



# *Sacrificed*

Jesus' death provides salvation to all who trust in Him.

## **LUKE 23:33-46**

The book *Lives Given, Not Taken* details the sacrifices of eight missionary martyrs. These missionaries went to potentially dangerous places because they believed God called them to serve people in hard-to-reach areas of the world. They took serious risks so others might know Jesus. From medical workers slain at a clinic to relief personnel assassinated by gunmen on motorcycles, they gave their lives because Jesus first sacrificed Himself for them.

**How does Jesus' sacrifice on the cross motivate you?**

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# UNDERSTAND THE **CONTEXT**

## **LUKE 23:1-49**

During the night of His arrest, Jesus was questioned informally by Annas (John 18:12-14) and Caiaphas (Matt. 26:57). At daylight, the Sanhedrin convened a formal hearing. The Jewish elders condemned Him on the accusation that Jesus made Himself to be equal with God (Luke 22:66-71).

The chief priests and elders brought Jesus before the Roman governor because only the Romans could sentence a man to death. The charge centered on false claims that Jesus encouraged the people not to pay taxes to Caesar. They also accused Him of wanting to be king (23:1-5).

When Pilate heard Jesus was from Galilee, he thought he could rid himself of the situation by sending Him to Herod, who ruled the region that included Galilee (vv. 6-12). At first, Herod was glad to see Jesus because he wanted to see Jesus do a miracle, as if performing a trick. Jesus' silence fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy: "He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to the slaughter and like a sheep silent before her shearers, he did not open his mouth" (Isa. 53:7).

Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. Recognizing that none of the charges were valid, Pilate tried several times to release Jesus, but the religious leaders led the crowd to cry for Jesus' crucifixion. Finally, Pilate yielded Jesus into their hands (Luke 23:13-25).

After being scourged, Jesus was in such a weakened condition that Simon of Cyrene was recruited to carry Jesus' cross to the place of crucifixion. Women wept for Jesus, but He urged them to weep for themselves and their children because of worse conditions to come (vv. 26-31).

Jesus was crucified between two thieves. One thief defended Jesus against the mockery of the other criminal and asked Jesus to remember him in His kingdom. Jesus accepted his dying words of faith and promised he would join Him in paradise (23:32-43).

**Read Luke 23:33-46, underlining the different titles and names used when addressing Jesus. How does each name used point to Jesus providing salvation?**

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# EXPLORE THE TEXT

## FOCUSED (LUKE 23:33-34)

<sup>33</sup> **When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on the right and one on the left.**

<sup>34</sup> **Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided his clothes and cast lots.**

### VERSE 33

Jesus arrived at *the place called The Skull*. The imagery is horrifying, and the act of crucifixion is even more terrifying. The cross was such a horrible way to die that it was against the law for Roman citizens to die on this Roman execution device. What killed the victims of the cross was not the nails, but blood-drowned suffocation.

As Jesus was lifted up on the crossbeam and it settled into the ground, the weight of His body would meet gravity with all of its force. For hours, in order to breathe, Jesus had to push His body upward, scraping the exposed tears in the flesh. Suffocation, with the loss of blood and exhaustion, was a deadly mix.

Jesus was crucified *along with the criminals, one on the right and one on the left*. It was prophesied in Isaiah 53 that the suffering Servant would be numbered with the transgressors. He who was accused of blasphemy was now being blasphemed.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

Luke is the only Gospel writer to use the Greek term for Skull (*kranion*) instead of the Aramaic term, “Golgotha.” (See Matt. 27:33; Mark 15:22; and John 19:17.) The word “Calvary” comes from the Latin translation of “Skull.”

### VERSE 34

Impaled on the cross, Jesus experienced excruciating pain. Yet when He prayed to the *Father*, He did not seek relief but asked God to *forgive them*.

The soldiers ***divided his clothes and cast lots*** for His garments, fulfilling Scripture (Ps. 22:18). As Jesus prayed for those who crucified Him, He said ***they do not know what they are doing***. They certainly did not understand they were executing the Son of God. Some scholars argue Jesus' prayer of forgiveness applied to everyone—Jew and Roman—who participated in His death.

Jesus was no victim. If He had not embraced the Father's will in the garden, these men would have had no power over Him. He knew His atoning sacrifice was the only way we can be forgiven. We cannot offer the excuse that we don't know what we are doing. Each of us is guilty and stands condemned unless we receive Jesus and the merit of His shed blood.

**How does Jesus' declaration in verse 34 point to His purpose?**

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## **MOCKED** (LUKE 23:35-39)

**<sup>35</sup> The people stood watching, and even the leaders were scoffing: “He saved others; let him save himself if this is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One!” <sup>36</sup> The soldiers also mocked him. They came offering him sour wine <sup>37</sup> and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself!” <sup>38</sup> An inscription was above him: This Is the King of the Jews. <sup>39</sup> Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”**

## **VERSE 35**

Some waited to see if the Miracle Worker would wondrously remove Himself from the cross. Others would have looked at the sign above His head—***This Is the King of the Jews***—and simply shook their heads. Luke pointed out that ***even the leaders were scoffing***, indicating that everyone present participated in mocking Jesus. This fulfilled Isaiah 53:3, where the prophet told of a Suffering Servant who would be treated like this.

The mocking centered on Jesus' claim to be ***God's Messiah, the Chosen One***. On numerous occasions, Jesus identified Himself as God's Son, which was equal to being the Messiah. The Jews believed their

Messiah would appear in power to set them free from Roman rule. They could not accept a bleeding Messiah hanging on a Roman cross.

They ridiculed the idea that **he saved others** but could not **save himself**. They did not understand the word *saved* in terms of spiritual salvation. They likely referred to His healing the sick and raising the dead. Their mocking included the conditional statement: **If you are**. This phrase did not carry the idea “since you are” but implied the negative. They dared Jesus to prove He was the Messiah.

## VERSES 36-38

The **soldiers** who **mocked him** seemed to show a hint of compassion by offering Him wine. But Jesus refused, bearing the fullness of the cross. Luke did not record Jesus’ statement: “I’m thirsty” but mentioned how the soldiers offered Him **sour wine**. Dipping a sponge into some vinegar, they put it on a long reed and held it up to His mouth (John 19:28-29).

The soldiers focused on the primary accusation against Jesus—that He supposedly claimed to be the King of the Jews. Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom was not of this world, but the guilty verdict did not depend on facts. If Jesus were the king, why couldn’t He call on the populous to rescue Him? If He were truly a miracle worker, let Him come down from the cross. Their snide rebuke did not move Jesus to respond. In order to provide forgiveness and salvation for humankind, He could not save Himself.

**What do the statements of the mockers reveal about their misunderstanding of the Messiah? What elements of truth are found in the statements?**

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## VERSE 39

Even **one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at him**. At first, both thieves spoke against Jesus (Matt. 27:44). Although they were **hanging there**, also being crucified, they had no sympathy for the one between them. But as the hours passed, one changed his attitude.

Jesus didn't have anything to prove to the crowds, to the soldiers, or even to the men being executed alongside Him. His proof would come on the morning of the third day. They couldn't understand it, but He did.

**Why might people choose to mock Jesus rather than turn to Him?  
What happens when we ignore the reality of our sin?**

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## **TRUSTED** (LUKE 23:40-43)

**<sup>40</sup> But the other answered, rebuking him: “Don’t you even fear God, since you are undergoing the same punishment? <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, because we’re getting back what we deserve for the things we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.” <sup>42</sup> Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” <sup>43</sup> And he said to him, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

## **VERSES 40-43**

One of the criminals knew he was getting what he deserved. He understood that sin and breaking the law had consequences. He challenged the other criminal based on these facts. Neither had any right to claim that they did not deserve to be there. He also knew that Jesus didn't deserve what He was getting. His statement indicates that he had some knowledge of Jesus.

The criminal then turned to Jesus and pleaded: ***“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”*** What an extraordinary statement! How could a man who was about to die remember someone? This appeal would be insane except for the man's confident faith that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and could overcome death. This criminal demonstrated what true belief is, with an acknowledgment of guilt and a cry for salvation. It seems he understood that, despite Jesus' impending death, Christ would be vindicated (*when you come into your kingdom*). Can you imagine the calm that rested on that criminal's heart as these words came from Jesus' mouth: ***“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*** Can you imagine how many times, in the last minutes of his life, he replayed those words and imagined what lay before him

when he finally breathed his last? The criminal did not continually plead for mercy. Jesus' promise was enough.

That Jesus made this promise in His last moments proves that He knew death would not have the last word. Even on the cross, Jesus' authority was fully expressed in that promise. Even death was powerless to stop Him. The suffering Servant is also the sovereign King.

### **How does the promise Jesus made on the cross define our salvation through faith in Jesus?**

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**BIBLE SKILL:** *Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.*

Review passages from Hebrews about the temple veil. Read Hebrews 6:19-20; 9:1-26; 10:10. What was the spiritual meaning of the torn curtain? How is Jesus described as He entered the Most Holy Place? What effect does Jesus' offering have for believers?

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### **SACRIFICED** (LUKE 23:44-46)

<sup>44</sup> **It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three,** <sup>45</sup> **because the sun's light failed. The curtain of the sanctuary was split down the middle.** <sup>46</sup> **And Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit." Saying this, he breathed his last.**

### **VERSES 44-45**

About noon, *darkness* came over the whole land from noon until three in the afternoon. Amos 8:9 describes such a phenomenon as

a sign of judgment. When the Hebrews were in Egypt, three days of darkness preceded the first Passover (Ex. 10:21). When Jesus was on the cross, three hours of darkness preceded His death as the Lamb of God (John 1:29). This was more than a three-hour eclipse; it was a supernatural event. While everyone around Him mocked or remained silent, all creation cried out.

Luke then turned the focus from creation to the temple. The temple was not only the center of religious life, it was believed to be the place where heaven met earth, where God dwelt among men. The temple was the place where people went for healing, forgiveness, worship, and fellowship with God. ***The curtain of the sanctuary was split down the middle*** as a public declaration that the separation that had marked the relationship between God and man was now torn.

The curtain separated the holy place from the holy of holies which represented God's presence. The curtain was torn from top to bottom, indicating it was an act of God (Matt. 27:51). The tearing of the temple curtain represented the rending of Jesus' flesh to provide access to God and make salvation available.

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### **KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son***

In His substitutionary death on the cross, Jesus made provision for the redemption of men from sin (Rom. 3:23-26).

### **VERSE 46**

Do not pass over the final words of Jesus: ***“Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.”*** Jesus quoted Psalm 31, which often was used as a bedtime prayer with children in ancient Israel. Jesus died with confidence and assurance that He would wake up. He closed His eyes like a child who closes his eyes in the darkness of night, only to be awakened by the brightness of morning.

**How does Jesus' death remove the barrier between sinful humanity and the holy God?**

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# APPLY THE TEXT

- Jesus' purpose of providing forgiveness of sin must remain central.
- Jesus is the Christ regardless of what others may say.
- Jesus can be trusted as the way to the Father.
- Jesus' death removes the barrier between the holy God and sinful humanity.

**Reflect on your understanding of Jesus' identity and purpose. How can you help others understand Jesus' identity and purpose by pointing to this passage?**

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**What barriers exist between you and God? What keeps you from trusting Jesus' death and resurrection to remove those barriers? What do you need to do to express trust in Jesus?**

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## PRAYER NEEDS

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