

Luke 23:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

Analysis

The crucifixion: 'And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.' The location: 'Calvary' (Κρανίου, Kranion, Latin Calvaria, meaning skull), elsewhere called Golgotha (Aramaic for skull). The act: 'there they crucified him' (ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτόν, estaurōsan auton)—simple, stark statement of history's central event. Remarkably, Luke doesn't describe crucifixion's details (though readers knew its horrors). The criminals: 'malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left' (κακούργους, ὃν μὲν ἐκ δεξιῶν, ὃν δὲ ἐξ ἀριστερῶν, kakourgous, hon men ek dexiōn, hon de ex aristerōn). This fulfills Isaiah 53:12: 'he was numbered with the transgressors.' Jesus dies as a criminal, bearing the curse for our crimes.

Historical Context

Crucifixion was horrific: victims were stripped naked, nailed or tied to a cross, and left to die slowly through asphyxiation, exposure, and shock. Death could take days. The victim's position between two criminals fulfilled prophecy while symbolizing human choice—two thieves, two responses, two destinies. One mocked (v. 39), one believed (v. 42). This pattern continues: humanity faces Jesus crucified and must choose. The brevity of Luke's crucifixion description ('they crucified him') suggests early Christians knew these details too well—many had seen crucifixions. Later readers must learn what first-century readers knew viscerally: the cross was

ultimate shame, suffering, and horror. Jesus endured this willingly for our salvation.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. What does the location 'Calvary' (place of a skull) symbolize about death and judgment?
2. How does Jesus being crucified between criminals fulfill prophecy and symbolize His mission?
3. Why do you think Luke describes the crucifixion so briefly without detailing its horrors?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	ὅτε	ἀπῆλθον	ἐπὶ	τοὺς	τόπον	τοὺς	καλούμενον
And	when	they were come	to	which	the place	which	is called
G2532	G3753	G565	G1909	G3588	G5117	G3588	G2564

Κρανίου	ἐκεῖ	ἐσταύρωσαν	αὐτὸν	καὶ	τοὺς	κακούργους
Calvary	there	they crucified	him	And	which	the malefactors
G2898	G1563	G4717	G846	G2532	G3588	G2557

ὃν	μὲν	ἐξ	δεξιῶν	ὃν	δὲ	ἐξ	ἀριστερῶν
the other	one	on	the right hand	the other	and	on	the left
G3739	G3303	G1537	G1188	G3739	G1161	G1537	G710

Additional Cross-References

Acts 13:29 (Parallel theme): And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulchre.

Zechariah 12:10 (Parallel theme): And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

John 18:32 (Parallel theme): That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.

Deuteronomy 21:23 (Parallel theme): His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Galatians 3:13 (Parallel theme): Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

1 Peter 2:24 (Parallel theme): Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.