

33. Which one are you?

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When we studied chapter 27 of the Book of Matthew, we concentrated on the agony of Jesus who went through the scourging stage and the actual crucifixion. But when we studied chapter 15 of the Book of Mark, we emphasized the six kangaroo courts that were held illegally within the span of 12-14 hours, from the evening of Thursday until Jesus was hung on the cross at 9 o'clock Friday morning.

With this timeline in mind, we are going to look at ten different groups of people which would represent all humankind.

A. PILATE

Luke 23:1-5 Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. 2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King." 3 Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "It is as you say." 4 So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." 5 But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."

The Jewish religious leaders brought Jesus to Pilate because only the Romans could carry out capital punishment. Besides, Pilate was known for his cruelty and hatred against the Jews. But they also knew that their actual charges against Jesus would not hold water in Pilate's court because the Romans believed in many deities. They simply changed Him with insurrection against Rome.

If a prosecutor does that kind of thing in today's court, judge will throw out the case before he can say, "Objection, your honor."

Just like Pilate, there are people who have no courage and principles in their hearts. They buckle under the pressure of others. When Pilate faced the truth – Jesus, he asked, "What is the truth?" and walked away from Him without earnestly seeking the answer from Jesus. Are you one of those people who walk away from the truth because of other people around you?

B. THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES

These chief priests and scribes were violating so many commandments of God that it was not even funny. They had one thing in their minds – killing Jesus to protect their social status, authority and monetary sources.

This kind of people would be the ones who are controlled and used by satan. They are even religious and thinking that they are working for God. But if the truth be told, they are for themselves and ultimately for satan.

Are you religious? Do you think that you can make your way to heaven by coming to church once in a while and do a few good things around Christmas time and Easter time? As you will find out in this study, there is only one way to get to heaven, that is through the personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Nothing else.

C. HEROD

Luke 23:6-12 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. 7 And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction,

he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. 8 Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. 9 Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. 10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. 11 Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. 12 That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Herod never took Jesus seriously. He wanted to see some miracles by Jesus as an evening entertainment. When Jesus refused to entertain him, Herod entertained himself by mistreating Jesus.

This kind of person considering having faith in Jesus is nothing more than believing a silly myth. To this kind of person, God's Word is nothing more than religious mumbo jumbo. To this kind of person, God's work is nothing more than coincidence. To this kind of person, God's miracle is nothing more than an entertaining element. To this kind of person, following God's way is a joke.

Are you this type of person who thinks that faith in God is a joke or something for mentally weak person? If you are, you have no true hope, no true joy in your life but void. Your happiness is temporary and you know that your heart is empty all the time.

D. BARABBAS

Luke 23:13-25 Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, 14 said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; 15 no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. 16 I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" 17 (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). 18 And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"-- 19 who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. 20 Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. 21 But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" 22 Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go." 23 But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. 24 So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. 25 And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Since it was customary at Passover for the governor to release a prisoner, Pilate offered the Jews a choice: a murderer or an innocent man. Somehow the governor thought the mob would choose Barabbas to crucify over Jesus. If anyone should be able to say, "Jesus died for me," it was Barabbas. He knew what it was to have Jesus die on his behalf, the innocent for the guilty.

The description of Barabbas is such a perfect fit for all of us: an insurrectionist and murderer. We rebel against God with our sins and we murder fellow human being in our hearts sometimes physically, too.

Are you Barabbas? Then you need Jesus who took your place and gave you an opportunity to have an eternal life.

E. THE MOB

A savage chant began to surge through the crowd: “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” These were the people who cried out “Hosanna! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” on Palm Sunday, only four days ago. They were controlled by the religious leaders and followed them without knowing the truth.

These are the type of people who have no idea about faith in Jesus and don’t care to have any idea. These are controlled by a massive mob emotion that is easily swayed by a small whisper in their ears. The general public of the secular world gets excited for carnal things, but turns their back on God’s truth.

Are you one of these people who have no idea and don’t care? You’d better, because you will get to see Jesus one day. Whether He becomes the Judge to send you to hell or the Savior to greet you into heaven is dependant on your decision while you are alive on this earth.

F. SIMON THE CYRENIAN

Luke 23:26-31 Now as they led Him away, they laid hold of a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, who was coming from the country, and on him they laid the cross that he might bear it after Jesus. 27 And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. 28 But Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. 29 For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!’ 30 Then they will begin ‘to say to the mountains, “Fall on us!” and to the hills, “Cover us!”’ 31 For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?”

If I could go back with a time machine to be a part of ancient history, I would choose to be Simon the Cyrenian on the way to Golgotha, the road called Via Dolorosa, so that I could carry the cross beam for Jesus even a few step.

Like many other thousands of Jews who came to Jerusalem from other nations to celebrate the Passover feast, Simon traveled over 800 miles from North Africa and now he was being humiliated to carry a cross beam for a criminal who was condemned to die. But in reality, he was carrying that wooden beam for Jesus. What a privilege for any Christian to have!

As born again Christians, Jesus wants us to deny ourselves and carry our cross daily. Does He mean to drag literal wooden beams everywhere we go? No, our Father God wants us to be more like Jesus who kept His commandments and abided in His love by denying and crucifying our carnal desires.

Are you one of those faithful followers of Jesus Christ who denies yourself and carries your cross daily? If you are, the Lord will bless you immensely.

G. THE THIEF AND THE SOLDIERS WHO MOCKED JESUS

Luke 23:32-39 There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. 33 And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the

left. 34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. 35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God." 36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, 37 and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." 38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. 39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

Jesus made seven statements while He was being crucified. The first statement was for the people who were nailing Him on the cross. That is the love, grace and mercy of God.

He let go of absolutely everything – even His clothes – becoming completely poor for us, so we could become completely rich in Him.

You might be a type of person like this thief who wants God to come to your rescue when you are in difficult situations, but you have no intention to obey the Lord and commit your life to Jesus. You would go back to a sinful life as soon as God rescues you with His compassion.

Or you might be a person like the soldiers at the cross and would mock Christianity. To you, it is nothing more than crutches which people lean on.

Which one are you, mocking thief or cruel and callous soldiers? But God still loves you. Come to Him today.

H. THE THIEF WHO ACCEPTED JESUS

Luke 23:40-43 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong." 42 Then he said to Jesus, "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." 43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise."

At the beginning, this thief also mocked Jesus. But in the course of their crucifixions, he realized that this man was not the ordinary fellow criminal. Not only that, but also he even came to a conclusion that He was the king of the Jews and the Christ the chosen of God. As a matter of fact, he was the only one who believed in the upcoming resurrection of Jesus.

I've heard a story that two drops of rain that land on the top of the Rocky Mountain. Depending on the angle of each rain drop, its ultimate destination is either the Pacific Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean.

Depending on the angle of individual personal decision, the ultimate destination of each person's spirit is either heaven or hell.

In this case, the thief who ridiculed Jesus on the cross ended up in hell with many others who reject Jesus as their Savior and Lord. But the one who asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus comes to His kingdom ended up in heaven with His Messiah.

Heaven is heaven because of the presence of Jesus. On the other hand, hell is hell because of the absence of Jesus.

Are you the one who believes Jesus as the Lord and Savior?

I. THE CENTURION

Luke 23:44-48 Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. 45 Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 46 And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.'" Having said this, He breathed His last. 47 So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, "Certainly this was a righteous Man!" 48 And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned.

In most cases, when we hear about the Roman Centurions in the Gospels of Jesus Christ, they were not bad people. They were more open toward Christianity than any Roman soldiers mentioned in the Bible. After this Centurion witnessed how Jesus handled Himself on the cross and the earthquake and the darkness for three hours, he believed that Jesus was a righteous man.

By the way, when Israel was in Egypt, three days of darkness preceded the first Passover according to Ex. 10:21. When Jesus was on the cross, three hours of darkness preceded the death of God's Perfect Passover Lamb for the sins of the world.

This type of people is open to the salvation message more than any other people. Are you the one whose heart is opened now to receive Jesus into your heart? If so, don't let anything stop you from doing that.

J. THE WOMEN WHO CAME TO THE GRAVE SITE AND JOSEPH FROM ARIMATHEA

Luke 23:49-56 But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things. 50 Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51 He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. 54 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. 55 And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

They believed Jesus as the Messiah, but they really didn't understand Jesus' resurrection.

Because their love for Jesus, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and these women risked their reputation to take care of Jesus' body even though they thought this was the end of Jesus.

Genesis chapter 2 tells us that when after six days God finished the work of the "old Creation," He rested. After six hours, our Lord finished the work of the "new Creation" in Jesus on the cross, and He rested on the Sabbath in Joseph's tomb.

But that was not the end of the story.

K. THE FINAL QUESTION

At the foot of the cross is a leveled ground for anyone to come to Jesus – from the most diligent religious person to the most horrible murderer and anybody in between. Whichever category describes your spiritual condition, you can find the truth, you can receive peace from God, you can find hope in Him, and you can be loved by Him as His own child. But it is your decision to determine where you are going to spend your eternal life.