

## THREE CROSSES AND TWO CHOICES

Luke 23:32-43

### **Introduction:**

A. Easter is the annual celebration of the fact that Christ is risen from the dead – the resurrection of Christ from the grave. Easter means that our greatest enemy, called death, has been defeated. For the Christian, Easter means that our sins are forgiven, and we are made right with God.

- “<sup>3</sup>For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; <sup>4</sup>And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor 15:3-4).

B. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation and crowning proof of Christianity. Apart from Christ’s bodily resurrection, we have no Savior, no forgiveness of Sin and no hope of Salvation.

C. All of us have sinned – “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). However, we are divided when it comes to sin – some have the penalty of sin resting on them; others, by grace, have shifted their sin over to Christ. The great question is this:

- **Is your sin on You or on Christ who paid its penalty?**

D. Over 2,000 years ago, on the hill of Calvary, three men died by crucifixion on three separate crosses that were aligned in a row. One man died **In** Sin, One man died **To** Sin and One man died **For** Sin. As we celebrate Easter, think about the three men. The man who died **In** Sin and the man who died **To** Sin – describe the eternal destiny (choices) of mankind. The man in the middle who died **For** Sin is the source of eternal life. The same is true and occurring today.

### **I. The Cross of Rejection (vv. 34-39)**

**A. The malefactors, people and religious leaders heard Christ’s prayer** (v. 34).

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

**B. The people and religious leaders ridiculed Jesus** (vv. 35-36)

“He saved others; let Him save Himself, If He be Christ, the chosen of God ... If thou be the King of the Jews, save thyself”

**C. The superscription affixed to the Cross of Jesus** (v. 38)

“THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS”

**D. This thief died in Sin** (v. 39)

- **Railed** – to slander, insult or speak evil against – abusive language, refuse to acknowledge
- There are many people in the world today who are identical to this man. They live their lives in sin and reject Jesus Christ. They do not have anything to do with Jesus. They make fun of Christ and His followers. They reject Jesus as Savior.

## **II. The Cross of Repentance (vv. 40-45)**

This thief died to sin. He believed on Christ's name in faith, so Jesus saved Him.

**A.** This man railed Jesus too, but had a change of heart. He demonstrated the steps to salvation and true repentance.

### **B. Jesus' response – He promised this man eternal life (v. 43)**

“Today, thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

- This man (this thief) was a sinner who repented of his sin and accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Savior.

## **III. The Cross of Redemption**

The man on the cross, in the middle, is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the perfect Son of God who became the Lamb of God. Christ was born to die. Without His shed blood, there would be no forgiveness of sin (Heb 9:22).

### **The Difference Between the Two Thieves:**

- 1.** The thief on the Cross of Rejection saw Jesus only as a man, but the thief on the Cross of Repentance saw him as Lord.
- 2.** The thief on the Cross of Rejection saw Jesus as a mock king, but the thief on the Cross of Repentance saw him as “King of Kings.”
- 3.** The thief on the Cross of Rejection saw Jesus as a sinner, but the thief on the Cross of Repentance saw Him as a Savior.

### **Conclusion:**

**A. Three Crosses:** One man died **In Sin**, One man died **To Sin** and One man died (Jesus Christ) **For Sin**. **Two Choices:** Eternal Life (Heaven) or Eternal Damnation (Hell).

**B.** As you celebrate Easter, remembering the suffering Christ endured for **YOU** at Calvary. His hands were pierced with nails (John 20:25), his face was marred in appearance (Isa 52:14) and his side was pierced with a spear, also, remember the purpose of Christ's death at Calvary – to destroy the works of Satan (1 John 3:8), to make salvation available to mankind (1 Thess 5:9-10) and to make it possible for man to be reconciled to God (Rom 5:10).

**C.** The man on the cross in the middle is Jesus Christ. Dying sinners, look to Him that your soul might be saved – **Romans Road: (Rom 3:10, 23; 5:8; 10:9, 13)**

**“... the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isa 40:8).**