



**The DAILY JESUS NEWS #322**  
**Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement**

**Jesus' Atoning Sacrifice On the Cross**

**While Mocked by the Crowd, Jesus Promises Eternal Life to a Penitent Thief (Saying #2)**  
**MK 15.29-30; LK 23. 35-37, 39-43(Parallel Texts: MT 27.39-44; MK 15.31-32)**

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<sup>M</sup>Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying,

“So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, come down from the cross and save yourself, <sup>MT</sup>since you are the Son of God!”

LK 23.35-37, 39-43

35 In the same way, <sup>L</sup>the people stood watching, <sup>MT</sup>and the chief priests, the teachers of the Law and the elders mocking him--<sup>L</sup>and the rulers sneered at him. They said,

“He saved others; but he cannot save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let <sup>M</sup>this Christ <sup>MT</sup>come down now from the cross, that we may <sup>M</sup>see and <sup>MT</sup>believe in him.

“HE TRUSTS IN GOD. LET GOD RESCUE HIM NOW, IF HE DELIGHTS IN HIM’ (Ps. 22.8), for he said: ‘I AM the son of God.’

<sup>L</sup>“Let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.”

36 The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37 and said, “Since you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”

<sup>M</sup>In the same way the bandits who were crucified with him were also heaping insults on him.

39 One of the criminals who hung there continued to hurl blasphemies at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”

40 But then 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, I plead with you to remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

43 Jesus answered him, *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This “superscript ID” is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible

book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	Golgotha, Outside the Western City Gates of Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement
	Jesus' Atoning Sacrifice on the Cross
Title:	(Saying Two) While Mocked by the Crowd, Jesus Promises Eternal Life to a Repentant Thief

Today's reading contains the second saying of Jesus on the cross, that reveals another major purpose of his death. Jesus spoke it in the context of blasphemy against him, as he was viciously mocked and excoriated by the crowd. We will consider the mocking first. Remember, Jesus had been mocked three times already in the worst way during and after his trials. Now the mob at the cross took ridicule of him to new level.

The narrative emphasizes the viciousness of the mocking in two different ways. First, note the way the gospel writers showed us four different groups of people joining into the verbal abuse of Jesus in succession. This progression created a sense a powerful cumulative impact. Who were these four groups?

First, Mark and Matthew pointed out that the people who were streaming by on the road into Jerusalem mocked Jesus. As they came up to Golgotha and saw three men crucified there, they didn't focus on the two outlaws who had threatened their lives when they were free. No, they hurled their abuse at the Lord of Glory! Next, the text shows us the Jewish leaders and people who had come from Jerusalem to observe Jesus' crucifixion mocking him mercilessly. Then, the soldiers on site joined in. Finally, the two bandits on their crosses beside Jesus added their jeers. The progression moved from those furthest away from Jesus to those were closest to him, in concentric waves of blasphemy.

The content of the mocking also shows us its devilish viciousness. It was pure irony. They had no idea that they were speaking the truth in some of what they said, but for the wrong reasons. The said he could save others, but not himself. This was solid truth, but not because he lacked the power to save himself, as they thought. Jesus was righteous, and he was love. Because he was righteous, he had no need to save himself. Because Jesus was love, he could not leave his enemies in a state of certain destruction in hell. He HAD to save them. In order to save them, he could not save himself. He had already prayed through this at Gethsemane. There was no other way to be able to forgive his enemies other than dying for them.

His mockers claimed that if Jesus came down from the cross, they would believe in him. That was a patent lie, for Jesus rose from the dead three days later--a far greater miracle than coming down off the cross. His mockers did not immediately believe in after they heard about his resurrection. Still, this false temptation hit Jesus hard.

The ultimate content of the mocking was the Scriptures. The chief priests quoted Ps. 22.8 to Jesus: "He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now, since he delights in him." This was the most vicious blow they could strike against Jesus. Jesus' ministry began with Satan tempting him by misquoting Scripture (Ps.

91.11-12), urging him to leap from the upper parapet of the Temple in Jerusalem. His earthly ministry ended on the cross, with his enemies also misquoting Scripture in an attempt to deter him from doing his Father's will. Using the very Scripture that predicted his sufferings to mock and ridicule Jesus was the lowest blow of all. (No wonder Jesus came back to this Scripture again later in his 4<sup>th</sup> saying on the cross.)

We have seen that both of the bandits began their time on the cross mocking Jesus. Jesus responded by continuing to pray for his enemies to be forgiven. This apparently had an impact on one of the thieves. As he observed the difference between the mocking crowd, the soldiers, he and his bandit buddy, and Jesus, his mind began to work, and his heart opened up. He had never seen anybody love like Jesus! The "king of the Jews" was praying for his forgiveness, too. Who does that? Only the LORD God.

The more the crowd mocked Jesus, the more this bandit became convinced of his own sinfulness, and Jesus' righteous godliness. Soon he could take it no more. He cried out to the other bandit in defense of Jesus, and in confession of his own sin. Then, he pleaded urgently for Jesus to include him in his Kingdom.

This was a shining moment of joy for Jesus on the cross. He was giving his life in payment for our sins, along with being forgiven, we might all have eternal life through faith in him as our Savior and Lord. Jesus therefore issued an unconditional promise of eternal life in paradise to the penitent, believing bandit.

"Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

This saying from Jesus was given to one man, but it illustrated the constant promise of eternal life to every person who believes in him that was a central feature of Jesus' preaching. Jesus was nailed to the cross so that we might have his life, shared with him in paradise, forever!

#### APPLICATION:

Just as Jesus on the cross gave us the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins through his prayer, he also gave us the assurance of eternal life through the example of his promise to the believing bandit.

Every person is ultimately like one of the two bandits crucified at the same time as Jesus. Either we believe in him and receive eternal life with him in paradise, or we mock the salvation Jesus purchased with his death by disbelieving in Him.

Our response to the meaning of Jesus' death is the key issue that will determine our relationship with him. Either Jesus died as our Substitute, or he simply died the way we all die. Believing in the saving power of Jesus' death is to believe the truth, according to Jesus.

What do you believe about the meaning of Jesus' death? Did his death purchase eternal life for you, just as it did for the penitent bandit?

If you have not yet decided your answer to this question, we plead with you to believe Jesus' own explanation of his death. Jesus believed that he died to give everyone who believes in him eternal life.

*Believe in him right now, by telling him of your faith in him and asking him for his forgiveness in prayer.*

*If you DO believe that Jesus died to give you eternal life, then a combination of praise, thanksgiving, love, and worship of him are the only way to respond. How will you do that today?*