



[Understanding the Christ](#)

Episode 33 - The Thief on the Cross: What He Knew About Jesus' Kingdom Part 1

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Host Scott Stanley opens this episode of the DTG videocast with an in-depth, part-one study of the thief on the cross (Luke 23). He examines what the thief actually believed about the dying man beside him, asking whether that thief recognized Jesus as the Christ, anticipated Jesus' resurrection, and trusted Jesus' coming kingdom. The episode traces the thief's words — "Remember me when you come into your kingdom" — and explores how those words imply belief in the risen Savior and connect to Old Testament prophecy.

Scott contrasts this careful scriptural reading with common denominational assumptions: The idea of an angry God who must be appeased, and the popular use of the thief-on-the-cross story as a shortcut to salvation without discipleship, Bible study, or baptism. He critiques institutional teachings that simplify the cross into a mere transaction and encourages listeners to study the Bible for themselves, rightly divide the word of truth, and test their own claims of salvation.

The episode walks through key passages and themes, including Luke 23:34–43, Mark 14:61, 1 John 5:1, Psalm 2, Psalm 110, and Zechariah 6. Scott explains terms like "born

again" in light of believing Jesus is the Christ, discusses the Psalm 2 anointing language and the "branch and priest" motif, and considers why Jesus replied, "Today you will be with me in paradise," restoring deeper meaning to that promise.

This is part one of a series. There are no guests on this episode — Scott teaches solo — and he closes with a call to humility, honest Bible study, and restoring family and personal relationships through a clearer understanding of Jesus. Listeners can expect careful exegesis, prophetic connections, and an invitation to pursue the fuller truth behind the cross in future episodes.

Modified Transcript:

Scriptures are transcribed directly with notations. Refer to KJV for verbatim wording.

Hi, I'm Scott Stanley. This is the DTG videocast concerning the deep things of God, Understanding the Christ. All of my Christian life, I've been told things about Jesus, and I've discovered there's a whole lot more to it than I was told. I know the churches... I refer to the churches as the Universal Church. It's universal because there are basic things they all have in common. One of the big things they all have in common, I mean every denomination, including paganism and Catholicism, is that God is angry and he needs to be appeased. The Catholics and Protestants use Jesus as that appeasement, that it was his death that appeased the angry God.

So I've discovered that as I grow in my understanding of Jesus, it helps me better understand why the cross, what was happening there. Today, I'm going to be talking about the cross, but we're going to talk about the thief on the cross. Now, I have been requested to teach on the thief on the cross. As I get into this, it's like you can't do this in one video, unless this video is going to be a long video, and I choose not to do that. I try to keep these videos to 30 minutes, maybe 40, less if I can. But the thief on the cross is huge, because there are certain things that we see in this part of Luke. It's Luke chapter 23.

Why is this so important? I was raised in the Baptist Church. After that, I went to various Pentecostal churches, and I was involved with Seventh-day Adventism. The Lord just moved me through them all. You know, if you're going to be honest in heart, truly if you're going to be honest, and you're going to study the Bible and be honest about it,

you cannot remain in a denomination very long. Because if you're honest, and you're studying the Bible yourself, you're going to discover all kinds of problems that arise from the truth.

So you want to remain faithful to your own conscience, and you want to *"study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needs not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2Tm 2:15). That's imperative. You have to rightly divide the word of truth.

What does that have to do with the thief on the cross? Because, as a Baptist, they would point to the thief on the cross, and they would say, "You see, he never prayed and asked God into his life. He was never baptized. He was just simply going to be with Jesus that day in paradise." So, the thief on the cross is like what everybody wants to be. I want the benefit of going to heaven and knowing God loves me, and all of that, but I don't really want to do much about it. I don't want to study the Bible. You know, it really gets me to have to do that and look at that thief on the cross. He made it. Why can't we all just do that?

Well, I think there's more to it than that, and that's what I want to bring out in this video cast. I don't know what to say to people who don't want to take the time to investigate what they say is their salvation. Why don't you want to investigate that? And if you have salvation, why wouldn't you want to express that to someone else, especially your family, your loved ones? Why wouldn't you want to do that and help them see the salvation that you have?

The truth of the matter is, you probably are not saved. You don't understand it, but you've been told all your life because you've been to church and you've prayed the prayer... How many times have you prayed that prayer? And you believe in God. You believe in Jesus. You just don't understand it.

So today, the thief on the cross brings out a variety of things. There's no way to do this in one video. So this is going to be Part 1, and by the grace of God, I'll remember to do Part 2 for the next one. It's important that we're able to trace the thief on the cross and what is stated about him, and what he says about Jesus, and see exactly what was going on there.

I ask the question: The thief on the cross said, *"Remember me when you come into your kingdom."* Did he believe Jesus was actually the Son of God? What did he think? Well, let's talk about that. What did the thief on the cross think about that man who was dying beside him? Let's turn to Luke 23. I'm going to start reading verse 34.

Luk 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment and cast lots.

Now, remember, he is beside the thief on the cross.

Luk 23:35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, and they said, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

Luk 23:36 And the soldiers mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

Luk 23:37 And saying, If you be the king of the Jews, save yourself...

Luk 23:38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Now, consider with me, you're dying on the cross, you're the thief on the cross, and you've got a guy beside you who is also dying, and the crowd of people below you, including church leaders, are accusing him of saying he is the Christ. Did Jesus ever do that?

Mrk 14:61 But he held his peace, and answered nothing (standing before Caiphas). And the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

Mrk 14:62 And Jesus said, I am: and you'll see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Mrk 14:63 Then the high priest rent his clothes, and said, What need we any further witnesses?

So, for the people to be standing at the foot of the cross, including the church leadership, and saying, *"Well, if he's the Christ, let him save himself,"* why would they say that? Because he said that about himself, *"I'm the Christ."* Now remember, you're the thief on the cross. Here's a group of people below you claiming that the guy beside you

said he was the Christ, the Son of the Blessed. And then they have a sign above his head, "King of the Jews."

What would that possibly mean? If you're a thief on the cross, what would that possibly mean to you? Well, let's go back to Luke 23, starting at verse 39.

Luk 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him. He said, If you be Christ, save yourself and us.

Again, everybody below you is saying, *"You said you're the Christ."* Well, here this guy, the other malefactor, is saying, *"You're claiming to be the Christ."*

Luk 23:40 But the other one (who is the thief on the cross) answering rebuked him. He said, Do you not fear God, seeing that you're in the same condemnation?

Luk 23:41 We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man has done nothing amiss.

Luk 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom.

Now, everybody believes that Jesus said he was the Christ, and what did this thief on the cross just tell him? *"You have done nothing wrong."* Question. Did that thief believe this was the Christ? He said, *"You've done nothing wrong."* But then he says something else. *"Remember me when you come into your kingdom."* What does that imply? Here, the guy's dying beside you. He's dying. The man is dying, he's going to be dead in a short manner of time, and you're telling him, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom."

What does that imply? Well, evidently, the thief on the cross believed that Jesus would be raised from the dead. That, by the way, is another prophecy about the Christ that he would be raised from the dead (Psa 16:9-10). Everybody is saying, *"You claim you're the Christ. Well, you're not doing anything wrong. Remember me when you come into your kingdom, remember me when you're raised from the dead."*

Right here, in the statements made by the thief on the cross, he is claiming... Now, I'm going to say something, and I don't mean to jump too far ahead. I want you to

understand, there is a prophecy in Zechariah chapter 6 about the Branch and the Priest (Zec 6:12-13). Jesus Christ is the branch (Isa 11:1). But who is the priest? It's the risen Savior (Psa 110:1-4). Remember Psalms 110, verse 1,

Psa 110:1 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.

That scripture is applied to the risen Savior, because that is the Psalm where God says, *"You're a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."* So Zechariah 6 plays off of the Branch and the Priest. *"And the counsel of peace is between the two of them."* That thief on the cross just acknowledged the Branch and the Priest. Whether he knew those prophecies or not is beside the point. He told him, "You haven't done anything wrong. You're claiming to be Christ. You haven't done anything wrong. Remember me when you're raised from the dead, and you come into your kingdom."

There's the Branch and the Priest. Did he believe this was the Christ? Absolutely, he did. Now we're going to read another verse together. This is in 1 John chapter five, verse 1.

1Jn 5:1 Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loves Him that begat loves him that is begotten.

Now, you tell me about the thief on the cross. According to the scripture, he had had a born-again experience. Born-again is when you believe Jesus is the Christ. Why? Why is that? Because of the prophecy in Psalm 2 about the anointing of the Son of God. Now, again, I'm going to turn and read this. I've put this in so many studies, but it's very important. Let's turn to Psalm 2. I'm going to start reading at verse 4.

Psa 2:4 He that sits in the heavens shall laugh (this is the Father): the Lord shall have them in derision.

Psa 2:5 Then shall he (the Father) speak unto them in his wrath, and trouble them in his sore displeasure.

Psa 2:6 Yet have I set (that word "set," is "to anoint, it's to pour upon")... Yet have I anointed my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

Remember what was above the head of Christ: "The king of the Jews."

Psa 2:6 I have anointed my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

Psa 2:7 (And then the Son says) I will declare the decree... (What decree? The anointing. I've anointed my king. I'll declare that decree.) Jehovah said to me, You are my Son; this day have I begotten you.

So when the Father tells the Son... and that happened at the baptism of Christ. At the baptism of Christ, John baptizes Jesus, the heavens open, the dove comes down, and God speaks and says, "*You are my Son in whom I am well pleased*" (Mat 3:13-17). That was the anointing of the Father anointing the Son.

But Psalm 2 adds another part to that: *This day have I begotten you.*" What do you mean? He was already born in Bethlehem. Yeah, what do you mean, "This day I've begotten you?" Because it's spiritual, "*This day you're born again. This day I have begotten you.*" So, anyone who believes he's the Christ... why would you believe that? Because he became the Christ when God anointed him with the decree, "*You're my Son.*"

If you believe Jesus is the Christ, you believe he's the Son of God because that's what it means. Only God can reveal that to you and make that come home in your heart if you let him. If that is the case, you're born from above.

Thief on the cross: "You haven't done anything wrong. Remember me when you come into your kingdom because you're going to be raised from the dead." It's pretty simple, isn't it? That is why Jesus answered him the way he did. Let's read this in Luke 23:43.

Luk 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, To day shall you be with me in paradise.

Now, look at the word "to day." It's two words. That isn't how you spell "today" because that doesn't say "to day." There's no space between "to" and "day." That is "this day" you'll be with me in paradise.

It's like it's too much to try to cover in the short time that we have. So we're going to pick up with what it means, "*this day you'll be with me in paradise,*" because this truly will open your eyes. Right now, I think for somebody new, coming into the truth, this is a lot.

This is a lot to tell somebody. Again, let me just say this: Jesus told the high priest he was the Christ, the Son of God. On the cross, everybody standing there watching him knew he had said that, because they're all saying, *"Well, if you're the Christ, save yourself."* Everybody knew that he said that. In fact, that's why he's hanging there. He hadn't done anything else. He's there because he said he's the Christ.

Then they accuse him of being the king, saying he's the king, so they hang a sign above his head: "The King of the Jews." Which goes back again to Psalm 2. It's all wrapped up in Psalm 2. The Father says, *I've anointed my king*. Jesus says, *Yeah, he told me I was his Son. He told me today I'm born from above*.

And the thief on the cross... *You haven't done anything wrong*. Why is Jesus hanging? Well, he said he's the Son of God. The thief on the cross... *Well, you haven't done anything wrong. In fact, remember me when you come into your kingdom*. Right there, he acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God. He also acknowledges the risen Savior – the Branch and the Priest.

So it's my prayer that this be a beginning for us. Without humility, we're never going to get there. We're never going to get the truth. We have been born into an apostasy. It is so bad that this little video, as simple as it is, would never be allowed in these churches. Why? It totally and completely refutes the Trinity.

Do you think that thief on the cross thought, "Oh, look, the Trinity God beside me is dying." You think that's what he thought? In no way did he think that. That whole Trinity thing wasn't even an issue until after Christ ascended, and there began to be an apostasy where people walked away from the teaching of the apostles, and they denied the Father and Son in eternity, and they denied that Jesus came in the flesh (1Jn 2:18-22 & 4:3).

If you're going to deny that he came in the flesh, meaning without an understanding of God, if you deny that, the baptism makes no sense. God told him, *"You're my Son. This day have I begotten you with that information."*

You deny? You think he came with a halo? You're going to have to give that up because it totally is not scriptural. It cannot help you be saved.

So we're going to get into these things deeper. I want you to understand what he meant when he said to the thief, "*This day* you'll be with me in paradise," because it's huge, and it opens the door for a deeper meaning, a deeper relationship between you and Jesus. Let this heal your family, not divide it. Let this heal you. Let this save us.