

Who were the two criminals crucified with Jesus?

Circa A.D. 29



The Two Thieves:

Traditional Names and Their Origin

Although Scripture does not name these two individuals, later Christian tradition came to identify the repentant thief as **“Dismas”** (sometimes spelled **“Dysmas”**) and the unrepentant thief as **“Gestas.”**

This identification appears in extra-biblical writings, most notably in the works of Josephus, the notable Jewish historian.

Within that tradition, Dismas is commonly referred to as the “Good Thief” or “Penitent Thief,”

while Gestas is presented as the thief who mocked Jesus.

Although these names have a strong historical presence in Christian literature and art, they do not appear in the original Greek texts of the New Testament or in earlier manuscripts like Codex Sinaiticus or Codex Vaticanus.

They remain part of ecclesiastical tradition but are not part of the inspired Scripture itself.

The men who under this name appear in the history of the crucifixion were robbers rather than thieves, belonging to the lawless bands by which Palestine was at that time and afterward infested.

Against these brigands every Roman procurator had to wage continual war.

It was necessary to use an armed police to encounter them.

The Penitent Thief

Getmas was the name of the penitent thief;

Luke's Gospel uniquely records the dialogue between Jesus and the two criminals.

One of the thieves, often referred to as the "penitent thief" or "good thief," acknowledges his guilt and recognizes Jesus' innocence.

In Luke 23:39-41 New International Version

39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"

41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

The penitent thief's recognition of Jesus' righteousness and his own sinfulness is a profound moment of repentance and faith.

He then makes a humble request in **Luke 23:42** : "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!'"

Jesus' Promise

In response to the penitent thief's plea, Jesus offers a promise of salvation, demonstrating His authority and grace even in His final moments.

Luke 23:43 records Jesus' words: "And Jesus said to him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'"

This assurance of eternal life highlights the immediacy of salvation through faith in Christ and underscores the theme of redemption.

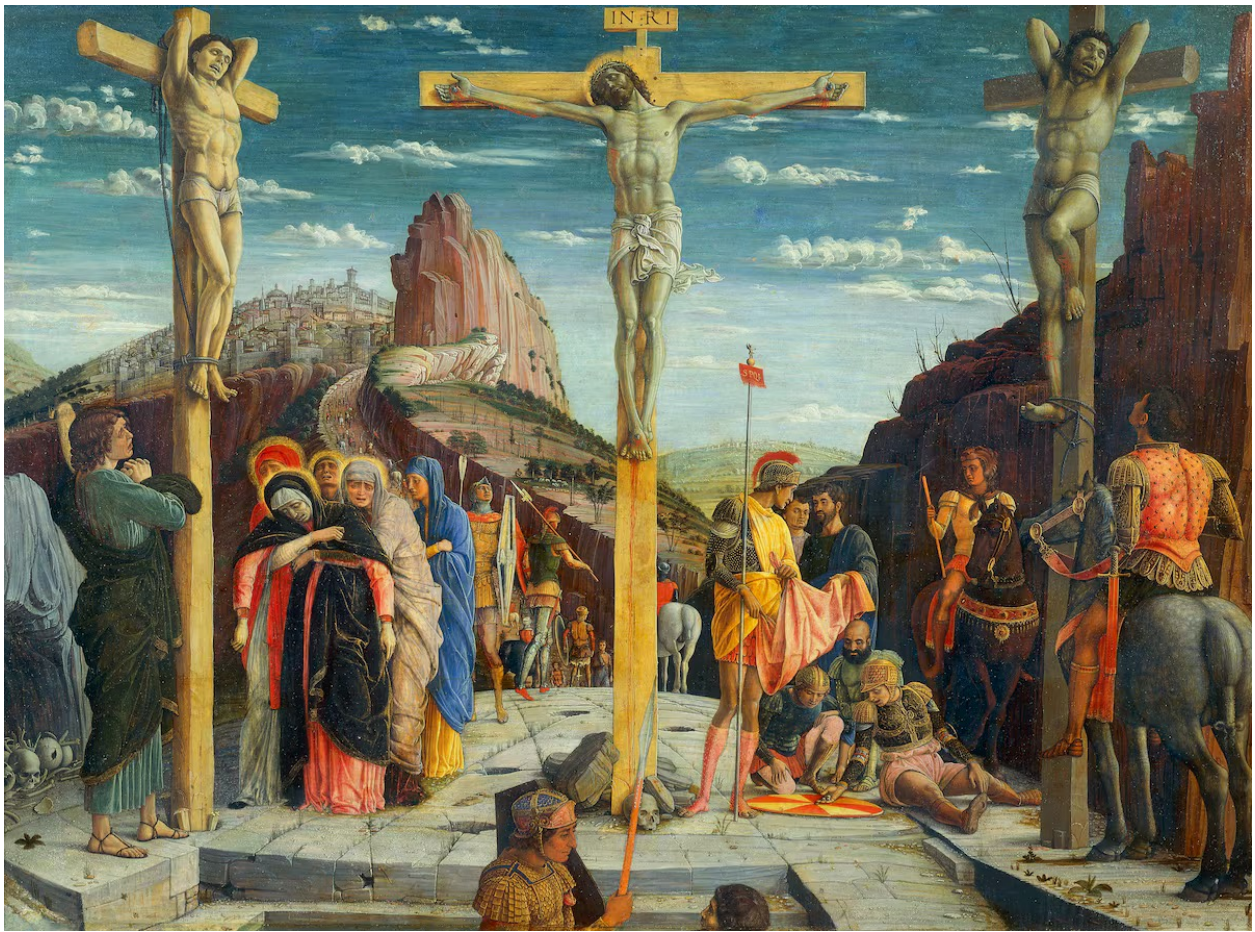
As we study this verse, it holds the key, that immediately upon one's death, the holy angels will bring all believers before the presence of God immediately... not tomorrow, not in a month, or a year Jesus said TODAY !



The Unrepentant Thief

Gestas is presented as the thief who mocked Jesus.

In contrast, the other thief, often referred to as the "unrepentant thief," joins the crowd in mocking Jesus, as noted in the earlier verses. His lack of repentance and continued derision serve as a stark contrast to the penitent thief's faith and humility.



The account of the Two Thieves, also known as the two criminals or malefactors, is a significant narrative found in the New Testament, specifically in the **Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke**.

These two individuals were crucified alongside Jesus Christ at Golgotha, the place of the Skull, during the crucifixion event.

Their account is particularly noted for its theological implications and the contrasting responses to Jesus.

Biblical Account

The Gospel of Matthew briefly mentions the two thieves in **Matthew 27:38** : "At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on His right and the other on His left."

Similarly, Mark 15:27 states, "Along with Jesus, they crucified two robbers, one on His right and one on His left."

These accounts emphasize the fulfillment of prophecy, as Jesus was "numbered with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).

The Gospel of Luke provides a more detailed account of the interaction between Jesus and the two thieves.

Luke 23:32-33 introduces them:

"Two others, who were criminals, were also led away to be executed with Jesus.

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals, one on His right and the other on His left."

The Penitent Thief's confession and repentance:

Luke's Gospel uniquely records the dialogue between Jesus and the two criminals.

One of the thieves, often referred to as the "penitent thief" or "good thief," acknowledges his guilt and recognizes Jesus' innocence.

In Luke 23:39-41, the narrative unfolds:

"One of the criminals who hung there heaped abuse on Him.

Are You not the Christ?' he said.

'Save Yourself and us!'

But the other one rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same judgment?'

We are punished justly, for we are receiving what our actions deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.'"

The penitent thief's recognition of Jesus' righteousness and his own sinfulness is a profound moment of repentance and faith.

He then makes a humble request in Luke 23:42 : "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!'"

Theological Significance:

The account of the Two Thieves is rich with theological significance.

It illustrates the divergent human responses to Jesus Christ —one of faith and repentance, the other of rejection and scorn.

The narrative underscores the core Christian belief in salvation by grace through faith, as the penitent thief, despite his past, receives the promise of eternal life solely through his faith in Jesus.

Furthermore, the account emphasizes the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and the nature of Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost.

The interaction between Jesus and the penitent thief serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of faith and the boundless mercy of Christ, even in the final moments of life.

Historical and Theological Reflections:

Early Christian communities often used the story of the penitent thief to highlight instant justification by faith, a theme echoed across the New Testament (**Romans 3:22-24**).

The essential truth-God's grace extended to a repentant sinner in his final hour-resonates with many testimonies and historical conversions throughout church history.

Even though "Dismas" and "Gestas" are names not included within the biblical canon, their inclusion in tradition testifies to the desire of early believers to remember both the seriousness of rejection and the joy of receiving forgiveness.

This moment at Calvary represents a pinnacle of biblical teaching: the universal need for atonement and the sufficiency of the Messiah's sacrifice to rescue all who call upon Him.

Key Points of Reflection:

1. Two criminals shared space with the Son of God in His final hours, representing humanity's choice between rejecting or embracing the Savior.
2. Scripture's silence on specific names highlights that it is the heart's response rather than personal identity that matters most in salvation.
3. The names "Dismas" and "Gestas" stem from later Christian tradition and are not part of the canonical record.

4. Archaeological and historical evidence supports the veracity of the crucifixion accounts, further validating the Gospel narratives' reliability.

5. The repentant thief's example encourages believers that genuine faith, at any point in life, ushers a person into God's promise of eternal fellowship.

Conclusion:

Dismas and Gestas are traditionally recognized as the two criminals crucified with Christ.

While these names do not appear in the biblical texts, the canonical record confirms two thieves by His side at Golgotha, with one of them recognizing Jesus's kingship and receiving a promise of Paradise.

Church tradition preserved these names to emphasize the stark contrast between sincere repentance and scornful rejection.

Their roles in the crucifixion narrative continue to draw believers and skeptics alike toward the fundamental truth of Scripture:

the grace of God is available to everyone, and upon one's sincere confession of faith in Christ's completed work, immediate salvation is assured.

This episode, bound together by consistent manuscript evidence and historically plausible details of crucifixion, serves as a powerful testament to the reliability of the Bible's account and the heart of its message-redemption through the risen Christ.

How do we obtain the Forgiveness of our Sins?



How do we get right with God, regardless of our individual sins?

Just say this Prayer and all of your sins will be forgotten, and you will have Eternal life, with Christ Jesus, in Heaven:

Lord Jesus, I repent of all my sins, and I ask you to come into my life, and I believe, that God raised You from the dead, this day, I ask you to be my Lord and Savior.

Romans 10:9 New Living Translation:

9 If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Friends, if you prayed that prayer, I believe that you are born again, and you have ever lasting life, get in a good bible teaching church, and may you keep growing, in the Lord, and may HE use you to help save many souls for His Kingdom !

In, Jesus Mighty Name!

Rev. Jesus Del Rio, Ed

