

Luke Study 18

Lk 23:26-56

Introduction

Having been tried and convicted, Jesus is now executed. From the outside, this seems like the end for Jesus. The man who has saved people now can't even save himself. But Jesus is still in control. Those who kill him and think they've gotten away with it will actually still be punished. And those who ask Jesus to save them can still actually be saved. The question is: how will we respond to Jesus?

Read 23:26-31

1. As Jesus walks to the site of his execution, what do the women walking alongside him do?
2. What does Jesus tell them to do instead? Why?
3. Read 13:34-35 and 21:20-24. How does this make sense of what Jesus says here? What will the fate of Jerusalem be?

As Jesus walks to the site of his execution, the women walking alongside him start wailing and mourning for him. But Jesus says they should instead weep for themselves and their children. He has already said that, because of the way Jerusalem has treated God's prophets in the past and now God's Son (13:34-35), God will judge Jerusalem by destroying it (21:20-24). That will be a particularly bad time for pregnant women and nursing mothers (21:23), so much so they will wish they were childless. In fact, even childless women will wish they were dead (23:30): that is how bad the destruction of Jerusalem will be. Because as Jesus says, if this is what the Romans do to Israel now - kill its king while the king is still alive ('when the tree is green'), just imagine what they will do when the king is dead ('when the tree is dry') (23:31). Yet that will be Jerusalem's punishment for rejecting God and his king, Jesus. In short, Jesus may seem out of control of his situation - he is walking to his own crucifixion, after all - but his enemies won't get away with what they are doing. This is all within God's control, and they will be punished.

Read 23:32-39

4. Who else is crucified with Jesus?
5. Once Jesus is on the cross, who mocks him?
6. Jesus said that he had come to 'save the lost' (19:10). What is the mockery's common theme? How does it seem to repudiate Jesus' claim?

Once Jesus is up on the cross, everyone mocks him: the people, the soldiers, the sign over his head, even one of the criminals crucified next to him. And their theme is consistent: 'He saved others, but he can't even save himself' (23:35, 37, 39). For someone who said his mission was to 'save' people, the cross seems like the definitive blow: surely Jesus has failed.

But Jesus doesn't seem to think so. He offers someone entry to heaven that very day.

Read 23:40-43

7. What does the criminal think he deserves?
8. What does he ask Jesus to give him?
9. How does Jesus respond?

One of the criminals recognises he deserves to die, but nevertheless asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. And Jesus says he will! The criminal will be with him in paradise. How can Jesus promise this? He can't even move his hands at the moment; how can he open the gates of heaven? How can he save anyone? We're about to see.

Read 23:44-46

10. At noon, what happens to the sky?
11. Read Amos 8:9. Looking at the surrounding verses, what is this a sign of in Amos? What does it tell us is happening on the cross?
12. What happens to the temple curtain? What do you think this means?
13. What is the last thing Jesus does?

At noon the sun stops shining for three hours, bringing darkness over the land. This is not just an astronomical event, but a theological one. Speaking about God pouring out his punishment for sin, Amos says this will be the sign it is happening: *"In that day," declares the sovereign Lord, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight."* (Amos 8:9) This is exactly what we see while Jesus is dying. He has already said he will 'drink the cup' of God's wrath for sin (22:42) and that his death will be 'for' us (22:19, 20). Now, we see him doing it: the sky darkens as a sign that God is pouring out his wrath for human sins on Jesus instead of us. He is taking the judgment of God.

And the result? Access to God for sinners. In the temple, an enormous curtain separated 'the Most Holy Place' - a room at the centre of the temple representing God's presence - from the rest of the temple and from people. It was a sign that sinful people could not approach a holy God without adequate sacrifice. And yet, as Jesus dies, and God's wrath for

sin is poured out on him, the temple curtain tears in two. It is a symbol that, because of Jesus' sacrifice, human sin has now been paid for and people can have access to God.

This is incredible news. But the question is: will people accept this new access to God?

Read 23:47-56

14. How do different people respond to Jesus' death?

- a. 23:47
- b. 23:48
- c. 23:49, 55-56
- d. 23:50-54

15. How ought we respond?

Jesus came to save people, and he died. But his death wasn't a failure for this mission, but its success. On the cross, Jesus took the wrath of God, for us, in our place, and that gave us access to God. All that remains is to respond in the right way: to recognise our sin, ask for forgiveness, and ask if we can be with Jesus in his kingdom, just like the criminal on the cross. And because of the cross, Jesus' answer will always be the same: yes, you can be with me in paradise.