

Jesus Accused before Pilate, Part 2

Luke 23:2-7

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It is a great honor and a great privilege for us to be able to open the Word of God in absolute confidence in its veracity, its inerrancy, its truthfulness and to hear what the Lord has said to us. And we are in a great and prolonged study coming soon to an end in the gospel of Luke. Let's open our Bibles to Luke chapter 23...Luke chapter 23.

Those of you who have been with us know that we find ourselves now on Friday of Passion Week, the day our Lord is to be crucified. And prior to His crucifixion He was put through a series of sham trials, one before the Jewish leaders and one before the civil leaders, the Gentile leaders.

The first trial had three phases, one before Annas, one before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin in the middle of the night, and the third before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin after daybreak in the morning. The Gentile phase of His trial had three parts as well. The first before Pilate, the second before Herod, and then back for the final phase before Pilate. In Luke chapter 23, the Jewish phase of the trial has been concluded and the Gentile phase begins with the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court, bringing Jesus to Pilate. Let's read the text.

"Then the whole body of them arose and brought Him before Pilate, and they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.' And Pilate asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' And He answered him and said, 'It is as you say.' And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, 'I find no guilt in this man.' But they kept on insisting, saying, 'He stirs up the people teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place.' But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time."

Luke gives us a summary of the first phase of the trial of Jesus before Pilate. More details are provided for us by Matthew by Mark and by John. This is one of the rich realities of the four inspired gospels, they bring to bear upon single events for accurate eyewitness accounts. So when we bring them all together, we get the full and rich texture of these events.

Matthew tells us that when Jesus was before Pilate, Pilate asked the Jewish leaders who had brought Jesus there, the Sanhedrin, this question...what shall I do them with Jesus who is called the Christ? What shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Christ?

Pilate was very enamored with his position. Pilate was very confident of his power. Pilate was certain that he wielded the greatest authority in the land of Israel. He really was a superior to all those in Jewish leadership by virtue of Roman occupation and Roman military presence. He was a superior even to Herod and the other small-time kings that ruled certain regions in a limited way. He was the big dog in Israel. And he didn't mind demonstrating his power. When he asked the question, "What

shall I do with Jesus?" he's under the illusion that he actually does have something to say about what happens to Jesus. The truth is, neither he nor anyone else could do anything with Jesus on his own. No one has the power, no one has the position and no one has the authority to determine what will be done with Jesus except God. In fact, in our Lord's trial before Pilate, Pilate expresses this illusion of his power with these words, he says to Jesus, according to John 19:10, "Do You not know that I have power, authority to crucify You?" To which Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me unless it had been given you from above."

We have been looking at this strange irony that exists in the midst of the betrayal and the trials of Jesus. There is a list of corrupt characters who all feel that they play a very important and self-motivated, self-directed role in the destiny of Jesus.

There is Judas who purposely puts Jesus into the hands of those he knows desired to kill Him for money, and thinks he is acting on his own for his own aggrandizement.

There is Annas, the very corrupt, conniving former high priest who is really the power behind the whole temple system with all of its corruption both religiously and economically. Annas thinks he sits in the seat of power and can determine Jesus' destiny.

And then there is Caiaphas, his son-in-law, who is the current high priest who for certain thinks that he is the determiner of the end of Jesus, along with the Sanhedrin, the supreme court of Israel, make up of some seventy-plus men who achieve the status of being on that supreme court by having demonstrated their prowess in matters of law and local and regional courts in their earlier lives. They all think that Jesus is in their hands and that His end is for them to decide.

And then on the Roman side, or the Gentile side, there is Pilate. And then there is Herod who is an Idumaeen and not a Jew. And they also weigh in on the case of Jesus. The truth of the matter, however, is no matter what those people thought about their authority and their power, they did not determine the destiny of Jesus, God did. They did not. What they did with Jesus did not determine Jesus' destiny, but it did determine their destiny.

John chapter 3, familiar, familiar section in verse 16 and following, says this, these are the words of Jesus. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He who believes in Him is not judged. He who does not believe has been judged already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God and this is the judgment that the light has come into the world and men love the darkness rather than the light, for their deeds were evil."

Jesus is saying here, "You're not going to judge Me, but I'm going to judge you. If you believe in Me, you'll escape that judgment. If you do not believe in Me, you have been judged already because you have not believed."

While Jesus in the account of His trials might look like the criminal, He is, in fact, the judge. And the would-be judges are the real criminals and Jesus' destiny is not determined by them, but their destiny is determined by Him, as is the destiny of every human being.

In John chapter 5, Jesus further speaks of Himself as the one who renders judgment, verse 24,

“Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and doesn’t come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life.” Again it’s the same thing, you believe in Him, you will not be judged. You do not believe in Him, you will be judged.

Verse 25, “Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear shall live. For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gives to the Son to have life in Himself and He gave Him authority to execute judgment.”

The strange irony of the trials of Jesus is that all those who thought they were judging Him were, in fact, being judged by Him. And it was not just Annas and Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin and Pilate and Herod and Judas, it was the whole nation of Israel. For whether they overtly rejected Jesus as Messiah, or remained in indifference toward Him, anything short of believing in Him as the Son of God and Messiah brought them under His judgment. Sinners still live with the illusion that they can make a judgment on Jesus Christ and avoid Him making a judgment on them. But that’s not the case. You judge Jesus wrongly, and He will judge you rightly.

So while no earthly authority can determine the destiny of Jesus, every soul’s destiny is determined by what that person does with Jesus. The question is not what will you do with Jesus? The question is when you see Him face-to-face, what will He do with you? He is the one person in all history who is the eternal determiner of everyone’s destiny, whether it’s heaven or hell.

Now, as we come to Luke chapter 23, these would-be judges of Jesus who are themselves under judgment by Jesus, bring Jesus to Pilate. Let me just give you a quick bit of background. For three years Jesus has been preaching, teaching, healing, raising the dead, casting out demons, proclaiming the Kingdom, calling people to put their trust in Him, to enter the Kingdom of God, to receive eternal life. He has been training those who believed in Him, particularly the Twelve, to take up the ministry when He leaves and spread the message of the gospel across the world.

It is now the last week of His ministry, we call it Passion Week. It was on Monday of Passion Week that He came in to what is the triumphal entry, when a very fickle and superficial “Hosanna” was ringing in His ears from a massive multitude that could have numbered as many as a quarter of a million people, hailing Him as the possible Messiah. On Tuesday He comes again into the city and cleanses the temple, literally attacking the religious system at its heart. He does teaching on Wednesday and teaching on Thursday and that’s the end of His public ministry. Wednesday night He goes to the Mount of Olives and talks to His disciples about His return in glory in the future. Thursday is a silent day in terms of teaching, preparation for the Passover.

So Monday, triumphal entry. Let me make sure you get this right. Tuesday, cleansed the temple, do some teaching. Wednesday, all day teaching. Thursday, preparation for the Passover. Celebrates the Passover, the last official one, institutes the Lord’s Supper Thursday night. Leaves after singing hymn, goes to the Garden of Gethsemane where He went every night for safety and privacy so they couldn’t find Him, those who wanted to arrest Him. After midnight, He is betrayed by Judas who shows up with as many as a thousand in an entourage, made up of Roman soldiers and Jewish leaders and temple police to take Jesus prisoner. They capture Him just after midnight which makes it early on Friday morning. They march Him off to Annas, take Him to the house of Annas who is going to be the one because he’s so conniving and corrupt to maybe come up with an indictment against Jesus that will work. He can’t really pull it off. So they move Him across the courtyard of that place to the house of Caiaphas, his son-in-law who is currently the high priest. He gathers the

assembly together, the Council, the supreme court called the Sanhedrin and they eventually between one and three in the morning in an illegal trial in every way you cut it come up with the fact that Jesus is a blasphemer who claims to be the Messiah when He is not, who claims to be God the Son when He is not, and thus He must be executed. They decide that by three in the morning.

Between three and five in the morning, they hold Jesus because they have to have some kind of a fake trial in the daylight to legitimize it because their law required that. No one could be convicted in the trial in the middle of the night. So they have to hold a facade of a public trial, and they have to wait for dawn. In the two hours between three and five, they spit on Jesus, punch Him in the face, mock Him and heap scorn on Him and make a joke out of Him.

After dawn, they convene in a public meeting in the early dawn and they go through the recitation of the same things they decided in the middle of the night and accuse Him of blasphemy. It is just after five o'clock, they now want to march Him to Pilate because they don't have the right to execute anybody, the Romans removed that right from the Jews and they hold it for themselves only as the occupying army. And so they take Him to Pilate with a view of getting Pilate to kill Him for them. The problem is, blasphemy is not going to work for Pilate. Maybe a good religious reason for the Jews to execute Jesus, it is no reason at all for the Romans to execute Jesus. And one of the things the Romans prided themselves on was their sense of justice and doing what is right. It was what perpetuated their kingdom in the world and let them survive for so long, that for the most part they did try to operate a just system of jurisprudence in the world that they had conquered.

Somewhere between the end of the meeting of the Sanhedrin just after dawn, and the few minutes later when they arrived at Pilate's praetorium, which is his residence in Jerusalem, they have come up with an accusation. We find that accusation in Luke 23 and verse 2. "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

In other words, summing all of that up, they are basically saying Jesus is a threat to Rome. He is an insurrectionist. He is a rebel. He is a revolutionary. He is misleading our nation in the sense they mean that He is collecting our nation against Rome, forbidding to pay taxes, endeavoring to weaken Rome and claiming Himself to be a King, He is posing Himself as an adversary to Caesar. They want Pilate to buy into the idea that Jesus is a threat to Roman power and authority. And if that is indeed the case, Pilate must act...and believe me, if Pilate thinks it's the case, he will act without hesitation because that was his primary duty, to protect the Roman power and the Roman presence. So they bring Him before Pilate with these accusations.

Now Luke gives us a brief discussion of the conversation between Jesus and Pilate. And I want you to see a little bit more of it, so look in your Bible at John 18. Notice John 18, here is a little more detail about this first meeting between the Sanhedrin with Jesus as their prisoner, and Pilate. Verse 28, "They led Jesus, therefore, from Caiaphas into the praetorium and it was early." And again here, John notes for us that this is just after dawn. The early morning sham trial which was trying to legitimize the illegal trial in the middle of the night went by very rapidly. They're in a big, big hurry. They want the Romans to kill Jesus as fast as they can before there's any opportunity for any kind of reaction from the people, among whom Jesus has popularity. So they want to escalate this as fast as they can. They don't know it, but so does God because Jesus needs to be convicted, crucified, and dead by the middle of the afternoon so that He dies exactly when the Passover lambs were being slaughtered between three and five, is in the ground before sunset so that He's a portion of three

days in the ground to fulfill the prophecy of three days and then the resurrection. So God's timetable is what's dominating these events, even though they don't know it. They're motivated by other things.

So we come to John 18. They lead Jesus from Caiaphas into the praetorium, it's early. They themselves didn't enter the praetorium in order that they might not be defiled but might eat the Passover. Kind of disgusting, isn't it? That they might not be defiled. What do you mean? Ceremonial unclean...you could never set your foot if you were a Jew into the domain of the domicile of Gentiles. Praetorium was certainly that, it was Pilate's residence in Jerusalem.

If you touch that place, according to their silly, ridiculous traditions, you had become ceremonial unclean. You had spiritually been defiled. You were eliminated from the celebration of the Passover, and that was critical. The Passover was everything to them, the high point. So while being fastidious about their ceremonial cleanness, they had no concern at all about their moral defilement. They had just butchered justice. They had just determined to kill the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer, the Promised One. They are so defiled, so corrupt of heart, and yet so externally fastidious. And this is the ugliness and the hypocrisy of legalism, religious superficiality.

So they show up with Jesus, all of them, the whole Sanhedrin. I'm sure this has never happened in Pilate's ten years. Pilate had been governor there since 26. He would be governor from 26 to 36 A.D., ten-year period. This did not happen. The entire Sanhedrin, the entire body of over 70 men, were there and he knew, Pilate did, that the pressure was on. This was an occasion the likes he had never seen. They wouldn't come in, so Pilate comes out, verse 29.

"Pilate therefore went out to them, said, 'What accusation do you bring against this man?'" He was told they were there because they had a criminal. They were there because they wanted the Romans to execute this criminal. And so Pilate doing what a good and honorable judge would do, asked the appropriate question...what's the accusation that you bring against this man? What is the indictment? What did He do?

This, by the way, the first legal act in all the phases of Jesus supposed trials. This is the first time somebody does something that is legal, that is legitimate. What crime has He committed? And that opens the civil trial. That opens the trial before the Gentiles which include two phases before Pilate and one in the middle with Herod.

But they are not prepared to identify the crime any further than to state it, that He's misleading the nation, forbidding to pay taxes, and claiming to be a king. They don't want to get into the details. They don't want to have to prove this. They don't have any witnesses to call. Remember, in the Jewish trial they couldn't find any two witnesses, even when they bribed them, they couldn't get them to come up with consistent lies.

So they don't have a case. They don't have an indictment. They don't have a specific crime. They don't have any evidence to support the nature of that crime and His guilt. They don't have any witnesses who can give a cohesive story. So they react in the only way possible, verse 30, the impugned Pilate as if to even ask such a question is to question their integrity.

"They answered and said to him, 'If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.'" They impugned Pilate for even asking what His crimes were. They're these noble, holy, righteous, sanctimonious people who would never think of bringing someone to be executed unless it

were firmly established that the man was an evildoer.

Now Pilate knew that Jesus had been arrested because a cohort of Roman soldiers went into the Garden of Gethsemane with the Jewish leaders and the temple police to arrest Him. So he knew what his troops were doing. He knew Jesus came in on Monday and he knew He was being hailed as some kind of Messiah and massive crowds were surrounding Him. And he knew on Tuesday that Jesus went in and singlehandedly wiped out the corrupt businesses throughout the temple courtyard. And he knew Jesus was drawing massive crowds. This is a small city. All these buildings are up against each other. It's a few minutes from each place to the next place walking. He knows that the Jews have problems with Jesus...big, big problems.

He knows Jesus has attacked their temple operation. He also knows their leadership in the temple is corrupt because much had been negotiated between leaders of the temple and the Roman authorities. That's why Caiaphas on an earlier occasion said, "We negotiated ourselves a position of strength and operation with Rome. If we don't stop this Jesus and kill Him, we're going to lose our position with Rome." So the governor Pilate was very aware of the kind of people who ran the temple enterprise. He was very aware that Jesus had come in and torn the place up. He was very aware that the masses of people were attracted to Jesus' teaching. He knew that. So he knew that the Jewish leadership hated Jesus for what He had done to their system in the temple and that they resented Jesus' popularity. In Matthew 27:18 it says, "Pilate knew they hated Jesus because of envy...envy."

So going in, Pilate was not at all convinced that there was an actual crime committed by Jesus. And if there was some religious issue with Jesus, that was no concern to him. Pilate, however, is backed into a corner here. He's never seen the whole Sanhedrin at his door.

He knows he's dealing with someone who has seriously assaulted their economics and seriously assaulted their religion, their theology, if you will, as much of that as he could understand. And he knows they hate Him and resent Him because they're envious of Him, because He has the people. He's everything they're not...wise, learned, profound, compassionate, sympathetic, tenderhearted, powerful, etc., etc., etc., selfless. He hasn't filled His own pockets with wealth by abusing widows like they had. They hate Jesus for every reason, but Pilate's aware that the dominant attitude is envy. So he knows that they feel very, very strongly. They want Jesus dead.

So, not wanting to get backed any further into a difficult place, verse 31, "Pilate therefore said to them, 'Take Him yourselves. Judge Him according to your law.'"

What is that? Well they had said, "If this man were not an evildoer would we have brought Him to you?" Which, of course, he would take as a joke...are you kidding me? Huh? If you really thought this man was a rival to Caesar, if you really thought this man was successful in getting the people of Israel to turn against the Roman power and presence, if you really thought this man was causing people not to pay tax to Rome, you would protect Him. He would be your hero. You'd help Him, you wouldn't bring Him to me to execute Him. If He really is a threat to Rome, do you think I'm going to buy that you would bring Him here for me to kill Him? If He is a real threat to Rome, He's your hero and you're going to help Him.

Pilate already knew how much they hated him, we'll see more about that later. And they had even reported Pilate's ineptitude to Caesar and brought the wrath of Caesar down on Pilate's head. Pilate was already afraid of them. And he was also afraid of Jesus, it says that in John 19:8, he was afraid of Jesus, he was afraid of the Jews. He was afraid he would lose his job if they went to Caesar about his ineptitude again.

So what he says in verse 31 is really, “Go kill Him yourself, take Him yourselves. Judge Him according to your law. I delegate permission to you to kill Jesus.”

Well, you say, “This is perfect. You couldn’t ask anything better than that. Take Him out and stone Him.” Cause when the Jews killed somebody, that’s what they did.

Notice their reaction, verse 31. “The Jews said to him, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death.’” I mean, the duplicity here is so stunning. They don’t mind violating the Son of God, they don’t mind violating the Word of God, they don’t mind violating the Law, they don’t mind violating all of the rules of jurisprudence, they just don’t want to violate the Romans law. Are you kidding? The hypocrisy is palpable here. And Pilate’s not stupid. He didn’t get to be the governor of Israel by being stupid. Are you kidding? You expect me to believe that if there’s a real threat to Rome you’re going to bring Him in here for me to kill Him? Now you expect me to believe that you are going to do everything in your power to uphold Roman law? You’re too noble to ever disobey Roman law?

You say, “Well, why did they say that?” Well from their viewpoint, there’s two reasons they said it. They were afraid of the people...they were afraid of the people. They wanted Rome to do this execution because it took it out of their hands, and then the people wouldn’t hold them responsible. And they were also afraid of Jesus cause they knew His power. They didn’t want to deal with Him in that kind of situation.

That was probably their view, but there was another view. Look at verse 32. “When they said we’re not permitted to put anyone to death, they said it that the Word of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.” They didn’t even know what they were doing. You might have thought that they would overcome their fear of Jesus, overcome their fear of the massive repercussions of the people who thought that Jesus, of course, was a prophet and a representative of God. You might have thought that they would have been able to overcome that and just go ahead and stone Jesus. But they never got to that point. It never did happen because it never could happen because Jesus had prophesied that He would not be killed by stoning.

What did He prophesy? Go back to John 12...back to John 12. This is earlier in the week. Verse 32, Jesus says this, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” And then John writes, “He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was about to die.” It would not be a death by throwing down, it would be a death by...what?...lifting up. It would not be a stoning, it would be a crucifixion. They didn’t know it, they weren’t determining the death of Jesus and they weren’t even determining the manner of the death of Jesus, that was all for God to determine.

And so, Pilate says to them, “Go kill Him yourself.” They say, “We can’t do that.” Motivated by fear of Jesus and fear of the crowds, but really held captive to the purposes of God to the lifting up of Jesus rather than the throwing down of Jesus.

It is at this point that Luke 23:2 comes into play, and they fire out their accusations to Pilate. He’s perverting our nation, forbidding to pay taxes, claiming to be a king. This is new, folks, they just thought this one up on the way over there from Caiaphas’ house. They’ve got to come up with treason against Rome. They have to come up with a crime of treason. Blasphemy isn’t going to work. And, of course, these accusations are ludicrous and false. He was a model citizen, showed respect for and obedience to the power of Rome, to the law of Rome. Never an insurrectionist, never a revolutionary, always working on the heart. Told people to be good citizens, to live godly lives. Told them to pay their taxes. When they tried to make Him a King, He wouldn’t let them. It’s all just lies,

lies, lies. And again, why does the Scripture give us all this? Because, folks, you have to understand this. I mean, I know the world doesn't like to hear this, but the death of Jesus Christ was the agenda of the leaders of Israel.

So, in verse 33 of John 18, Pilate therefore entering again into the Praetorium, he went out, had that brief conversation on the outside with Jesus and then he enters in and he summons Jesus in to a private conversation. And he says to Him, this has to be somewhat scornfully, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He looks at Jesus who has no palace, has no army, has no institution behind Him, has no entourage, is absolutely alone. All His disciples scattered to the high winds in fear. Who has the clothes on His back and probably not a coin in His pocket, no one there to defend Him, no one there to support Him, and says, "Are You the King of the Jews?" This is ridicule and nothing but ridicule against this, in Pilate's view, hapless, hopeless, helpless Galilean.

Verse 34, "Jesus answered him," it's a great answer, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" Ha, I love that. He's saying this. "Am I on the list of threats to Rome? Is My name on that list? Do you have Me written down somewhere as a rebel, an insurrectionist, a tax dodger, a revolutionary, a competing monarch with Caesar? Am I on that list somewhere, or are you just running somebody else's errand here?"

He couldn't have said just a simple yes. Or Pilate might have taken politically, because how else would he take it? And he couldn't just say a simple no, I'm not a king, because He is a King. But the first thing He establishes, folks, and you have to understand this, is that this is not really a Gentile issue here, it's a Jewish issue. This is not Pilate's issue. He does not have Jesus on a list of revolutionaries. Whatever some revisionist history people might want to tell you, the Gentiles, the Romans did not determine that Jesus was a threat to Rome. And Jesus elicits that. Is this your issue? Is this your conclusion? Do you have evidence to indicate this?

And Pilate answers in verse 35, "I'm not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me. What have You done? I haven't got a clue about any crime that You've committed against anybody, certainly not against Rome? What have You done? This isn't my issue. I am admittedly on an errand here. I'm not a Jew, am I? This isn't my issue. It's Your own nation and the chief priests who delivered You up to me, for the one purpose, execution."

Folks, let it be said, this is the testimony of Scripture that the reason Jesus went to the cross from a human viewpoint was because of the relentless aggressive virulent rejection of the leaders of Israel. No other explanation. It never was a Gentile agenda. It never was a Roman agenda. It's Your own people. It should be obvious it isn't my issue. I don't even know what You've done. If these accusations are true, I don't have any evidence to that.

So, when he says at the end of verse 35 what have You done? Then John gives us a little more detail into the conversation between Pilate and Jesus about the kind of King He was. Jesus answers, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Luke says He said, "It is as you say, I am a King...I am a King, it is true, I am a King, but My Kingdom is not of this world." Not of this world, it's not the kind of Kingdom you would understand. "If My Kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews." If My Kingdom were of this world, you would have seen a fight in the Garden of Gethsemane about five hours ago. You would have seen a big fight because if My Kingdom were of this world, then My servants would have fought your soldiers and the temple police and the Jewish leaders to protect Me. And there would have been some help to get Me out of there. But My Kingdom is not of this world. It's not of this realm, not temporal, it's not physical, it's not

earthly...spiritual Kingdom. It has a future earthly form but it is for all time a spiritual Kingdom made up of those who submit to My sovereign rule.

Verse 37, "Pilate therefore said to Him, 'So, You are a King.'" Again scorn, mockery...so You are a King. "Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a King.'" That's a parallel to Luke 24 where Jesus says "It is as you say. For this I have been born and for this I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." God sent Me into the world to speak the truth, proclaim the truth about the true Kingdom of salvation.

To which Pilate, verse 38, responds, "What is truth?" Cynical. But he's convinced that Jesus is no revolutionary. Verse 38, "When he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, 'I find no guilt in Him.'" And with that you can go back to Luke 23.

I find no guilt in Him. And that takes you to verse 4. "He said to the chief priests and the multitudes, 'I find no guilt in this man.'" Pilate's verdict? Not guilty...not guilty.

Do you get the flow here? It's important that the record stand for all time that Jesus is not a revolutionary, He is not an insurrectionist, He is not trying to build an earthly power base, He is not trying to establish an earthly Kingdom at all. That is settled and established. Not only by the words of Jesus, the affirmation of Pilate...let the record stand. The whole charge was invented by the Jews who want Him dead for other reasons. And if, in fact, He were a successful threat to Rome, the last thing they would do would bring Him to Pilate.

So, in Luke's account you could break it down this way. It starts with the accusation in verse 2. They began to accuse Him of misleading our nation, stirring up a revolt against Rome. He answered that in John 18:37, we just read it, "If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight. My Kingdom is not of this world." I'm not leading people into a revolution. Forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, go back to chapter 20 verses 20 to 25, Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, pay your taxes."

And then they said He's saying that He's a king. John 6:15, "They tried to make Him a King and He disappeared out of their midst." If Pilate had been convinced that Jesus was an insurrectionist, it would have been his duty to kill Jesus and he would have done it without batting an eye.

And there stood Jesus before all these accusations, thrown at Him by the Jews. In Matthew 27:13 and 14, Pilate said to Him, "Don't You hear how many things they testify against You?" And He didn't answer with regard to even a single charge. So the governor was quite amazed. Look, this is a guy who had criminals brought before him on a regular routine. And criminals brought before him would howl and yell and cry and plead and beg their case, particularly if they were innocent. Here is a man who is absolutely innocent of all charges and never says a word...not a word. He's used to the guilty protesting, let alone the innocent protesting, pleading, demanding exoneration. Here is this calm, majestic, resolute silence as Jesus in full majesty heads to the inevitable hour of His death for the glory of God and the salvation of the elect.

So it starts with the accusation. Then comes the interrogation in verse 3. "Pilate asks Him, 'Are You a King?'" We went through that interrogation in John 18. The interrogation is followed by the exoneration in verse 4. "Not guilty," he says to the Sanhedrin. "Not guilty." That leads to the intimidation...the intimidation. That is not legal. It's legal to have an accusation brought against

someone if it's legitimate, to have an examination of the person to render a verdict. In this case, after the accusation and after the discussion of guilt in the interrogation, the rendering of "not guilty" is the exoneration, that changes nothing. They're not interested in justice. They don't want Pilate to be a judge. They don't want Pilate to retry the case. They don't have a case. They don't have an accusation that stands. They don't have evidence. They don't have witnesses. All they have is intimidation.

So they kept on insisting in verse 5 saying, "He stirs up the people teaching all over Judea, starting in Galilee even as far as this place." Vicious hatred drives them. Pilate knows Jesus is innocent but he's in a touch spot. He's afraid of Jesus. John 19:8 says he's afraid of Jesus cause Jesus has a reputation of being powerful. He's afraid of the Jews because he's never seen anything like this, he knows they want Jesus dead. But he knows it's unjust and there's no Roman involvement in this whatsoever. He doesn't want to prostitute at least initially his role. And he has some sense of what is right, at least at the start. So he's looking for an escape hatch. How can I get out of this trap?

Well when they said he started this in Galilee and came down as far as this place, meaning Jerusalem, that triggered something in his mind. So in verse 6 when Pilate heard, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And, of course, He was, Luke establishes that, chapter 1 verse 26, chapter 2 verse 4, chapter 4 verse 16 that Jesus was from Galilee. And that was where there was this petty king by the name of Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great who ruled over Galilean Peraea. And so Pilate decides that maybe the thing to do is to move Jesus to the jurisdiction that Herod is over because that's where He's from and there would be a trial for Him in that jurisdiction. This is Pilate's way of getting rid of this very difficult issue.

Verse 7, "When he heard..or learned that Jesus did belong to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. Pilate thought Herod's going to help me here. What did he expect out of Herod? That's a long debated question. For the answer to that, come next week, it's fascinating what happens before Herod. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we understand that no one sees himself or herself as a Judas, no one sees himself or herself as an Annas, a Caiaphas, a Pilate, a Herod, as a corrupt member of a Sanhedrin. We don't see ourselves that way. I suppose, Lord, most people have some warm feelings toward Jesus. But the truth is, all who reject Him as Lord and Savior will spend forever in the same hell with Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, Pilate and Herod and all others who have rejected Christ for heaven and eternal life is only for those who believe in Him. And Pilate asked, "What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?" He didn't realize that that wasn't the compelling question. The compelling question was, "What is Jesus going to do with me based upon whether I believe in Him or not?"

O, Lord, we understand that to reject Jesus as Savior and Lord is to join the Christ killers in hell, to confess Him as Savior and Lord is to join the Christ lovers in heaven. That's the choice. It's not Jesus on trial, it's we who are on trial. We can't render a verdict on Him that affects Him, but He will render a verdict on us that will affect us forever. I pray, O God, that You would grant the grace that is absolutely critical and necessary for the rejecting heart to turn, repent and embrace Jesus, the Savior and Lord. This majestic Christ who was the Messiah is the true Son of God, sinless, who never committed a crime, innocent and thus went to the cross not to die for His own sins, but as a substitute to die for ours. We thank You, O God, for this immense gift of salvation because our sins have been paid for in Christ, thus we can be forgiven and freed from condemnation. I just pray, Lord, that You'll work the mighty work of saving grace in the hearts of sinners this morning who will turn to

Christ so that He will never be their judge, but only be their Redeemer and Savior and even brother as joint-heirs in heaven to come. Give us grace, Lord, to live lives that honor the One who gave His life for us. These things we ask in the name of Christ. Amen.

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