

One Hill, Three Men, Three Crosses, and Us

(I have no idea who produced the basic premise expressed in the title, but the outline below developed from it is mine. PCS)

We've been addressing some "heavy" current event and world-view lessons of late. But I don't want us to forget the theme our Elders have (wisely) chosen for us this year of "Being Filled with Jesus." Previously, we've considered that in order to be "filled with Jesus," we must "empty ourselves" of everything else. We also examined His interaction with the various *political* and *religious groups* of His day to better understand how we should do likewise. While there are various aspects of *who* and *what* He was/is that can be comprehended through His *virgin birth, physical and spiritual life, sacrificial death, miraculous resurrection, glorious ascension, and continual intercession* on our behalf, perhaps nothing tells us more about Jesus than the cross. Those momentous hours reveal so much about Him, mankind generally, and ourselves specifically. This is so because on that hill that day, not only was the *perfect sacrifice* revealed in Jesus the Christ, but also man's need for it, and reaction to it.

On that day, there was *one hill*, but *three crosses* and *three men*, Luke 23:26-33

- **One man cursed, v.39.** The marginal reading is "*blaspheming*"- which is to *speak against, to deny the power or authority of, to speak evil of*. This man wasn't just *cursing* his own situation- he was "*hurling abuse*" at "*the Christ*" by denying His power to save, Luke 19:10.
- **One man prayed, vv.39-42.** Prayer requires *faith* that *understands* and *believes*, Jas.1:6-7. This man *believed in Jesus*, and *understood* (at least in part) that death was not the *end*, but merely the *beginning* of Jesus' eternal *kingdom*, cf. 1Cor.15:19-20.
- **One man promised, v.43.** *Paradise* (cf. 2Cor.12:4) is part of the *Hades* (*realm of the dead*, or place of *departed spirits* awaiting eternal judgment, cf. Rev.20:13). It is also called "*Abraham's bosom*" in Luke 16:22. Jesus' *spirit*, after death (cf. Jas.2:26), went thus to "*Hades*" (not *hell/Gehenna*, cf. Acts 2:27), but the portion of it called *Paradise* or *Abraham's bosom* rather than "*torment*" (cf. Luke 16:23-24) to await the *resurrection* of His body wherein His *spirit* rejoined it, was *glorified* (made ready for *heaven*, cf. Phil.3:21), and *ascended* back to heaven. *Paradise* was thus *promised* to the *penitent thief*.

As a result:

- **One man died condemned, vv.32,39-41a.** He could have been *forgiven* for *blaspheming* the *Son of Man*, cf. Luke 12:10, if he had only *repented*, cf. Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30-31.
- **One man died forgiven, v.43.** Jesus, as *God*, before *incarnation*, cf. John 5:58; during *incarnation*, cf. Matt.9:6; and after *incarnation*, cf. Heb.7:24-25; had the *authority to forgive sins*, and He did so on this occasion, John 1:12.
- **One man died innocent, vv.13-25; 1Pet.2:22; 2Cor.5:21.** For God's eternal plan of redemption to be brought to full fruition, Jesus had to be *sinless*- the *unblemished Lamb of God*, sacrificed as *propitiation* (the *redemptive price paid*) for the sins of the world, cf. Rom.6:23.

Because:

- **One man died *in sin*, cf. John 8:21,24.** Everyone, because of sin (Rom.3:23) becomes spiritually *dead in sin*, cf. Eph.2:1. But one does not have to remain in that condition- one can become “*made... alive together with Christ*” by God’s *grace* and *our faith*, Eph.2:5-10. The real question is whether we *die* (physically) *in sin* or “*in the Lord*,” Rev.14:13; cf.1Thess.4:16. This thief did NOT die “*in the Lord*,” but “*in sin*”!
- **One man died *to sin*, Rom.6:2,11.** Given the information in the previous paragraph, we can easily see the comparison between dead *in sin* and dead *to sin* with these two dying men as they hung upon their crosses, cf. Gal.2:20!
- **One man died *for everyone’s sin*, Heb.2:14-17; John 1:29; 2Cor.5:20b-21.** Jesus was born as a *man* for the express *purpose* of *dying* for the sins of the world, cp. John 1:21 with John 12:27.

Therefore:

- **One man was *held by death*, Rom.8:13a.** His *fear* of it was well-placed for *death* signaled only eternal damnation for him, cf. Heb.2:14. He was thus *held* by death’s power over those destined for “*the second death*” of hell, Rev.20:6.
- **One man was *released by death*, Rom.8:13b-14.** For him, death was not an *end*, but a *graduation* to a *new/everlasting beginning*, 1Cor.15:55-57; Rom.8:37.
- **One man *conquered death*, Rom.8:15-17.** He did so *once for all* and *once for all time*, Heb.7:27; 9:25-28.

Conclusion:

- **One man *lost life*, Matt.16:25a.** What about you- will you *lose your soul* because you valued and sought to *save your life*?
- **One man *gained life*, Matt.16:25b.** Again, what about you- are you willing to *save your soul* by *losing your life*?
- **One man *was life*, Matt.16:21-24,26-28.** Jesus, by His part in the *original creation* (cf. Col.1:16), provided *physical* life to mankind; but by His death, He provided the opportunity for *spiritual* life to mankind, John 11:25.

What about *us*? What about *you*?

- You can’t be “*saved like the thief on the cross*” for he lived under a different dispensation and Law. Jesus, on the basis of this man’s faith in Him, forgave His sins. But after Jesus’ *death, burial, and resurrection*, a new dispensation and Law commenced (cf. Heb.9:11-17), and Jesus commanded that “*He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved*,” Mark 16:16.
- We all know we’re not Jesus, but which *other man* are you? And just as importantly, which *other man* will you become and be when you die?
- To be truly *filled with Jesus*, we must not only know who He is, we must also know who we are, and who we can become through Him!