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## Luke 23:32,33 and 39-43

32. “Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

33. When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

39. One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, ‘Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’

40. But the other answered, and rebuking him said, ‘Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?’

41. ‘And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.’

42. And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’

43. And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”

When I share with people such verses as I Peter 3:21 which states specifically that “baptism now saves you,” many will ask, “What about the thief on the cross?”

That's a good question. What about the thief on the cross?

In our text today we find that one of the criminals crucified alongside of Jesus defended our Lord and rebuked the other criminal who was hurling insults at Jesus. Then the thief petitioned the Lord, saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" The Lord grants the man's request saying, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."

Yes, Jesus granted the request of the thief who hung on the cross next to Him, and Jesus saved him.

But note the fact that the thief was saved under the Old Testament. Hebrews 9:16 and 17 defines this truth: "For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives." So, according to the Scripture, The New Covenant of Jesus Christ did not come into effect until Jesus died. While Jesus was still living He had the power to forgive sins and save anyone, by any means He chose. But once He died, the terms of pardon and salvation through Christ are given only as expressly written in His will and testament--the New Covenant Scriptures.

A good illustration of this would be a benevolent rich man. While he is living he can give out his money to whoever he chooses, for whatever reason or circumstances he desires day by day. But once he dies,

his money is locked up and is only dispensed according to the stipulations in his written will.

Usually there is a formal reading of the will by a designated authority, when family, associates, and friends are gathered together.

Yes, the thief on the cross was pardoned and went to Paradise with Jesus that day. But this in no way circumvents the necessity of baptism for salvation under the terms of Jesus' last will and testament. Jesus granted the thief salvation before the Lord died on His cross--before the New Testament came into effect.

Fifty days after Jesus' death, on the day of Pentecost when God had His people gathered in Jerusalem, Peter proclaimed the terms of salvation in Jesus' will and testament. When asked by the brethren, "What shall we do?" Peter states, (Acts 2:38) "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

What about you? Have you followed the will of Jesus and His New Testament terms for salvation?