



The Cross Luke 23:26-56

Introduction

The hour for which Jesus was born had arrived. The Lamb of God, prepared before the foundation of the world, must be sacrificed for your sin and mine, and the sin of the world. From this point on, history has divided itself into two periods: before and after the cross. From this point on, until the end of time, there would be a Way, Truth, and Life, for any or all, to take, for it is freely given. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross provided a never-failing fountain from which all may drink and be satisfied. The cross is a place where sins are forgiven, a place where God did not spare His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all so that *whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life* (John 3:16).

Outline of Luke 23:26-56

- I. People Along the Way to the Cross - Luke 23:26-32
- II. The Scene at the Cross - Luke 23:33-46
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I. People Along the Way to the Cross - Luke 23:26-32

- A. Simon of Cyrene - Luke 23:26; Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21

Cyrene was a port city in North Africa, founded by Greeks and inhabited by many Jews. It was a beautiful city, sitting eighteen hundred feet high on a tableland. The Cyrenians had a synagogue in Jerusalem (Acts 6:9) and Simon was there to celebrate the Passover. As he came into the city, a Roman guard commandeered him out of the crowd to carry Jesus' cross. Carrying the blood stained cross disqualified him from eating the Passover but earned him a place in the sacred record. He evidently became a believer for he is named as the father of Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21), brothers known to the church in Rome. Rufus is mentioned by the apostle Paul (Romans 16:13).

Taking up your cross, as Jesus said to do (Luke 9:23), may cost you dearly and cause you to miss out on many things, but it will also provide blessings beyond any earthly joys that you may desire. And it will open the way for others to know the Lord.

- B. Daughters of Jerusalem - Luke 23:27-30

And a great multitude of the people followed Him,

and women who also mourned and lamented Him. Commentator George Williams says, "No woman is mentioned as having spoken against the Lord, or as having a part in His death. On the contrary, He was anointed by a woman for His burial; women were the last at His grave and first at His sepulcher; Pilate's wife interceded for Him, He announced His resurrection first to a woman, and women were the first to proclaim the resurrection" (The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures).

The women of Jerusalem are distinguished from the women of Galilee (23:49). The latter were personally acquainted with Jesus while the former were not and were like professional mourners who, in eastern style, followed crucifixions and funeral processions. They offered what comfort they could to Jews dying by crucifixion, a death so horrible it was forbidden as a judgment upon Roman citizens. Jesus told these women not to mourn for Him. Theirs was a shallow cultural kind of mourning, and it would be better to mourn for themselves and their children who would be caught in the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. "*For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?*" He was the green wood (unspoiled, vigorous, and a source of life) and Israel's corrupt expression of religion was the dry (old, barren, and ready for judgment). Like an old wine skin, it was soon to be tossed away. Then the women would have plenty to mourn from the depths of their souls.

How sincere are your emotions? Are they wasted on trivia such as meaningless movies and television? Or are they related to reality and responsive to the real drama of life? Will you please ask God to make you real?

- C. The Two Thieves - Luke 23:32

There were also two criminals, led with Jesus to be put to death. The contrast between these two who were guilty as charged and the innocent Son of God was not apparent to the casual observer. He was *numbered with the transgressors* (Isaiah 53:12; Mark 15:28). He who was sinless was identified with sinners. They were seen as three condemned men trudging up the hill to their deaths on a day when Jerusalem was festive and thronged with people. It was one more diversion for the holiday crowd.

Paul wrote of the Lord, *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a*

servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:5-8).

He became like you so you might become like Him. To what extent are you allowing God to transform your life into the image of His Son? In what ways are you resisting and holding on to your rebellious ideas and sinful ways? What selfish pleasures and treasures do you place before your true treasure, Jesus Christ?

II. The Scene at the Cross - Luke 23:33-46

A. Lifted Up to Die - Luke 23:33-38

1. Calvary - Luke 23:33; Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; John 19:17

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Only Luke, writing to Gentiles, gives the Latin name Calvary. The others give the Hebrew name Golgotha, meaning "The Place of the Skull".

2. Jesus' first words from the cross - Luke 23:34

"Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do." Jesus asked for God's mercy on the soldiers who nailed Him to the cross. They were merely doing their duty. It was a routine assignment. Jesus *made intercession for the transgressors* (Isaiah 53:12). There are many things we do not think of as sin, or we make excuses that someone else made us do it. But God is offended and His forgiveness is needed. Do you search your heart for unrecognized transgressions that you easily excuse but which offend God and block His blessing in your life? Some examples are hidden anger, gossip, self-indulgence, pride, laziness, hatred, and selfishness.

3. Sedative refused - Matthew 27:34; Mark 15:23

Jesus was given sour wine mingled with gall to drink. But when He had tasted it, He would not drink. A sedative was offered to the condemned to show the mercy of Rome, but when Jesus realized what it was He refused it so that His mind would be clear to do the work God had ordained for Him.

4. Garments taken - Luke 23:34; Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; John 19:23-24

Soldiers were not paid well. Many were mercenaries who served only for a paycheck rather than the glory

of Rome. A bonus the Romans gave was allowing them to keep the clothing and possessions of condemned criminals. Their belongings could be divided among the soldiers on duty. All Jesus had were undergarments, sandals, and His seamless robe that had been woven for Him. Rather than tear it, they gambled for it, fulfilling Psalm 22:18, *They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.* The Savior and Lord of the universe hung naked on the cross, stripped for our sakes, that we might be forever clothed with His righteousness (Job 29:14; Isaiah 61:10; Luke 15:22; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

5. Mocking and ridicule - Luke 23:35-37; Matthew 27:39-44; Mark 15:29-32

a. The crowd - Matthew 27:39-40

Criminals on the cross were not objects of sympathy. Rome prided itself on being fair and objective, but justice, once decided, was swift and harsh. Sentenced malefactors were mocked and ridiculed as public enemies. Jesus was scorned by the Gentiles and despised by the leaders of the Jews. *Those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"*

b. The Sanhedrin - Matthew 27:41-43

Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if he will have Him."

c. The soldiers - Luke 23:36

And the soldiers also mocked him, coming and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself."

d. The thieves - Luke 23:39-43; Matthew 27:44

At first, both thieves also reviled Jesus in the same way. Then only one continued to rail at Him, *"If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."* He could have saved Himself by coming down from the cross. It took more effort for Him to stay on it. But He would not have fulfilled His purpose, and no one would have eternal life. Satan was behind all these challenges to come down from the cross (Matthew 16:23). He had tried to get Jesus to bypass the cross all along. Satan still hates the cross as well as teaching about it, for it was at the cross that he was defeated.

6. The inscription - Luke 23:38; Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; John 19:19-22

Attached to each cross was the crime for which the person had been condemned. Above Jesus' head was an inscription written by Pilate himself in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. These were the languages of government, pagan culture, and religion. They came together at the cross. By piecing together the incomplete statements in each gospel, the inscription read, THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. The Romans were amused that they could crucify an unlikely looking king, and the Jewish leaders were incensed that Pilate gave Jesus this title. They asked him to change it by adding, "He said, I am King of the Jews," but Pilate stood firm. "What I have written, I have written" (John 19:21-22). Did Pilate feel uneasy that Jesus might have been a king? Is Jesus your King? Do you refuse to participate in any mocking of Jesus or the Bible?

B. Jesus' Work on the Cross - Luke 23:39-46

1. The dying thief - Luke 23:39-43; Matthew 27:44; Mark 15:27; John 19:18

The second thief fell silent, but then rebuked the first thief, "*Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.*" Then he said to Jesus, "*Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.*"

2. Second words from the cross - Luke 23:43

Jesus must have felt satisfied in the midst of His suffering, for this thief was the first convert to a crucified Lord. *He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied (Isaiah 53:11)*. His second statement from the cross was, "*Assuredly, I say to you, today, you will be with Me in Paradise.*" This speaks of a real place and of conscious life after death, *Absent from the body, present with the Lord* (2 Corinthians 5:8). Paradise is a Persian term meaning "a garden". It came to mean the place of God. The apostle Paul made reference to it in 2 Corinthians 12:4.

3. Third statement from the cross - John 19:26-27

There was a little oasis of love in that desert of hate, for standing by the cross were Jesus' mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, John, and another Mary, the wife of Cleopas. (Could this have been the couple on the Emmaus road? See Luke 24:18.) Jesus wanted His mother to be cared for by believers, not by His brothers who did not yet believe, so He gave her into John's care. "*Woman, behold your son!*" To John, His disciple, "*Behold your mother.*" In this way both would be comforted.

4. The last three hours - Luke 23:44-45; Matthew 27:45; Mark 15:25-33

a. Darkness

Jesus was nailed to the cross at nine in the morning and hung there for six hours until three in the afternoon. He was busy during the morning hours taking care of the people around Him, despite the awful physical and emotional pain so graphically described in Psalm 22. At noon, light faded and darkness crept over the whole land in an unusual eclipse of the sun. The crowd quieted nervously in the eerie light as a veil of darkness was drawn across the intense spiritual battle being waged.

b. Spiritual battle

Jesus was locked in mortal combat with the prince of darkness and all his forces of evil. Jesus had lived a perfect life from birth and had fulfilled all Scripture relating to His first coming. He was the flawless Lamb of God willingly offered up, and Satan threw everything he had against Him in a final effort to undo Him.

c. Offering for sin

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed (Isaiah 53:10). Jesus now became unclean for the first time in His life. He was the sin-bearer, Azazel, the scapegoat which bore the sins of the people into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:8). He was feeling the guilt and weight of every sin you ever committed or will commit along with the sins of every other human being who has ever lived or will live. He felt horror and loneliness as God His Father had to turn away from Him.

- d. Fourth statement from the cross - Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34

No wonder He cried out, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me*" (Psalm 22:1)? Nothing and no one has ever been as godforsaken as Jesus was at that moment.

- e. Fifth statement from the cross - Mark 15:35-36; John 19:28-29

Knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, Jesus said, "*I thirst.*" So someone ran and filled a sponge with vinegar, put it on a reed and held it to His lips to drink. He had two more things to say and His mouth was dry and parched from the sun and suffering (see Psalm 69:21). He had lost bodily fluids, perspired profusely, His lips were cracked, His tongue thickened, fever ravaged His body,

and His inflamed vocal cords became raspy. (See The Life and Times of Jesus, Hershel Hobbs).

f. Sixth statement from the cross - Matthew 27:50; John 19:30

After Jesus received the vinegar, He was able to cry with a loud voice, "*It is finished.*" It is just one word in the Greek, "Tetelestai".

5. Jesus' last words from the cross - Luke 23:46; Matthew 27:46-50; Mark 15:34-37; John 19:28-30

It was over. Our redemption was paid for, so He bowed His head and voluntarily yielded up His spirit, saying in a loud voice, "*Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit*" (Psalm 31:5). They could not kill Him. No one could take His life from Him, but He could yield it up by an act of His will.

III. Events After the Cross - Luke 23:47-56

A. Extraordinary Phenomena

1. Veil rent - Luke 23:45; Matthew 27:51

With the perfect sacrifice offered, the veil in the Temple, which separated the Holy of Holies from the holy place was torn from top to bottom. This veil was sixty feet long and twenty feet wide, the thickness of a man's hand, made of seventy-two squares joined together. It took many priests to lift it and would have been humanly impossible to tear from the bottom up, let alone from the top down. The way into the Holy of Holies was open.

2. Earthquake - Matthew 27:51-54

Matthew alone mentions the earthquake. It could have been that which shook the Temple and tore the veil, though it was more likely God's hand from above. However, it did open a few graves in the area. The contemporary Jewish historian, Josephus, mentions a quaking of the Temple forty years before it was destroyed, which would have been A.D. 30.

3. Graves opened - Matthew 27:53

Matthew tells us that after Jesus' resurrection, bodies rose from those graves, and the revived people went into the holy city and appeared to many. Presumably they died again and were not permanently resurrected.

B. The centurion - Luke 23:47; Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39

The converted Jewish thief on the cross was joined by

the Roman centurion. When the centurion saw what was happening, he glorified God, saying, "*Truly, this was the Son of God.*" All the centurions in the New Testament were exceptional, honorable men. This one in charge of the crucifixion was also. He considered the evidence and came to the correct conclusion. Jesus of Nazareth was innocent! He was what He claimed to be! The three synoptic gospels record the centurion's testimony.

C. Galilean Women - Luke 23:49; Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:40

The Galilean women who ministered to Jesus in His life were faithful to Him in His death and lingered at the cross, as all three synoptic gospels record.

D. Burial - Luke 23:50-53; Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; John 19:31-42

1. Breaking the legs

The Jews asked Pilate to have the legs of the criminals broken because the evening of a special Sabbath was approaching and it was against their law to leave bodies exposed over night. Pilate so ordered, and the soldiers carried out the order for the two thieves. But Jesus was already dead so they did not break His legs. *Not a bone of Him shall be broken* (Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20).

2. Jesus pierced with a spear

One of the soldiers thrust his spear into Jesus' side and immediately blood and water flowed out. John witnessed this and in his gospel he quotes Zechariah 12:10, *They will look on Me whom they have pierced.*

3. Joseph of Arimathea - Luke 23:50-54

And behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to Jesus' death.

a. Waiting for the kingdom of God

Who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. Unlike the other Jewish leaders, Joseph of Arimathea was seeking a spiritual kingdom, not a material, political kingdom. John says he was *a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews* (John 19:38). Joseph and Nicodemus were of the same mind.

b. Asked for the body of Jesus

Joseph was not afraid to go to Pilate and boldly ask for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that Jesus was already dead (Mark 15:43-44) and asked for verification from the centurion in charge. Having received it, he

gave the body to Joseph. After this, Pilate's career plummeted. Tradition says he committed suicide by jumping from a mountain in Switzerland subsequently named Mt. Pilatus.

c. Laid the body in a tomb

Joseph, with the help of Nicodemus who had gone to Jesus by night (John 3), carefully took Jesus' body down from the cross, bound it in linen cloths with spices, wound a clean linen cloth around to secure it, and laid Him in a garden tomb which had never been used. After the Sabbath ended, the women would care for Jesus' body properly.

E. Sabbath preparation - Luke 23:54-56

The Sabbath following the Passover would be a high Sabbath. The women from Galilee took note of the tomb where Jesus was laid. Then they returned home

to prepare the spices and fragrant oils for a proper burial. They would rest on the Sabbath according to the law. Soon they would understand that grace had come and they were no longer under the law. However, that would be after Jesus' resurrection.

Applications

Those who loved Jesus showed their love by serving Him. The apostle John took Jesus' mother into his home to care for her. Joseph of Arimathea boldly faced Pilate to obtain custody of Jesus' body. He and Nicodemus lovingly removed the body of Christ from the cross and gently wrapped it in linen and spices. Joseph even provided his own tomb. The women of Galilee carefully prepared more spices, with plans to attend to Jesus' body when the Sabbath was over. How can you serve the Lord with courage, care, and respect as these people did? How can you show your love for Him?

QUESTIONS

Questions are based on the New King Version of the Bible.

DAY ONE: Read lesson notes and references.

1. Which of the crucifixion details were new or meaningful to you?

On the way to the cross

On the cross

After the Cross

2. In what way did Jesus' death seem more personal to you than it has before?

3. How would you explain to someone (such as a neighbor or a child) exactly why Jesus had to die?

DAY TWO: Read Luke 24:1-5; Mtatthew 28:1-4; Mark 16:2-6; John 20:1.

4. a. How long did the women wait to return to the garden tomb?

b. What day was it?

5. a. What did they take with them? Why?

b. Did they think Jesus had risen? Give reasons for your answer.

6. a. What problem did they expect to have?

b. Why did they not have that problem?

7. a. What did they see at the tomb?

b. What did they see in the tomb? What did they not see?

DAY THREE: Read Luke 24:6-11; Matthew 28:5-8; Mark 16:7-8.

8. a. What reminder did the angel give the women?
 - b. ? (Thought Question) Do you think this could mean we will be held accountable for what we are taught? Explain your answer.
9. a. What did the angel tell the women to do?
 - b. Did they do it? What was the response?
 - c. Who were the women?
10. Describe their emotions? Give verses.

DAY FOUR: Read Luke 24:12; John 20:2-10.

11. a. Who ran to the tomb to see for themselves?
 - b. Who got there first?
 - c. Who went in first?
12. a. What did Peter think about the linen cloths?
 - b. What did John think about the linen cloths?
 - c. What kind of evidence do you think the linen cloths gave?

DAY FIVE: Read Luke 24:13-33; Matthew 28:9-10; Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18.

13. To whom did Jesus appear first after He was resurrected?
14. a. What did He tell her not to do? Why?
 - b. What did He tell her to do? Did she do it?
 - c. What was the result? Give verse.
15. From Matthew 28:9-10, what did Jesus tell the women to do?

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16. a. What were the two on the Emmaus road talking about when Jesus joined them?
- b. Describe their thoughts and emotions.
- c. How did Jesus contribute to the conversation?
- d. According to Jesus, what is the Old Testament all about?
17. a. What caused Jesus' hosts to recognize Him?
- b. How did they describe their feelings?
- c. ♥(Heart Question) Have you ever felt that way about the Scriptures? If so, will you share it with your discussion group?

DAY SIX: Read Luke 24:25-53.

18. a. With whom did the Emmaus couple share their experience?
- b. To whom had Jesus already appeared?
19. a. What proof did Jesus offer the disciples that He had risen in the same body?
- b. What proof did He offer that He was really alive as a human being?
20. a. From Luke 24:44-45, what did Jesus help them understand?
- b. From Luke 24:46-48, what did He want them to do with this knowledge?
- c. What were they to wait for before doing it?
- d. Are you able to do this immediately today? Explain.
21. a. What happened while Jesus was blessing His disciples?
- b. What was their reaction?