

The Salvation of the Thief

There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)

Protestant Viewpoint

1. The thief was saved without doing any **good works**
2. The thief went to paradise without being **baptized**
3. The thief was saved in a singular **moment** without the Church **Sacraments** or through the **Priesthood**

The Thief's 10 Good Works



1. His belief in the Lord Jesus Christ

This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent
(John 6:29)

- Belief itself is an act of service to God
- Believed even when Jesus was in a humbled state

“O blessed thief, what did you see and what did you observe; that you confessed the crucified Christ in the flesh, the King of heaven and the Lord of all?”

(Commemoration of the Thief, Good Friday, Sixth Hour)

2. His Repentance

Unless you repent you will likewise perish.
(Luke 13:3,5)

- Repented in his heart of his deeds



3. His Confession

- Confessed his sins to Jesus
- Accepted the punishment for his actions
 - Did not focus on getting himself out of it
 - Unlike the second thief who said to Jesus *"Save yourself and us!"* (Luke 23:39)
- Was concerned for his spiritual salvation and eternity

4. His Hope

- Despite his evil deeds
- Knew that Jesus could absolve him
- Judas Iscariot

5. His Defence of the Lord

This Man has done nothing wrong.

(Luke 23:41)

- Not even disciples or followers
- Everyone throwing ridicule at Him

6. His Work for Others

- His words comforted St. Mary during this difficult time

A sword will pierce through your own soul also.

(Luke 2:35)

7. His Confession of Faith

*Remember me when you come into
Your kingdom.
(Luke 23:42)*

Implies 3 things:

1. Jesus is a ruler
 2. Death has no power over Him
 3. Jesus is the source of salvation
- Public confession
 - St. Peter

8. His Endurance

*Blessed are you when they revile and
persecute you, and say all kinds of evil
against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice
and be exceedingly glad, for great is
your reward in heaven.
(Matthew 5:11-12)*

- Rewarded

9. His Quenching of Jesus' Thirst

- Jesus told the woman he was thirsty
- “...drink of her faith”
 - (St. Augustine)



I thirst.
(John 19:28)

- Did not drink
- The thief quenched His thirst through his good works and faith

Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was thirsty and you gave Me drink.

(Matthew 25:34-35)

10. His endurance after Jesus' death

- Maintained his faith even after Jesus had died

He who endures to the end will be saved.

(Matthew 24:13)

The Baptism of the Thief



What is Baptism?

BAPTISM = Death with our Lord Jesus Christ

“Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?” (Romans 6:3)

Where does the water come in?

- Other denominations commonly cite situations in which **water** baptism is physically impossible
 - eg. someone is lost in a desert or is about to be killed in war
- Baptismal water is a **simulation** of Jesus' death
- We are performing a ritual that reveals a belief

"We have been united together in the likeness of His death" (Romans 6:5)



Was the thief baptized?

BAPTISM = Death with our Lord Jesus Christ

What did the thief do?

He **LITERALLY** died with Christ

“I have been crucified with Christ” (Galatians 2:20)

Jesus said it Himself!

“I have a baptism to be baptized with and how distressed I am till it is accomplished” (Luke 12:50)



“It is finished” (John 19:30)

Was the Thief
Saved Instantly?



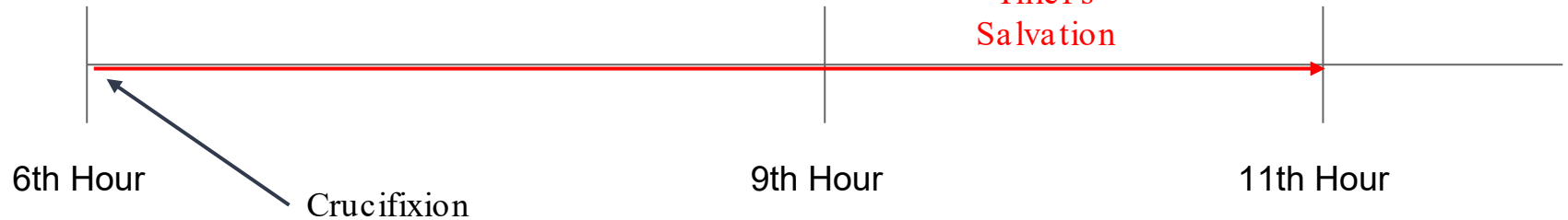
Is Salvation instant?

- Some denominations believe in salvation **the moment** you accept Christ as your Saviour
 - Life becomes an individual relationship with God
 - The Bible becomes the “heavenly instruction manual”
 - Salvation is a “do-it-yourself” project
 - The role of the Church, Priesthood, and Sacraments disappears
 - Seems easy! **But... is it supposed to be easy?**

“Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:14)

So when was the thief saved?

“Lord Remember me when You come into Your Kingdom”



- BAPTISM = Death **with** our Lord Jesus Christ
- *“Without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22)*

The Thief in the Coptic Tradition



Was he really the right hand thief?

- Was the forbidden fruit an apple?
 - We have no idea, and it doesn't make much difference
- The Bible mentions the Lord being crucified between two criminals
- The Bible does not specify which of the two was saved
- So why does tradition call him “The Right Thief”?

“He will set the sheep on His right and the goats on the left” (Matthew 25:33)

When do we remember the thief?

- Ninth hour Agpeya litanies
- Good Friday hymn “Golgotha”
 - “Remember me, O Lord when You come into Your Kingdom;
Remember me O Holy One when You come into Your Kingdom;
Remember me, O Master when You come into Your Kingdom”
- Nighttime litanies of Holy Pascha Week
- During the prayer for the departed

In My Life...



How does this story
affect my
relationship with
Christ?

- Understanding God's power
 - Hope
- The correlation between faith and works
 - Quenching Jesus' thirst

In the Service...



How does this
affect me in my
service?

- Gives us a deeper understanding of Salvation and our true Orthodox faith
- Helps us respond to and support those whom we serve when they come in contact with opposing beliefs