

The Story of Hope #17
The Perfect Payment
Luke 23:32-49
Story of Hope Section 30-31
1.14.2018

Now that Judas is out of the room and into the night, Jesus concludes the last Passover feast in a very intimate way. Speaking dearly to the eleven, He institutes a new type of remembrance. Jesus picks up a cup of wine and some bread. This cup is the third cup of wine that is drunk during the Passover meal. It comes after the main course. It is called The Cup of Redemption. In the Jewish Passover it was symbolic of the blood of the lamb that was sacrificed at the first Passover in Egypt.

Jesus now identifies Himself with this cup. He would give his life up, just like the lamb in Egypt. His blood, however, would become the symbol of new and different kind of covenant. It would not just save one group of people from temporary punishment, His blood would be the payment for the sins of the world.

Once the meal is over Jesus and His disciples, minus Judas, leave and travel to a garden outside the city. Judas, knowing where Jesus would likely go, hurriedly presents himself to the chief priests. Jesus had 'outed' him as the betrayer, and so the plan that the religious leaders were hoping would not happen during Passover, was now forced into effect by Jesus. The chief priests send Judas to the governor Pontius Pilate as a witness to the accusations against Jesus. In order to keep peace during the Passover, Pilate released a band, or cohort, of Roman soldiers to aid in the capture of Jesus.

Picture the scene in your head. There in the garden is Jesus, along with his disciples. They are met by this cohort of Roman soldiers, along with officers from the chief priests and some of the Pharisees. A cohort of Roman soldiers was between 500 and 600 soldiers. If you add to that the delegation of religious leaders, this is a large group!

Jesus takes charge of the situation and asks who they are looking for. They answer, "Jesus of Nazareth." When Jesus answers, "I am He", everybody falls back! Imagine the noise. A group of 500-600 soldiers falling backwards. This is not a man being captured. This is not a man who was manipulated or deceived into a trap. At any time Jesus could have simply walked away from this crowd. He could have called down angels to defend him, but He didn't. That wasn't the plan. This was a man, a God-man who was giving up his life. **This was a man about to carry out the final act of a plan. He would be the perfect sacrifice, a way for perfect peace.**

Jesus is bound and taken to the house of the high priest, Caiaphas. It is here that the leaders of Israel spend the night testing Jesus. They spin story after story, accusation, after accusation, but nothing sticks.

Jerusalem was being ruled by the Roman Empire, so the temple leaders could not execute Jesus without permission from the Roman governor, a man named Pontius Pilate. They make up a charge that Jesus is a rebel king stirring up revolution against the Roman emperor.

Pilate can see that Jesus is an innocent man and doesn't deserve death; but the leaders of Israel keep insisting that he is dangerous. So they negotiate a compromise. Pilate will release an actual rebel against Rome, a man named Barabbas instead of Jesus. The innocent is handed over in place of the guilty. Jesus is taken away with two rebels to be put to death.

People mock Jesus. "If you are really the king, if you are really The Rescuer, then rescue yourself and rescue us," they say. Rescuing Himself would have been possible for Jesus. In fact, this would be just what Satan would have wanted. Jesus doesn't do it. Instead, He endured the shame and ridicule. Both of the criminals initially join the crowd in their ridicule of Jesus. Then, there is a turn, a realization or a change of heart in one of the criminals. He turns to Jesus and we get this crazy interaction.

The two rebels look at Jesus in two opposite ways. The first rebel continues to ridicule Jesus, but the other tells him to stop. The one rebel turns to Jesus and asks to be remembered in His Kingdom. Jesus turns to the true rebel and grants him stay in His Kingdom. "Today," he says "we will be together in Paradise."

This interaction is one of the most simple and profound expressions of how one becomes right with God. How one becomes rescued. This rebel had done nothing to deserve to be with Jesus in Paradise. He had no time to be baptized. There were no sacrifices made. He most definitely didn't lead a good life. There was no time to "get his act together." He simply was who he was.

This was a man laying bare before God, recognizing himself as a sinner, unable to save himself. This rebel recognizes Jesus as being without sin, and his only hope. He recognizes Jesus as God's way. He believes that Jesus is capable of saving him. Even though he can see that Jesus is dying, he believes that Jesus would be King and asks that he be remembered in Jesus's Kingdom.

In supernatural suddenness, darkness covers the whole land. Luke says that the sun's light failed. It stays this way for three hours. The mocking stopped, the insults were hushed, the beatings and scourging were over. Yet, that was nothing compared to the separating that Jesus was now enduring. God was pouring wrath meant for all humanity onto Jesus. The one without sin was making a payment for the one with sin.

As the Rescuer, Jesus Was the Perfect Payment. Jesus was the perfect payment for the sins of the world. He was the answer, the solution that God promised when Adam and Eve sinned in the garden. He alone fulfilled each of the prophecies, and He alone offered himself up as a sinless sacrifice. **The One Without Sin Dies in the Place of the One With Sin.**