

Luke 23:1-25

Verses 1-7: Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

He answered and said, "It is as you say."

So Pilate said to the chief priests and crowd, "I find no fault in this Man."

But they were more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

--(1) **the whole multitude of them.** . . refers back to the council of religious leaders and scribes who had Jesus on trial and just accused Him of blasphemy—the Sanhedrin.

--They bring Jesus to Pilate, because they do not have the authority to put Him to death.

--Knowing that Pilate will care nothing for their religious charges, they need to change their accusations to get Rome to agree.

--(2) What do they bring against Jesus? Lies!

--**perverting the nation.** . . From the ones monetizing their religion and murdering their Messiah! He, who preached the Sermon on the Mount, corrupting the nation?!

--Interestingly enough, **perverting** is the same Greek word (*diastrepho*) that Jesus uses for them (**Mt. 17:17; Lk. 9:41: O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?**)!

--**forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar.** . . Which was just a bold-faced, outright lie. Especially when Jesus had just taught otherwise (**Lk. 20:20-26**).

--**saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.** . . Here, they mix truth and lie. Jesus did claim to be the Messiah, and that one day He would rule as King, but He was not setting up a political kingdom in competition with Rome.

--One thing the enemy has used through the ages is false political charges: Ezra's slanderous letter (**Ezra 4**); Nehemiah with Sanballat & Tobiah (**Neh. 6**); Mordecai (**Esther 3**); Daniel (**3+6**); and even into the days of the apostles: **Acts 17:7: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.**

--What do we see in this? Jesus' perfection was not a defense from the lies and slander of the enemy. In fact, His perfection was the draw!

--If Satan used this weapon against Jesus, we can expect him to do the same with us. Satanic lies have been the lot of all of God's servants: Moses, Elijah, Jeremiah, Paul, etc.

--(3) Pilate asks Jesus a simple question, and Jesus again answers in the affirmative. The tragic sight must have neared the comical for Pilate, this Jewish man, standing there, beaten and bloody, the very image of someone of no reputation.

--Pilate is no fool. He knows the religious leaders would not be eager to execute someone who was against Roman rule. He doesn't take long to discern the real reason the religious leaders are trying to get this man executed.

Matthew 27:18: For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

--(4) Pilate declares Jesus' innocence. This was more than a thought. This was Pilate's judicial pronouncement regarding their request for the death penalty.

--The public declaration of Jesus' innocence is central to Luke's account.

--(5) The religious leaders begin to fiercely protest, hurling various accusations, and specifically mention the area of Galilee. Some commentators think that is because Galilee had been the source of a few recent movements of political unrest, and the religious leaders wanted to tie Jesus to the current "hotbed" of political malcontents.

--(6-7) Whatever the reason, Pilate hears Jesus is from Galilee, and, discovering it is true, finds his way of escape. He sends Jesus off to Herod, who is also staying in Jerusalem at that time—probably in what was called the Hasmonean Palace.

--What do people like Pilate do with an uneasy conscience? Try to get rid of it! Make it someone else's problem! He probably grabs a seat inside, with some breakfast, and congratulates himself for escaping another sticky situation.

Verses 8-12: Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

--(8) This was Herod Antipas, who had stolen Herodias from his half-brother Philip and had murdered John the Baptist and offered up his head as a grim reward for a sexual dance.

--He has gone from fearing that John the Baptist was risen from the dead (**Mt. 14:1-2**), to being excited to see Jesus, the Man whose herald he had unjustly beheaded.

--Why is he glad? Because Herod expects Jesus to provide some entertainment. *It is always a bad sign when people approach Jesus hoping to be entertained!*

--(9) Earlier, we know that Jesus avoided Herod, and later sent him a stinging message, but here Jesus says nothing at all. In this, we see something so different from Jesus' interactions with almost everyone else. I think the closest thing we see to Jesus' lack of interaction here with Herod was His removal of the mockers in Jairus' house (**Lk. 8:53-54**).

--Jesus did not come to earth to entertain unrepentant sinners. I believe the reason Jesus had nothing to say was that there was nothing left to be said. Jesus had nothing to say that John the Baptist had not already said. At some fearful point, light willfully rejected becomes utter darkness.

Matthew 6:23: *If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*

--(10) The religious leaders continue to hurl their lies and accusations, which even the flippant Herod seems to laugh off as a joke.

--(11) The Greek participles here are singular, which give us the impression that Herod himself is the chief mocker. He is the one who first treats Christ with contempt, mocks Him, and puts the robe on Him (*gorgeous* seems to infer *a white robe*).

--By God's grace, may we never be found in Herod's place, mocking one whom heaven sees as worthy of eternal robes and an eternal crown!

--May God give us the grace to follow Christ through mockery when necessary. Jesus Christ didn't deserve mockery, but He did endure it for us.

*Fenelon (Talking With God, pg. 42): *"Even if you have to bear some unkind mockeries, you will get off very cheaply. Having been approved by the world for so long, when you wished to please those who were blind, is it not just that you should have to suffer something from the folly of the world, so that you may acquire true wisdom? We are too jealous of a vain reputation when we fear the comments of those whom we do not admire and whose irregular conduct we know well."**

--(12) Pilate's move to recognize Herod's jurisdiction did something to mend their rift and build a friendship around the mistreatment of Jesus. Any friendship whose bond is formed by being united against Jesus is Satanic.

--In the book of Acts, after being threatened by the Jewish rulers, Peter and John returned to the believers and prayed for boldness, drawing from Jesus' example before Pilate and Herod:

Acts 4:27: *For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together. . . **

Verses 13-19: *Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).*

And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"—who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder.

--Pilate brings everyone back together and attempts to release Jesus publicly. **Release** or **let go** is stated five times in **16-25**.

--Pilate clearly declares His innocence, and even states that Herod also agreed with Jesus' innocence regarding their accusations.

--To appease everyone, Pilate says he will release Jesus after chastising, or scourging Him, which He does later (**Jn. 19:1**), seemingly after verse **22** in this section. *No one can ever please everyone!*

--Pilate, thinking ahead, also comes with a second way to release Jesus. They had developed a custom where a prisoner would be released to the public. *Historically, it is unclear whether the custom originated on the Jewish or Roman side.*

--Either way, what Luke and the other gospel writers make clear is the Pilate gives them a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. Barabbas having been imprisoned justly for the very things the religious leaders accused Jesus of (rebellion), and the very thing they were set on doing (murder).

--If they cared about rebellion and murder, the choice was clear. What becomes clear though is that the religious leaders and the crowd care nothing about the truth.

--Why does the crowd react this way? We don't know: Letdown from the Triumphal Entry? Burning hate against Rome and Pilate? Blind trust in the Sanhedrin? Bloodlust? We are not told. Only the facts are given.

Verses 20-25: Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go."

But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested.

And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

--(**20-22**) Luke's gospel account has us focused on the people of Israel as seen embodied in their religious leaders and the Gentile world as seen embodied in Pilate and Herod.

--The religious leaders of Israel and the people who follow are willfully wicked in their rejection of Jesus Christ.

--Pilate is put before us as weakly wicked, not willfully wicked. That is why I think most of us can empathize with Pilate somewhat. He didn't want anything to do with Jesus! He wasn't asking for this problem! That is why Luke can truly write: **Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus. . .** and we can understand.

--Pilate has been trying everything. He listened and made his own personal judgment. He sent Jesus to Herod. He accepted Herod's judgment. He tries to give Jesus back. He tries to exchange Jesus for the very thing they say they hate in Barabbas. He tries to punish Jesus.

--All this time, internally, he knows the Jewish leaders are envious, his wife warns him about Jesus because of a supernatural dream (**Mt. 27:19-20**), and finally, the Jews admit the reason they brought Jesus to Pilate was because He claimed to be the Son of God (**Jn. 19:7-9**).

--The tension of all this culminates in Luke's gospel in **22: then he said to them a third time. . .** Three times now, Pilate has pronounced Jesus as innocent. Three times the religious leaders and people reject Jesus' innocence. The true battle is not between Pilate and the religious leaders, but between everyone and Jesus.

--How will each individual respond to Jesus?

--Peter denied Jesus three times and repented. Pilate justifies Jesus three times and then unjustly condemns Him.

--(**23-24**) Instead of choosing the innocent Son of God, Pilate chooses himself.

--We are told **the voices** prevailed. Particularly when they cried out: ***If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar (Jn. 19:12).***

How many voices does it take for us to cave? How many before we too give up on the truth or Jesus Christ?

--Historically, we don't know what happened to Pilate. Some claim he remained unrepentant and tell tragic stories. Others, like the Coptic church, claim he was saved and even consider his wife a saint.

--We don't know his end, but we do know the biggest mistake of his life. *What will we do when Jesus is forced on us, and there is nothing we can do to pass Him off?*

--(**25**) Here is the summation of the religious leaders and the people of Israel. They will to release a guilty murderer and murder the innocent Son of God.

--The apostles, while preaching in the book of Acts, would bring this moment back in accusation against the people of Israel:

Acts 3:14-15: But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

--And against the religious leaders of Israel:

Acts 5:30-31: The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

--Paul would repeat the same message:

***1 Thessalonians 2:14-15: For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and**

have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men,*

--And yet, despite the horrible sin of denying the Holy One, accusing the Just, choosing a murderer over the Prince of Life, and hanging their Messiah on a tree; God, in His great love, and divine grace, sends to them this message:

****Acts 3:26: To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.****

--God sent the gospel first to those most in need—the willfully wicked murderers of the Son of God.