

# Redwater Restorer

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness..." (Matthew 3:3)*

Volume 1

No.23

November 11, 2003

## The Thief On The Cross

### Published By:

Redwater  
Church of Christ

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Sunday  
Bible Class 10:00 a.m.  
AM Worship 10:45 a.m.  
PM Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday  
Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

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It has been my observation for many years that a multitude of people need a better insight into the case of the penitent thief that died on a cross on Mount Calvary. There were three crosses on Calvary when Jesus of Nazareth died, one on which he died, and two on which two thieves died. "And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors" (Mark 15:27-28).

### One Repented

At first, both of the thieves on Mount Calvary spoke against Jesus. "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth" (Matthew 27:44). The Greek of this verse is literally translated, **reproached, upbraided**, etc.

Evidently one of the thieves was more outspoken in his upbraiding of the Lord, because Dr. Luke's account says, "And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us" (Luke 23:39). When he did this the other thief rebuked him saying:

"But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:40-43).

One of the thieves on Calvary repented. Jesus referred to the place he and that thief were going as paradise. But Jesus went into Hades.

On Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus, Peter taught that the soul of Jesus went into Hades while his body was in the grave (Acts 2:31).

**Hell** in Acts 2:31 is from Greek **Hades**, or the place not seen. Hell is sometimes translated from the Greek **gehenna** in the New Testament which means the place of eternal punishment.

There is a good part of Hades, and a bad part. There is a gulf between the two as we learn in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). **Hell** of Luke 16:22 in which the rich man was from Greek **Hades**. So, the rich man was in the bad part of Hades, and Lazarus was in the good part or Abraham's bosom as it is called in Luke 16:22. Obviously, **Abraham's bosom** is a figurative way to refer to what Jesus called **paradise** in Luke 23:43.

### Evidently Saved

Evidently, that penitent thief on Calvary was saved. Many use this fact to try to prove that one need not be baptized to be saved because they say if the thief could be saved without being baptized, people can now be saved without being baptized. People say this even though Jesus told his apostles "... Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). Jesus did not say, "He that believeth and looks to the example of the thief on the cross shall be saved." Neither did Jesus say, "He that believeth and is **not** baptized shall be saved, because I saved the thief on the cross without his being baptized."

Actually, we cannot know that the thief on the cross had not been baptized. He evidently was a Jew who had considerable knowledge of Christ and what he had said about his kingdom that he was soon to establish. He certainly must have known Jesus well for he spoke the truth about Jesus. He said Jesus had done nothing amiss! Even a dying thief testified concerning the innocence of Jesus of Nazareth. From the mouth of a malefactor, who spoke from the cross where he soon died, came one of the sweetest messages that has ever been uttered.

## *The Thief On The Cross (Cont.)*

This message was: "Jesus was innocent! Jesus was sinless!"

### **Was He Baptized?**

Being a Jew, the penitent thief was one of God's children under the law of Moses. He was an erring child of God under that covenant.

John the Baptizer preached as the forerunner of Jesus in an attempt to get the erring Jews to turn back to their God (Luke 1:17). John baptized the erring Jews for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4). The penitent thief who died on a cross when Jesus died may have been baptized with John's baptism before he was crucified. He could have been baptized with John's baptism for the remission of sins and then got into trouble by stealing. One cannot prove that the penitent thief on the cross was baptized with John's baptism. But, one cannot prove he was not baptized either.

People are without excuse who try to make void all that is said in the Bible on the subject of water baptism by introducing the case of the thief on the cross. They should know that the thief did not live in the Christian dispensation. When Jesus told the thief: "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise," the Mosaic age had not ended, and he could exercise his power to forgive and save as he saw fit. The testament of Christ became of force after his death (Hebrews 9:16-17).

### **Pentecost "The Beginning"**

Through the apostle Peter the Holy Spirit called the day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Jesus "the beginning" (Acts 11:15). Obviously it was the beginning of the Christian dispensation or the Church Age, for on that day the Lord established his church in Jerusalem (Act 2).

On the day of Pentecost which was "the beginning" Peter told convicted believers in Christ to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins and that they would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-38). Peter did not tell them to look to the thief on the cross and be saved like he was. Why? Because it was "the beginning." On that day the Gospel of Christ was preached for the first time in the name of Jesus (Luke 24:47). That is why Peter told those who

heard and believed the Gospel to repent and be baptized so that their sins could be forgiven through the precious blood of Christ.

### **Not A Case Of Conversion For Today**

There is not a case of conversion recorded in the Book of Acts where a preacher or anyone else mentioned the penitent thief on the cross, or where anyone was told he could be saved like that thief was saved. Instead, those who were converted and saved according to Acts all heard the same Gospel and there is abundant evidence they were baptized into Christ in order to receive forgiveness of their sins.

No Christians were told in the many letters or epistles of the New Testament that they had been saved as the thief on the cross was saved. Instead, many times in these epistles the holy writers made it clear that those Christians whom they addressed had been baptized to be saved through the precious blood of Jesus.

Inspired preachers did not point the lost to a thief on a cross; they pointed them to Christ on a cross!

If you are not a Christian do not be deceived into thinking you can be saved as that thief on that cross was saved. Instead, please believe in Jesus and repent and be baptized in his name for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

Mark Miller

If you are interested in any of the following please check the appropriate box and mail to the address below. Please include return address and phone number if possible.

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