

# The Thief on the Cross

Video Clip Study Summary by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®  
Study Summary & Doctrinal Overview

## About This Clip

This video clip is an excerpt from Lesson 11 of Keith Blades' study "Justification & Salvation." In it, Keith examines Luke 23:39–43 — the account of the malefactor crucified alongside Jesus — and demonstrates that the thief on the cross was not an exception to God's program with Israel. Keith explains that understanding Israel's salvation "package deal" and properly distinguishing between justification unto eternal life (the fundamental issue) and the rest of that package's elements resolves what appears to be a problem. The thief received exactly what anyone has always received: salvation from the debt and penalty of sin through a simple faith response — and the Lord was perfectly right in recognizing that justification unto eternal life was the only thing this man needed.



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## Clip Summary

### CLIP

#### **The Thief on the Cross** *A Video Clip from Keith Blades' Teaching*

##### **The Problem People Manufacture: Calling Him "An Exception to the Rule"**

- Those who teach faith plus works for salvation in Israel's program face a problem with this man: he had no opportunity for water baptism, discipleship, endurance, animal sacrifice, or works of any kind
- Their solution is to declare him "an exception to the rule" — since he couldn't produce the required works, the Lord accepted him anyway
  - Keith calls this response "ridiculous — downright ludicrous": a forced conclusion that arises from failing to understand Israel's salvation package deal and what justification unto eternal life actually is

##### **The Thief's Faith Response — What He Understood and Believed**

- He rebuked the other malefactor on the basis of the fear of God — he understood divine law and God's authority over it
- He recognized his own condemnation as perfectly just: "we receive the due reward of our deeds" — the wages of sin is death; he had no self-defense tactic
- He knew who Jesus was: he called him "Lord" — Adonai Jehovah — and understood that the name Jesus meant "Jehovah the Savior"; he recognized him as God in human flesh
- He believed the gospel of the kingdom without qualification: "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" — not if, but when; the cross was not a stumbling block to his faith in the coming kingdom

##### **Justification Unto Eternal Life: The Only Issue Before This Man**

- This man was going to physically die within hours — the entire salvation package deal had no bearing on him whatsoever, and the Lord fully recognized that
- Water baptism — a public, physical mark of disassociation from apostate Israel — was not something he needed; he wasn't going to be around to put it into practice
- Discipleship, endurance, animal sacrifice: none of these had any bearing on his situation; they were simply not the issue
  - "Give God the credit for recognizing what he needs and the fact that it's the only thing he needs"
- The only issue: justification unto eternal life — salvation from the debt and penalty of his sins; this is what the Lord addressed, and this is what the Lord gave him

#### **Not an Exception — The Same Fundamental Justification in Every Case**

- Jesus said: "Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise" — paradise is a place only those with no sin charged against them can enter; he was completely forgiven at that moment
- He received justification unto eternal life the only way it has ever been received — by a faith response to the truth God provided, whereby God said he would justify unto eternal life
- This was not a new arrangement: "That was not only in that salvation package deal as the fundamental issue, but was there all along before the gospel of the kingdom even began to be preached in Israel"
  - The thief is not an exception to the rule — he is a demonstration of the rule at its most fundamental level, stripped of everything except the one essential: faith in the provision of God

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## **Key Doctrinal Distinctions**

### **Israel's Salvation Package Deal vs. Justification Unto Eternal Life**

Keith explains that Israel's salvation involved a "package deal" with multiple elements — water baptism (a public mark of disassociation from apostate Israel), discipleship, endurance, and more. But within that package, the foundational element is justification unto eternal life: salvation from the debt and penalty of sin by faith alone. The thief on the cross only needed — and only received — this foundational element. He was going to die within hours. None of the other elements had any bearing on his situation. Recognizing this distinction dissolves the apparent problem entirely: he was not an exception because he didn't need the rest of the package.

### **The Thief's Faith Was Exactly What Was Required — Nothing Was Missing**

The malefactor's faith response was substantive and complete: he recognized divine law and God's authority, acknowledged his just condemnation under it, identified Jesus as Lord (Adonai Jehovah, Jehovah the Savior) in human flesh, and believed without reservation in the coming kingdom despite the apparent stumbling block of the cross. This is not a thin or deficient faith — it is exactly the faith response

to the information God gave, by which he said a response would be met with justification unto eternal life. The Lord's declaration — "Verily I say unto thee" — carries the full weight of divine certainty: you can stake your claim on this.

## "Today Shalt Thou Be With Me in Paradise" — What This Declares

The Lord's words are a declaration of accomplished justification. Paradise is a place that cannot be entered by anyone who has sin charged against them. When Jesus says "today shalt thou be with me in paradise," he is declaring that at that very moment, this man's sins are forgiven and he is justified unto eternal life — completely cleared of the debt and penalty of his sins. The Lord would enter paradise having paid for sin before he physically died; this man would enter having been forgiven by the same payment. The two of them going to paradise together that day is itself the proof that he was not an exception but a recipient of the same fundamental grace.

## Justification by Faith Alone Preceded the Gospel of the Kingdom

Keith makes a significant point in closing: the faith-alone basis for justification unto eternal life was not introduced by the gospel of the kingdom — it was there "all along" before it. The gospel of the kingdom added elements to Israel's salvation package deal, but the fundamental issue — justification by faith — predates it. This means the thief was not receiving something novel or exceptional. He was receiving what has always been available at the bedrock level of God's program. Understanding this ensures that the thief on the cross is not used to undermine Israel's program, but rather confirms the consistent grace of God running through it.

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## Key Scripture References

<b>Luke 23:39</b>	First malefactor rails on Jesus — physical salvation only in view: "save thyself and us"
<b>Luke 23:40–41</b>	Second malefactor rebukes him: acknowledges just condemnation, recognizes Jesus as entirely different — "this man hath done nothing amiss"
<b>Luke 23:42</b>	"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" — faith in Jesus as Lord and in the coming kingdom, without qualification
<b>Luke 23:43</b>	"Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise" — declaration of immediate, complete justification unto eternal life
<b>James 1:1 (context)</b>	James is written to the twelve tribes — Israel's remnant; the thief belongs to this same program and its foundational principle of faith-based justification