

The Crucifixion of Christ

Main Text: Luke 23:26-49 (KJV)

Supporting Texts: Isaiah 53:5-6, 10 (KJV); Romans 5:8-11 (KJV); Galatians 3:13 (KJV); 2 Corinthians 5:21 (KJV); 1 Peter 2:24 (KJV)

This study is meant to help each family walk carefully through the crucifixion account in Luke. The tone of the passage is solemn. We are standing on holy ground. Luke gives the historical record plainly, but the rest of Scripture helps us understand the meaning of what took place. At Calvary, we do not simply see a man dying. We see the Son of God giving Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners.

Big Idea

At the cross, the glory of Christ is revealed in His suffering, His mercy, His innocence, His kingship, and His saving power.

Lesson Aim

The aim of this study is to help your family see what happened at the crucifixion, what it reveals about Jesus, and how every person must respond to Him.

Background

Luke's account is brief, but it is not shallow. The Gospel writers record the event with great restraint because the original readers already understood the horror of crucifixion. The theological meaning of the cross is supplied throughout Scripture. Isaiah foretold it. The sacrificial system pointed to it. The apostles later explained it. So when we read Luke 23:26-49 (KJV), we are reading history that carries eternal meaning.

Isaiah 53:5-6 (KJV) shows that Christ was wounded for our transgressions and that the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Romans 5:8 (KJV) declares that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Galatians 3:13 (KJV) teaches that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us. The cross is not merely tragic. It is redemptive.

Section 1: The Road to Calvary

Text: Luke 23:26-32 (KJV)

Jesus is led away to be crucified, already weakened by Gethsemane, the trials, the scourging, and the burden laid upon Him. Simon of Cyrene is compelled to carry the cross after Jesus. In the sermon notes, Simon becomes a living picture of discipleship. He quite literally bears the cross after Christ.

As Jesus moves toward Calvary, the women lament Him, but Jesus tells them not to weep for Him. Instead, they are to weep for themselves and for their children because judgment is coming upon Jerusalem. Even on the road to His own death, Jesus is not absorbed with Himself. He is speaking as the true Prophet, warning of coming wrath.

Key Observations

Before discussing the questions, it helps the group notice what this section reveals. Jesus is weak in body, yet clear in mind. He is suffering, yet still speaking truth. He is on the way to death, yet still concerned with the spiritual condition of others. That is the majesty of Christ.

- Simon bears the cross after Jesus, Luke 23:26 (KJV)
- Jesus warns the daughters of Jerusalem, Luke 23:28-31 (KJV)
- Christ interprets the moment in light of coming judgment
- Compassion for Jesus is not enough without repentance and faith

This part of the passage reminds the group that religious emotion is not the same as saving faith. A person may feel deeply about Jesus and still remain unconverted. Christ calls for more than sympathy. He calls for repentance.

Discussion Questions

These questions can help the group move from observation to conviction.

- What does Simon of Cyrene illustrate about following Christ?
- Why does Jesus tell the women not to weep for Him but for themselves?
- What is the difference between feeling sorry for Jesus and believing in Jesus?
- How does this section show Christ's prophetic office?

Your family should leave this section understanding that Jesus is still ministering while He suffers. His love does not cancel His warnings. His mercy does not erase coming judgment.

Section 2: The Crucifixion and the Prayer of Mercy

Text: Luke 23:33-34 (KJV)

Luke records the event simply: "there they crucified him" (Luke 23:33, KJV). The simplicity of the words should not hide the horror of the act. Crucifixion was painful, public, degrading, and designed to display power through terror. The One hanging there is not guilty of His own sins. He is the righteous One suffering in the place of sinners.

Then Jesus speaks: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34, KJV). This prayer is especially applied to the Roman soldiers, men who were guilty, yet ignorant of the full reality of the One they were crucifying. Even in agony, Jesus acts as Priest, interceding for others.

Key Truths

This moment reveals more than suffering. It reveals the heart of Christ. He is not cursing His enemies. He is praying for them. He is not overcome by rage. He is moved with mercy.

- Christ is crucified at Calvary, Luke 23:33 (KJV)
- Christ prays for forgiveness, Luke 23:34 (KJV)
- Christ is acting as merciful High Priest
- The cross reveals both human sin and divine mercy

Your family should feel the weight of this. The same cross that exposes the evil of man also displays the mercy of God. No one can look at Calvary and say lightly that sin is small. No one can look at Calvary and say truthfully that mercy is scarce.

Discussion Questions

- What does Jesus’ prayer reveal about His character?
- Why is the cross both a revelation of man’s sin and God’s mercy?
- How should Christ’s mercy shape the way believers view their enemies?
- What does this moment teach us about Jesus as our Priest?

This section should move your family toward worship. The Savior suffers, and still He prays.

Section 3: Mockery at the Cross and the Repentant Thief

Text: Luke 23:35-43 (KJV)

The rulers mock Him. The soldiers mock Him. One of the criminals mocks Him. The language is bitter and unbelieving: “save thyself” (Luke 23:35, 37, 39, KJV). Yet in all the mockery, hidden truth keeps surfacing. They speak of Him saving others. They speak of Him as the Christ. They speak of Him as King. Their scorn becomes an unwilling testimony.

Then everything changes in the other thief. This man appears to begin in hardness, but as he watches Christ suffer, hears Christ speak, and comes under the work of grace, he is transformed. He rebukes the other criminal, confesses his own guilt, declares Christ’s innocence, and casts himself on Christ’s mercy.

He says, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42, KJV). Jesus answers, “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43, KJV). This is one of the clearest pictures in Scripture of salvation by grace through faith.

Marks of the Thief’s Conversion

This is a strong part of the study because it shows saving faith in a very compressed and vivid form. Note that the thief had no time for good works, religious performance, or ceremonial merit. He had Christ, and by faith he laid hold of Him.

- He feared God, Luke 23:40 (KJV)
- He confessed his own guilt, Luke 23:41 (KJV)
- He affirmed Christ’s innocence, Luke 23:41 (KJV)
- He called Jesus “Lord,” Luke 23:42 (KJV)
- He believed Jesus had a kingdom beyond the cross, Luke 23:42 (KJV)
- He appealed personally to Christ for mercy, Luke 23:42 (KJV)
- He received immediate assurance, Luke 23:43 (KJV)

This is the scandal and glory of grace. A dying criminal, with no righteousness of his own, is promised paradise by a crucified Savior. Salvation is not earned. It is received through faith in Christ.

Discussion Questions

- What do you see in the thief’s words that shows genuine repentance?
- Why is the thief’s conversion such a powerful proof of salvation by grace?
- What does the word “remember” mean in this context?
- Why is it significant that the thief calls Jesus “Lord” while Jesus is hanging on the cross?
- What comfort does “To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” give to believers?

This section should lead the group to clarity. The cross divides humanity. One thief dies hardened. One thief dies believing. Nearness to Christ is not enough. Each person must respond.

Section 4: Darkness, the Torn Veil, and the Death of Christ

Text: Luke 23:44-46 (KJV)

From the sixth hour to the ninth hour, darkness covers the land. This darkness is understood not merely as a sign of man's evil, but as a sign of divine judgment and curse falling upon Christ as the sin-bearer. When this is read alongside Galatians 3:13 (KJV) and the cry of dereliction recorded in Matthew and Mark, the meaning becomes even more solemn. The spotless Son bears the curse due to His people.

Then the veil of the temple is torn. Hebrews explains the meaning. Through the death of Christ, the old order is fulfilled and the way into the presence of God is opened. What was once barred is now opened through the blood of Jesus.

Finally, Jesus commits His spirit to the Father: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46, KJV). He does not die as a victim overwhelmed by events. He dies in obedience, confidence, and triumph.

Doctrinal Significance

This is the theological center of the passage. We should slow down here and feel the weight of what Christ accomplished.

- Darkness signifies judgment, Luke 23:44-45 (KJV)
- Christ bears the curse for sinners, Galatians 3:13 (KJV)
- The veil is torn, opening access to God, Luke 23:45 (KJV); compare Hebrews 10:19-20 (KJV)
- Jesus entrusts Himself to the Father, Luke 23:46 (KJV)
- Redemption is accomplished through His death

The death of Christ is not accidental. It is not merely an example of courage. It is the accomplishment of redemption. He came to do the will of the Father, and at the cross that work was finished.

Discussion Questions

- What is the significance of the darkness in this passage?
- Why is the tearing of the veil so important?
- What does Christ's final prayer reveal about His relationship to the Father?
- How does this section help us understand substitutionary atonement?

This portion of the study should bring the group to reverence. Christ is not simply suffering beside sinners. He is suffering for sinners.

Section 5: The Witnesses and Their Responses

Text: Luke 23:47-49 (KJV)

Luke closes the scene with witnesses. The centurion glorifies God and says, “Certainly this was a righteous man” (Luke 23:47, KJV). The crowds depart smiting their breasts. His acquaintances and the women stand afar off beholding these things. The cross leaves no one untouched. People see the same event, but they do not all respond in the same way.

The various people around the cross become pictures of different responses to Christ. Simon points to discipleship. The women show the danger of sentiment without saving faith. The Roman soldiers picture ignorant sinners who still need mercy. The rulers represent hardened religious hypocrisy. The two thieves show the difference between rebellion and repentance.

Responses to Christ

This section helps a small group move from the ancient scene into present application. The cross still reveals hearts.

- Simon of Cyrene pictures cross-bearing discipleship, Luke 23:26 (KJV)
- The mourning women show that emotion alone is not salvation, Luke 23:27-31 (KJV)
- The soldiers reflect ignorance that still needs grace, Luke 23:34, 36-37 (KJV)
- The rulers show hardened religious unbelief, Luke 23:35 (KJV)
- The unrepentant thief shows rebellion to the end, Luke 23:39 (KJV)
- The repentant thief shows saving faith in Christ, Luke 23:40-43 (KJV)
- The centurion shows that even outsiders can be brought to confession, Luke 23:47 (KJV)

The group should recognize that every person in the room is somewhere in this scene. No one is merely a spectator. The cross calls for response.

Discussion Questions

- Which response in the passage do people still repeat today?
- Why can religious people be among the hardest opponents of Christ?
- What is the difference between outward sorrow and true repentance?
- How does the centurion encourage us in evangelism?

- In what ways does this passage press every person to make a decision about Jesus?

This section should lead naturally to personal reflection. The question is not simply, “What happened at Calvary?” The deeper question is, “How am I responding to the Christ of Calvary?”

The Glory of Christ in His Words

Christ’s words reveal His person. Even in suffering, He is seen in His offices and in His Sonship.

Christ Revealed in His Sayings

As your family reflects on Christ’s words, they can see the fullness of His glory.

- He speaks as **Prophet** when He warns Jerusalem, Luke 23:28-31 (KJV)
- He speaks as **Priest** when He prays, “Father, forgive them,” Luke 23:34 (KJV)
- He speaks as **King** when He promises paradise to the thief, Luke 23:43 (KJV)
- He speaks as the **Son of God** when He addresses the Father, Luke 23:34, 46 (KJV)

The cross is not the collapse of Christ’s mission. It is the revelation of who He truly is.

Main Applications

This study should not end in information only. It should press into faith, humility, worship, and obedience.

- Do not stop at pity for Jesus. Come to faith in Jesus.
- Do not assume religious familiarity equals salvation.
- Christ can save the worst sinner who comes to Him in repentant faith.
- Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works.
- The believer’s hope rests entirely in the righteousness of Christ.
- True discipleship means taking up the cross and following Him.

These applications keep the study from becoming merely historical. The cross is the center of the Christian faith because it is the center of redemption.

Suggested Closing Summary

At Calvary, Christ is revealed in majesty and mercy. He suffers as the righteous One. He prays for sinners. He warns of judgment. He opens paradise to a believing thief. He bears

the curse. He opens the way to God. He dies in faith and obedience to the Father. The cross is both the exposure of human sin and the triumph of divine grace.

Closing Prayer Focus

Pray that your family would not merely admire the account of the crucifixion, but bow before Christ in repentance, faith, gratitude, and worship. Pray also that anyone still standing at a distance would come personally to the Savior who still receives sinners.