

When and Where Do I Become a Christian ?

Lesson 9

Luke 23:32-43

Memory verse

I (God) give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. John 10:28

Opener

Have you ever wondered when and where you can become a Christian? Some people think that there is a certain time or place to believe in Jesus. Lots of people have ideas about when a person can believe in Jesus. Some people think you have to be 12 years old. Others think that you have to be an adult.

Scripture

Luke 23:32-33

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

Discussion

Ask: Have you ever wondered when and where you can become a Christian?

The Bible does not say a certain time when we can trust Him. What it does say is that a person must really believe in Jesus with all his heart. It is easy to know about Jesus in your mind. That's not what God means. God wants you to believe in Jesus and trust Him with your heart.

For example, lots of people know **who** Emmitt Smith is. There are friends and family that really **know** Emmitt personally. You may know **who** Jesus is. However, He wants you to really **know** Him personally. You do that by believing Him and asking Him to come into your life.

Some people may think that a person has to ask Jesus into his heart at church or Bible study time. Guess what? The Bible tells us that there is no certain place that you have to do this. God is not so concerned about where you ask Jesus to come into your life. God is more concerned that you believe in Jesus and don't put it off. You could pray at Bible study, in your room, or with a friend. The main thing is that you are serious about trusting Jesus and you want Him to be with you forever.

There is a lesson in the Bible that gives an example of how someone believed in Jesus. It was at a very unusual place and at a very unusual time.

When Jesus was being taken to the hill to be crucified, two criminals walked with Him. They were being killed because they had done wrong.

When they reached the place called the "skull", they crucified Jesus and the two criminals by hammering nails in their hands and feet onto a wooden cross. One man's cross was on Jesus' left side and the other was on His right. Jesus was in the middle.

Luke 23 34-38

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots. The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." There was a written notice above him, which read: **THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.**

Suddenly, Jesus said something that surprised everyone. He prayed and asked God to forgive everyone because they did not know what they were doing. Can you believe it? Even when Jesus was in so much pain and suffering, He was thinking about others.

People that were standing and watching started making fun of Jesus. They yelled insults at Him. They jeered at Him and said, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is Jesus." They did not realize that Jesus had to die in order for us to be able to go to Heaven. He died for all people—even the people who were yelling the insults!

Luke 23:39-43

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.'" Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

One of the criminals on the cross started insulting Jesus too. He wanted Jesus to save all of them! But the other criminal told him to stop. He said, "We are punished rightly for the things that we have done wrong. We are getting what we deserve. Jesus has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Ask: Why did Christ tell the criminal that he would be in Heaven?

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Jesus told the criminal that he would be in Heaven. Why? It was because the man believed in Jesus and knew that Jesus was God's Son. He trusted Jesus and he became a Christian—even though he was about to die and he was hanging on a wooden cross.

Application

Ask: Are you wondering what happened next?

Well, soon after that, Jesus died. They laid Him in a grave and put a stone over the entrance. Three days later, on Sunday, something wonderful happened. Jesus came back to life! He was alive again! Because of what Jesus did for you, taking your punishment for your wrongs, you can go to Heaven, if you trust Him and ask Him to come into your life.

Ask: Would you like to do this?

Just like the thief became a Christian, you can too.

Ask: When can you become a Christian?

The thief did not hear until he was about to die. But, he knew Jesus was telling the truth and he immediately believed. Some people are young when they believe and others are old. The point is that God wants us to trust Him when we understand and not wait or put it off until a later time. God wants us to trust Him and not make excuses. He promises to take care of us and help us always when we believe in Him. He will help us get through any hard times.

Romans 10:9-10

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.

Romans 10:9-10 tell us that we need to do two things. First, we have to confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord. Second, we have to believe in our heart that God has raised him from the dead. Then we will be saved and we will have a new life.