



“Choosing a Sinner Over the Savior”

Luke 23:13-25

Theme: Rejecting Jesus is an irrational decision.

Introduction: Yesterday example demonstrates that *attempting to avoid making a decision about what to do with Jesus Christ is to reject Him!*

I. The Acknowledgement of Jesus’ Exoneration - *23:13-15*

A. THE CLAMORING FOR THE VERDICT - *v. 13*

1. The injustice shown toward Jesus continues in our text.
2. There is nothing that is just about what transpires – everything demonstrating the complete rejection of Jesus happens as the God of this world foments and unleashes the hostility of sinners against the Son of God.
3. Having been subjected to illegal proceedings and punishments, Jesus is taken from the Sanhedrin and presented to Pilate, who in turn sends Him to Herod who then returns Him to Pilate.
4. All of this happened in the predawn and early dawn hours – ending up back here at Pilate’s praetorium for him to render his final verdict around 6:00 AM – cp. *John 19:14*.
5. Pilate is done – he’s endured their clamoring too long already and he is ready to provide a verdict so *“Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people.”*
6. Together with the Sanhedrin – *“the chief priests and the rulers”* – Pilate also called *“the people”* – likely thinking that many of the people would be friendly toward Jesus and would help dilute the Sanhedrin’s clamoring for the death

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penalty.

7. This was supposedly his final verdict he was officially reading – an edict of sorts.

B. THE CLARITY OF THE VERDICT – vv. 14-15

1. We are told that he *“said to them, ‘You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.’”*
2. *“examined”* [ἀνακρίνω] is a legal term for making a judicial examination of a prisoner – essentially saying that “after due process” he is found “NOT GUILTY.”
3. He corroborates the legitimacy and propriety of his verdict by referring to Herod’s examination – *“No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.”*
4. This was designed to provide a wider scope of investigation as Herod reigned over the domain where Jesus had worked and taught for so long and would thus be in the best position to know about any criminality of even impropriety toward Roman authority.
5. This verdict was definitive, complete and ought to have served as the final word on the subject – they all should have walked away, Jesus freed from his shackles and allowed to leave and go home – he was innocent.

II. The Antagonism toward Jesus’ Existence – 23:16-21

A. THE ALTERNATIVE TO JESUS’ DEATH – vv. 16-17

1. However, Pilate does something absolutely unexplainable – he says: *“Therefore I will punish Him and release Him.”*
2. Wait ... what?! He had just declared Him a man in whom Pilate had found no guilt!

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3. This was an effort to assuage the vitriol and envy that Pilate knew was motivating the Sanhedrin, thinking that if he beats Jesus within an inch of his life, the Sanhedrin would be pacified.
4. The way that Jesus would have been “*punished*” [παιδεύω] by Pilate was “scourging” – a horrific beating: cp. *Mark 15:15*.
 - a. The victim would be tied to a pole with arms above his head until his feet dangled.
 - b. Two scourgers would take turns striking the victim with a short-handled whip of multiple leather straps with shards of glass or bone embedded in them.
 - c. They would repeatedly strike the victim allowing the leather straps to wrap themselves around the body and the glass would dig into the flesh and rip the flesh deeply.
 - d. Often entrails would be exposed or lacerated, and the victim would expire during or shortly after such a beating
5. Short of a death penalty, this would have been the worst punishment that a Jew could receive; so heinous that Romans were exempted from such treatment.
6. We do know as the morning unfolded that Jesus was eventually scourged and left so weakened that He could not carry His cross to the crucifixion.
7. We are told that the people rejected this proposal and so Pilate suggested another possibility – cp. *Matthew 27:15-19*.
8. Luke merely states: “*Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.*”
9. Pilate kept seeking an alternative to condemning Jesus.

B. THE APPETITE FOR JESUS’ DEATH – vv. 18-21

1. However, there was no basis for scourging Jesus, and he ought to have been freed.
2. Suggesting that he would “*punish*” Jesus was itself an

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abuse of judicial authority and provided the Jews with encouragement to reject Pilate's verdict.

3. Then, when Pilate put an innocent man whom he had acquitted up as a common criminal that he could release under the tradition of Passover, he compromised his own verdict.
4. The people smelled Pilate's intimidation and with the cajoling influence of the chief priests and rulers, *“they cried out all together, saying, ‘Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!’”*
5. Pilate was shocked that this second plan was being ruined as Barabbas was such an objectionable criminal there is no way that they would choose him over Jesus – *“He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.”*
6. *“Barabbas”* [Βαραββᾶς] – means “son of the father” – and is poetically appropriate as a man who was released while the “Son of the Heavenly Father” was condemned in his place.
7. So *“Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept on calling out, saying, ‘Crucify, crucify Him!’”*
8. Despite having done nothing worthy of death, being officially examined and acquitted, mistreated, and abused, the people with irrational hostility toward the Son of God called for mercy upon a degenerate murderer and called for execution of the Lord Jesus – cp. [*John 19:7*](#).

III. The Acquiescence to Jesus' Execution – **23:22-25**

A. THE PRESSURE TO EXECUTE – **vv. 22-23**

1. Pilate could not believe the irrationality of the hostility against Jesus – and so *“he said to them the third time, ‘Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilty demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him.’”*

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2. We are told that Pilate had taken Jesus back into the Praetorium and asked Him again why they hated Him so much – cp. [John 19:9-11](#).
3. However, *“they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified.”*
4. *“asking” [αἰτέω]* – refers to the people “demanding” that Jesus be *“crucified.”*
5. Their demands became more vocal and intense, and Pilate was concerned that a riot might break out and Luke says: *“And their voices began to prevail.” [κατισχύω]* – dominate.
6. They even called into question Pilate’s fidelity to Caesar – cp. [John 19:12](#).

B. THE PERMISSION TO EXECUTE – vv. 24-25

1. As a result of the intensity, irrationality, and constancy of the cries for Jesus to be crucified, Pilate acquiesced to their demands.
2. Pilate completely folded and in the epitome of injustice, condemned a man he had officially found innocent – *“And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.”*
3. As a result, since he had offered to free who they chose, he had to make his word good – *“And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.”*
4. Can you imagine being Barabbas? – No one would be able to say “Jesus died in my place” as literally as he can!

So What?

1. **The claim of Lordship by Jesus is highly offensive to sinners who are committed to the mastery of their own lives.**
2. **The treacheries and brutalities exhibited toward Jesus are mere glimpses of the irrational evil characterizing all sinners**

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toward God that is masked by civility and restrained by God's mercy.

3. A person submits to Jesus as Lord and Savior only because of God's grace enabling him/her to do so; do not spurn this grace.

**Rejecting Jesus is an irrational
decision.**