

June 8, 2014

LORD, REMEMBER ME

Luke 23: 32-43

Your comments about a subject (any subject) can be very revealing about your knowledge of that subject. We will look at one today whose comments were very revealing about his STANDING with God. He was chosen, justified, redeemed, and certain for final glory. His last comments on earth will REVEAL that.

Look at Luke 23: 32-34 **“And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death. 33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. 34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.”**

Christ was crucified with two OTHERS, who were (themselves) malefactors. It is not saying that Christ was one of THEM (i.e. a ðmalefactorö); but, that He was crucified WITH them. This word (ðmalefactorö) is translated one other time in the New Testament as ðevil doerö. In Markø Gospel they are called ðthievesö.

Look at Mark 15: 27 **“And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.”**

All of which was done to fulfill the scriptures concerning Christø death.

Look at Mark 15: 28 **“And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.”** This is quoted from Isaiah 53.

Look on in our text at Luke 23: 35-37 **“And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. 36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar, 37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.”**

These all thought that if Christ delivered Himself down from the Cross, His deliverance would be (convincing) proof that He was (truly) King. They thought that if Christ could (somehow) save Himself FROM (physical) death, He could (by that) prove Himself to be the Christ. Such is the thinking of natural man.

I am reminded of a prominent evangelist of our generation who said on national television speaking of Christø crucifixion , ðIf I had been there, I would have stopped it.ö But, to the contrary, the scriptures say that it is His death and subsequent resurrection which declare Christ to be the Son of God, (the Lord of Lords and King of Kings).

Look at Romans 1: 1-4 **“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:”**

Of course, this passage is one in which Christ is declared to be God and man. Why does His resurrection declare Him to be God? It is because ONLY One who is God could have satisfied Divine Justice in its demand for eternal death. And, ONLY One who is God could (at the same time/by the same death) bring in the everlasting righteousness that demands life. Christ's death put away the sin of and established the Righteousness that demands the (eternal) life of EVERY sinner He died for.

Look at Luke 23: 38 **“And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”**

Look at Luke 23: 39 **“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.”**

This common criminal is simply displaying the logic of natural (human/not spiritual) reasoning. You say you are a king. You say you are the Christ. If that is true, prove it. Save yourself. Save us. He was mimicking the derisions of the people and rulers back in verse 35, Luke 23: 35 **“He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.”**

Look on at Luke 23: 40-41 **“But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?**

41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.”

The penitent thief stated the truth, first, about his own sin. We are common criminals. We are here rightly. We are here because of the crimes we have committed. We are getting what we (justly) deserve.

Then, He states the truth about Christ's lack of sin. This man is NOT here, because He has done anything to deserve it. **“This man hath done nothing amiss.”** Again, this man agrees with the scriptural testimony of Christ.

II Corinthians 5: 21 says, **“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.”**

Look at Hebrews 7: 26 **“For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;”**

Look at Hebrews 4: 15 **“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”**

This penitent thief knew that Christ was not here for any wrong doing on HIS part, but, for some other reason. He knew that Christ's death on the Cross was not the RESULT of HIS sin. He was on the Cross for the PUNISHMENT of sin (NOT His own, but those He represented). He bore OUR sins in His body on the tree. He was delivered because of OUR offences.

This thief, also, knew that Christ's death would have RESULTS; that because of Christ's death He would have a kingdom. And, we will learn more about this thief's knowledge of that kingdom in his later comments.

Look at Luke 23: 42 **“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”**

Let's compare scripture with scripture. Look at the requests two other penitent sinners made of the Lord. Though not in the EXACT words, the publican prayed for the same thing.

Look at Luke 18: 13 **“And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”**

The word merciful is the same for propitious. In the original a sinner is THE sinner. This publican first acknowledges his sinner-hood, which is an understanding that he deserved nothing less than God's eternal wrath and judgment. He is asking God for what he does not deserve and cannot obtain. He is asking God to remember him in His mercy; let him come under His propitiation; let him be found in His (eternal) mercy and grace.

David, the Psalmist, desired the same thing of Christ.

Look at Psalm 106: 4-5 **“Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation; Ps 106:5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.”**

Look back at Luke 23: 42 **“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”**

Consider some things with me that these comments by this penitent thief reveal about his understanding of Christ. These are not the comments; this not the prayer; these are not the words of a DESPARATE man. They are, rather, the words of a man who sees his own sinner-hood. They are the words of one who sees his need for mercy from One which he acknowledges to be God.

Although Christ did not (at this point) look anything like a King or a Lord, this thief addressed Him by His RIGHTFUL title. He acknowledged Him as Lord. He confessed what every regenerate sinner will confess in time, as well as, what all will confess at some point.

Look at Philippians 2: 10-11 **“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

All (w/o exception) will acknowledge Christ by His RIGHTFUL title. ALL will confess Him to be Lord. The Regenerate sinner will confess Him in time. They will confess Him as the LORD, OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Those who die in unbelief will confess Him in eternity. They will confess Him to be the (rightful) Lord, of eternal judgment.

Look at I Corinthians 12: 3 **“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”**

A person ðaccursedö is a person ðdoomed to destructionö. All of us by nature (ignorantly) call Jesus ðaccursedö. Who (in their theology) calls Jesus ðaccursedö? One does who fails to say what the scriptures say about Him. One does so who fails to recognize Jesus as God and man in one Person. One does so who declares that Jesus failed to save every sinner He died for. To do so is attributing failure to the Incarnate Son of God. It is to say Christ failed to do the ONE thing He came to do, ðSave His people from their sinsö. So, when sinners say these things, they are not ðspeaking by the Spirit of Godö.

Look back at I Corinthians 12: 3 **“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”**

This is not saying that a lost (unregenerate) sinner cannot use the titles of Jesus and Lord. By nature we all call one Jesus who is NOT Lord. We call one Lord who is NOT the Jesus of the Scriptures. But, no unregenerate sinner can acknowledge the Jesus of the Scriptures to be Lord. It takes a sinner born of the Spirit; one ðtaught of Godö; one with the persuasion of (true) faith to do that. Doctrine identifies the ðJesusö you are calling ðLordö. Is he God and man in one Person? Did He die for all or for (only) for those He was given? Did His death (itself) accomplish the complete salvation of every sinner He died for? Or, did his death just provide the POSSIBILITY of salvation to those who meet the condition?

Look back at Luke 23: 42 ð“**And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”**

These words ðremember me whenö testify that the penitent thief understands something about Christ's death and about his (own) death. He understands that Christ's death is not the end for Him. There is more beyond the grave. I.e. He is expecting Christ to be, (acknowledging that Christ WILL BE), resurrected from the dead.

These words, also, acknowledge that this sinner knows that death is not the end for HIMSELF. He understands that HE will live beyond the grave; that HE will live beyond physical death. Everyone I know believes that there is life beyond the grave.

Look back at Luke 23: 42 ð“**And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”**

The penitent thief acknowledged Christ to be Lord. He acknowledged that Christ would be resurrected, as would he. Next, he acknowledges that Christ has a kingdom. **“Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”** He is not speaking about a (physical) kingdom of this world, but rather, a spiritual kingdom of the next world (a world beyond physical death). Christ said the same thing of His kingdom to Pilate.

Look at John 18: 36 “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”

Remember, this penitent thief has already stated the TRUTH concerning Christ's death: I.e. That Christ was not on the Cross because of any wrong doing on His part. “He has done nothing amiss.” He was there because of the sins of His people (charged) to Him. He was there to ACCOMPLISH (their) salvation. He was there establishing a “kingdom” FOR THEM. He was there EARNING the right to REIGN (to be LORD) over that kingdom.

This thief knew what Moses and Elijah knew and stated on the Mount of Transfiguration. Do you remember what they “spoke about” on that Mount?

Look at Luke 9: 30-31 “And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: 31 Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

How can I know that I am not wrong here in my assessment of this dying, penitent thief's standing with God? How can I know that I am not reading more into his comments than are there?

Two reasons: First, because his comments are not those of a NATURAL, but, a SPIRITUAL man. I have shown you that HE (only) said what the scriptures say about Christ's Lordship, His death, His resurrection, His right to a Kingdom; Him EARNING His people's place in that Kingdom. But, in case that is not enough, there is GREATER proof. I can know (with CERTAINTY) by Christ's reply to his plea. I can know (without a doubt) by Christ's response to his prayer.

Look at Luke 23: 43 “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

That (very) day (the day of Christ's death/the day of his death) this penitent sinner entered the “city of the living God” and joined “the spirits of just men made perfect”.

Look at Hebrews 12: 22-24a “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant,”

The “spirits of just men made perfect” are those who have died in the Lord, and are in heaven awaiting Christ's return and their spiritual bodies.

Christ comes to His own in every generation. And, His own are those who (like this penitent thief) receive Him, embrace Him, and rest in Him alone. That is what John, the Apostle said of those Christ came to.

Look at John 1: 10-12 **“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:”**

Those who receive Christ are given õpowerõ (right/privilege) to become known as õthe sons of Godõ. Their coming does not MAKE them sons. Their coming REVEALS them to (already) be sons. That is why they receive Christ. Why do THEY come, and not others?

Look at John 1: 13 **“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”**

Why do some receive Christ? They do so because they are õborn or Godõ.

The Bible makes many statements about Christõs sheep. õMy sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give eternal life to them and they shall never perish.õ õThey shall be all taught of God.õ

This penitent thief was fulfilling one of the most (emphatic) statements Christ made concerning those GIVEN to Him by His Father before the world began.

Look at John 6: 35-37 **“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. 36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”**

When a sinner hears of Christ in the Gospel and comes to Him, rests in Him, finds all his hope and confidence IN HIM, when a sinner does that, what is that sinner doing? They are REVEALING themselves to be sheep.

There are two thieves in this story. By their comments to Christ each one REVEALED their standing with God. They did not CHANGE their standing. They REVEALED it.

Do you call Christ Lord because it is a TITLE you see the Bible commanding you to use? Or, are you calling Lord One who EARNED the right to that title and kingdom by His perfect satisfaction to Godõs law and justice on behalf of a multitude of sinners to the glory of His Father. Are you calling One Lord who was raised from the dead because He had done EVERYTHING necessary for God to be Just when He justifies (declares righteous) otherwise, ungodly sinners?

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