

THE THREE CROSSES

1. (LK. 23:32-43) 3 crosses stood on the hill the day Jesus died. By crucifying 2 thieves with Jesus, His enemies sought to put Him into their category. But all this was in harmony w/ancient prophecies, forseen by God (ISA. 53:9; 1-8).

2. One compelling thought: the frame of mind of the three victims; faced the same fate but w/different perspectives. One thought mainly of others (LK 23:34); one thought mainly of himself (LK 23:39) and one thought of his fellow victim hanging on the center cross (LK 23:41).

3. Another approach is to consider how & why each one met his death, especially as it relates to sin and eternitiy; one died IN sin, one died TO sin, and one died FOR sin.

I. ONE DIED IN HIS SIN

A. Of all sinners who have ever died in sin, this one is the most ironic; he is hanging right next to the One who could have saved him!

1. What a foolish way for anyone to die! (HEB 9:27; 10:26,27; 30,31)

2. The other thief recognizes the foolishness of this thief. "Isn't it time to stop with your arrogance?"

3. Yes! It is time! Then and today; now! Let go of the arrogance. Jesus is mocked daily by our "enlightened" society. It's time to put the pride to rest! We are heading for judgment and eternity! (GAL. 6:7,8; II COR 5:10; ROM 2:4-8)

4. The obstinance of this man well symbolizes humanity's rebellion throughout history (HOSEA 7:13-16)

5. Amazing how that even as all hope vanishes, many will not make the only reasonable decision (LUKE 16:31; REV 9:20,21; 16:9,21).

6. Do not face your creator in this man's condition!

II. ONE DIED TO HIS SIN

A. Obviously, this man had been deeply effected by several things (LU 23:40-42). He had an awakened respect for God; the realization that the end was approaching; that he was a sinner getting what he deserved; that Jesus was innocent; and he displays a familiarity with Jesus as Messiah or King, and asks for consideration.

1. Jesus' answer would certainly comfort this man (LU 23:43). Jesus was the ONLY one on earth who could offer hope even in death! Later, when this man dies, his final thoughts are going to be quite different from those of the other thief! Not terror, or emptiness; but hope & anticipation! (PSA 32:5,6; ISA 55:6,7)

2. "Death to sin" or "repentance" is required to be pleasing to God; in that generation as well as this (ACTS 2:38; 40; 3:19; 17:30; JAS. 4:8-10) (See also discussion of "dead to sins" in ROM 6:1,2; 5-7; 11;23)

3. Good illustration of repentance and reward found in parable of prodigal son (LU 15:17-20: repentance & reception; vss. 21-24: reward and joy) (cf. ACTS 26:18)

III. ONE DIED FOR THE SINS OF OTHERS

A. While many have died in sins and to sins, the circumstances of the one on the middle cross is unique! No sins to die in or to! Chose to die FOR the sins of the world!

1. The only one on the cross that day by choice; gave His life because of love for us (MATT 20:28; JOHN 10:11, 15, 17,18)

2. It had been a difficult choice in some ways (JN 12:27-33).

3. Think of the attention focused on that center cross! By the instigators and mockers (LK 23:35); the soldiers (LK 23:36,37); the thieves and then the disciples standing at a distance (LK 23:49).

4. To the disciples, everything seemed to have gone wrong. Then, the sun (LK 23:44) and the veil of the temple (23:45). The death (23:46) and the centurion's cry (23:47).

5. Thanks to Joseph of Arimathea, the One who had said "The Son of Man has not where to lay His head" was provided such a place; a new tomb (LUKE 23:50-56).

CONCLUSION

1. Conclude with another compelling thought about these three men: One would be resurrected unto judgment on the same day as another would be resurrected unto life in the future (JN 5:28,29).

2. But the One in the middle would be raised much earlier than that... just three days. He is the resurrection and the life!

3. On that final day when the thieves rise, we will join one of them. Which one do you want to be with in eternity?