — Joseph of Arimathea. He did not consent to the Council's evil, and when everyone else was hiding, he went to Pilate and gave what he had — a tomb (vv50–53). I will ask: what do I have that I can give Jesus, that no one else can?

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and still gave in to the crowd. Where do I know what is right but go along with the loudest voices around me? (23:4, 20–25; Prov 29:25) *Knowing the truth is not the same as standing on it.*
2. Barabbas walked out free because Jesus took his place. What would change in me this week if I really saw myself as Barabbas? (23:18–25; 1 Pet 3:18) *The just for the unjust.*
3. Simon was forced to carry a cross he did not choose. What burden am I carrying that I can carry "behind Jesus"? (23:26; 9:23) *You do but carry the light end of the cross (Spurgeon).*
4. Jesus prayed "Father, forgive them" for men who were not sorry. Who is the person I most need to pray that prayer for? (23:34; Acts 7:60) *He kept on praying it.*
5. The thief had no time to clean up his life — only to fear God, own his guilt and ask. What keeps me from coming to Jesus that simply? (23:40–43) *Never did a poor sinner trust Christ too much (Spurgeon).*

6. Joseph served Jesus in a way no one else could. What can I give Jesus that only I am in a position to give? (23:50–53) *We must serve God in whatever way we can (Guzik).*

Worship. The King of the Jews stood silent before a puppet king, was traded for a murderer, carried a cross until He fell, and then from that cross forgave His killers, opened Paradise to a thief, and handed His spirit to His Father. Six witnesses called Him innocent. He is the Righteous One, the Lamb who tore the veil from God's side, and the Lord who would use a borrowed tomb for only three days.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, I am Barabbas, and You took my place. I am the thief, and I ask You to remember me. Forgive me for the times I knew the truth like Pilate and let the crowd win. Teach me to forgive the way You forgave from the cross, and to carry my cross behind You. Thank You that the veil is torn and I can come home to the Father. Into Your hands I commit my spirit today. Amen.

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