

## What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- BELIEVE – ACTS 16:31
- REPENT – ACTS 17:30; LUKE 13:3
- CONFESS – ROMANS 10:10; I TIMOTHY 6:12
- BE BAPTIZED – ACTS 2:38; MARK 16:16
- BE FAITHFUL – REVELATION 2:10

### PRAYER LIST:

North Ridgeville Church of Christ  
 36364 Chestnut Ridge Road  
 North Ridgeville, OH 44039

www.nrcoc.net

### *Times for Meeting*

Lord's Day

9:30 AM Bible Study (all ages)  
 10:30 AM Worship

Wednesday

7:00 PM Bible Study (all ages)

#### *Elders*

Bruce Dean  
 Mark Ullman

#### *Evangelist*

Steven Wallace

## THE NORTH RIDGEVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,  
 deceiving your own selves.” James 1:22

February 19, 2023

## “Four Thieves Connected with the Cross”

Steven J. Wallace

“The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10).<sup>1</sup>

When we think of the cross, we frequently think of the two thieves that were crucified with our Lord. Have we considered that there were four thieves connected with the Lord’s crucifixion?

### **The thief who purchased a field with the cross.**

When Jesus was arrested, He was betrayed by a kiss. Who kissed Him? Judas came with a great multitude that was armed with swords and clubs (Matt. 26:47-49). Jesus asked them, “Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? ...” (Matt. 26:55). Ironically, the multitude didn’t come out against a robber, but they came being led by a thief. Although Judas was an apostle, he was a thief and stole money from the money jar (Jn. 12:6). He also betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15). Perhaps he thought they would never be successful in apprehending Jesus as He had escaped their clutches before.

Regardless, the thirty pieces of silver didn't buy Judas happiness; but rather, it bought him a field *with the wages of iniquity* (Acts 1:16-19). When Jesus had been condemned, we find Judas bringing the money back to those he conspired with in Matthew 27:3. We find him confessing that he had sinned by betraying innocent blood (Matt. 27:4). In remorse, Judas throws his blood money down and then hangs himself (Matt. 27:5). The money of his betrayal purchased the infamous *Field of Blood* (Matt. 27:6-8). Not only does Judas show us that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil but also that it pierces one through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10). Tragically, not only did Judas sin against innocent blood in betraying Jesus, he also sinned against himself by *taking his own life* rather than *trusting in the Lord* to rise the third day after His death (Mk. 10:34). The blood that Jesus shed is powerful to forgive all sins, even betrayal, if the sinner repents and obeys the Lord. Judas *regretted* but never *repented*.

### **The thief who was replaced by the cross.**

At the same time Jesus was arrested, there was a notorious prisoner named Barabbas (Matt. 27:16). He was a murderer, incited rebellion with others, and was a robber (Mk. 15:7; Jn. 18:40). We know that the chief priests handed Jesus over to Pilate because of envy (Mk. 15:10). The crucifixion of Christ shows the depths in which morals can plummet into dark hatred. These chief priests would stir up the people to release someone who desecrated the Ten Commandments while condemning one who worked what was good through miracles and signs. The balance of justice was thrown down and crushed by releasing a murderer and killing the Just (Acts 3:14, 15).

### **The thief who reviled on the cross.**

Crucified next to Jesus was a thief who continued to revile the holy Lord. "Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing" (Matt. 27:44). Evidently both robbers were reproaching the Lord with what others had said. It is sad that even when death's cold hand is near that some, who have

become so hardened by sin, will join in malicious conversations. Where this thief died reviling, something happened that brought a change upon the other robber.

### **The thief who repented on the cross.**

Luke 23:40-43 shows us that one of the two thieves had a change of heart on the cross. He ceased saying, "If you are the Christ" and responded with "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." He turned from *reviler* to *defender* of the Lord. He became self-aware of his own crimes and at the same time became fully convinced of the innocence of Jesus. The transition is remarkable, and his understanding of the identity of Jesus as not only "Lord" but also a "king" is refreshing. Jesus promised him paradise.

Some abuse this text, asserting that one doesn't have to be baptized to be saved. They cannot prove that this thief was never baptized, for all the land of Judea came out to John to be baptized (Mk. 1:5). Furthermore, Jesus had the power to forgive sins while on earth (Mk. 2:10). Further still, to say the thief on the cross undermines baptism for salvation would also undermine the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, for none of those things had happened yet when this thief was forgiven. Finally, we are to be saved like the *chief* of sinners, not the *thief* on the cross.

"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life" (1 Tim. 1:15, 16).

Note carefully that the chief of sinners is the *pattern* to those who are *going to believe*. What did the chief do? He was baptized to have his sins washed away where he, through grace, contacted the death of Jesus (Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3, 4).

<sup>1</sup> Unless noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.