

God on Trial

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles then tonight and open them, this morning rather, and open them to Luke chapter 22.

! And I bet you were going to, or thinking, that I would say Luke chapter 23. But I really want to begin with Luke chapter 22, starting with verse 66.

And so my text this morning is going to take up the last six verses of Luke chapter 22 and the first 25 verses of Luke chapter 23.

In fact, I want to read all of that here at the very beginning. So starting with Luke 22, verse 66. And as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led him, of course that's Jesus, into their council, saying, If you are the Christ, tell us.

But he said to them, If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer me or let me go.

[1 : 22] Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God. Then they all said, Are you then the Son of God? So he said to them, You rightly said that I am.

And they said, What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from his own mouth. 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 him and said, It is as you say. So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, I find no fault in this man.

But they were the 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.

[2 : 29] 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. 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. 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. 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 accused 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.

[4 : 09] 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, that would be

Barabbas, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison.

But he delivered Jesus to their will. Okay. In our great country, and it is a great country, and I'm proud to be an American, in our country, we are proud, and I think rightfully so, of what is called American jurisprudence.

That is, our legal system of justice. Very proud of that system. It's the right system. It's biblically based as well. A system which provides for due process when someone is accused of a crime.

[5 : 36] And of course, you know, a system which maintains that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Right? That's our system, our jurisprudence here in this country, according to our Constitution.

I have recently had the joy of serving in jury duty. How many of you have ever had that pleasure, that joy?

Several hands have gone up. Now, I have not sat on a jury or been selected for a jury yet, but you may know the process. You know, you're kind of in that pool of people, or panel as they call it.

And I've already gone three times. And the first time, just to kind of get the, you know, the whole system read to me so I know how it works, and then selected for a panel.

And then the second time, I sat there with, I don't know, a hundred or so others waiting to see if I was going to be selected to serve on the jury. And it's really, you know, quite an interesting process.

[6 : 36] And I was not selected that day, but there were those selected. And of course, you know how it goes. The judge first kind of vets the prospective jurors, and he, you know, releases some, and then pulls from the pool to replenish those jurors.

And then each of the lawyers get to ask their questions, and they are allowed to kick out at least, or up to five, so that you get down to those 12 jurors.

But as the defense was asking his questions of the jurors, he asked this one lady. She said, he said, I want you to look over here at the defendant, the man that I am representing.

Is he here because he's guilty of a crime? And guess what she said? Yes. Just exactly what this guy wanted to hear, and he really pounced on that.

And he made the point that my client here is innocent until you prove him guilty. And that's our system, isn't it?

[7 : 47] Innocent until proven guilty. And so in our system, as American citizens, when we are suspected of a crime, and I hope you're never suspected of a crime, you know, we have certain rights, don't we?

And I guess we could say that the first right is to be reminded of those rights. We call it the Miranda rights or Miranda warning. And you know how it goes.

You have the right to remain silent because anything you say may be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you can't afford one, we'll appoint you one.

You know how the rights are read. And hopefully you've never had those rights read to you personally, but we've all seen it on TV and, you know, cop shows and all of that. And that's the way it works.

So in our court of law, in the eyes of the law, no matter what crime you're accused of, you're innocent until proven guilty.

[8 : 46] And this is American jurisprudence. Now in our text, and we've just read about the trials, the various trials of Jesus, Jesus is on trial.

On trial as he stands before several different groups of people, in fact, more specific groups of people than even Luke reveals to us.

You really have to go beyond Luke and look at all of the Gospels to see this. But Jesus is on trial. He really goes through a series of trials. He stands, first of all, before the Jews, the Jewish leadership.

And then he stands before the Romans. And I would even maintain that finally he stands before the people. And it's the people, the will of the people that finally get their way. All right, so Jesus is accused by the Jews of a capital crime, right?

That is, a crime for which the prescribed judgment is death, execution. And that's what they have accused Jesus of. In fact, they had pretty much settled on that verdict for Jesus long before this day came.

[9 : 55] In fact, early on in Jesus' ministry, as I've mentioned before, that was already their verdict. So the verdict was settled even before the trial. Now, of course, this is not America.

It's not taking place in America, right? And America didn't exist. And our jurisprudence didn't exist at the time. There were no Miranda rights. There, for the people of that day, you know, the arresting Roman soldier did not, as he's handcuffing Jesus, did not remind him of his rights. And yet, there was a system of justice in Jesus' day. There was one. The Jews had their system or their rule of law.

The Romans, of course, had their rule of law. and the Jewish law was subservient to the Roman law because the Jews were under the rule of the Roman Empire.

But the Jews could rule themselves according to their laws, but within certain parameters. Parameters that were set by the Roman government.

[11 : 05] Certain limitations. For example, and pertinent to our story today, the Jews could not administer capital punishment. They could accuse someone of it, rule and judge and issue a verdict for capital punishment, but they couldn't carry it out.

Only the Romans could do that, and that explains this series of trials to which Jesus was subjected. The question is, was Jesus given a fair trial?

Was he given a fair trial? If Wes were here, he would say, no, you could hear him good. Was he given a fair trial? Were certain basic laws of jurisprudence followed here in this case with Jesus? And certainly the answer is no. An unequivocal no. But now, the outcome of it all, all these trials, the outcome of course, we know the outcome of it, Jesus' death.

Jesus will die. He will be executed. He will be crucified, which, by the way, is exactly what he wanted. Right? He certainly did.

[12 : 20] And it's exactly what God ordained to happen. And I'd go a step further. This is exactly what we needed to happen for Jesus to go to the cross.

And yet, we need to understand that that in no way lets the Jewish leadership off the hook here. Somehow, making them innocent in all of this.

Nor does it let Pilate and Herod off the hook. And it certainly does not excuse the Jewish people, this mob that had gathered there to try to subvert justice, real justice, who cried out away with this man, crucify this man.

We have no king but Caesar. They're all guilty of a crime here against the Lord Jesus Christ. Even though the outcome was, of course, a part of God's plan.

See, Jesus really stood before three courts. A priestly court, a political court, the Romans, and finally, a public court.

[13 : 30] I would call it a public court, a court of public opinion. And each of the, and the verdicts that came out of each of these various courts, so to speak, the verdicts represent the various ways people judge Jesus today.

And that's really chiefly what we can learn from this. God is on trial today. Every day. Every day. I'm not talking about just any God or God in some generic sense. I'm talking about the God of the Bible, who is, of course, the one and only true God.

On trial today. Every day. His existence is on trial. His word is on trial. His authority, his laws, his Messiah is on trial.

His provision and way of salvation is on trial today. And what is the verdict with most people?

[14 : 39] Well, we know, don't we? It's unfavorable. An unfavorable verdict. But why? Why? Well, I think we can learn a lot about that as Luke takes us into the courtroom to kind of witness the proceedings.

And if you've ever sat in on a court trial, you know, there's certain aspects that are quite interesting. A lot of it is quite boring. But really, Luke is inviting us and all the gospel writers are inviting us in, allowing us to come into the very courtroom where Jesus is on trial.

So, come on in to the courtroom. Find you a seat. Turn your cell phones off. That's what the judge always says, you know. And you have, haven't you? I at least silenced mine.

I would be so embarrassed if my cell phone went off. And it has happened while I was preaching. And sit back and see the drama unfold as we look at the various gospel accounts.

Not just Luke, but all of them. All right, so, God is on trial. The Lord Jesus is on trial. And so, here's number one. We see, first of all, Jesus before standing before the priests, or what I want to call the unprincipled priests.

[16 : 05] Now, actually, Jesus' trial before the Jewish leadership took place in three phases. three phases to it. Now, we don't get that from Luke, but we put it all together, we find out there are really

three phases to his trial before the Jewish leadership.

And John tells us about that. Luke doesn't tell us this part of it, but before Jesus is brought before the Sanhedrin, and ultimately he will be brought before the Sanhedrin, that would be the ruling body, 71 members of priests and Pharisees and Sadducees from the various parties, political parties, religious parties within Jerusalem, 71 of them sitting on this sort of ruling body, the Sanhedrin.

But before he is brought there, John tells us that he is brought before Annas, to the home of Annas. And again, we don't find that in Luke, but we do in John.

And so listen to what John says in John 18, verse 12. He says, Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound him.

That's taking place, of course, in the Garden of Gethsemane. And they led him away to Annas first. So John tells us they brought Jesus to Annas.

[17 : 25] And he even gives a little explanation about Annas, for he, Annas, was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year. All right, now, who was Annas, other than what John tells us right here?

Well, we know from history that Annas was, at this time, the most powerful man in Israel, in all of Israel. Annas had been high priest from 6 AD to 15 AD, but he'd been removed from that office by the Romans, actually by Pilate's predecessor, the Roman governor, Valerius Gratus.

He removed Annas from the high priesthood. It made the Jews really mad. And there's a lot of history about why that happened that we'll not get into this morning.

So he's not officially, at least in the eyes of the ruling Roman empire, he's not officially the high priest. And so after he was removed from the office of high priest, five of his sons and one of his grandsons served as high priest.

And the current serving high priest, and this is what John tells us, Caiaphas was Annas' son-in-law. All right, so it's kind of all in the family here.

[18 : 44] But now, and this is important, many of the Jews of that day, especially among the Jewish leadership, really despised the Romans for doing this. They despised the Roman government for intervening and meddling with religious affairs.

And so, to them, the real high priest was still Annas. It was Annas, even though Caiaphas had been selected by the Roman empire to be, and approved by the Roman empire to be the high priest.

So they still thought Annas was Annas. And out of that, but Annas continued to wield the power and the influence of the office of high priest, even to the point of retaining the title.

And we get that even from the Gospels. That explains why John refers to Annas as the high priest in John 18, verse 19. We'll get to that in just a moment. It also explains why Jesus was brought before Annas first, before anyone else, because he was the top guy, or viewed that way, not by the Romans, but by the Jewish leadership.

And so John tells us in John 18, verse 19, the high priest, again that's Annas, all right, John's talking about Annas, the real power behind the high priesthood.

[20 : 03] Then, the high priest then asked Jesus about his disciples and his doctrine. Sounds like a simple question. And yet the idea here is that Annas is interrogating Jesus.

He is cross-examining Jesus. This is, in a sense, a trial before the top guy in the Jewish nation.

And this is strictly illegal, by the way. This is illegal on a number of points. First of all, Annas had no official right to examine Jesus, to question Jesus, to bring him to trial.

Annas had no official right. He had no status. He was not the high priest. He had no right to do that. This is illegal. Second, it was illegal to carry on trials at night.

And this was in the middle of the night. Illegal, according to Jewish law. So, Annas is breaking the law in that he had no right to examine Jesus.

[21 : 08] He had no right, by law, to examine him at night, to bring him to court at night. And third, it was illegal to hold trials during feast days, and this was the Passover.

And fourth, Annas is clearly attempting to have Jesus incriminate himself. That's the design, the idea behind these questions that Annas is asking of Jesus.

And that was illegal, according to Jewish law and to Roman law, very much like our Fifth Amendment in our Constitution. Constitution. And then the fifth illegality came after Jesus kind of sort of answers Anna's question.

In John chapter 18, verse 20, Jesus answered him. He said, I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing.

Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them. Indeed, they know what I said. Now, what's Jesus doing here? He's reminding Annas, what you're doing is not the right procedure.

[22 : 23] You should be questioning witnesses, not the defendant, because I, by law, you cannot force me to incriminate myself. So he's just really shutting Annas down here.

But then what happens next? Jesus, what he said, what happened to Jesus after that? In John 18 and verse 22, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, and he said, do you answer the high priest like that?

He's referring to Annas, of course. So he struck him. Now, according to Jewish law, to strike an accused prisoner before the evidence is judged, heard and judged, and before a guilty verdict has been issued was strictly illegal.

What I'm trying to show you is that all of this was illegal from start to finish. And the Jews are unprincipled because of their strong desire to have Jesus put to death.

The verdict was already in for them. Okay? They didn't care anything really about evidence. All of what they're doing with Annas and then later Caiaphas and then eventually with the Sanhedrin is just to simply try to build a case that will pass with Pilate who will be the one who must give the order to have Jesus crucified or destroyed.

[23 : 56] All right, so Annas got no satisfaction from his little kind of trial and so Jesus moves to the second phase of his trial before the Jewish leadership and this time to the officially recognized high priest that is officially recognized by the Roman government and that would be Caiaphas.

And that's what Luke tells us in verse 54 having arrested him they led him and brought him into the high priest's court. This would be Caiaphas. And so while Jesus was being questioned by Annas, Caiaphas evidently had been gathering together some of his partners in crime, members of the Sanhedrin, to bring them over to his house to have a little bit of a trial there to try Jesus there. Now Luke tells us about this part of the trial, this phase of the trial, and I read that a moment ago in Luke 22 verse 66. But both Matthew and Mark give us more information.

In fact, the information they give is really very key. So I want you to listen to what Mark records for us in Mark chapter 14 and verse 53.

Now listen to this. And they led Jesus away to the high priest, and with him were assembled all the chief priests priests and elders and the scribes.

[25 : 24] This is the Sanhedrin, but they're meeting at Caiaphas' house. But Peter followed him at a distance. Remember, then we have this part about Peter.

For many, we get back to the council, for many bore false witness against him, that's verse 56, but their testimonies did not agree. So here we have Caiaphas, and we would assume that Annas probably came over to, and we have the Sanhedrin meeting together, and they're bringing witnesses, but they are bearing false witness against him, but their testimonies do not agree, it says here.

This is amazing. Then some rose up and bore false witness against him, so the various witnesses that come really with hearsay evidence, they can't agree, they're contradictory, and so, hey, we'll just lie about it.

So they have some false witnesses against him. And then we heard him say, this is hearsay, I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But not even then did their testimony agree. They couldn't even get their lies straight. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, do you answer nothing?

[26 : 49] What is it these men testify against you? But he kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, saying to him, are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

And Jesus said, I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power and coming with the clouds of heaven. Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, what further need do we have of witnesses?

You have heard the blasphemy, what do you think? And they all condemned him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on him and to blindfold him and to beat him and to say to him, prophesy.

And the officers struck him with the palms of their hands. I mean this is terrible. Now think, think about it. This is all strictly illegal.

There isn't anything about this that is legal. Trial by night, trial during a feast day, disqualifying testimony that is allowed to be admissible. I mean even by Jewish law, any testimony contradicted by further testimony would have to be thrown out.

[27 : 59] But they didn't throw it out, they kept it in. False testimony also added to the evidence. All of it hearsay evidence which is not admissible in a court of law, not even in the Jewish court.

And then questions that were designed to get Jesus to self-incriminate. And then on top of that, physical abuse of the accused even before he is condemned.

And not only that, not only is the whole thing illegal, but there is nothing official about any of this. This was an unofficial assembly of the Sanhedrin in the home of Caiaphas.

And so I mean this was in the truest sense a mock trial. Or what is technically called a moot trial. A mock trial.

And on top of that, since the priests were not really interested in proving Jesus innocent or guilty because they had already determined he was guilty.

[29 : 00] And so because the priests are not interested in evidence that's factual or any admissible evidence, this is really nothing short of what we call a kangaroo court.

That is where they come together and the verdict has already been decided upon and it's guilty and so it doesn't make any difference what the evidence is. It doesn't make any difference if there's a lack of evidence.

Guilty is the verdict. And then came the final phase of this Jewish travesty of justice. And Matthew tells us about it in Matthew 27 verse 1.

When morning came, all the chief priests and elders plotted, and really the word literally means came to a decision, not about the guilt, but how to get Pilate to destroy him.

Because they came to a decision, they plotted against Jesus to put him to death. Also very clearly, the unprincipled Jewish leadership.

[30 : 07] And today, listen, today many, many people will not give Jesus a hearing. A fair, open, honest hearing.

Nor will they give a hearing to the evidence of the truth of God's word and the truth of the gospel.

They won't give an honest hearing. They are unprincipled, really. And so the evidence, even though it's overwhelmingly in favor of the truth of God's word and the truth of the gospel, they will not give it a hearing.

They've already made up their mind. Scientists are intellectually dishonest today. When everything that they examine, everything that they see, everything that they observe in all of the created order points to God, that they are intellectually dishonest, unprincipled.

Cult leaders are deliberately dishonest so that they can maintain their following and maintain the financial benefits that it brings.

[31 : 27] Unbelievers in general are morally dishonest, loving their sin more than they love the truth.

Now let's move to the next trial Jesus faced, this time before the Romans. First before the Jews, kind of a three-phase trial, ultimately the Sanhedrin issuing their verdict, their official verdict, and so now it's time to take him to Pilate.

And so second, we see not only Jesus before the priests, but now Jesus before the politicians. Herod, first Pilate, and then Herod.

And so the undecided Pilate, first of all, and then the unimpressed Herod. The politicians, Jesus before the politicians.

So let's begin with the undecided Pilate. In Luke chapter 23 verse 1, then the whole multitude of them, that is the Sanhedrin, arose and led him to Pilate.

[32 : 34] So let me just again bring all of the four Gospels together here, piece it all together, to see about this part of the trial. It could get the whole story of Jesus before Pilate.

It was early, very early, Friday morning, in fact it was still dark, when the Jewish leadership knocks on Pilate's door. And so they get him out of bed.

That part's not in the record, but we can assume by the timing that that's the case. He gets him out of bed, and Pilate gets out of bed, he leaves his wife there, of course, in the bed, she's still sleeping, and she's having a dream.

We do read about this later in the Gospel account, and it's a dream that was so troubling to her that she later would tell her husband not to have anything to do with this, quote, innocent man, end quote.

All right, and so when Pilate comes to the door of his living quarters, there are the Jews, the Jewish leaders, the priests, the high priests, and they have Jesus there.

[33 : 38] bound, and the Jews turn Jesus over to Pilate. Possibly Jesus is escorted on into Pilate's living quarters there. But the Jews will not go into Pilate's house because, and Scripture tells us, because this would defile them.

It's the Passover week, and so it would make them unclean for that festival, and so they would not go in, and so they're standing outside, and they begin to rehearse to Pilate their litany of charges, their trumped up charges, subverting the nation, refusing to pay Roman taxes, claiming to be a king, king of the Jews, and all that is recorded in Luke chapter 23 as we read a moment ago.

Pilate, I think, just kind of yawns and says, go judge him yourself. And they retorted, we have. They've already judged him. He's guilty. He's guilty of a crime worthy of death, Pilate. And we can't carry that execution out, that punishment out.

You have to do that. That's why we're here. All right, so Pilate, well, all right then, goes into the house and he begins to question Jesus. But notice, he does not ask him any questions about subversion, whether or not he is subverting the people, whether he's an insurrection.

[35 : 18] He doesn't ask any questions about that. And he does not question Jesus about, you know, his views on Roman taxes, and whether he's refusing to pay taxes.

And why would he not ask those questions? Because he already knew the answer to those questions. He knew those accusations were false. Pilate made his business to know all things within his area of rule, his area of authority.

And he knew Jesus was not an insurrectionist. If he had thought that, he would have had him arrested a long time before. And he knew he was paying his taxes. Remember, Jesus even paid his tax on one occasion by getting the money out of the mouth of a fish.

Jesus not only gave to Caesar what belonged to Caesar, he also taught his disciples to do the same thing. So Pilate knew this about Jesus.

And so he does ask him, though, about this alleged claim that he's a king, king of the Jews. And so he asks him, are you?

[36 : 18] It's simple. He just wants to get right to the quick of it. Are you? And Luke doesn't tell us about this part, but John does. And so let me read what John records in John 18, verse 34.

And Jesus answered him, are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning me? All right, so you're asking this question because that's what you think, or you want to know, or is this something somebody else is telling you to ask?

And Pilate answered, am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me. What have you done? And Jesus answered, my kingdom is not of this world.

If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I should not be delivered to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here. Pilate therefore said to him, are you a king then?

And Jesus answered, you say rightly that I am a king for this cause I was born and for this cause I have come into the world that I should bear witness to the truth.

[37 : 26] Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice. And Pilate said to him, what is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, I find no fault in him.

This is very interesting. You see, Pilate only cared about one kingdom, the kingdom of his Caesar, the kingdom of the Roman Empire, the kingdom that hired him, appointed him, the kingdom that lined his pockets with money or allowed him to line his pockets with money, the kingdom that gave him his power.

That's the only kingdom he was interested in. And as soon as he heard Jesus say, my kingdom is not of this world, well, all right then. All right, I don't have any problem with that.

And so he goes back out to the priests, the leadership and says, I don't find any fault in this guy.

And now it's at this point that Pilate discovers that Jesus is a Galilean.

And so he palms him off on Herod. Herod happens to be in town at the time. And Galilee is not Pilate's jurisdiction. That's Herod's responsibility.

[38 : 40] So he sends him to Herod. We'll get back to Herod here in just a minute. But eventually Jesus comes back to Pilate and Jesus is again his problem to deal with.

And the whole thing points to this, that Pilate is totally undecided about what to do about Jesus. If he had been decided, then it just would be done.

That would be that. Death or release. And so why this banding back and forth with the Jewish leaders? Because Pilate's undecided.

And so Pilate calls the Jewish leaders back and he tells them that he has found no fault or nothing wrong with Jesus, nothing worthy of death, and neither has Herod.

By the way, according to Jewish law, the witness, two witnesses will decide a case. They're not going to accept that, are they? And so instead, then because he's undecided, he offers them a choice.

[39 : 46] Well, I'll let you decide whether this guy dies or lives. And so he puts out Barabbas or Jesus. Now, I don't know what he thought. Maybe he thought they would pick Jesus because Barabbas was such a stinker, such a bad guy, such a rebel rouser, and a real problem to the Jewish nation to keep peace.

He thought surely the high priests who really want peace with Rome because that allows them to continue their job, surely he thought they would pick Jesus over Barabbas, but he was wrong about that.

They chose Barabbas. And so, he has Jesus whipped. Now, I want you to get this picture in your mind. Jesus hasn't been officially accused of anything.

and Pilate has him whipped to the very edge of his life. And then he mocks him also. He puts a crown of thorns on his head and he puts this robe, the robe that Herod, by the way, had placed on Jesus, has this royal robe on him and then he parades him out in front of the Jewish leadership and that crowd that had gathered together there and he said, look at the man.

And he thought that they would be so appalled by what they saw and so sickened by what was done to Jesus because he really, at this point, barely looked human. And he thought that would appease their anger but again, that didn't work, did it?

[41 : 18] And Pilate should try in every way he can because he can't decide what to do. But here's the point. To make no verdict is a verdict.

to be undecided about Jesus is to be decided, is to make a decision.

And many people today say they are undecided about Jesus and the demands of the gospel, but that in itself is a decision, one that bears eternal consequences.

And so then, let's get to Herod here. Pilate is the undecided, but Herod is the unimpressed. He's unimpressed with Jesus.

And so Luke is the only one who tells us about Jesus being brought before Pilate, so let me read that again to you. In Luke chapter 23, starting with verse 6, when Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the man were a Galilean and as soon as he knew that, knew that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at the time.

[42 : 32] 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.

So the picture really is pretty clear. This little blurb about Herod that only Luke gives us, pretty clear. Herod is only interested one thing, to see Jesus do some miracle.

He had heard about Jesus' miracles. You know, that word spread all around Israel. About this great power, these supernatural things, the healings, the stormy seas being calmed, and feeding 5,000 with a little boy's sackclush.

He had heard about all those things, but he had never witnessed any of that. So all Herod is interested in is seeing Jesus perform some miracle of power, some supernatural thing.

[43 : 51] That's all he wants. And so when Jesus would not perform for him, then he had no more interest in him. Sent him back to Pilate. You know, many today are just like Herod, aren't they?

And sadly, even some, many who profess to be believers, and even some true believers, can kind of fall into this trap where they want to see the power of God.

They want God to do things for them. But they are not, they do not want the person of God ruling in their lives.

That takes in a whole lot of people today. They want God to do things for them, but they do not want a king to rule in their lives. They want to hear about the supernatural.

Our culture is fixed on supernatural things. They want to see the supernatural. They want to hear about the supernatural.

[44 : 56] They'd like to experience the supernatural, but they do not want to hear about their sin. sin. And so, the unimpressed Herod.

And that leads us to Jesus' final trial. And it is what I want to call Jesus before the public. The people at large.

The unbowed public. I mentioned earlier that the Jewish leadership held a mock trial, and it really was a mock trial. There wasn't anything official about it.

But in the end, the Jewish people held a mob trial. A mob court. And so, Jesus was finally condemned to die, essentially, on the basis of the court of public opinion.

basically it. And in the end, that's what Pilate listened to. Made his decision based upon it. Verse 13 tells us that Pilate had called together chief priests, rulers, and the people.

[46 : 08] And they would have come anyway. This is probably a very large crowd. In fact, Mark 15, 11, speaks of the crowd. The crowd present at Jesus' final trial before Pilate.

Mark 15, in verse 15, speaks of, again, of the crowd that Pilate wished to appease. And so, Luke 23, 16, in our text for this morning, has Pilate saying, I will chastise him and release him.

And they, that is, the crowd, all cried out at once, saying, away with this man. They didn't even mention his name.

Did they know his name? Of course they did. He'd been teaching in the temple all that week. All day, every day, all day that week, they knew who Jesus was. They had heard about Jesus.

They knew this was Jesus. They didn't even mention his name. They wouldn't even call him by his name. Away with this man. And even further than that, I don't know if you notice in your Bibles, the word man is in italics.

[47 : 19] that means it's not in the original text, and so literally, they said, away with this. I mean, think about this. How angry they were.

How wicked and ugly. Away with this thing. in verse 20 says that Pilate therefore wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them.

So this is the second time. Meaning, reconsider your position. But they shouted, Luke goes on to say, they shouted, crucify him.

Crucify him. And then in verse 22, then he, Pilate, 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, that's the crowd, the mob, the court of public opinion, they were insistent, Luke records here, demanding with loud voices that he be crucified.

[48 : 48] And then here is what it all came down to, and it's not recorded in Luke. This is what Pilate said again, the fourth time. This is the fourth time.

In John chapter 19, verse 15, Pilate said, shall I crucify your king? And they said, we have no king but Caesar.

Unbowed before their Messiah, their sovereign Lord. Unbowed.

So, what is this revealed, really, when you put all of this together? Well, simply, like the priests in that first trial, series of trials, like the priests of Jesus' day, many people today, most people, really, are absolutely unwilling to give an honest hearing of the gospel.

They're intellectually dishonest, morally dishonest, and dishonest in many other ways. Their mind's already made up. They will not give it a hearing. And, like the Roman governor, Pilate, like Pilate, many people today, most people, I would say, say they are undecided about Jesus.

[50 : 24] Have you ever had anybody say that to you? I haven't decided about that yet. But, to be undecided is decided.

And, like Herod, many people today, a whole lot of people, actually, even, God help us, within the church, want Jesus to do things for them.

And, that's really the extent of their devotion. what they can get from Jesus, whether it's prosperity, or health, or, you know, whatever it may be.

Many people just want Jesus to do things for them, but they do not want him as Lord, and King.

And, then, finally, like the mob, the crowd, many, many people today, most people today, will not bow before the sovereign Son of God in submission to his person, his word, his will.

How about you? Thank you.