**Thief on the Cross - M. Wade & David Riggs - 01/31/2021 (01/01/00 - TV - DR & MCW)**

In this lesson we will be studying about the most notorious thief of history. One might be thinking of Jesse James, Billy the kid, Bonnie and Clyde, Dillinger, Al Capone, or some other. However, the thief we want to consider is the one from 2000 years ago, who is, really, the best known thief of all times - the thief on the cross.

Many disciples of Christ who have engaged in conversations with religious people on the Biblical subject of conversion, have been asked, ***"What about the thief on the Cross?"***

**I. WHAT DO THE SCRIPTURES REVEAL REGARDING THE THIEF (OR ROBBER) ON THE CROSS?**

**A. Information about this man is found in three of the four Gospels** (**Matthew 27:38-44; Mark 15:27-32; Luke 23:33, 39-43**).

1. Luke's account relates the most information.

2. Matthew and Mark's account indicates that at first both the thieves where engaged in reproaching Christ (**Matthew 27:44, Mark 15:32**). However, from Luke's account we see that one of the thieves had a change of heart and made a plea to the Lord (**Luke 23:40-41**).

3. In response to the statement made to Christ by the thief in **Luke 23:42**, Christ responded with this statement in **Luke 23:43**.

**B. To what place did Jesus and the thief go that day?**

1. The original word that is translated "paradise" is defined as: "That part of Hades which is thought to be the abode of the souls of the pious until the resurrection." (Thayer).

2. In **Acts 2:27, 31**, we read of Christ after His death going to Hades, to the spirit World, the place where disembodied spirits go." According to **Luke 16:19 -31**, "Hades" has three places: (1) A place of comfort. This corresponds to Paradise. (2) A place of torment. This corresponds to "Tartarus" of **2 Peter 2:4**. (3) A great gulf (there is no passing from either place).

3. We can see that when Christ went to Hades, He went to Paradise. On the day of Christ's death, the thief was going to Paradise with Christ and to be comforted with the righteous of the ages.

**II. LET US CAREFULLY CONSIDER THE ARGUMENT THAT IS MADE REGARDING THE THIEF.**

**A. The argument that is often made regarding the thief is: "I can be saved without being baptized because the thief was saved without being baptized." There are at least three false assumptions made regarding this argument:**

**1. Some assume that the thief was never baptized (Mark 1:4-5, Luke 7:29-20, John 4:1-2**). The question is, is it possible that he could have been baptized? I am not saying this is certain, only that he could have been. No one knows for sure whether or not the thief was baptized; some "assume" that he wasn't. What is truly sad is that some base their salvation on something which is assumed.

**2. Some assume they can be saved exactly like the thief.** For one to be saved exactly as the thief, he must be on a cross along with the dying Savior, and have Jesus say to him, "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise." Of course, Jesus is not here today, and such could never be done. While Jesus was alive on earth, He had the power to give His Spiritual blessings to any as He saw fit. For example, Jesus often personally forgave sins: (a) **Mark 2:1-12** - The paralytic who was carried by four others and let down through the roof; (b) **Luke 7:36-50** - The woman who washed Jesus' feet; (c) Consider what Jesus said to the rich young ruler (**Mark 10:17-21**). Jesus did not require the rich young ruler to be baptized, at least, not at this time. ***Why don't people want to be saved like the rich young ruler?*** The point is that Jesus, during His personal ministry, granted God's blessings to several individuals upon various conditions, and the thief was one of them. What Jesus did for the thief, and others, has nothing to do with our salvation.

**3. Some assume that today they are under the same Law the thief was under.** (1) **Hebrews 7:12** shows there was a change in the Law. (2) **Hebrews 9:16-17** tells us when Christ's Law went into effect. (3) Paul said in **Romans 7:4** we have become dead to the Law. (4) We are now under the "everlasting covenant" (**Hebrews 13:20**). God will not change the conditions of the "everlasting covenant" that requires all to repent and be baptized. In the light of this, what does the argument "the thief was saved without being baptized" prove? Neither was Abraham, Moses, David, or any of the O.T. prophets baptized.

The New Testament of Jesus Christ established after his death on the cross, teaches that all must be baptized to be saved. (1) Jesus said (**Mark 16:16**) (2) We must be baptized in order to receive remission of sins, to have the new life, and to have a clear conscience (**Acts 2:38, 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:21**).

**III. CONCLUSIONS**

A. It is not wise to base one's entire Salvation on the assumption that one can be saved like the thief. Prior to the death of Christ, the Old Law was still in effect, but after His death, the New Law became binding upon all men. What we need to do is humbly obey from the heart what Jesus has commanded us.

B. If one can make the argument, "I can be saved without being baptized because the thief was saved without being baptized," why can't I argue: "I can be saved without attending services, because the thief never attended services." "I can be saved without partaking of the Lord's Supper, because the thief never partook of the Lord's Supper." "I can be saved without giving on the first day of the week, because the thief never gave on the first day of the week."

C. When one becomes a disciple of Christ in the N.T., one obeys the command to be baptized to wash away their sins. The question is, will I be like the Pharisees and Lawyers who rejected the will of God in not being baptized (**Luke 7:29-30**) or will I be as the early disciples who obeyed the Lord in baptism (**Galatians 3:26-27**)?

***Maybe a Christian?* Are you striving to humble yourself to the Lord's will every day? Satan gives us many opportunities to make excuses to disobey His will.**

***Maybe you are not a Christian?* If you want to one day be comforted in Paradise, the Lord commands that all repent and be baptized to wash away their sins. No better time than now to make the most important decision for good you will ever make!**