

INVESTIGATIVE BIBLE DISCUSSION

Luke 23:32-49

[32] Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. [33] When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left. [34] Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

[35] The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One."

[36] The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar [37] and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

[38] There was a written notice above him, which read: this is the king of the jews.

[39] One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

[40] But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? [41] We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

[42] Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

[43] Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

[44] It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour, [45] for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. [46] Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

[47] The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." [48] When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. [49] But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Questions

1. Highlight the main and minor characters
2. Where or when does the story take place?
3. What are the key events, activities or ideas presented in this passage?
4. How did the characters respond to Jesus personally, to what he said, or to what they saw?
5. How is Jesus described (by himself or others, claims made, character traits displayed)?
6. What values were taught/demonstrated by Jesus?
7. What truths/principles, were taught or demonstrated by Jesus?
8. What conclusions or observations can you draw?

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BACKGROUND

The superscription over Jesus' head read in full, "This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." It was written in 3 languages: Aramaic, Latin and Greek. Normally the superscription noted the crime. Here it was a title given by Pilate as a response to the Jewish leaders.

The mocking of Jesus by the various groups of people had 2 things in common: a) They mocked his claim of Messiah and b) they challenged him to come down from the cross.

At the time of his death, 3 events took place as recorded in the gospel records. The temple veil was torn from top to bottom – signifying access to God by all people through Christ. There was a significant earthquake. Tombs of recently deceased saints were opened.

KEY WORDS

Place called the Skull: It was the location of Christ's execution. The exact location is not known. It was near Jerusalem and outside the city.

Casting lots: Probably throwing dice, lottery system. There were four soldiers at a crucifixion and 5 pieces of garments. The seamless tunic was put into the lottery rather than being divided.

Christ of God, Chosen One: Terms referring to his claim to be the Messiah.

Sixth hour: 12:00 noon. His crucifixion began at 9:00 a.m. and was over by 3:00 p.m.

Temple curtain: The cloth curtain that separated the Holy area of the temple from the most sacred area called the Holy of Holies. It was Jewish belief that God's presence was in the Holy of Holies.