

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 41: Luke 23:26-56

Bloodied and bruised, the burden pressed down upon Him until He could no longer bear its weight. “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matthew 16:24). Christ’s words rang loudly in the ears of those who had expressed their desire to go wherever He led.

While they contemplated these things, another was chosen and compelled to pick up Christ’s cross and ascend Calvary’s hill.

What appeared to be a tragedy to the masses, turned out to be the greatest opportunity of his life. Simon the Cyrenian had come face to face with the living Christ, experienced His blood, walked in His footsteps, shared in His sufferings and in His triumph. Life was truly found when he took His cross upon His back (Matthew 16:25).

Read Luke 23:26-31.

1. Simon the Cyrenian had traveled some 800 miles from Cyrene in North Africa (modern-day Libya) to observe the Jewish holiday. But upon entering the city, his plans were disrupted, his journey detoured. What was Simon forced to do in verse 26 of Luke 23?
2. Describe Simon’s proximity to Christ as they traveled.
3. Describe how Simon might have felt. If you were chosen to bear a burden of this magnitude, how would you feel?
4. Read Matthew 16:24. What must those do who desire to follow Christ?

5. What was Simon required to “lay down” so that he might pick up Christ’s cross?

6. Are you willing to do the same, or have you placed conditions on what you are willing to bear or relinquish to His control? If so, what?

7. Does following Christ mean that you may be led to a place that you may not want to or are unwilling to go? Explain.

8. The text states that Simon bore the cross “*after Jesus*”. This means that the “end” would be reached at the pace determined by the Lord. If He fell, Simon waited. If Christ walked, he followed. Why is traveling at the Lord’s pace as or more difficult than bearing the physical weight?

9. Read Mark 15:21 and Romans 16:13. Who was changed by Simon’s experience?

10. Return to Luke 23. For what reason did the crowd gather and follow?

11. Upon whom were Christ’s thoughts as He ascended the hill?

12. Describe the nature of the crowd's lament based on Christ's words (vv.28-31). Why should they have been weeping?ⁱ (Think on Proverbs 11:31 and Jeremiah 25:29.)

13. Contrast their sorrow, and its results, with that experienced by Christ's followers. (See John 16:22.)

Keep reading in Luke 23, verses 32-43.

14. How do Christ's words in verse 34 demonstrate Matthew 5:44?

15. Based on their words and deeds, did Christ's torture—the attainment of their desire—satisfy the religious leader's vengeance? Why or why not?

Does revenge truly placate any man? Explain.

16. *"If He is the Christ ... If He is the chosen of God (v.35) He saved others (v.35) ... If what He claims is true (Mathew 27:40) ... He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him (v.43).* How might these words have impacted those who heard them?

Does the adversary use similar expressions in your life? If so, how?

17. What did torment produce in each criminal's heart? (Luke 23:39-43)

18. What did the impenitent thief base his belief in Christ upon? (v.39)

How is this practiced today? Why is this sort of faith faulty? (Consider Matthew 7:27.)

Read Luke 23:44-49.

19. Describe the significance of the events listed in verses 44 and 45, also Matthew 27:51.

How do Isaiah 9:2, Luke 1:79, John 1:4-5, 9-11, 3:19-21, 8:12, 9:5, 12:35-36, 46, and Hebrews 4:16 aid your understanding?

20. Read Matthew 27:45-46, then, Psalm 22:1-21 and John 19:28-30.

According to Psalm 75:8, Isaiah 51:17, Jeremiah 25:15, Luke 22:42, and John 18:11, what occurred that enabled Christ to declare, “It is finished” (John 19:30), “Into Your hand I commit My Spirit” (Psalm 31:5)?

21. Contrast John 4:14 and John 6:35 with Luke 16:24. What will believers fail to experience because of Christ’s sacrifice?

Before continuing in Luke, read John 19:31-37.

22. Return to Luke 23 and reread verses 47-49. How did the people react to what had occurred? (See John 12:32, also Luke 2:34-35.)

Continue in Luke 23, verses 50-56.

23. While Jesus’ acquaintances stood afar off (Luke 23:49, Psalm 88:18), Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus (John 19:39), and the women from Galilee (Luke 23:55-56) tended to Christ’s burial. Describe the sacrifice and the risk to each of them.

ⁱ Although Christ’s statement in verse can be difficult to understand, it is thought that Christ is implying, “If the Romans are willing to kill the just when all is well, what will they do to the unjust during troubled times?”