

Which Cross? Is a transcription of a message preached to an audience including 1<sup>st</sup> graders through adults at Triple Cross Cowboy Church in Granbury, TX several years ago in a Sunday morning service. Thus the age differences are not broken down nor is there a Little Wranglers version

## Which Cross? The Right or the Left?

### Introduction:

There were three crosses on Mt Calvary. The cross on the left leads to a place called Hell. The cross on the right leads to Heaven and Eternal Life. And the cross in the middle is reserved for the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Without Jesus' coming to that middle cross, I would not have the gift offered to me of eternal life.

**What you do about these three crosses on this mountain determines your eternity.**

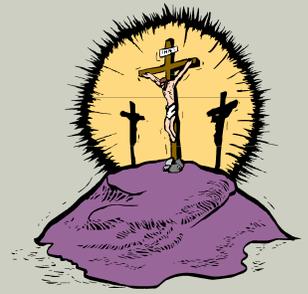
**Some people don't want to deal with that, to make a decision about these, but nonetheless no decision is still a decision.**

### The Confrontation

The Bible says you are confronted with the Lord Jesus Christ and His Blood.

You can either make the choice of the man that was on the left or you can make the choice of the man that was on the right. These choices lead to two completely different places, yet they both were within the view of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Luke 23: 32-33; 39-43 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death....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. 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.*



### **VISUALS**

Whether you are dealing with young people or adults, this message is best taught with a visual.

You can have three crosses drawn on a white board, or better still, you can make three crosses and have people hold them while you speak.

This way you can bring the message for each cross standing at the sight of the one you are referring to. Point out or walk to each visual throughout the message. A visual is powerful with this message.

## **When we read that story, we see there were choices made up on that hill!**

Jesus made a choice a long long time ago. Jesus had this planned before Adam and Eve drew their first breath. Jesus said in *Revelation 13* that He was the lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

Before Adam and Eve drew a breath; before we were thought of; Jesus Christ already had this all planned.

There was only a brief time in history when crucifixion was used. The Romans were good at torture. They had used crucifixions as a horrible way to die. Jesus picked that time to come and to be our sacrifice.

We all feel pain. Some have more than others. Some have it a little better. But Jesus says no matter what you go through I know how to identify with it.

He had chosen this situation before the foundation of the world. Jesus chose to walk up that hill and lay down His life. Nobody killed the Lord Jesus. He chose to die. He did this for us.

There were two others on that hill that day on crosses. Some people may say that spoils the picture. There's a crook hanging on each side of Jesus, one on the right and one on the left.

The man on the left made some decisions that were not real bright.

The man on the right saw the mess that he was in and understood there was only one solution to his mess. He chose the correct solution.

## **The Choice**

Jesus is on the cross. People have beat him, scourged him, put crown of thorns on his head. Basically his back is filleted open. They have driven nails, through his hands and feet. They have torn his body to shreds.

He's hanging on that cross. Blood is everywhere. It's a messy sight. Some folks are offended at that. We have a "bloody" religion.

The offence comes because you have a choice to make. Whether you make the choice that the man on the right made or the choice that the man on the left made determines whether or not you are offended by Jesus' blood.

The man on the left looks at Jesus and he sees a **man** hanging up there.

He sees a man that represents religion. And religion can put you off. He sees a man that has gone around and made claims that he is going to set up a Kingdom. He heard **stories** about Jesus healing people. He heard **stories** about Jesus speaking to large crowds.

But he doesn't see a Savior on that cross. He doesn't see God come down in a fleshy body. Instead, he sees a man in that same predicament as he is in. He sees a man up there. He says he's seen enough religion.

He says to Jesus: If you are God, then come down off of that cross and save yourself and save me, too! He wanted a life that centered on the "now." He didn't care about eternity; he cared only about getting off of the cross "today." He was only concerned about today. He wasn't concerned about eternity.

The man on the right was in the same predicament as the man on the left. He's hurting, he's guilty, he's in a big mess and he knows that before the sun goes down today he will be dead.

The man on the right looks at the man on the far side and says: What are you talking about over there? Who do you think you are? You are in the same mess I am in. We are hanging up here on a cross! **You and I deserve what we get.** We are sinners; we are criminals. We deserve to die. We have done nothing but harm during our lives.

This man in the middle hasn't done anything wrong.

The thief on the right didn't see the same person hanging on the cross that the thief on the left saw. The man on the left just saw another man that had made claims. The man on the right saw a Savior.

The man on the right says: Leave him alone. He's done nothing to you. Then to Jesus he says: When you come into your Kingdom please remember me.

He didn't say: Get me down off of this cross. He didn't say: Take me to your Kingdom with you.

He did say that he didn't deserve anything. He just asked that someone remember him. That's all. **He didn't have any expectations; just remember me.**

He said something that touched the heart of God!

Jesus turns to him and says: Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise! That should be encouragement to us all!

Here's a man on the cross that just says: Remember me. He puts his trust, his confidence, in Jesus.

Jesus writes our name in the Lamb's Book of Life. We can't go and forge that! It is only written down when we come to a place of repentance and say like the thief on the right, I deserve the punishment for my sin, but I want what only Jesus can give.

The thief just says: Remember me.

While Jesus is on that cross dying for my sins and yours, he was also dying for those of the two thieves.

This is a perfect illustration of the choices we have to make. **We have two choices and that's all.**

You can choose to do nothing about the Lord Jesus Christ and we can be like the thief on the left. Or we can say Jesus remember me and be like the man on the right. Jesus was on the cross, yet still taking care of business. He was in total control. He gives us the plan of salvation right there.

He also taught some other things if you stop and think about it.

## **The Confusion:**

### **Baptism Question**

I [Ron] was raised in a First Christian Church which was a Disciples of Christ denomination. Their doctrine says baptism is part of being able to enter Heaven. I have a Bible that my mother gave me after I accepted Jesus as my Savior. I didn't know all about their doctrine when I called on Jesus to be my Savior. I was just a seven year old boy that knew that Jesus was my Savior because I asked Him into my heart. I knew I had accepted the free gift of eternal life that He offered.

But my mom wrote in my Bible after I was baptized: Baptized into Christ. I got saved and then they thought I had to be baptized to get into Heaven.

Jesus told the man on the right: Today you will be with me in Paradise.

Think about that! If you have to be baptized to get into Heaven then Jesus would have had to say: TIME OUT. He would have to get the man on the right down off of the cross, walked down the hill, find a body of water, and baptize him; walk back up the hill and get back onto the cross.

If baptism is required then Jesus lied to the man on the cross. And we know he is not a liar! Therefore, baptism is not it! You can't get baptized while hanging on a cross.

Baptism is a picture of what Jesus did for us.

If I look at a picture, I don't expect it to talk back to me. If I pull out my picture on my driver's license and show you my picture, do you expect that picture to answer you if you ask it a question? No you wouldn't; it's just my picture. It's not me.

Baptism is a picture. When you go under the water, it's a picture of being buried with him in belief, and when you come up, it's a picture of the resurrection.

Baptism is the first act of obedience for a born-again believer. When you ask Jesus into your heart, make the decision to be baptized. Why start off your Christian life in disobedience? If you are saved, get baptized!

I don't mean to offend anybody, but this is what the Bible says.

He could have chosen to picture our salvation another way, but this is His choice.

Baptism comes after salvation; Jesus taught this on the cross. He didn't bring down the man on the right for baptism before He told him that he would be in Paradise with him.

So if it's not baptism that gets you to Heaven, then it must be good works, right?

### **Works Question**

Some churches say if you do more good than bad things you will go to Heaven.

I have asked people if they are sure they are going to Heaven and they say..... I sure hope so.

I have asked: Do you think you can know? They often say: Well, you can't know so because you might mess up or I don't know if I can live that "kind of life."

It's not about how good we are.

As a Christian I subscribe to *Rom 12:1. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*

Once we are born-again God has some expectations out of us. But He does not say I expect you to live a good holy life to get into Heaven. But rather He says I'd like to see you live that way. He wants to see you have victory.

Just think; what if Jesus had said you can be with me in Paradise if you do more good than bad things.

Then the thief would have had to get off the cross because he would have said: I have robbed; I've got to make it right. I've hurt people; I need to go make that right.

He couldn't do that!

He only had ONE more thing he could do in his life; and that was to die. He asked Jesus to remember him.

It wasn't about doing more good than bad; it wasn't about being holy as a man on this earth; it was about repentance. He says, he's sorry, he says: I deserve what I get.

### **Predestination Question:**

So it's not about baptism; it's not about doing more good than bad; maybe it's because God loves the man on the right more than He loves the man on the left? What do you think?

God loves all the same. *2 Peter 3:9b..... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* God wants any person to come to Him.

We visited a church when we lived in another state. We thought it was just a little laid back. The people acted like we weren't even there. We filled out a visitor card. In a few days we got a sixteen page pamphlet in the mail. It said that some people are "predestined" to go to Heaven and others are "predestined" to go to that place called Hell.

I said, what is this? The Bible is clear that anyone can come to the Father through Jesus. But this group of people believed that God had picked out who will and who won't go to Heaven.

Again: *2 Peter 3:9b..... not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* He makes it an open invitation for all of us. *Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

God does not love one more than another.

It all boils down to **YOUR CHOICE.** What are you going to do about the Blood shed on the middle cross?

Jesus died on this cross to be our sacrificial death. He was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

He was the Lord's goat and we the scapegoat in Deuteronomy. All the way through the Old and New Testaments, God had a plan.

God doesn't want anyone excluded but He does require each person to make the decision for himself. All you have to do is look on Him and live.

The man on the left looked at Jesus and just saw another man and didn't want anything to do with Him.

This man on the right looked at Jesus and saw someone heading for a Kingdom. He did not have the audacity to ask for it, but he would like to go. Jesus says, I paid for this trip, why would you not want to go?

It's a simple thing, it's free, and yet so many people miss it.

The man on the left made the wrong choice. The man on the right saw a Divine Christ.

If you have not made a clear decision, you don't have to hope, you can know.

The gift was paid for on the Center Cross.

**Present Salvation.**