

Luke 23:34 (Matthew 27:33-60)

Read Matthew 27:33-61

I know we read from Matthew's account of the crucifixion of Christ, but I actually want to take as a text one verse from Luke's account:

Luke 23:34

Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

[34] 当下耶稣说：父阿 赦免他们；因为他们所做的，他们不晓得。

Christ said this just as the Roman soldiers were casting lots for His clothing and nailing Him to the cross. While Christ was physically being put to death by wicked men, He still asks for forgiveness for them. And He says they don't know what they're doing. In other words, they don't realise who they're killing. They're killing the Lord of glory, the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. We're told:

1 Corinthians 2:7-8

But we [believers] speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

我们讲的，乃是从前所隐藏、神奥秘的智慧，就是神在万世以前预定使我们得荣耀的。这智慧世上有权有位的人没有一个知道的、他们若知道，就不把荣耀的主钉在十字架上了。

If they'd have known exactly who they were putting to death, they would never had done this. But they did do it. Because they hated Christ so much. Christ said:

John 7:7

The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.

世人不能恨你们，却是恨我，因为我指证他们所做的是恶的。

But we've got two questions to ask here. First of all, who are the ones Christ is asking forgiveness for? And secondly, did God the Father answer Christ's prayer?

The answer to the first question, the ones Christ is asking forgiveness for, are primarily the Roman soldiers. That's the context. But I also want to look at the others on the scene too.

33 And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,

[33] 到了一个地方名叫各各他，意思就是髑髅地。

34 They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

[34] 兵丁拿苦胆调和的酒给耶稣喝。他尝了，就不肯喝。

This sets the scene. And the first thing that happened when He arrived at the crucifixion site, was that He was given vinegar mixed with gall. They probably did this to everybody about to be crucified, to numb the pain. Christ deliberately didn't drink it, because it was important that the pain wasn't lessened in any way. Why? This death was unique.

Christ came into the world to die. That was His whole purpose. God sent Him into the world to be a sacrifice for sin. Not for His own sin, He didn't have any. But for ours. In His death, He took the full punishment upon Himself for the sins of all those who trust in Him.

There are two things we need to know. We all deserve to die for our sins. And there is going to be a judgment. That's God's justice. He sent Christ into the world to take away sin. If we don't trust in Him, we must endure the punishment for our own sin ourselves.

So we must take these things deadly seriously. We've got many people who want to lessen His pain, who want to find an easier way to have their sins forgiven. They just think forgiveness of sin is such a light thing. Just say sorry and move on. But it's not a light thing. There is no easier way but by the death of Christ. He prayed in Gethsemane:

Matthew 26:39

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

我父阿，倘若可行，求你叫这杯离开我。然而，不要照我的意思，只要照你的意思。

There is no other way. Christ alone had to pay the price for sin in exactly the way He did.

35 And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

[35] 他们既将他钉在十字架上，就拈阄分他的衣服，

Here we've got the first group of people at the cross, the Roman soldiers. They've already, earlier in the passage, mocked Him and scourged Him and had a good laugh at His expense. They hated Him. They saw Him as weak and pathetic. Men laugh at people like that. And they cast lots for his clothing. They couldn't possibly have known that by doing that they were fulfilling prophecy of Psalm 22 written a thousand years before.

Then they nailed Him to the cross. It was at this point, according to Luke, that Christ said the words, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

36 And sitting down they watched him there; 又坐在那里看守他。

After they'd done their duty, and set the cross upright, they sat down and watched. These were the executioners. They did this regularly. It was just a job. This was their lunch break. They had to wait until they were all dead, clear up the mess, then go home.

37 And set up over his head his accusation written, this is Jesus the King of the Jews.

[37] 在他头以上安一个牌子，写着他的罪状，说：这是犹太人的王耶稣。

The first thing that's different about this crucifixion, compared to others, is the accusation written above Christ's head. It wasn't a crime. It wasn't even, "He said He was the king of the Jews," which I suppose could be thought of as treasonable. That's what the religious leaders wanted, but Pilate the Roman governor wouldn't let them.

38 Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.

[38] 当时，有两个强盗和他同钉十字架，一个在右边，一个在左边。

And here we're introduced to the second group of people at the cross, the two thieves who were crucified with Him. They had no love for Him either, v.44:

44 The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.

[44] 那和他同钉的强盗也是这样的讥诮他。

Then we're introduced to a third group of people. They that passed by:

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

[39] 从那里经过的人讥诮他，摇着头，说：

40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

[40] 你这拆毁圣殿、三日又建造起来的，可以救自己罢！你如果是神的儿子，就从十字架上下来罢

Most of these were passing by, so they didn't stay. So we can't really count these people in the number to whom Christ said, "*Father forgive them.*" They were just passing by reflecting public opinion. They weren't going to hang around to see what happened. And there were other more notable people who weren't there either. Annas and Caiaphas the high priests, or Pilate the governor. They all had far more important things to do with their lives than waste time watching a routine public execution. They'd passed the sentence, but they just let the authorities get on with it. The world just carried on.

But some of the chief priests, scribes and elders did stay around. And they didn't have much love for Him either, they mocked Him just as much. They said:

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

[41] 祭司长和文士并长老也是这样戏弄他，说：

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

[42] 他救了别人，不能救自己。他是以色列的王，现在可以从十字架上下下来，我们就信他。

43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

[43] 他倚靠神，神若喜悦他，现在可以救他；因为他曾说：我是神的儿子。

We've got all these groups around the cross, within earshot of Christ saying, "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" And, up to now, all of them without exception mocked Him and hated Him. They all want Him dead. So, up to this point, God the Father hasn't forgiven them at all. And then this mysterious three hours of darkness:

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.

[45] 从午正到申初，遍地都黑暗了。

What happened in that three hours, we can't possibly enter into. Christ at least felt He had been forsaken of the Father. Had He been forsaken by the Father? No. This was the work He came to do. The Father never loved Him more than during that time when He was making atonement for our sins. The sinless Son of God having the burden of our sins put on His shoulders, so we who believe could go free. We can't enter into that at all.

This was so different from an ordinary, routine crucifixion. And it affected everyone who was there. And we'll look at them all. But the light dawned on one person even before this three hours of darkness began. One of the thieves. We're told in Luke:

Luke 23:39-43

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

那同钉的两个犯人有一个讥诮他，说：你不是基督麽？可以救自己和我们罢 那一个就应声责备他，说：你既是一样受刑的，还怕神麽？我们是应该的，因我们所受的与我们所做的相称，但这个人没有做过一件不好的事。就说：耶稣阿，你得国降临的时候，求你记念我 耶稣对他说：我实在告诉你，今日你要同我在乐园里了。

Here, in Matthew's account, both the thieves railed on Him. But one of them suddenly changes, and turns on his companion, and rebukes him for what he himself was doing minutes earlier. How can we explain this sudden change? The fear of God had been put into Him. Suddenly everything was now different. Before, he didn't know what he was saying, but now, everything makes sense. What did he see?

He saw exactly how different this man Jesus was. He saw his own, and the other thief's sin, and the fact that they both deserved to be there. He saw that Christ didn't deserve to be there, because Christ had done nothing wrong. He saw that Christ was a king. But it couldn't be of a kingdom in this world, because they weren't going to be in this world much longer. So the kingdom must be in the next world. And he's bold enough to ask Christ the king for entrance into it. To which Christ replies positively. Where did he get all that theology from? Bible college? No! God the Father revealed it all to him personally.

That's the first spark of light we see in this situation. The Father has forgiven one of the thieves, and he has received entry into paradise, Christ's kingdom after death. And what's the first thing he does? He witnesses to the other thief. We don't know if the other thief saw the light as well, we're not told. But here's the first answer to Christ's prayer.

46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

[46] 约在申初，耶稣大声喊着说：以利！以利！拉马撒巴各大尼？就是说：我的神！我的神！为甚麽离弃我？

47 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.

[47] 站在那里的人，有的听见就说：这个人呼叫以利亚呢

At the end of the three hours of darkness, Christ gave out this great cry, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me." Some there thought He was calling on Elijah. They got it wrong. He was actually quoting the first verse of Psalm 22. So the moral of the story is, be familiar with your Bible. But at least some had suddenly taken an interest in the situation. This is no ordinary crucifixion.

48 And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.

[48] 内中有一个人赶紧跑去，拿海绵蘸满了醋，绑在苇子上，送给他喝。

One of them tried to help Him by giving Him a sponge filled with vinegar. This drink had no gall in it to numb the pain, and in any case, Christ had finished His work on the cross. He'd paid the price for our sin. John tells us He shouted, "It is finished." The work has been completed. So He took this drink. It was an act of kindness from one of the crowd. Well, that's strange. Nobody had showed Him kindness before. They'd just mocked Him. But some anonymous person in the crowd had changed from railing on Him, to showing Him an act of kindness. Another answer to Christ's prayer, "Father forgive them."

49 The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.

[49] 其余的人说：且等着，看以利亚来救他不来。

They're all taking an interest now. Just three hours beforehand they were shouting in His face. Whatever happened in those three hours, it kept their attention, and changed them. They're no longer railing on Him but are now taking an interest in what'll happen next.

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

[50] 耶稣又大声喊叫，气就断了。

They didn't have to wait long. Elijah never came to save Him. He died. Was that it? Could they go home now? Well, a sequence of very strange events took place after this:

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

[51] 忽然，殿里的幔子从上到下裂为两半，地也震动，磐石也崩裂，

First of all, the veil in the Temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom. This signified that the way into the holy of holies was now open. The Temple has this great curtain. Only the High Priest once a year was allowed to go in behind it to sprinkle blood, signifying the taking away of sin. There was also a year round ritual of animal sacrifices, all of which was a picture of the one true sacrifice which would one day really come and take away sin. That's what Jesus had just accomplished in that three hours on the cross. Now there's no need for the pictures any more. In fact within one generation, God would destroy the Temple altogether, never again to be rebuilt. The veil being torn in two, was God showing that access into the real tabernacle in heaven is now open to all. Jesus Christ has come.

Then there was an earthquake. I heard someone once say Satan causes earthquakes. That's not true. He's a very powerful enemy, but he's a spiritual enemy. He's the accuser of the brethren. He can't produce earthquakes. Only God Himself can do that.

52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

[52] 坟墓也开了，已睡圣徒的身体多有起来的。

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

[53] 到耶稣复活以后，他们从坟墓里出来，进了圣城，向许多人显现。

This was a unique occurrence, which took place after the resurrection. And Matthew is the only one who records it. So we can't speculate too much. Notice it was the bodies of the **saints** that arose and appeared to many. That must have frightened the authorities in Jerusalem. Because they'd been putting the saints to death, over many generations.

Matthew 23:34-36

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.

所以我差遣先知和智慧人并文士到你们这里来，有的你们要杀害，要钉十字架；有的你们要在会堂里鞭打，从这城追逼到那城，叫世上所流义

人的血都归到你们身上，从义人亚伯的血起，直到你们在殿和坛中间所杀的巴拉加的儿子撒迦利亚的血为止。我实在告诉你们，这一切的罪都要归到这世代了。

And after all this, something remarkable happened to the Roman soldiers:

54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

[54] 百夫长和一同看守耶稣的人看见地震并所经历的事，就极其害怕，说：这真是神的儿子了

When Christ said, *“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,”* the primary context was the Roman soldiers. Their crucifying Christ hadn’t bothered them before, they were just doing their job. But, in Luke’s account, we read that now the Centurion said, *“Certainly this was a righteous man.”* And here we read that both *“the Centurion **and they that were with him**”* *“feared greatly”* and said, *“Truly this was the Son of God.”*

So, did God the Father answer Christ’s prayer, *“Father forgive them, for they know not what they do”*? Of course He did. Every one of the Roman soldiers there was converted. What a change. What a lunch break. From mocking Him and nailing Him to a cross, not knowing what they were doing, to fearing God and suddenly realising who He really was.

Now, just before Christ raised Lazarus from the dead we’re told:

John 11:41-42

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.

他们就把石头挪开。耶稣举目望天，说：父阿，我感谢你，因为你已经听我。我也知道你常听我，但我说这话是为周围站着的众人，叫他们信是你差了我来。

God the Father always hears His Son and answers His every prayer. Because He was sinless. He always did the things that pleased the Father. So, the Father always heard Him. So, for example, in John 17, Christ prayed for Christian unity:

John 17:20-21

Neither pray I for these alone [the disciples], but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

我不但为这些人祈求，也为那些因他们的话信我的人祈求，使他们都合而为一。正如你父在我里面，我在你里面，使他们也在我们里面，叫世人可以信你差了我来。

The Ecumenical Movement think this means Christ is praying for all the denominations to get together to try and be as much one as they possibly can. But we've got to make the effort. No! True Christians, those who have had a new heart put within them, are already one in Christ Jesus. Christ prayed to His Father we may be one, so therefore we are all one. Whenever we meet a fellow believer in Christ, we already have sweet fellowship:

1 John 3:14

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

我们因为爱弟兄，就晓得是已经出死入生了。

We don't need to make an effort at unity, we already have it with every real believer. God the Father answers every prayer of God the Son.

And then we're introduced to another group who were there:

55 And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:

[55] 有好些妇女在那里，远远的观看；他们是从加利利跟随耶稣来服事他的。

56 Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.

[56] 内中有抹大拉的马利亚，又有雅各和约西的母亲马利亚，并有西庇太两个儿子的母亲。

We haven't come across this group in the narrative yet, but there was a group of women there. They were looking on at the crucifixion from afar off. These were already followers of Christ, so maybe they didn't want to get too close in case they were recognised.

We think of Christ going around with His disciples, a group of men. But there were also women who followed Jesus from Galilee and ministered to Him. They were there at the cross. Where were the men, the disciples? We've no record of any of them being at the cross, apart from John, to whom Christ commits His mother for her care. We're told that, after Gethsemane, the disciples all forsook Him and fled. They were despondent after the crucifixion, and only came to see the truth for themselves after the resurrection.

Now, it's an interesting exercise to look at all four gospels, and the lists of the women at the cross. You can deduce some interesting facts.

Mary Magdalene is the only one named in all four gospels. I don't know why people think she used to be a prostitute. There's nothing in the Bible about that at all. We only know two things about her. Her name, Magdalene, probably meant she came from Magdala, on the Sea of Galilee. And we're told that Christ cast seven devils out of her. That's it.

As for Mary the mother of James and Joses, it could be Christ's mother, because He had half brothers with those names, but that's very unlikely. If it referred to Christ's mother, the

text would have said. It could be the mother of the apostles James and Judas (not Iscariot). That's far more likely, in which case she's the wife of Alphaeus.

Zebedee's children are the apostles James and John. You can deduce his wife was Salome, and that she was Christ's mother's sister. So, when Christ committed His mother to the care of John, He was committing her to His cousin, because by this time, both Joseph and Zebedee had died. We know all of Mary's other children didn't believe at this point, although they did later, so He committed her to the nearest relative who believed.

But what about the chief priests, scribes and the elders. What happened to them after the crucifixion? Were they all converted too? We don't know. But we're told in Luke:

Luke 23:48

And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

聚集观看的众人见了这所成的事都捶着胸回去了。

All the people who witnessed the crucifixion of Christ were heavily affected in some way. Nobody was mocking Him or railing upon Him any more. They "*smote their breasts*" as they returned home. And by Acts chapter 6, we're told:

Acts 6:7

*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a **great company of the priests** were obedient to the faith.*

神的道兴旺起来；在耶路撒冷门徒数目加增的甚多，也有许多祭司信从了这道。

And then we read of one member of the ruling council in particular:

57 When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:

[57] 到了晚上，有一个财主，名叫约瑟，是亚利马太来的，他也是耶稣的门徒。

58 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.

[58] 这人去见彼拉多，求耶稣的身体；彼拉多就吩咐给他。

John tells us that Joseph of Arimathaea had been a secret disciple of Christ's for a while:

John 19:38

And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.

[38] 这些事以後，有亚利马太人约瑟，是耶稣的门徒，只因怕犹太人，就暗暗的作门徒。他来求彼拉多，要把耶稣的身体领去。彼拉多允准，他就把耶稣的身体领去了。

He didn't want to lose his position on the ruling council, so he'd been following Christ secretly. We're told there were several secret believers on the council:

John 12:42-43

Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

虽然如此，官长中却有好些信他的，只因法利赛人的缘故，就不承认，恐怕被赶出会堂。这是因他们爱人的荣耀过於爱神的荣耀。

The ruling council had such a tight grip over the people, they were too scared of being open about their faith. But look at Joseph now. He's not scared any more of what the council might do to him. He boldly goes up to Pilate and asks for the body of Christ, which he gives him. He doesn't care if the council knew it or not. And this is the beginning of the end of the iron rule of the religious leaders of Christ's day.

We're not actually told Joseph was there at the cross, this was in the evening. But it would have been odd if he wasn't there. For a start, he knew Christ was dead, which is more than Pilate knew. And I just wonder if it was he who managed to persuade a group of his fellow priests, scribes and elders to witness Christ's crucifixion. He wouldn't have joined in with their mocking Christ, but maybe he was there and had brought them.

59 And when Joseph had taken the body, he wraped it in a clean linen cloth,

[59] 约瑟取了身体，用乾净细麻布裹好，

60 And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.

[60] 安放在自己的新坟墓里，就是他凿在磐石里的。他又把大石头滚到墓门口，就去了。

Joseph of Arimathaea would have needed help for that, and John tells us he had a helper:

John 19:39

And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.

[39] 又有尼哥底母，就是先前夜里去见耶稣的，带着没药和沉香约有一百斤前来。

Nicodemus was the man in John 3, who came to Jesus by night because he was so scared the authorities would find out. But now he receives boldness too, and isn't bothered who knows what he's doing any more. The cross of Christ not only changed

people from darkness to light, from mocking Him to taking Him seriously, but it also emboldened those who believed already but were too afraid to show it.

Christ's prayer, "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do,*" was most certainly answered. Every single person at the cross was at least affected by what they saw.

God the Father always answered Christ's prayers, because He always did the things that pleased Him. He was sinless. But what about us? Does the Father always answer our prayers? No! We're not perfect like Christ was. We often ask for wrong things.

James 4:3

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

你们求也得不到，是因为你们妄求，要浪费在你们的宴乐中。

So if we ask for a million pounds, we probably wouldn't get it because we'd use it on ourselves. But if God wanted us to have it to build His kingdom, and He thought He could trust us with it, He might just give it to us. John says:

1 John 5:14-15

And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

我们若照他的旨意求甚麽，他就听我们，这是我们向他所存坦然无惧的心。既然知道他听我们一切所求的，就知道我们所求於他的，无不得着

God does answer every one of our prayers, as long as they are according to His will.

We know that God delights that men would turn to Him, that we would repent of our sins, that we should finish trusting in ourselves and put our trust in Him. So if we ask these things of Him, He'll surely give them to us. But we have to first forsake our sin and trust in what the Lord Jesus Christ did for us in those three hours of darkness to take our sin away. Only Christ can save us, if we come to Him. Mohammed can't save anybody. Buddha can't save anybody. They didn't make an atoning sacrifice for sin. But Christ did.

Acts 4:12

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

除他以外，别无拯救；因为在天下人间，没有赐下别的名，我们可以靠着得救。