

The Incomparable Christ

"Jesus said to him, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.'"

Luke 23:43

Today we look again at this remarkable scene of Jesus and the repentant thief speaking to each other. This beloved story has several remarkable things to say about Jesus.

We know that Jesus being with a pair of criminals in death was to fulfil a prophecy made hundreds of years earlier. Isaiah 53:12 says, "He was numbered with the transgressors." Or it might be translated, "He permitted himself to be numbered with the transgressors."

In Luke 22:37 Jesus quotes Isaiah 53:12 and goes on to say, "...and I tell you this must be fulfilled in me." (NIV). So it is perfectly clear to us that Jesus wanted it known, before it happened, that He would die in the company of criminals.

When people come to their last days they greatly desire to have loved ones near. Many wish the preacher to come and pray with them and read comforting Scriptures. I well recall my mother telling my siblings and myself that she desired to have her children around her when she left for heaven. We saw to it

that all three of us were there.

Has it occurred to you that when Jesus came to die His companion in death was a criminal? The apostles were very brave behind closed doors and vowed to stay with Jesus to the death if necessary, however, when push came to shove they all forsook Him and fled.

The disciple whom Jesus loved was at the cross but he did not speak up concerning his relationship to the Saviour. Only this repentant thief had the courage to name Christ as His Saviour before the jeering mob.

It seems that at first the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and ministered to His needs were standing far off from the Lord's cross (Matthew 27:55; Mark 15:40; Luke 23:49).

John 19:25 hints that the women drew nearer possibly when it appeared they would not be harmed by the Romans or the Jews.

It is truly amazing to realise that the person Jesus picked to be His companion in death was a condemned man. Our

Lord did this to indicate to the world that He had come to reclaim sinners. He desired everyone to understand that His mission was to die in the place of sinners and give them the forgiveness they could not obtain any other way.

Jesus was with the condemned at His death and then a rich man used his own tomb for the burial of Jesus' body. So we learn that our Lord is interested in people at both ends of the social ladder and also those in between.

The thief freely admitted that he deserved to die for his sins. Yet in Jesus he saw hope for forgiveness and redemption. This man's example of speaking with hope to Jesus is good for all of us to follow.

Come to Jesus whoever you are, rich or poor, socially acceptable or outcast. He will give you what He gave this man. Jesus will answer your prayer today. Our Lord is the Incomparable Christ.

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