

SESSION TWENTY-ONE: How do I respond to Jesus' death? *Luke 23 v 32-47*
Quick, Slower and Full Route

1. By asking God to forgive those who are crucifying him, who don't know who the man they're executing is. To the soldiers, Jesus was simply a convicted criminal, and they were just doing their job.

This is amazing—that Jesus, in all that pain, should be praying for those who are causing, shows his great love for the undeserving.

2. They sneer (v 35) and mock him (v 36).

3. He hurls insults at him. His point seems to be that if Jesus really is God's Christ, he will be able to get off his cross and get the two criminals off too. Since he isn't doing that, this criminal thinks he's a fraud.

4. He does three things:

- admits that he is facing death, and that he deserves death because of what he's done (v 40-41).
- accepts that Jesus doesn't deserve death (v 41), and that he is in charge of a kingdom that lies beyond death (v 42).
- asks Jesus to give him a place in his kingdom. ("Remember" means "remember and act on what you've remembered". It's a bit like remembering you need to lock your front door: you don't just remember, you act on what you've remembered and lock it!)

The reason he reacts so differently is because he realises who Jesus is: an innocent man who is God's promised King.

5. Jesus promises that this criminal will be with him in heaven that day.

People who get into heaven are those who, like this criminal, realise that they are facing death deservedly, and that there's nothing they can do to get into God's kingdom; but who simply ask King Jesus for a place in his kingdom.

6. In Amos 8, God looks forward to a day of judgment. It's a judgment on those who've turned away from him and worshipped other "gods" (v 14)—and the judgment on those people is death (end of v 14). The sign that this day has come will be the sun going down at noon, and darkness during the day (v 9).

This enables us to understand the unnatural darkness as Jesus hangs on the cross. God is showing that his judgment is falling, the judgment of death for turning away from him (ie: sin). But of course, the one dying is his Son. It is Jesus, who has always obeyed his Father, who is dying under God's judgment. This is what he meant when he told his followers his body would be given "for", or "on behalf of", theirs (22 v 19, see Session 19).

7. The barrier between God's presence and sinful people has been torn down. Jesus' death means there is now no "no entry" sign between God and us. We can come into his presence.

8. Jesus is trusting his Father, giving his spirit to him. And he still seems in control—he dies when he chooses to, once the curtain has been torn.

9. That Jesus was a “righteous man”, or “innocent man”. In 22 v 70, Jesus said he was the Son of God. So he’s either not the Son of God and so guilty of blasphemy, or is the Son of God and so innocent/righteous. So the centurion is saying that he recognises that Jesus is who he said he was—God’s Son and God’s Christ. Everything Jesus said pointed to who he was: his praying for those killing him, his promising the criminal he’d give him a place in paradise, his trusting God with his death.

After this session in the booklets you’ll find a “Where you’re at now” section. If you’re not doing Session 22 together (ie: you’re on the Quick or Slower Route), the idea is that both of you look through this section on your own, before you next meet up together. It’s a chance to think through what you believe, and how you’ve responded to what you’ve seen so far in the Gospel of Luke.

And, if you’re not doing Session 22 or Session 24 (ie: you’re on the Quick or Slower Route), have a look at the “What next?” section on page 60. Hopefully, you’ve enjoyed looking through Luke’s Gospel together, and this page helps you think about what you might want to do next.

If you are doing Session 22 together (ie: you’re on the Full Route), the “Where you’re at now” section is best done after you next meet up together.