

An Examination of Three Crosses

Pt.2



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- Last week in our study of the three crosses we examined the first cross – The Cross of a Savior.
- We established that without first examining the cross of Christ that it would be pointless to examine the other two in light of Jesus.
- We concluded that the Cross of Christ was not only relevant to the two men who hung between him but to each and every one of us living today.

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- We demonstrated that the cross of Christ was in fact:
 1. A Cross of Love
 2. A Cross of Sacrifice
 3. A Cross of Peace
 4. A Cross of Joy

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- This morning with the cross of Christ in view we will examine the other two crosses that hung to the right and left of the Lord:
 - The Cross of a Hardened Heart
 - The Cross of a Penitent Soul

The Cross of a Hardened Heart



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- As the Lord hung upon the cross, suspended above the ground before his accusers who lied, the Romans who put him there, his mourning mother, and even some of his disciples who stood off watching from afar and denying Him while doing so...
- The Lord having endured all the shame of the cross received hateful mocking and taunting as well:

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And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, ‘I am the Son of God.

~ **Matthew 27:39-43**

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- As Jesus hung there, battered beyond recognition, staining the ground beneath Him red with blood, we learn that the two thieves who were crucified with Him also mocked and blasphemed Him:

Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.

~ Matthew 27:44

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- We know that one of these two thieves will later repent, for now we will focus upon the cross of the man who did not.
- There are several sad conclusions that can be drawn about this man:

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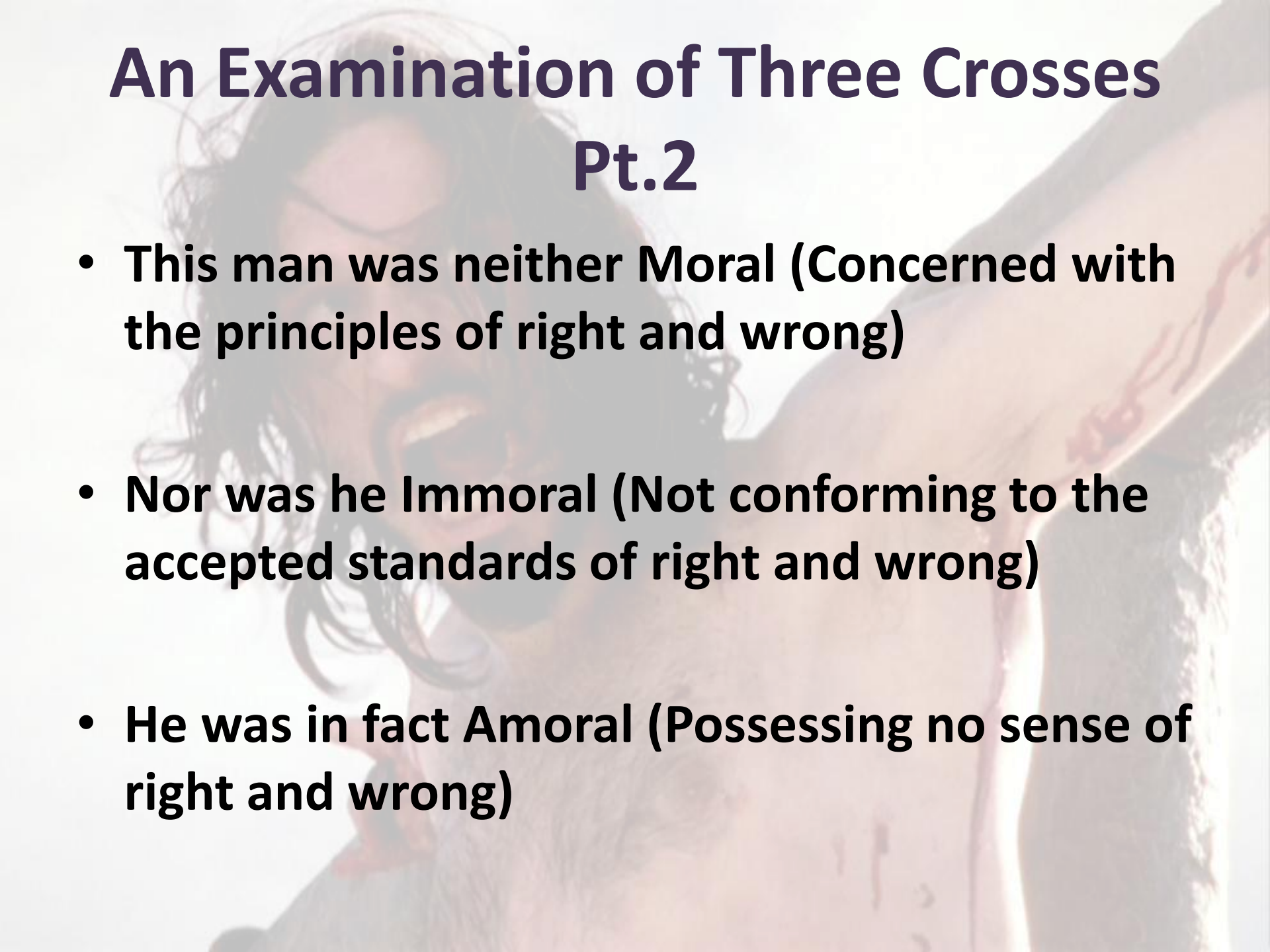
1. He Had *NO* Fear of God.

- In addition he had no respect for civil or divine law either.
- He would seem to be void of any religious or moral sensitivity, a soul that even the unspeakable horror of the cross could not awaken.

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- **This man was neither Moral (Concerned with the principles of right and wrong)**
- **Nor was he Immoral (Not conforming to the accepted standards of right and wrong)**
- **He was in fact Amoral (Possessing no sense of right and wrong)**



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There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. "Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips (continued)



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***Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness.
Their feet are swift to shed blood;
Destruction and misery are in their ways; And
the way of peace they have not known.
There is no fear of God before their eyes.***

~ Romans 3:10-18

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2. Since he endorsed the sentiments expressed in Matthew 27:42-43 it would seem reasonable that he had at least some threshold knowledge regarding Christ

- His Miracles**
- His Teachings**
- His marvelous deeds**

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- When the Lord's adversaries exclaimed, "he saved others," it was an inadvertent concession (even though sarcastic) that he had "delivered" others by His miracles...

Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

~ John 11:47-48

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- **Now Jesus could “do nothing” for Himself. They laughed at Him, mocked Him, and this thief joined in...**
- **Like so many others He had hardened his own heart in disbelief of the signs and wonders which proved Christ to be the Son of God.**

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But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: *“Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?”* Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:

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He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.

John 12:37-40

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3. He unequivocally rejected Christ as King.

- He seemingly despised Him since he endorsed the taunts hurled at the Savior at the height of his agony.
- He equally with everyone else was guilty of rejecting and repudiating the Jesus' claim to be the Son of God.

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“He was willing to step into the horrible darkness of eternal condemnation with a heart of skeptical hate. Legions follow him with like animosity as the generations come and go. Many share the same hostility, and no level of conscience-pain or danger can awaken a sense of need in their blighted souls.”

~ Wayne Jackson

The Cross of a Penitent Soul



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- Although we are originally told that both thieves mocked and blasphemed Christ (Matthew 27:44), one eventually had a change of heart.

Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? (continued)

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And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong. Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

~ **Luke 23:43**

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- The question commonly asked is **“Why?”** or **“What?”**

“Why did he repent?”

“What caused him to change?”

- There are some possibilities that exist...

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- 1. In facing death one comes quickly to grips with their own mortality and flaws.**

In those days Hezekiah was sick and near death. And Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, went to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD

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and said, “Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly. And the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, Go and tell Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will add to your days fifteen years. ~ Isaiah 38:1-5

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2. It is possible that He was a disciple of John or even Jesus at one time considering some of the things he said:

- Do you not fear God? **(Luke 23:39)**
- For we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong **(Luke 23:41)**

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- “Lord” – spoken not as a general address but as THE LORD – *The NU Text actually says “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42)*
- “Remember Me When you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42; Matthew 12:28; 13:11, 19, 24, 31,33,38, 43-45, 47,52; 16:19)

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3. Perhaps He Was Moved By What He Saw from the Crucified Savior.

- Jesus Quoted Scripture (**Psalm 22:16;**
Matthew 27:46)
- Gave the care of His mother to John (**John**
19:26)

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- Beaten, scourged, spit upon, mocked, had his clothes gambled away in front of Him, and yet he never uttered a single word of defense, anger, or curse upon any single one of them (**Matthew 26:53**)
- Perhaps He was moved by the prayer that was uttered in love for himself, and all others present (Luke 23:32).

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- While we cannot say for sure why this man repented we know that it was true repentance accepted by Christ just hours before the Old Law would be abolished forever.
- Under the Old Law Christ could forgive sins while here on earth (**Mark 2:10; John 8:11; Luke 5:20; 7:48**).

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- Under the New Law Christ can still forgive sins when we come to Him in faith (**Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:17**)
- Repenting of our sins (**Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38**)
- Being immersed for the remission of our sins (**Mark 16:16**)

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- **Two-Thousand years later our choices are still the same:**

1. Reject Jesus Christ

2. Accept Him; Obey Him; Follow Him

The penitent thief could only be forgiven by Christ, as could the other thief had he repented.

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- Today each and every one of us carry a cross:
- It is either the heavy, sad, lost cross the world gives you to carry...
- Or it is the cross of Christ that is light, easy, peaceful, and free. In this life that we have will we be like the hard hearted thief or will we call upon Jesus to remember us in His Kingdom?

This Morning Which Cross Do You Bear?

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

~ Acts 4:12

Which Person Do You Want Be Like?