

The Two Thieves Reviled Christ

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The Two Thieves Reviled Christ (Mt. 27:44; Mk. 15:32).

Only One of the Thieves Reviled Christ (Lk. 23:39-40).

Many have assumed that only two criminals were crucified along with Jesus Christ. This is erroneous and partly due to medieval paintings depicting such a scene. However, when all the relevant scriptures are examined closely, it will be shown that there were a total of four criminals executed with Christ. Two are described in Matthew 27:38, and Mark 15:27, as robbers (Gr. *lestai*), while another two were described as malefactors (Gr. *kakourgoi*; evil doer – cf. 2Tim. 2:9) in Luke 23:32.

In Matthew 27:44 and Mark 15:32, both robbers reviled Christ,

Even the robbers who were crucified with him (Christ) reviled him with the same thing (Mt. 27:44; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted; Ed. note in parenthesis).

With him (Christ) they also crucified two robbers, one on his right and the other on his left (Mk. 15:27; Ed. note in parenthesis).

And those who passed by blasphemed him (Christ), wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself and come down from the cross!' ³¹ Likewise the chief priests also, together with the scribes, mocked and said among themselves, 'He saved others; himself he cannot save. ³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross that we may see and believe.' **And those** (two robbers; cf. Mk. 15:27) **who were crucified with him reviled him** (Mk. 15:29-32; Ed. notes in parentheses; emphasis added).

In Luke's account, one of the malefactors "railed on him (Christ)," while the other did not. In fact, there was an exchange between the two malefactors, with one rebuking the other for criticizing Christ,

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him (Christ), saying, 'If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.' ⁴⁰ But the other answering rebuked him, saying, 'Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss' (Lk. 23:39-41; Ed. note in parenthesis; KJV).

The timing and placement of the two malefactors and the robbers was different as the following sequence of scriptures will show. The two malefactors were "led with him (Christ) to be put to death" and when they arrived at Calvary they were crucified at the same time as Christ, one on the right hand and the other on the left,

And there were also two other malefactors, led with him (Christ) to be put to death.³³ And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him (Christ), and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left (Lk. 23:32-33; Ed. notes in parentheses; KJV).

Two robbers were also crucified and placed to the left and right of Christ but they were put on a stake later than the two malefactors, and positioned to the outside of the malefactors. According to Matthew's account, the two robbers were crucified after Christ's garments were parted, which occurred sometime after Christ and the two malefactors had already been crucified,

Then they crucified him (Christ), and divided his garments, casting lots that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: *'They divided my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.'*³⁶ Sitting down, they kept watch over him there.³⁷ And they put up over his head the accusation written against him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.³⁸ **Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and another on the left** (Mt. 27:35-38; Ed. note in parenthesis; emphasis added).

So the two robbers were crucified later and positioned on the outside, which explains why it was easier for the malefactors to have a verbal exchange with each other as well as with Christ. Because he was on the inside and closer to Christ, the malefactor that did not revile Christ was easily able to speak to him and be heard,

Then he (the malefactor) said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom' (Lk. 23:42; Ed. note in parenthesis).

With one robber and one malefactor to the left of Christ, and another robber and malefactor to the right of Christ, the next scripture makes sense because soldiers started breaking the legs of each person commencing with the first two located to one side of Christ. Following the first two, the soldiers then came to Christ who was in the center. Had there been only two criminals, the soldiers would have come to Christ after the first one had his legs broken,

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with him (Christ).³³ But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs (Jn. 19:32-33; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Again, if there were only two criminals, the soldiers would have come to Christ, who was in the center, right after breaking the legs of the first criminal. Instead, there were a total of four criminals with two situated on Christ's left side and two on Christ's right side. There is an interesting extra-Biblical reference to four criminals being crucified with Jesus Christ. It is called "Les Cinq Croiz" (The Five Crosses) located at Ploubezere near Lannion in the Cotes-du-Nord, Brittany. In this group of five stone crosses (circa. 10th century), there is one large cross in the middle with four smaller ones, two on either side (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Five_Crosses).

In conclusion, there is no contradiction between Matthew, Mark, and Luke's account of the criminals who were executed along with Christ. There were a total of four, and only one did not revile Christ.

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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