

## A Simple Plan

(Luke 23:26-49)

### Introduction

1. [Series] Resonate: Tune into Jesus' frequency to experience the power of the gospel & impact the culture.
2. On the surface, it seems like God's simple plan for Jesus' life & ministry has gone wrong.
  - a. Jesus' final week: (Sun) welcomed into Jerusalem; (Mon) clears the Temple of sin & false worship; (Tue & Wed) teaches at the Temple re: the Kingdom of God & His authority; (Thu) Jesus instructs His followers how to remain faithful to Him, and to be His Kingdom community when He's gone.
  - b. (Fri) Jesus is arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to execution by crucifixion.

### Who is guilty? [Luke 23:26-31]

1. [26] Historical details
  - a. Jesus is so physically weak from scourging, a man is pressed into service to help carry the cross beam.
2. [27-30] Mourn those who are genuinely guilty
  - a. [27] Mourners seem distraught as the hope for liberation & the coming King & Kingdom is withering away.
  - b. [28] Jesus tells them not to mourn for Him, but for themselves & their children. Why?
    - i. Traditional paid mourners are not likely to be genuinely mourning for Him.
    - ii. "Daughters of Jerusalem": They're not His followers from Galilee, but residents from the capital city, representing Israel, who want a political Messiah but reject the King who brings spiritual redemption.
  - c. [29] The normal category of children as a blessing (cf. Psa 127:3-5) will be reversed because of the coming judgment on all Jerusalem/Israel for rejecting Jesus (including women & children, cf. Luke 21:22-24).
  - d. [30] The magnitude of justice for their sin will be so great, they will desire quick death to be put out of misery.
3. [31] Jesus' analogy
  - a. If green/innocent wood is not spared (the Son/King), then how much worse will it be for the spiritually dry, dead wood of sinful, rejecting Israel?
  - b. Though Jesus is condemned, He is innocent. Those who reject Him are the guilty ones, and will suffer far worse in judgment.
  - c. Issue: Who is really guilty (and condemned), and who is innocent?

### The response of Jesus [Luke 23:32-34]

1. [32-33] Crucifixion
  - a. [32] Jesus is led away with two convicted criminals on death row (fulfilling Isa 53:12b).
  - b. [33] At the place of the Skull, they crucified Him (fulfilling prophecy; cf. Luke 20:13-15; Isa 53:5-6).
  - c. A horrific form of execution.
    - i. 7" spikes driven below wrists & ankles, but they don't bleed to death.
    - ii. Hung naked under the brutal Palestinian sun, wasting away from the exposure.
    - iii. As they grow tired/weak, they slump so that they cannot breathe; death by exposure & asphyxiation.
    - iv. It requires one to agonizingly pull up on the spikes until too weak to make the effort.
  - d. Outside of the gospels, Jesus' death is historically recorded: Mara bar Serapion (Stoic philosopher of Syria); Josephus (Hellenistic Jew); Tacitus (Roman senator/historian); Babylonian Talmud (Jewish rabbinic writings).
2. What does God direct our attention to in this text?
  - a. Luke's audience would be very familiar with this type of brutal execution, but Luke chooses not to focus on the gory details.

- b. Luke does record evidence of fulfilled Scriptures/prophecy
    - i. Verses 32 (cf. Isa 53:12b); 33 (Luke 20:13-15; Isa 53:5-6); 34a (Isa 53:12c); 34b (Psa 22:18); 35 (Psa 22:7-8); 36 (Psa 69:21); 46 (Psa 31:5)
    - ii. Many references in the other gospels (e.g., John 19:31-37; unbroken bones [cf. Psa 34:20; Exo 12:46; Num 9:12] & side pierced [Zec 12:10]).
    - iii. But he does not highlight them (as John's gospel does) because he writes to a Gentile audience.
  - c. Instead, Scriptures focus on Jesus' response, and that of the people.
3. [34] Jesus' response
- a. Jesus prays for His enemies, asking His Father to forgive all who declare themselves enemies (cf Isa 53:12c).
  - b. Application: How do you need to resonate with Jesus in praying for enemies & forgiving them?
  - c. Forgiving enemies of God: Jesus came, living a sinless life to suffer & die. He takes our sin & punishment and puts them on Himself, and in exchange, puts His righteousness & life on us.

### **The response of rejection [Luke 23:35-39]**

- 1. [35a] The crowd stand back, watching to see how it all plays out.
- 2. [35b-39] Mockers
  - a. [35b] Religious leaders scoff: "Save others? If You're the Christ King, save Yourself!" (cf. Psa 22:7-8).
  - b. [36] Roman soldiers mock & prolong Jesus' suffering with sour wine (cf. Psa 69:21).
    - i. [37] Again: "If You're King of the Jews, save Yourself."
    - ii. [38] They post a sign, describing Jesus' "crime" & mocking Him.
  - c. [39] Even one of the crucified criminals: "If You're the Christ, save Yourself (& us)!"
- 3. Response of rejection: 3 times, Jesus is mocked/challenged.
  - a. "If You're the Christ King": i.e., I don't believe You are who You say You are.
  - b. "Then save Yourself": i.e., I don't believe You can do what You claim You can do.
  - c. Assumption: If Jesus can't even save Himself, how can He possibly save/redeem others?
- 4. Application: Do you believe Jesus is who He says; that He can do what He says?
  - a. If we believe Jesus is King, we must submit to His lordship over every area of our life.
  - b. If we believe Jesus saves/redeems, bring Him every area of brokenness, sin, & hurt where we're enslaved.

### **The response of faith [Luke 23:40-43]**

- 1. [40] One criminal rebukes the other for his mocking rejection of Jesus.
  - a. [Matt 27:44] Both criminals join the crowd in mocking Jesus, but something has changed in one of them.
  - b. In his brief exposure to Jesus, he genuinely sees Him: His sinless response to enemies, His prayer & forgiveness; the Holy Spirit convicts him.
- 2. Turning to Jesus
  - a. [41] Confession of repentance
    - i. He doesn't rationalize his crime or blame others.
    - ii. He understands he is guilty of his crimes/sin, which deserve death.
    - iii. But he also understands that Jesus is innocent & sinless.
  - b. [42] Confession of faith
    - i. "Your Kingdom": He declares Jesus to be the eternal God & King (cf. Dan 7:13-14) who will overcome the grave to rule His eternal Kingdom.
    - ii. "Remember me": He asks the King to save him at the resurrection of the dead, when Jesus rules His Kingdom.
  - c. [43] Jesus' response
    - i. You won't have to wait; by repenting & turning to Me in faith, you'll be with Me in the Kingdom of Heaven today (cf. Luke 14:12-24; 16:22; 19:9-10).
- 3. Application: To follow Jesus, we confess in repentance and faith.
  - a. We are in the same boat as the criminal, categorically the same, sinful under a death sentence.
  - b. As Jesus calls out to you & the Holy Spirit convicts you from sin to life, you can come to Him today, through simple confessions of repentance & faith.
  - c. Repent: I sin, deserving death. I can't enter the Kingdom on my own. But Jesus is sinless, holy, innocent.

- d. Faith: You're King/Lord; I submit to You. You're eternal God; I worship You. You're Savior; please save me.

### **Conclusion [Luke 23:44-49]**

1. [44-45] God's verdict
  - a. [44] From noon ("sixth hour") to 3 PM, darkness blankets the land as a sign of God's divine judgment.
    - i. His just punishment for our sin placed on His Son.
    - ii. His divine displeasure for the murder of His Son.
  - b. [45] The Temple curtain, separating the Holy of Holies (Exo 26:33; 2 Chr 3:14) from the rest of the Temple, is torn in two, signifying judgment and new access to God's presence through Jesus (cf. Heb 10:19-20).
2. Final responses
  - a. [46] Jesus' response: In faith/trust, He submits to His Father's will, calling His Father to resurrect Him from the dead (quoting Psa 31:5a).
    - i. Then, our response to Jesus should be [Psa 31:5b]: "You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God."
  - b. [47] Significantly, a non-Jewish, Roman captain has the last word, serving as judgment over the scene.
    - i. He praises God after witnessing Jesus' treatment of His enemies & the supernatural signs.
    - ii. He declares Jesus to be innocent of crime, meaning Jesus must be who He claims: The Christ King.
  - c. [48-49] The crowd disperses, disturbed. Jesus' followers stand at a distance, shell-shocked (cf. Psa 88:8).
    - i. We don't see the outcome of how any of them respond, prompting us to consider how we will respond to the most significant event in all of history.
3. It looks like God's plan has gone wrong; the sinfulness & rebellion of people have turned His plan upside down.
  - a. This is not Plan B; Jesus death on a cross was Plan A all along. He came to die, that we might live.