

When you read about some of the jaw-dropping events in the Bible, have you ever wanted to go back and witness them in person?

Which Old Testament one would you like to experience?

- The sights of this world’s first 6 days and the Creator’s craftsmanship and creativity?
- The sounds of animals filing two-by-two into Noah’s ark?
- The feel of the ground shaking as the original David versus Goliath match-up finds Goliath, all 9 feet of him, face-planting on the ground from David’s perfectly placed stone?

Or, would you prefer the New Testament? Imagine experiencing the Friday that we have come to know as “Good.”

- The sight of 3-hours of total darkness at the time of the day when the sun is at its highest and brightest.
- The sound of forgiveness offered by the man on the middle cross to those who put him there, when most crucifixion victims are cursing the people who put them there.
- The feel of the earth quaking during those quiet mid-day hours of total darkness.

Today’s Gospel takes us to Good Friday to experience the crucifixion of a King. And as we do, we’ll learn two things about **The Crucified King**: *He won’t save himself. He will promise paradise.*

It was shortly after 9:30 am, early spring of 33 AD, on the road leading into Jerusalem. Three crosses stood in full-view of all who passed by. Spiked to the wooden timbers and suspended above the ground, were 2 criminals and 1 Christ.

On this Friday morning, hundreds stood watching while hundreds more passed by. The religious rulers were the first to break the silence with their sarcastic remark: **“He saved others. Let him save himself, if this is the Christ of God, the Chosen One!”**

They were right! He had saved others. He had saved some from sickness, disease and blindness. He had saved some from death, while others he brought back from the dead. Without knowing it, these Jewish leaders, fulfilled this prophecy of Psalm 22: **All who see me mock me. They sneer. They shake their heads. They say: “Trust in the Lord. Let the Lord rescue him, if he delights in him.”**

The verbal abuse directed at Jesus wasn’t only from his own people. The Roman soldiers made him their target too: **“If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”**

How would they have known about Jesus’ claim to be King of the Jews? Everyone knew it. It was printed in big letters, above his head, in three languages: Aramaic, for the locals; Latin for the soldiers and Greek for everyone else. It testifies to all people, from all places, for all time.

Every criminal’s charge was posted on their cross. That’s one of the purposes for crucifixion. Besides inflicting excruciating pain, it was a powerful deterrent for whoever passed by. They’d read the crime and think twice about committing the crime!

So what was Jesus’ crime? It was abbreviated in Latin – INRI. Spelled out: *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum*. Jesus from Nazareth ... *crucified for the crime of being ... the King of the Jews.*

Here you sit shortly after 9:30 am, late fall of 2022 AD, knowing all this all happened because of you and for you. You hear the sarcasm of the Jewish leaders: **“He saved others; let him save himself.”** That is Jesus’ predicament! He did save others, like us, the miserable sinners we are. He had to suffer hell for us. He had to die to rescue us. In order to be **Our Crucified King**, he couldn't save himself.

You also hear the ridicule of the Roman soldiers: **“If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.”** Again, that’s Jesus problem! Jesus is the King of the Jews and the King of the world he helped

create. A good king will put his life on the line to protect and fight for his people. Our King Jesus, put his life on the line for us. He led the charge against the enemies we were helpless to defeat – sin, death and the devil. He put his body on the cross, until it became a corpse to deliver us. In order to be ***Our Crucified King***, he couldn't save himself.

- It was your fascination with sin and mine, that stretched him out on a cross.
- It was your angry words, and mine, that led soldiers to take spikes and a hammer and attach Jesus' body to the wooden timbers.
- It was your impure thoughts, and mine, that left him gasping for air on the cross, at noon, in the dark.
- It was your inconsiderate actions, and mine, that had him suffer the agony of hell on the cross.

Your Crucified King valued you and your soul so much:

- that before he made the world he knew your name, and your sin, and he still developed a plan for you to live with him eternally!
- that he left his throne behind, where he had been perfectly content for all eternity, to come to this imperfect world as a baby for you!
- that he spent 33 years surrounded by sin, tempted to sin, to forgive all of your sin!
- that he accepted your guilt, suffered your penalty, died your death and was damned to hell for it!

Your Crucified King willingly paid the price for your forgiveness.

The taunting went on for some time that morning, so it shouldn't surprise us that one of the criminals decided to add his own two cents: ***"Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"***

The other criminal, though, experienced a change of heart. Somehow the Holy Spirit reached him. Maybe he remembered God's Word, or Jesus' own testimony, or the message of the witnesses. Whatever it was, this man came to trust Jesus during the final moments of his life.

This new believer responded back: ***"Don't you fear God, since you are under the same condemnation?"*** He correctly identifies the One between them as God. What a powerful personal confession.

He continued: ***"We are punished justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for what we have done."*** He's a sinner and he owned up to it. Another powerful personal confession!

He's not quite done: ***"This man has done nothing wrong!"*** This time he correctly identifies the One between them as sinless. A third powerful personal confession!

The one who defended Jesus now makes this request of Jesus: ***"Remember me when you come into your kingdom."*** A plea for mercy from the only One who could possibly demonstrate mercy. It doesn't get any more personal or powerful than this!

Jesus responds with a fantastic promise: ***"Today you will be with me in paradise."*** When a believer dies – there's no purgatory, no pause, no delay – God immediately retrieves the soul forever.

This repentant criminal was right about you. Your sins mark you as a perfect candidate for death by crucifixion. Mine do too.

This repentant criminal was also right about Jesus. As the sinless Son of God, he's the only one who could deliver on the fantastic promise to all who trust in him: ***"Today you will be with me in paradise."***

While you're living, depend on the only King whose power and love reaches out and touches you here. When you're dying, depend on the only King who can transport you immediately to paradise.

Due to time and place, it's not possible to be at Calvary on Good Friday. It's still a trip you'll want to make every week, at church, and every day, in your Bible. That's where you meet ***Your Crucified King!***