

Luke Lesson 23

Luke Chapter 23

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Memory verses for this week: *Zec 1:16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem..*

Introduction: We continue our study of the book of Luke this week as we continue in chapter 23. In last week's lesson, we witnessed the denial of Peter as Jesus was taken in to be tried by the soldiers. In those last hours, Peter denied Christ 3 times. After the third denial, we read about the cock crowing, and Jesus looked at Peter making him realize that he had not been strong in faith like he had promised. We begin this week's lesson with Jesus going before Pilate.

I. Jesus Before Pilate

*Luke 23:1 And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.
 Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.*

Jesus was brought in by the soldiers, but it says that the multitude rose up to take him to Pilate. We all need to recognize that while we may not have been there that day, we are guilty when it comes to our sins being the reason Jesus had to die on Calvary. The crowd accuses Jesus of forbidding them to give tribute to Caesar and saying he was a king. When did Jesus pervert the nation? We know even in his teaching on the taxes, he said to pay tribute to Caesar and render unto God the things that be God's. Not only did he teach to pay tribute, but paid himself tribute to Caesar.

Mat 22:19 Show me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.

Mat 22:20 And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?

Mat 22:21 They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.

Luke 23:3 And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

Luke 23:4 Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

Luke 23:5 And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.

Pilate questions Jesus and asks him “Art thou the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered and said “Thou sayest it.” It was not a hidden fact from the people. When Jesus was born, the wise men came several months later and asked about him. They asked “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” (Matt. 2:1-3) Wise men sought him back then, and as many signs proclaim during the Christmas season, wise men still seek Him today. After Pilate talked and questioned Jesus, he claims he could find no fault in Him. The reason was good... there was no fault in Jesus.

All the accusations against Christ were false and unfounded. Had he been given a fair trial, he would have been found not guilty. But Jesus did not receive a fair trial. He was beat and spit upon, and mocked. Not one bad accusation leveled against Christ was founded or substantiated. Some things he was accused of were true, and there was no reason to cause him to be sentenced to die. Jesus was the King of the Jews, and He was the Son of God. One day the nation of Israel will see Him for who He really is. When Pilate said he could find no fault in this man, it enraged the people and they became more fierce. The reason for this is because they were convicted of their sins.

II. Jesus Sent Before Herod

Luke 23:6 When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean.

Luke 23:7 And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time.

Luke 23:8 And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.

Luke 23:9 Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

Pilate thought that he found a loophole when he heard that Jesus was a Galilaean. He could escape responsibility by turning the judgment over to someone else. Herod was the governor of Galilee. He was conveniently in town at this time in order to keep the feast of the Passover. So Pilate sends Jesus to Herod since he was under his jurisdiction. Herod was pleased when Jesus was brought to him because he had wanted to meet Him for many months. The miracles Jesus had performed were known to Herod, and he desired to see Christ do some great thing. Herod begins interrogating Jesus, but it says ‘he answered him nothing.’

Luke 23:10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him.

Luke 23:11 And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.

Luke 23:12 And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Jesus may not have been saying anything in his defense, but the chief priests and scribes were speaking out in a great way accusing Him of many things. Even Herod's men mocked Jesus and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe. Herod was a crafty politician as was Pilate, and he returns the favor and sends Jesus back to Pilate a second time. These men had been at odds with one another, but because of Christ, it says they were made friends together. Love and hate can cause people to draw together. God help us to draw together because we love one another, not because we hate someone else as these men appeared to do.

Adam Clarke in his commentary on the New Testament said this about verse 10.

The chief priests—vehemently accused him—Corrupt priests and teachers are generally the most implacable enemies of Christ and his truth. Evil passions betray those who are slaves to them. An affected moderation would have rendered these accusers less suspected, their accusations more probable, and the envy less visible than this vehemence: but envy seldom or never consults prudence: and God permits this to be so for the honor of truth and innocence.

III. Barabbas is Released as Jesus is Condemned

Luke 23:13 And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people,

Luke 23:14 Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:

Luke 23:15 No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto him.

Luke 23:16 I will therefore chastise him, and release him.

Again Pilate says that he can find no fault in Jesus. Three separate times in this chapter Pilate comments that he can find no fault in this man. He says not only could he find no fault, but Herod also found nothing worthy of death. He says to the mob that he will chastise Jesus and release him unto them.

Luke 23:17 (For of necessity he must release one unto them at the feast.)

Luke 23:18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:

Luke 23:19 (Who for a certain sedition made in the city, and for murder, was cast into prison.)

Luke 23:20 Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spake again to them.

Luke 23:21 But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.

Luke 23:22 And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.

Pilate says he had by law to release someone unto them at the feast, so he chose to release Jesus rather than the murderer Barabbas. Barabbas was a mean and vile man, and he knew the people would be better off to put him to death and release Jesus. When he announces this, the people cried out to crucify Jesus. The third time Pilate points out that there was no evil found in Jesus, and that there was no cause of death to sentence him to die. Pilate had a conscience and was trying to follow it. Unfortunately for him, he didn't stick to his decision and changes. He went against his own best judgment and the recommendation of his wife.

Mat 27:19 When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

Luke 23:23 And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed.

Luke 23:24 And Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they required.

Luke 23:25 And he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, whom they had desired; but he delivered Jesus to their will.

Pilate thought that if he promised to chastise Jesus, that this would pacify the crowd. But it did not. They had loud voices urging him to crucify Jesus. So Pilate gives in and lets the murderous crowd and chief priests have their way. So rather than freeing the guiltless one, they rather have a murderer released from prison. It says in verse 25 that "he delivered Jesus to their will."

J. Vernon McGee said this about Pilate.

Pilate is trying to escape making a decision about Jesus, but he cannot. Careful analysis of Pilate's part in the trial will reveal that *he* is on trial and Jesus is the Judge. Jesus is not trying to escape, but Pilate is. Pilate sought for an easy escape from these astute religious politicians. He hit upon giving them a choice between Barabbas and Jesus. To him the decision was obvious. He detected that they wanted Jesus dead because of envy. Pilate did not reckon with the depth to which religion can sink when it goes wrong. Matthew tells us that the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas. Pilate was startled when the crowd demanded Barabbas to be released. Imagine a judge asking a crowd for their decision as to what should be done with a man on trial! He decided that

Jesus was innocent; yet he handed Jesus over to be crucified. What Roman justice!

Pilate finally had to make a decision, just as every man today has to make a decision relative to Jesus Christ. What have *you* decided about Him? i

Luke 23:26 And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus.

Simon was from Cyrene, a city of North Africa, and was told to carry Christ's cross. After the beating, it was impossible for Jesus to bear the weight of the cross. Most likely this man had no idea the honor that had been bestowed upon him that day. By bringing the cross up to the hill of Calvary, it provided the only way of salvation that God would accept. Jesus had to live the sinless life and then go and die on that cross so that we might go free. Barabbas deserved to die that day, but one took his place. That same one, Jesus, paid the sin debt that we could not pay when he died on the Cross. But you have to accept the gift of forgiveness and promise of eternal salvation to have your sin debt paid.

IV. The Crucifixion

Luke 23:27 And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him.

Luke 23:28 But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children.

Luke 23:29 For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.

Luke 23:30 Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us.

There was a great multitude that followed Jesus up that hill. Many came because of sympathy for Jesus. Even more came to ridicule Him or see if He might do some tremendous miracle in their presence. Jesus had the power and ability to prevent His death, but He died willingly to take our place. Jesus tells those who were weeping to not weep for Him but rather weep for their children. A day would soon come when the people would cry out for the mountains to fall on them. Jesus knew the destruction that was about to come upon Jerusalem in just a few short years. Jesus understood their feelings, but He was simply following through with the Will of the Father.

Luke 23:31 For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

iJ. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible commentary [computer file], electronic ed., Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1981 by J. Vernon McGee.

The green tree here speaks of Jesus, while the dry speaks of Israel.

Luke 23:32 And there were also two other, malefactors, led with him to be put to death.

Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

There were two others who died that day. They were men guilty of crimes and were called malefactors. It says they come to the place where they would die... a place called Calvary. These malefactors being crucified with Jesus was a fulfillment of prophecy from Isaiah Chapter 53. Jesus was truly numbered with the transgressors, even though he was not guilty of even one sin.

Isa 53:12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

This is perhaps one of the greatest proofs that Jesus was the Son of God. How could anyone suffer such pain, humiliation, and agony, and yet be so loving. As they are putting him to death on the cross, Jesus asks God to forgive the people for they did not know what they were doing. And it was so true. The one that God sent to redeem and save them was being crucified. It says they parted his raiment and cast lots making a game of the Lord. This was another fulfillment of prophecy.

Psa 22:18 They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

Luke 23:35 And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God.

Luke 23:36 And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him, and offering him vinegar,

Luke 23:37 And saying, If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself.

Luke 23:38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

The people mock Christ and say if he truly is the Christ, then save himself. The soldiers also mocked him, not knowing who they were addressing. They too made comments that if he was the king of the Jews, then he should save himself. Pilate had written a superscription over the top of the cross in 3 languages saying "This is the King of the Jews." In the record of the gospel in John, it says some

told him to change it to say “He said I am King of the Jews”, but Pilate refused to change it. What he wrote was the truth.

*John 19:21 Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews.
John 19:22 Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.*

V. The Repentant Thief

*Luke 23:39 And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.
Luke 23:40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?
Luke 23:41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.*

There were two men hanging on a cross on each side of Jesus. One of the men railed on Jesus and says “If thou be Christ, save thyself and us.” The other thief was not that way. He realized his lost and undone condition, and takes up for Jesus and rebukes the other man. He realizes that he is dying justly for what he had done and was about to meet God, but Jesus was dying for no apparent reason.

He asks the other man “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss.” This man knew Jesus was innocent, and has faith that he is the Messiah. He then asks Christ to remember him when he come into His Kingdom.

*Luke 23:42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.
Luke 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

Some people like to make salvation out to be a long and complex journey. You have to first have faith and then work all your life and if in the end, your good works out weight your bad, then maybe you will get into heaven. But all of this is man’s logic and thinking. The way to heaven is by Jesus Christ, and he is the author and finisher of our faith. This man recognized he was lost, knew he was hopeless without Christ, and turned in faith and repentance to ask for help. Note that is what God requires. Jesus said “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Paradise is the third heaven.

2 Cor 12:1 It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

2 Cor 12:2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven.

2 Cor 12:3 And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

2 Cor 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

2 Cor 12:5 Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.

Luke 23:44 And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour.

Luke 23:45 And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.

It says that there was darkness over all the earth from the sixth hour to the ninth hour. The Hebrew day began at six am, which made the sixth hour noon our time, and the ninth hour was 3pm. There was a lot of things that went on during this time, and truly only God the Father and Christ the Son know. It was a very dark hour the day that Christ was made to be sin for us. The veil of the temple was rent in the midst, signifying that the way unto God had been torn down and we have direct access to the Father now.

The veil separated the outer room from the “Holiest of Holies” in the temple, and only the High Priest was allowed to enter that room, and only once per year. He brought a sin offering for his sins and then a sin offering for the sins of the people. And God met with him and accepted the offering. However none of that blood could take away sin, but it pointed to the one who could, which is Jesus Christ. Christ is now our Great High Priest, and He sits on the right hand of God daily interceding for us. There is no veil between us and the presence of God once we know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

VI. Jesus Dismisses His Spirit

Luke 23:46 And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Just before Christ died, God turned His face from Him because God can not look upon sin. And as all the sins of the world are placed on Jesus, he died and completed the sacrifice that God required. When the Father left Him at that time, Jesus had to in faith turn his soul and spirit to God. He says “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

Matthew Henry said some important things about Jesus commending His spirit into the Father’s hands.

Christ hereby signifies his dependence upon his Father for his resurrection, by the re-union of his soul and body. He commends his spirit into his Father's hand, to be *received* into paradise, and *returned* the third day. By this it appears that our Lord Jesus, as he had a *true body*, so he had a reasonable soul, which existed in a state of separation from the body, and thus he was made like unto his brethren; this soul he lodged in his Father's hand, committed it to his custody, resting in hope that it should not be left in *hades*, in its *state of separation* from the body, no, not so long as that the body might see corruption. 5. Christ has hereby left us an example, has fitted those words of David to the purpose of dying saints, and hath, as it were, sanctified them for their use. In death our great care should be about our souls, and we cannot more effectually provide for their welfare than by committing them now into the hands of God, as a Father, to be sanctified and governed by his Spirit and grace, and at death committing them into his hands to be made perfect in holiness and happiness. We must show that we are freely willing to die, that we firmly believe in another life after this, and are desirous of it, by saying, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* ii

Luke 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man.

Luke 23:48 And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

Luke 23:49 And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things.

The words of Christ on the cross are recorded in all four accounts of the Gospel. It takes reading all four to read of all the things Jesus said on the cross. I have a book that is just a study of those scriptures. This is the third record in Luke when Jesus says that he commends his spirit unto God. The centurion who stood by realized that Jesus was no ordinary man. In the account in Matthew, he states that this truly was the Son of God.

Mat 27:54 Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.

VII. The Entombment

Luke 23:50 And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just:

Luke 23:51 (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God.

Luke 23:52 This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus.

iiHenry, Matthew, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers) 1997.

Luke 23:53 And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid.

Luke 23:54 And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on.

Luke 23:55 And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.

Luke 23:56 And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment.

Joseph of Arimathaea came and asked the Pilate give him the body of Jesus that he might place him in a grave. He had a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, and he took Jesus there. It says that no man had ever been in this sepulchre. So Pilate grants him his request, and they bury our Savior in a borrowed tomb. He came from glory and didn't have a good place to be born, and left this life in a borrowed tomb. But only 3 days later, he came out of that grave. Praise God for the resurrection. If Jesus had not risen, he would be like all other religious leaders. But he is not dead in a grave, but is alive and with the Father in Heaven today.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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Practice Random Acts of Kindness. Each act spreads, and many will be blessed.