

**The Gospel of Luke (#103);
The Trials of our Lord Jesus (2)**

We are continuing to consider the trials of our Lord Jesus that took place through the night and the next morning of the day of His crucifixion. Last week we examined the account of our Lord Jesus before the Jewish religious leaders--the Sanhedrin—which was comprised of chief priests and their scribes. They had mocked and beaten the Lord Jesus and had accused Him of blasphemy, when He affirmed to them forthrightly that He was indeed the promised Christ, the Son of God. This supreme leading body of the Jews did not have the authority to execute Jesus. They needed an order from the Roman official for that to occur, and so, in chapter 23 we read that Jesus was led before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, and then before king Herod. A consideration of these political leaders before whom Jesus was taken provides an outline of the passage:

1. Jesus before Pilate (23:1-7)
2. Jesus before Herod (23:8-11)
3. Jesus before Pilate again (23:12-25)

Let us read Luke 23:1-12.

Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. ²And 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.”

³Then Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

He answered him and said, “It is as you say.”

⁴So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no fault in this Man.”

⁵But they were the more fierce, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

⁶When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. ⁷And 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. ⁸Now 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. ⁹Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. ¹⁰And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. ¹¹Then 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. ¹²That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other. (Luke 23:1-12)

I. Jesus before Pilate (23:1-7)

Luke records in **verse 1**, “*Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate.*” This rather large gathering of principle leading Jewish men agreed as to what must be done with Jesus. This multitude included Jewish priests and scribes, as well as the entire Sanhedrin comprised of 70 leading men of Israel. Yes, there were probably a few with reservation regarding this action, even harboring objection to what transpired. These would have included Nicodemus, who had first come to Jesus by night, was probably a disciple of Jesus, as well as Joseph of Arimathea, who was a secret disciple due to fear of his Jewish comrades. Later this very day these two men would obtain permission from Pontius Pilate to remove the body of Jesus from His cross and then with care and compassion place the body of Jesus in Joseph’s own tomb (cf. John 19:38). This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:8, which had

foretold 700 years beforehand their care for the body of the dead Messiah, when they entombed the body of Jesus in a rich man's tomb. Isaiah 53:9 reads,

“And they made His grave with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.”

But in spite of the likely exception of these two men, Luke could record that “the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate.” Usually this leadership body could not agree together on any matter, but here, the whole group of them were convinced that this man was to die. They would all take Him to Pilate. An angry mob scene seems to be depicted. An older commentator once wrote the action of these leading religious men:

Unanimity in any cause is no proof that the cause is good: nothing is requisite but to raise an outcry, and the passions of the multitude are soon heated; and, if there be a few artful and designing men to head them, they will concur in measures the most violent, and in acts most atrocious. Never was this more awfully exemplified than in the conduct of the Jews towards our blessed Lord. Of all the Benefactors that nation ever beheld, Jesus was by far the greatest: yet there we find the whole multitude of the Jews, with the priests and the elders at their head, leading Jesus before the Roman governor, in order to obtain against Him the sentence of death.¹

They brought Jesus before the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. “They pretended a zeal for Cæsar, only to ingratiate themselves with Pilate, but it was all *malice* against Christ, and nothing else” (Matthew Henry). There was no love between Pilate and this group of men. Pilate was a Roman, who lived in the coastal city of Caesarea. He and his extra troops were only in Jerusalem at this time in order to discourage potential Jewish nationalistic uprising which might occur during the Passover. Pilate was proud, hated the Jews, and was cruel to them. We read in Luke 13:1 of some who came to Jesus and called His attention to the fact that “Pilate had mingled” the blood of some Galileans with sacrifices. Pilate did not like the Jews, and they certainly did not like him. They would not even enter his palace, lest they defile themselves, so Pilate had to accommodate them by coming out to his palace gate to deal with them. But the Jews would need his order to have Jesus executed. But for this to occur, Jesus must be charged with crimes which are an affront to Rome which call for His execution. Blasphemy would not do. So they accused Jesus of fomenting rebellion against Rome.

Consider the implications of Jesus our Lord and Savior standing condemned before this earthly judge, Pontius Pilate. **John Calvin** (1509-1564) wrote of this:

For the Son of God chose to stand bound before an earthly judge, and there to receive sentence of death, in order that we, delivered from condemnation, may not fear to approach freely to the heavenly throne of God. If, therefore, we consider what advantage we reap from Christ having been tried before Pilate, the disgrace of so unworthy a subjection will be immediately washed away. And certainly none are offended at the condemnation of Christ, but those who are either proud hypocrites, or stupid and gross despisers of God, who are not ashamed of their own iniquity. So then, the Son of God stood, as a criminal, before a mortal man, and there permitted Himself to be accused and condemned, that we may stand boldly before God. His enemies, indeed, endeavored to fasten upon Him everlasting infamy; but we ought rather to look at the end to which the providence of God directs us. For if we recollect how dreadful is the judgment-seat of God, and that we could never have been acquitted there, unless Christ had been pronounced to be guilty on earth, we shall never be ashamed of glorying in His chains. Again, whenever we hear that Christ stood before Pilate with a sad and

¹ Charles Simeon, **Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible**, vol. 13 (Zondervan Publishing House, 1955), 126.

dejected countenance, let us draw from it grounds of confidence, that, relying on Him as our intercessor, we may come into the presence of God with joy and alacrity (cheerful readiness).

We read in **verse 2** their charges against Jesus before 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.’*”

John’s Gospel records the initial entrance of these Jewish men into the presence of Pilate. In John 18:28 through 32 we read these words:

Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. ²⁹Pilate then went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this Man?”

³⁰They answered and said to him, “If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.”

³¹Then Pilate said to them, “You take Him and judge Him according to your law.”

Therefore the Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,” ³²that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.

Now this body of men had previously determined that Jesus was worthy of death for blasphemy, when he claimed to be the promised Messiah--the Christ. But Pilate would not impose the penalty of a capital offense on such a charge. But it is clear of the intention of the Jewish leadership. They would not be content with anything but our Lord’s execution. And so, these Jewish men fabricated a charge of sedition and rebellion against Jesus, setting Him forth as a threat to Roman rule. They brought three charges against Jesus as set forth in verse 2. These include that

1. He was attempting to mislead, or pervert the Jewish nation,
2. He taught to withhold taxes, and
3. He claimed to be Christ, a king

The Lutheran commentator, **Richard Lenski** (1863-1936) wrote,

We are dumbfounded to hear them, for not one of these crimes was even breathed at their (previous) two court sessions. The great Sanhedrin faces the Roman governor with the rankest lies. Nor was there one man who dissented, one man who opened his mouth to tell the truth about what they had “found.” Caiaphas and a few leaders do the speaking, but all the rest lend their assent. This need not surprise us. They who plotted judicial murder are capable of carrying it out by means of bold lying.²

And so, here we see here, ***first, the maliciousness, the malevolence of their opposition.*** They were intractable. They would say anything to Pontius Pilate to achieve their desire and design. He was an “evildoer”, they charged. He subverted Roman authority, fomenting rebellion. But not long before Jesus had taught the opposite of what they had charged Him. He had taught the crowds, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Mark 12:17). He had performed a miracle so that He could pay His and Peter’s taxes (Matt. 17:27). And when the people were intending to make Him king forcefully, He taught them in a manner that He knew would result in them no longer favoring Him, and then He withdrew Himself from them (see John 6). And so, these Jewish leaders accused Jesus

As making Himself a *rival with Caesar*, though the very reason why they rejected Him, and would not own Him to be the Messiah, was because He did not appear in worldly pomp and power, and did not

² R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel** (Augsburg Publishing House, 1946), 1102.

set up for a temporal prince, nor offer to do any thing against Cæsar; yet this is what they charged Him with, that He said, *He Himself is Christ a king*. (Matthew Henry)

Secondly, we also see *the subtly of their deception before Pilate*. They desired to influence his decision, so they fabricated their charges in a manner they knew would bring forth his anger and antipathy toward Jesus. We read in the Word of God that God hates some who sin egregiously. Proverbs records,

These six things the Lord hates,
Yes, seven are an abomination to ^[1]Him:
¹⁷A proud look,
A lying tongue,
Hands that shed innocent blood,
¹⁸A heart that devises wicked plans,
Feet that are swift in running to evil,
¹⁹A false witness who speaks lies,
And one who sows discord among brethren. (Prov. 6:16-19)

It would seem that these Jewish leaders were guilty on all counts and warranted God's utter abhorrence of them. We read in the Word of God that "all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8). These men will be among them, except those who perhaps later repented of their sin and came to faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

And **thirdly**, we read of the *quiet dignity of our Lord in the face of His accusers*. They accused Jesus of "*saying that He Himself is Christ, a King*." Now Jesus had certainly affirmed before them His true identity, but only after repeated inquiry. We had read in Luke 22:66 that after their all night abuse of Him, "As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, 'If You are the Christ, tell us.'" But even then, Jesus had not answered them. And so again, they insisted. We read, "Then they all said, 'Are You then the Son of God?'" Jesus only then acquiesced, saying, "You rightly say that I am." But their charge before Pilate suggested that Jesus was going about everywhere declaring that He was a king who was standing in defiance and rebellion of Roman authority.

Our Lord stood alone in this crowd, even as He was subjected to their intense hatred and anger. He wrought our salvation alone, for all had forsaken Him. It appears He was helpless and at the mercy of these intractable and compassionless men. He was subject to them and their evil designs. Yet He overcame them, not by reasoning or appealing to them, not by vehemently denying the charges as one falsely accused and whose rights were being denied Him, but by silently committing Himself to His Father Who judges things rightly.

We read in **verses 3 and 4** Pilate's response to these charges against Jesus and of Jesus' answer to Pilate.

³***Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?"***

He answered him and said, "It is as you say."

⁴***So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man."***

Pilate was immediately drawn to the accusation that Jesus was fomenting rebellion against Rome. It was well said,

Nothing could have been more odious than this crime to Pilate, whose greatest anxiety was to preserve the kingdom in a state of quietness. From the Evangelist John we learn that He was accused on various grounds; but it is evident from the whole of the narrative that this was the chief ground of accusation. In like manner, even at the present day, satan labors to expose the gospel to hatred or suspicion on this plea, as if Christ, by erecting His kingdom, were overturning all the governments of the world, and destroying the authority of kings and magistrates. Kings too are, for the most part, so

fiercely haughty, that they reckon it impossible for Christ to reign without some diminution of their own power; and, therefore, they always listen favorably to such an accusation as that which was once brought unjustly against Christ. On this account Pilate, laying aside all the other points, attends chiefly to the sedition; because, if he had ascertained that Christ had in any way disturbed the public peace, he would gladly have condemned Him without delay. This is the reason why he asks Him about the kingdom. (John Calvin)

The response of Jesus to Pilate is not a clear, unambiguous answer. It allows for the fact that He is the Christ, but not a “Christ” or “a king” that was in any way a challenge or threat to Rome. And so, in effect, Jesus was not guilty of their third charge. Pilate concluded with his announcement, ***“I find no basis of charge against this man.”*** Pilate did not regard this man as a political threat to Rome. Pilate found him innocent of charges. Jesus was innocent and should have been released. This fact was a point of later apostolic preaching, when Peter said of the action of the Jews against Jesus,

“The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied ***in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.***” (Acts 3:13)

But the Jewish leaders would not allow this opportunity to pass. They further insisted on His guilt in verse 5: ***“But they were the more fierce, saying, ‘He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.’”***

Pilate was in a tough spot. His own wife had warned him. We read in Matthew 27:19 of this,

“While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, ‘Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.’”

How could Pilate now deal with this? But when Pilate the word “Galilee”, he, being a good politician, saw his way out of the matter. “Galilee? Well, then, you have come to the wrong place. You need to go to Herod.” Since Jesus was from Galilee, then he could be sent before the Jewish/Idumean “king” Herod, who ruled over Galilee, who also was in Jerusalem at the time.

Before we depart with their bringing Jesus to Herod, let us consider several points in the light of these events:

1. Let us beware of external religion. These Jewish men were religious men. They were sincere in their service to God, but they would crucify our Lord. But in these days “sincerity” seems to be the ultimate test of what should be approved or disapproved. Sincerity in religion counts for nothing, if it is not in accordance with truth. Sincerity in religion apart from the truth of the Word of God is dangerous. Zeal for God, but not according to knowledge, is dangerous and harmful (cf. Rom. 10:2).
2. Beware of failing to do right because of pressure which others can place on you. Pilate saw clearly the way of justice here. He should have released the Lord Jesus. But rather than doing what was right, he sought to escape his responsibility by turning the matter over to others. If it is our responsibility to act righteously, then we are to do so regardless of the consequences of doing so.

II. Jesus before Herod (23:7-11a)

We read of Pontius Pilate sending Jesus to King Herod in **verses 7 through 12.**

⁷*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.* ⁸*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.* ⁹*Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him*

nothing. ¹⁰And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. ¹¹Then 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. ¹²That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Let us say a few words regarding this man, Herod. We may know some things regarding him from the record of Mark's Gospel. Here is **Mark 6:17-29**:

Now King Herod heard of Him, for His name had become well known. And he said, "John the Baptist is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him."

¹⁵Others said, "It is Elijah."

And others said, "It is the Prophet, or like one of the prophets."

¹⁶But when Herod heard, he said, "This is John, whom I beheaded; he has been raised from the dead!" ¹⁷For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife; for he had married her. ¹⁸Because John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

¹⁹Therefore Herodias held it against him and wanted to kill him, but she could not; ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.

²¹Then an opportune day came when Herod on his birthday gave a feast for his nobles, the high officers, and the chief men of Galilee. ²²And when Herodias' daughter herself came in and danced, and pleased Herod and those who sat with him, the king said to the girl, "Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you." ²³He also swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

²⁴So she went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask?"

And she said, "The head of John the Baptist!"

²⁵Immediately she came in with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

²⁶And the king was exceedingly sorry; yet, because of the oaths and because of those who sat with him, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷Immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded his head to be brought. And he went and beheaded him in prison, ²⁸brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹When his disciples heard of it, they came and took away his corpse and laid it in a tomb.

There were a number of men named "Herod" in the days just before Jesus was born until well after Jesus died and rose from the dead. This Herod was Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, who had the infant boys murdered in Bethlehem, hoping to kill the baby Jesus. But Joseph had been warned by God in a dream which resulted in Joseph escaping with his family to Egypt until Herod the Great had died in 4 BC. His region over which he had reigned as tetrarch, was upon his death divided among his four sons by Caesar. The Herod mentioned in Luke 22 was Herod Antipas, who became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea from his father's death in 4 BC until he was deposed by the emperor Caligula in AD 39. The title tetrarch originally meant ruler of a fourth part of a region but came to be used of any minor ruler. This Herod lived during the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Herod was the fellow whom Jesus called, "that fox." He was a cunning man without scruples. He was the Roman ruler over the region of Galilee and Perea.

We read in Mark's Gospel that this Herod had imprisoned and eventually executed John the Baptist when John spoke out against his marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip's ex-wife. He had also wondered about Jesus' identity thinking that Jesus was John the Baptist who had risen from the dead (Mark 6:14-16). When Jesus was warned that Herod was seeking His life, Jesus derisively called him "that fox," suggesting that he was cunning and deceitful. Herod had wanted to see Jesus for quite some time, and here in Luke 23 we read that Pontious Pilate brought this desire of Herod to realization.

Herod was a sinful, worldly man. Herod, although he was king over Galilee, was driven by fear of what others about him thought of him; he was governed by the fear of man. Herod was a man who was the puppet king that Rome had installed over the region of Galilee. History records that he was hated by the Jews even though he had sought to curry their favor. But he was an evil, ruthless man. He was an ambitious man. He had obtained his kingdom by traveling to Rome from Palestine and securing the position for himself.

Again, Mark 6:17 reads, “For Herod himself had sent and laid hold of John, and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; for he had married her.” After Herod imprisoned John, Herod became a prisoner to John’s Preaching. Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just and holy man, and he protected him. And when Herod heard John preaching, he responded in a measure. We read that Herod “did many things, and heard him gladly” (Mark 6:20).

Often times we find ourselves as Christians forced to deal and work with people like Herod. We find ourselves in places or positions in which we are forced to interact with unbelievers who are not indifferent to the things of God, but rather they are antagonistic toward our Lord and therefore toward us. It might be a neighbor, a fellow worker or supervisor, or perhaps even a spouse. We find ourselves having to face and encounter these people and their unreasonable antagonism to us and for everything we believe and espouse. We feel ourselves to be prisoners. But take note of this: They are the ones who are truly imprisoned. When we are forced to live in their proximity, they, equally, are forced to live in ours. As a result, they are confronted by our words or even by our presence with a lifestyle which repudiates them and rebukes them whenever they are forced to deal with us. And sometimes as a result, they are converted to Christ.

When Herod imprisoned John, Herod became imprisoned to John’s preaching. For Herod’s imprisonment of John did not silence John’s words; rather, they became more frequent, and more direct, and more personal. As we read in Mark 6:20 (KJV), “For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and a holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly.”

Do not be surprised if those to whom you have been imprisoned are also fearful of you! They will be if you show yourself to be unconcerned about impressing others and exalting yourself in their eyes. Be true. Be direct. Be strong and of good courage. Seek to bring honor to Christ, and although others about you may not admit it to you or even to themselves, they will honor you. Herod honored John.

Herod had some good traits. Herod respected justice and holiness. Again, we read that “Herod feared John for he was just and a holy man.” This is a good trait on the part of Herod. It is good for one to recognize and regard goodness. And sometimes people do so even though they do not exhibit these qualities in themselves. Some have so defiled themselves with sin that they despise goodness and ridicule justice. Herod had not digressed that far. He respected these qualities. And we may find ourselves among those who do not love our Lord but say that they love these qualities.

Herod admired the man in whom he saw these qualities of justice and holiness. This is a step farther. Herod kept John the Baptist safe; for a time, Herod protected John. This Herod, who would later have John beheaded, provided a measure of protection for him. Herodias, Herod’s wicked wife, hated John and was a vengeful woman. She did not like what John was telling her consort. She desired John to be put to death, but Herod protected John for a time, for Herod admired John.

There are those about us who respect us, who may appreciate us as Christians and think highly of our convictions and even desire our company. But where they might respect us, they will have nothing to do with our faith. They might surprise us by even coming to our defense! We may not at the time know what to think of it. It might make us hopeful for their case, but this is not enough, and we should not embrace them as one of us on such little evidence.

Now the KJV has this phrase not as Herod having kept him safe, but having “observed him.” As did Herod, there are people of the fallen world that may be watching us. Perhaps they are curious. Perhaps they are hoping to justify their non-committal by finding some inconsistency in us. There is a strange love-hatred kind of association with these people. They don’t know what to make of you and you don’t know what to do about them. You find yourself having to interact and sometimes respond to bizarre behavior and irrational outbursts. Herod admired John, but John was a rebuke to him, and so their relationship must have been stormy, to say the least.

But there was a third good point about Herod. We read that Herod “listened to John and heard him gladly” (Mark 6:20). The NASV reads, “He used to enjoy listening to him.” This is a good quality, is it not? To enjoy hearing the Word of God preached? To enjoy having conversations about the things of God? There are not many in this world who enjoy such things, but interestingly, Herod did.

But just because one listens to you and may seem to endorse enthusiastically what you say, that does not make him a Christian. Our Lord described some hearers of the Word who were no doubt lost yet for a time “receive the word with joy,” and they might even “believe for a while,” but that is not enough, for when difficulty comes because of the Word they cast off their profession like a garment as quickly as they put it on. Do not assume that another is a Christian any more than Herod was a Christian on such evidence.

But there was something about John and his style that appealed to Herod. Perhaps it was his fearlessness which had such an appeal to him, a quality that he lacked himself. Herod “heard him gladly”, but again, that is not enough. But there is one further good point about Herod. We read that king Herod “did many things” (Mark 6:20). This was not a man who disregarded all of what John had to say. He made some changes in his life. He perhaps righted a few wrongs, perhaps performed some charitable acts, and maybe he reformed some of his attitudes and actions. But partial repentance is no repentance. Picking and choosing which teachings of Scripture to accept or selecting some principles to follow is not salvation. And do not be fooled by others and do not delude yourself that somehow doing things, even “many things” like Herod, will result in acquittal at the judgment. Charitable acts and some efforts at reform may soothe your conscience but it will not remove guilt before God. That is something only the blood of Christ does for His disciples through their faith alone in Him.

We may encounter many like this to whom we witness. They hear us and begin to attend church, any church. They hear us and give up a sin or two, and they can point to the change! “Why just look at what I used to be like!” It causes us to be hopeful for their case, and rightly we should be hopeful, if we perceive an awakening of conscience. And they may have intentions of further reform, but all this is not enough. For regeneration is needed, not merely reformation. A new life needs to be experienced, not just a change in some behavior patterns. Actually, Herod “doing some things” had only condemned him further. For in doing these things he was acknowledging that the truth was known to him; therefore, his guilt will be great on the last day.

Now those were his good points! But sadly Herod had some serious flaws in his character. First, although he looked at John, but he never looked to John’s Master. He was sort of a follower of John, but never of Jesus. We are to be witnesses for Christ, but sometimes people do not see past us to Him. It is not our fault any more than Herod’s nearsightedness was John’s fault, but do not be fooled by people. Try and discern if it is Christ they are following and not you only. And continually reinforce to them that it is before Him with whom they have to do.

This is what Christian parents do with respect to their children. We know that our children, when they are young, will tend to believe the things that we believe. They will follow us as we follow Jesus, and that is good. But as our children grow, we desire to see them increasingly follow Jesus Himself rather than to follow us as we follow Jesus. And so, as you children get older, we Christian parents begin to look for signs that you are indeed following the Lord Jesus. This especially comes to the forefront in the teen years. For even when you are with other Christian teens, we wonder whether you are following Jesus because you love Him or simply that is the direction that your friends happen to be going at the time.

In other words, are you following Christ out of a fear of God or are you following Christ out of a fear of man? Are you seeking Him because that is what others about you are doing and you want to be accepted by them? Would you follow Christ even if you had no friends that knew and loved Him? The crowd may be following Him today, what about tomorrow? Will you follow them when they turn in another direction? Or will you follow Christ because you long to be approved by Him?

Although Herod had respect for John’s goodness, he had none in his own heart. Jesus had called Herod “that Fox.” He was as a cunning, crafty animal who is bold before weaker creatures, but quick to flee before an aggressor like John. “Herods” will pray with you, read the Bible with you, sing hymns with you, and speak of spiritual things with you. And yet in the next hour, when they are with the rowdy

crowd, they will mimic them--speaking their language, laugh at their jokes, listen to their music, and delight in their pursuits.

But further, although Herod listened to John's words, he never listened to them as the word of God. "Look how boldly he presents himself", thought Herod, "that's the kind of man for me." But he never said to himself, "God is speaking to me through him." Herod would pick and choose what he wanted to hear. "He heard him gladly and did many things." But Herod never responded to John's proclaiming of the 7th commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Herod stopped short and did only those things that he chose to do. He would not be a disciple of Jesus who commands of His disciples, "observe (do) all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19) In this way Herod revealed that he was his own lord over his own life, neither God nor His Son would rule over him.

That leads us to our final word and the core flaw in Herod's character. Although Herod feared John, he did not fear God. He did not fear God, but he did fear man; that is, he was more concerned about what other men and women thought about him than how God regarded him. And this is what ordered his life. Herod feared man, who did not have the power to destroy his body and soul in hell rather than fear God Who does have that power. John the Baptist feared God only, and therefore feared no one else; but Herod did not fear God, it would seem, that he feared everyone else. And so, when the day came that Herod made a foolish vow before a gathered crowd, at that time he had greater fear of them than fear for John, and so John was expendable (Mark 6:21-28).

John, the Elijah who was to come, had his Herodias who controlled Herod, just as Elijah had his Jezebel who controlled Ahab. And so it was, that Herod slew John, the preacher whom he once respected. This was but the beginning of his sorrows. And some three years later, Herod went infinitely lower, for we read here in Luke 23 that it was Herod, who, having lost all sense of decency and any former sensitivity to right and wrong, along with his soldiers, openly mocked and abused the Savior. May the Lord help us to live according to the fear of God rather than be governed by what others think of us.

Let us return to our text in Luke 23:8ff. What we will see in these few verses are (1) a second official declaration of Jesus' innocence, and (2) a gathering together of the opposition against Him. We read in **verses 8 and 9** these words:

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. ⁹Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.

Herod was pleased to see Jesus (23:8), but Jesus refused to speak to Herod (23:9). Throughout this whole series of trials, our Lord only refused to speak to Herod. Jesus would not perform miracles before him. Our Lord uses His power in His service to people, ministering to them out of love and compassion. But He does not entertain people through doing signs and wonders in order to impress them with His power and persuade them to believe on Him. Sinful people look for signs, and the Lord does not oblige them. Sometimes silence is all men deserve.

Our Lord must have suffered greatly having to endure this session with Herod. **Charles Spurgeon** (1834-1892) wrote of this encounter:

Then to think of our Lord's being questioned by such a fop as Herod! A man of intense and earnest soul, living for one thing only, and that the redemption of mankind, is here worried by the foolish questions of a man of the world. Were you ever in agony of bodily pain yourself, and did some frivolous person call upon you and begin to torture you with the veriest inanities and absurdities? Have you not felt that his chatterings were worse than the pain? It must have been so with Jesus. When the ridiculous must needs question the sublime the result is misery. With the bloody sweat yet damp upon His brow, and with the accursed spittle still defacing His blessed countenance, the Man of Sorrows must be tortured by the drivellings of a heartless idler. With His heart all bowed down under a sense of the awful penalty of sin, the great Substitute for sinners must be molested by the petty small talk and ribald jests of the meanest of mankind. Solving eternal

problems, and building up an everlasting temple unto the living God, He must be twitted by a vainglorious tetrarch, tormented and tortured by foolish questions fit only to be asked by a mountebank. We think the cross itself was not a worse instrument of torture than the haughty tongue of such a debauched monarch. (C.H. Spurgeon, vol. 28, p. 106).

Isaiah 53:7 was fulfilled here:

He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.

We read that the Jews accused Jesus vehemently. **Verse 10** records, “*And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.*” One can well imagine the scene. Jesus is silent. The mob is out of control, challenging and charging Jesus. And Herod is trying to get Jesus to perform for him. Apparently, Herod just ignored these people, which must have all the more enraged them. But Herod, being the man he was, when he was not satisfied with Jesus’ silence, determined to make sport of Jesus.

In **verse 11a** we read of Herod’s maltreatment of Jesus. “*Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe.*” Herod treated Jesus with contempt. Here we see the indifference of sin and mockery toward the authority of Jesus the king.

But rather than just acknowledging Herod’s crimes, let us affirm that the Scriptures regard all persistence in sin in the light of knowledge of God and His rule over us as mockery against Him. And He will not be mocked. It is mockery to God and His rule over His world when we live lives in disregard of Him and knowingly do things that are displeasing to Him. Denying His right to rule over us is mocking Him as our King. And so, “dressing Him in an elegant robe” they sent him back to Pilate.

III. Jesus before Pilate again (23:11b-12)

We read in **verses 11b** and **12** these words, that Herod “*sent Him back to Pilate.*” ¹²*That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.*” Due to their mutual hatred and maltreatment of Jesus, Herod and Pilate become friends. They had been foes. Perhaps it was due to Pilate intruding upon Herod’s territory when he had mixed the blood of some Galileans with their sacrifices that had caused Herod to despise Pilate (cf. Luke 13:1). But we see them making peace due to their mutual contempt for Jesus. Here is a sure way to settle a dispute between warring factions. Put the Lord between them; or put one of His devout followers in the middle of them. They will find that they have much in common in their hatred for Him and they will make peace with one another. Granted, I suspect their mutual contempt of the Jewish leadership also caused them to bond.
