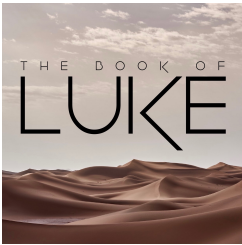


“Sinners Assessing the Sinless”

Luke 23:1-12



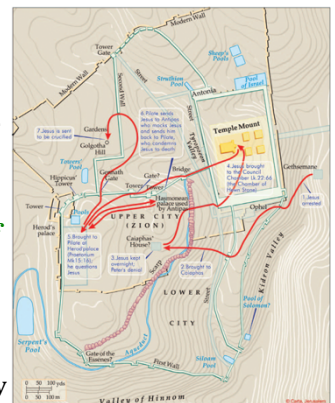
Theme: Attempting to avoid making a decision about what to do with Jesus Christ is to reject Him.

Introduction: Yesterday I had the opportunity to play golf. In the round, you could count on one hand the number to hits that I could be encouraged by. Because I play infrequently, I have a frequent sensation as I approach the ball of tragedy. I just know that when I hit this, it could go anywhere ... I'm not sure what is going to happen. I approach the ball, get set, and then feel the need to back away and reset. I'll wiggle my club behind the ball, twitch my shoulders, take a deep breath, and then feel the need to do it again. All this is within a few seconds. Then I just barrel through, pull the club back and rotate my hips into the ball as I swing the club. The ball leaps off the face of the club and heads out to who knows where? Thankfully, those watching can track it so I can go find it. This is like the sentiments of some sinners as they approach Jesus – not sure about any of it: “What will happen if I repent and trust Him?” Will my life become one of rejection, despair, and loneliness? Will those around me turn on me?” Our text displays such a response to Jesus – Pilate and Herod both knew that Jesus was not worthy of any punishment, but because of fear, they rejected Him and gave in the pressures of those around them. They fought desperately to avoid deciding about Jesus but could not. Their example demonstrates that ***attempting to avoid making a decision about what to do with Jesus Christ is to reject Him!***

I. The Pretenses to Accuse Christ - *23:1-5*

A. THE INDICTMENTS OF CHRIST - *vv. 1-2*

1. As soon as they could, the Sanhedrin marches Jesus through the city to what is known as the Praetorium – the governor’s official residence where Roman legal proceedings would occur – ***“Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.”***



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- a. The Jewish officials had already gone through the rituals of purification required for Passover and didn't want to contaminate themselves – cp. [John 18:28](#).
 - b. They come en masse together showing solidarity in their desire – something that tipped Pilate off that something exceptional was afoot.
2. It is apparent that they were hoping that Pilate would merely rubber stamp their request for permission to execute Jesus – cp. [John 18:29-30](#).
- a. However, Pilate calls their bluff and tells them to do with Jesus what their law permits.
 - b. However, the hatred for Jesus was so great they wanted Him humiliated as He died, thus requiring crucifixion – just as prophesied – at the hand of Gentiles – cp. [Luke 18:32-33](#).
3. Thus, *“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.’”*
- a. He is guilty of **INSURRECTION** – *“... misleading our nation”* [into rebellion] – cp. [Matthew 5:44-45](#).
 - b. He is guilty of **INSUBORDINATION** – *“... forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar”* – cp. [Luke 20:21-25](#).
 - c. He is guilty of **IMPERSONATION** – *“saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.”* – cp. [John 6:15](#).
4. The Sanhedrin provided no corroborating evidence, testimony, or documentation of these assertions and acted insulted that Pilate should require any of this.

B. THE INTERROGATION OF CHRIST – v. 3

1. In a political maneuver, Pilate takes Jesus to interrogate Him – but suspects from the outset that He is innocent – cp. [Matthew 27:18](#).

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2. Nevertheless, Pilate must certify that Jesus is NOT a threat to Roman authority or peace – *“So Pilate asked Him, saying, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’”*
3. However, before Jesus answers, He asks Pilate to clarify his question – cp. ***John 18:34***.
 - a. If Pilate was asking with the notion that Jesus was a political threat to Rome, Jesus’ answer would have been “no.”
 - b. If Pilate is asking is asking on behalf of the Jews, Jesus’ answer would be “yes!” – cp. ***John 18:35-36***.
4. Having clarified Pilate’s question, Jesus provide the answer Luke records: *“And He answered him and said, ‘It is as you say.’”*
5. Hence, Jesus affirms that He is indeed a King; having already made this “good confession” before the Jews, He know declares Himself before the Gentiles – cp. ***1 Timothy 6:13***.

C. THE INNOCENCE OF CHRIST – v. 4

1. As a competent Roman governor, Pilate would have kept a watchful eye on every movement throughout his jurisdiction and had undoubted known about Jesus but had apparently never heard of any insurrectionist disturbances or political ambitions on Jesus’ part.
2. Based on Jesus’ answers, Pilate concludes that Jesus does not pose a threat to Rome.
3. In a very public and definitive ruling, *“Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, ‘I find no guilt in this man.’”*
4. He completely discredits the accusations that the Jews had brought against Jesus – seeing through the charade of sanctimony and loyalty being projected by the Sanhedrin, essentially condemning them for their sin by acquitting Jesus.

D. THE INCRIMINATION OF CHRIST – v. 5

1. However, this insult was more than the chief priests could handle and they got very aggressive – *“But they kept on insisting ...”* [ἔπισηύω] – to “make strong” by adding persistent pressure.
2. They were repeatedly stating: *“He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place.”*
3. This commentary on the ministry of Jesus speaks to the influence that He had gained throughout the nation of Israel – something that had seriously worried the Sanhedrin – cp. *John 11:47-53*.

II. The Ploy to Avoid Christ – 23:6-7

A. THE DILEMMA OF ACCOUNTABILITY – v. 6

1. Pilate realized that if the Jewish people were to be stirred up in any kind of insurrection on his watch, Pilate would be accountable for it in the eyes of Rome.
2. However, the chief priests had provided him a door of opportunity to avoid the problem – *“when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.”*
3. Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth, a city about 12 miles southwest of the Sea of Galilee – cp. *Luke 2:4, 39-40*.
4. Since Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, Pilate saw a possible way to avoid dealing with Jesus.

B. THE DEFLECTION OF ACCOUNTABILITY – v. 7

1. So, *“when he learned that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself was also in Jerusalem at that time.”*
2. This was *“Herod”* Antipas – the same *“Herod”* that had

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beheaded John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin.

3. Jesus had actually left Judea in order to avoid any confrontation with *“Herod”* – cp. *Matthew 14:1, 13*.
4. Jesus had no respect for *“Herod”* – having rebuffed his interest earlier – cp. *Luke 13:31-32*.
5. Pilate figured, “now it’s Herod’s problem!”

III. The Persuasion to Abuse Christ – 23:8-12

A. THE CURIOUS ASSESSMENT – vv. 8-9

1. Luke is alone in his record of the interrogation with Herod – providing this additional level of intrigue in this most heinous flow of events.
2. As noted, Herod was eager to meet Jesus – Luke stating: *“Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.”*
3. Herod’s curiosity was in the famed power displayed by Jesus – the power of God, or even the superstitious power of a resurrected John the Baptist.
4. Hence, when Jesus was brought before him, Herod *“questioned Him at some length ...”*
5. *“... at some length”* [ἰκανός] – conveys that Herod exhausted questions – coming to a conclusion that Jesus was not going to honor him with any responses – *“... but He answered him nothing.”*
6. Jesus’ silence was itself a curiosity as most people are very verbal and expressive in their self-defense, consistently asserting themselves to be falsely accused.
7. Nevertheless, Jesus was not willing to defend Himself from their varied accusations.

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B. THE CHARGED ACCUSATIONS- v. 10

1. As *“the chief priests and the scribes were standing there”* witnessing Jesus’ silence and the lack of incriminating evidence that existed – became distressed that Herod might actually derail their efforts.
2. As a result their rhetoric and accusations became more intense – *“And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.”*
3. *“vehemently”* [ΕΥΤΌΝΩΣ] – **“expressing intense emotion”**
4. The quieter and more placid Jesus was, the opposite extreme described His enemies – they were getting desperate as they couldn’t get anyone to condemn Jesus and were frustrated.

C. THE CONTEMPTUOUS ABUSE - v. 11

1. Having been dishonored and rebuffed by Jesus – essentially ignored, Herod joined in the spiteful treatment of Jesus – *“And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe ...”*
2. Jesus had already been beaten – his face swollen and bleeding and looked meek and unimpressive – certainly no threat to Herod or anyone around Him – cp. ***Luke 23:15***.
3. However, to appease the blood-thirst of the chief priests, abused Jesus and in mockery *“dressed Him in a gorgeous robe”* – [λαμπρός] – **“radiantly bright,”** or **“glistening”** – an old robe of Herod’s that portrayed his royalty.
4. Herod then *“sent Him back to Pilate.”* – refusing to pass judgment or take responsibility for the decision as to whether Jesus was worthy of death – apparently greatly disappointed in his encounter with Jesus ... Herod was “underwhelmed.”

D. THE CORRUPT ALLIANCE - v. 12

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1. This exchange of deference and resistance of the pressures by the chief priests forged a newfound alliance between Herod and Pilate – *“Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.”*
2. Additionally, Pilate had – by sending Jesus to Herod – indicated that he would defer to the jurisdiction of Herod; and Herod by sending Him back to Pilate indicated that a Roman decision would be best.
3. Neither of them wanted anything to do with condemning someone who seemed so innocent and harmless.

So What?

1. **Fearing what others will think about you if you follow Jesus means a rejection of Jesus.**
2. **We cannot avoid a personal decision about Jesus – you are either bowing to Him or rejecting Him.**
3. **Are you persuaded that Jesus is God’s Son, or curious about His power to miraculously change you? ... do not allow your sin to be more important to you than Him.**

Attempting to avoid making a decision about what to do with Jesus Christ is to reject Him.