

Today in Paradise

“Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:42-43)

1. It Is No Accident – Jesus was crucified between two thieves.
 - a. God foresaw it.
 - b. Isaiah foretold *“He was numbered with the transgressors”* (Isaiah 53:12). It included:
 1. The soldiers.
 2. The crowd.
 3. The two thieves.
 - c. Not petty thieves, but gangsters or criminals.
2. Why Thieves?
 - a. They represent all mankind. All have sinned – no one is righteous.
 - b. He was not there to die for the righteous. He was our substitute. We are the thieves.
3. The Two Thieves Were Imprisoned at the Same Time.
 - a. They left prison together.
 - b. They traveled to Calvary together and were crucified together.
 - c. They probably knew each other as criminals.
 - d. They probably ran with the same criminal gang.
 - e. They probably heard of Jesus’ ministry and miracles before prison.
 - f. They both left the cell and traveled the same streets with Jesus.
4. They Both Watched Jesus’ Reaction
 - a. They saw Jesus beaten and nailed yet; He never opened His mouth.
 - b. They both heard Jesus pray for them from the cross.
 - c. They both heard Him pray *“Father, forgive them.”*
5. When Crucified, Both Spoke Evil to Jesus.

“Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing” (Matthew 27:44).
6. They Probably Never Heard a Sermon by Jesus.

“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).
7. They Probably Never Witnessed Jesus’ Miracles Before Their Death.
 - a. They did not see the multitudes healed.
 - b. They did not see water turned to wine.

- c. But because His fame spread everywhere, they must have heard of Him and His works.
8. The Did Not Live Long Enough to See the Miracles After Jesus' Death.
 - a. They did not see the darkness or feel the earthquake.
 - b. They did not see Old Testament saints come from graves and walk into Jerusalem.
 - c. They did not see the temple veil torn from top to bottom.
 - d. They did not see Jesus' resurrection.
 9. Before They Were Crucified, They Might Have Done a Few Good Works.
 - a. At the crucifixion, it was not mentioned because it did not matter.
 - b. Works weren't an issue. They were thieves.
 10. On the Cross, They Could Do No Good Works to Gain Salvation.
 - a. Their hands were nailed.
 1. They could not feed the hungry.
 2. They could not give money to the poor.
 - b. Their feet were nailed.
 1. They could not go to church and walk forward to an altar to receive Jesus.
 2. They could not visit the sick or those in prison.
 11. They Could Not Guarantee Doing Good Works After Salvation.
 - a. They died without getting off the cross.
 - b. They had no good works to accompany or prove their salvation.
 - c. *Lordship salvation* was not possible.
 12. Salvation is Completely by God's Grace.
 - a. For by grace, you are saved through faith.
 - b. It is not by works of righteousness, but according to His mercy.
 - c. Eternal life has nothing to do with your good works. Before or after salvation.
 13. It Is Not an Accident There Were Two Thieves.
 - a. They represent the two answers to the gospel.
 - b. One said, "Yes." The other said, "No."
 - c. The whole world is a **yes** thief or a **no** thief (Romans 1:20).
 14. The Choice was Theirs – Not God's.
 - a. God's sovereignty is seen in the presentation of the gospel to all.
 - b. Man's sovereignty is in the choosing.
 - c. Heaven or hell is your choice – not God's (1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9).
 15. One Thief Realized This and Saw Jesus as God, His Savior.
 - a. Salvation was a gift to be received.
 - b. Paradise was his for the asking.

What About You?

1. The thieves represent you.
2. You may have never gone to church, heard a sermon, or seen a miracle.
3. You may or may not have done good works.

4. You may or may not live long enough after you are saved to do good works for men.
5. Today you have heard about Jesus and His plan for your life.
6. Eternal life, paradise (heaven), is a choice (John 3:16-17).
 - a. Which thief are you?
 - b. You can say **yes**, or you can say **no**.