

The Story So Far

The Gospel of Luke is a story. Let's not forget that. And like every good story, the plot builds and builds, leading up to one final climax. This week we finally encounter that climax as Jesus is tried and crucified. As you think back through Luke's story of Jesus thus far, notice how themes have been woven together leading us to this climactic point.

It has all led up to this. Before Jesus was born Simeon prophesied that Jesus would bring division among Israel. He began His ministry by mixing it up with the religious establishment in His hometown. Throughout the narrative, Jesus has confronted the Pharisees and others who are trusting in their own righteousness, rather than God's. Upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus mixed it up with the Jerusalem religious establishment. Now the confrontation boils over with Jesus landing on the cross.

Character Studies

All four gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) give a detailed account of Jesus' trials and crucifixion. Yet each one of the writers focuses on different parts and attempts to bring your attention to different aspects. Luke has an emphasis on the different characters in the story and how they respond to Jesus. As you read Chapter 23, how does Luke portray each of the following characters?

Jerusalem Establishment (including Chiefs, Scribes, Elders, Sanhedrin)
23:1, 2, 5, 10, 18, 21, 23, 35

Pilate
23: 3, 4, 7, 13-16, 23-25, also look at 13:1 for context on Pilate

Herod
23:8-12, also look at 9:7-9 for context on Herod

Simon of Cyrene
23:26.

The People

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23:27, 35, 48

The Women

23:27-31, 49, 55, 56

Two Criminals

23:32, 39-43

Soldiers

23:36-38

Centurion

23:47

Joseph of Arimathea

23:50-54

What do you notice from this study about the people?

What do the people have in common who are sympathetic to Jesus?

Simon was probably of Jewish descent. Even though he has a Greek name, there was a large Jewish population in Cyrene. It is interesting how this Jew from outside of Jerusalem "carries his cross" in comparison to the Jews from within Jerusalem. What do you think Luke is trying to get across here? Is Luke anti-Semitic in the way he paints Jews? Why or why not?

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Sayings Study

In addition to showing us many characters in this chapter, Luke also gives us 6 sayings of Jesus. Study each of these sayings in their context and write down what they tell us about Jesus and His concerns.

"You have said so." (23:3)

But he made no answer (23:9)

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children..." (23:28-32)

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (23:34)

"Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (23:43)

"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." (23:46)

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Reflection

Luke 23: Jesus dies on the cross. We have come to this, the climax of the Gospel of Luke, the central act of the Story of God, the epitome of God's love, and the crux of our faith. Let's make sure we don't glance over the cross!

What is your favorite song about the cross? Here are some suggestions to get your mind going: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross, Nothing But the Blood, Old Rugged Cross, How Deep the Father's Love, Beautiful Scandalous Night, Near the Cross, At the Cross.

Write the lyrics below. Put the CD on. Pray. Cry. Reflect. Thank. Rejoice.