LESSON 17

Name:

How Jesus’ Death on the Cross Saved Us From Sin

*Directions*: Read the cited scripture passages and related biblical footnotes to help you to fill in the blanks

for each item.

1. Some people think Jesus saved us from sin because he alone was hung on a cross. But Matthew 27:38 says that on Jesus’ right side and left were crucified two .

2. Others think he saved us because unlike all the others who were crucified, he alone was executed unjustly on a trumped-up charge. But Luke 23:2-5 and John 19:12 point out that Jesus was condemned for sup- posedly inciting a rebellion against legitimate authority. It made little difference that Jesus professed: “My kingdom does not belong to .” (Jn 18:36)

3. Now how could a condemned criminal, simply by dying a painful death, save the whole

?

4. Some people think that Jesus was the only person who was nailed to the cross, and hence he suffered more than anyone else who was ever executed. But John 19:18 makes clear that not only Jesus, but also two others with him, were .

5. Or again, maybe Jesus saved us from sin because he willingly gave his life for his beliefs. But Socrates, Nicanor (2 Mc 6:18-31), and John the Baptist (Mt 14:3-12) also died for their beliefs, and we don’t say that they saved all mankind from .

6. It could not be the type of execution that Jesus endured which saves us. The Romans executed thou- sands of criminals over a period of five hundred years. Josephus in his *Antiquities* (17.10.10) notes that the governor of Syria in 4 B.C.E. crucified two thousand .

7. The Bible itself (Dt 21:22-23) says: “. . . God’s curse rests on him who

.”

8. According to St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:23, the crucifixion of Jesus was a real stumbling block to belief on the part of both .

9. In the Roman empire, crucifixion was a type of torture reserved for slaves, rebels, murderers, and non- Roman .

10. Finally, if Jesus were cruelly executed in order to make up to God the Father for all the sins ever com- mitted on earth since Adam and Eve, then his death would make God the Father seem very

.

11. Well, then, did Jesus save us from sin simply because he was crucified? If Jesus had been beheaded or stoned to death instead of being crucified, would he still have ?

12. It was not the style of execution suffered by Jesus that saved us. Rather, it was Jesus’ behavior during his passion and death that .

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Lesson 17 continued

13. First of all, Jesus did not try to talk his way out of his impending death. When Jesus was questioned by

Herod, Luke 23:19 says that Jesus “. . . gave him .”

14. Mark 15:5 agrees, saying that when Jesus gave Pilate no further answer to his questions, Pilate was

.

15. Secondly, Jesus thought of the welfare of those around him, even while he himself was undergoing tor- ture. According to Luke 23:28-31, while Jesus was walking to his death at the Place of the Skull, he thought not of himself, but of the .

16. Even after he was nailed to the cross, in Luke 23:34 Jesus prayed for his executioners: “Father, forgive them, they know not .”

17. Again, in Luke 23:42 one of the criminals crucified next to Jesus said: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus replied to him, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in

.”

18. Thirdly, Jesus did not die cursing his killers or bemoaning his fate. Instead, in Luke 23:46, with his last breath Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commend

.”

19. Jesus did not die reacting the way most people would react in a similar .

20. So how *did* Jesus save us from sin? By showing a whole new level of possibility for human beings.

Certainly, humans are capable of loving relatives and friends. It is easy to love those who

. (Lk 14:12)

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