

Reader 3

Fall 2022

The Crowd

Two groups attended Jesus' crucifixion. The first group, His followers and acquaintances, intimately knew Him and stood at a distance from the execution site in sorrow and mourning. Rather the second group, the Jewish antagonists, displayed great public contempt. This latter consensually cried out for His death. Along with the Roman soldiers who oversaw this spectacle, the opposition witnessed a demonstration of God's power that gave them a second chance to accept Jesus as the Messiah. God ordained Calvary to deal with sin and death giving all men an opportunity for salvation!

Daryl Cox/March 31, 2013



Followers, Willingly and Lovingly Separated to Jesus

The Gospel author Luke identifies Jesus' followers and acquaintances as a separate group from the crowd who called for His death (23:48-49). Unable to stop the events ordered by Pontius Pilate, they stood at a distance from the site out of fear not wanting to identify themselves with the crowd. First Corinthians 2:7-8 defines why they stood at a distance. It says, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the

princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Those who loved and followed Jesus knew His identity.

Jesus changed the lives of His disciples. In addition to this impact on their lives, He revealed Himself to them as the Son of God. They rooted their loyalty in the truth that the Lord of glory came to earth as a man to live among His people. Prior to His death, Jesus’ followers did not comprehend His coming. Many of them looked for the kingdom promised by the Scriptures. According to the Apostle Paul, this lack of knowing premised Jesus’ rejection and execution (1 Cor 2:8). Many thought that Jesus would deliver them from Roman oppression as Scripture foretold. However, their love for Christ was the reason for their stand away from the crowd. They did not want to associate themselves amidst those who hated Him.

In like manner, as Christians, we should distinguish ourselves from the crowd of this world by our love for Christ. Does our love and knowledge of Jesus as Lord and Christ motivate us to live separate from the ungodly thinking and behaviors of this world? Does our love for Him cause us to withdraw from conversations that morally have gone south? Does it allow us to maintain relationships that are harmful to our calling and purpose? We should root our love for Christ in devotion to Him.

Antagonists, Spiritually and Morally Hostile to Jesus

Luke describes the crowd at the site as spiritually and morally hostile to Jesus. Along with the soldiers who brutally afflicted Jesus, the crowd contemptuously laughed and mocked Him with shame. Furthermore, they dared Him to save Himself. Others walked across the site shaking their heads in disbelief of Him. The two thieves crucified with Him similarly taunted Him to save Himself if he was the Messiah. The soldiers, who carried out the crucifixion, gambled for His cloths at the foot of the cross. Above all else, everyone wanted to see a supernatural deliverance of Jesus from the cross to prove His claim as the Messiah. Luke uses the Greek transliterated word *theōria* for “sight” (Luke 23:48) to describe this event, which means “a spectacle.” [1] The Lord’s crucifixion was a public spectacle of disgrace and humiliation, yet out of it Jesus cries, “Father forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34b). This prayer, in contrast to the many vengeful psalmic ones, would give opportunity to the crowd and eventually the

world to correct the biggest error in the history of the human race, the rejection and crucifixion of the Lord of glory.

The Resurrection's Effect

As the account continues, one of the thieves repents. Amid all the confusion and hatred, the one thief witnesses the majesty and glory of Christ that continued to flow from within His brutally disfigured and wounded form. This revelation touched his heart producing recognition of his wrong and Jesus' identity. He repented and cried, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42). The thief realized that Jesus was Lord. Our first steps toward salvation include recognizing our wrong and confessing Jesus as our Lord (God manifested in the flesh). Jesus responded to the thief's confession and request; however, he gave no response to the continual hatred of the crowd. The Lord responds to faith. This thief embraced who Jesus was and found pardon. In a similar vein, we can receive forgiveness of sins and the Holy Ghost by embracing the Gospel (Acts 2:38). The Lord's promise of paradise to this man gave him hope beyond his impending death. It would also reveal the spiritual change that would take place for everyone who died prior to Christ's return for His people. No longer would believers go to a place in hades (hell) called Abraham's bosom (Luke 16:22). The sacrifice of Jesus' human and divine life would forever settle the issue of our sin with God and give us access to His presence in this world and the one to come. "Upon death, our spirits rest with Jesus in paradise until His return" (1 Thess 4:14b). Jesus' death on the cross gives us a new opportunity to repent and get right with God!

At His death, Jesus prays the submission of His life into the hand of God. This powerful prayer let God use the death and resurrection of Christ to abolish the reign of death over humanity. Jesus' taste of death for everyone set the stage for our release as the Hosea the prophet promised (Hos 13:14). God gave the people two signs that revealed who Jesus was and their error in crucifying Him. With the first sign, God supernaturally split the temple veil that led to the Holy of Holies. A veil 50 inches thick and 36 inches long completely tore apart. God no longer restricts us from His presence with this veil. He now lives in us through the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Jesus opened the door to a New Covenant relationship with God by way of His death. The Father's

presence in us through the Holy Ghost makes both fellowship with Him and worship real. Next, God sends a great earthquake as the second sign. He allows death to overcome Jesus and thus destroys it upon His resurrection ending its reign over us who believe (Rom 8:1-2). His death atoned the transgressions of all future believers and those who lived prior to His first coming. With sin now resolved, Gospel author Matthew tells us that many of the Old Testament saints physically rose from the dead upon Christ's resurrection and showed themselves to many in Jerusalem (27:52-53).[2] The earthquake only opened the dead's tombs. They came out from their graves when Jesus rose from the dead (vv.51-53). This resurrection reveals the extensive effect of His death. God forgave and restored everyone who believed from Adam to Christ by Jesus' death, and He continues to restore those of us who believe since His resurrection.

This act also gives us hope. We have the promise of the future resurrection for the righteous. God answered Jesus' prayer of forgiveness for the crowd and their unbelieving expectation of His deliverance from the cross through these two signs. God did not deliver Jesus from the cross but delivered Him out of death by the resurrection. Using these two events, He convicted the crowd that they might repent and receive His forgiveness.

Man's Unbelief

God never disregarded the unbelief of the people during the crucifixion. Once He dealt with the issue of sin by Jesus' death, He now turned to the crowd. God did not execute judgment upon them. Luke describes a change in the crowd in his Gospel. When the crowd saw what happened, they "smote their breasts and returned to their lives" (23:48 NLT). In response to Jesus' request to forgive His executioners, God opened the eyes of the crowd and conviction followed as He revealed Jesus' identity and the error of their ways. Thus, they felt sorrow and distress.

By using the Greek *typtō* (v. 48) for "smite," Luke suggests the events moved the crowd and caused them to experience remorse [3] for their actions. [4] They stood convicted of their deeds but remained unrepentant. As a nation, Israel continued to reject Jesus as their Messiah. God wanted to forgive the nation as well, but it likewise did not repent. When God convicts us, do we turn to Him in repentance? Change and

forgiveness comes when we repent, too. The Gospel deals with our sin and unbelief to the point of seeking change.

Remembering the Death and Resurrection of Christ

Let us keep in mind that God dealt with sin and death through Calvary in His ordained time, making salvation possible for everyone. He gives us four key points to consider:

1. **Rejoice and celebrate His victory** over the world, sin and death.
2. **Take the opportunity to know and serve Jesus** as the almighty God in the flesh.
3. **Perfect your walk** with His continued forgiveness and grace to overcome sin.
4. **Identify yourself as a true believer** in Christ before the world.

God gives us the privilege and responsibility of proclaiming the Gospel until Jesus returns. The Gospel offers a message of hope for everyone. Do not change the message, but faithfully stand for its truth. Our lives are a witness to this world.

Endnotes

[1] Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 290.

[2] (Matt 27:52-53; cf. Ezek 37:12; Dan 12:2 and Zech 14:5b)

[3] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 382.

[4] Darrell Bock, *Luke, 9:51-24:53: Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 1996).