

Luke 23:1-25
The Judge is on Trial—The Roman Civil Trials

Introduction: These trials take place early (6:30-8:30 AM) on Friday morning, April 3, 33 AD, just hours before His crucifixion. This fulfills the prophecy of Jesus that He would be handed over to the Gentile rulers (cf. Luke 18:32). This also is referred to by Paul in his first letter to Timothy (6:13-16).

1) Jesus is declared innocent by Pilate, the ruler of Judea—23:1-5

- a) The unjust accusations—23:1-2 ¹ *Then when the whole assembly (the Sanhedrin) had stood up, they brought Him to Pilate. ² And they began to bring (legal) charges against Him, saying, “We found (by investigation) this Man ... (doing 3 things)*
 - i) Political rabble-rousing—*misleading the nation*
 - ii) Political resistance—*and forbidding to pay tribute tax to Caesar,*
(1) This is a bold lie (cf. 20:20-25)
 - iii) Political rebellion—*claiming that He Himself is Messiah, a King.”*
- b) Pilate’s initial investigation, especially of the third charge—23:3
 - This is further detailed in John 18:33-38
 - i) ³ *Then Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are **You** (emphatic) the King of the Jews?”*
 - ii) *And having responded to him, He said, “**You** (emphatic) say so.”*
- c) Pilate publicly states Jesus’ innocence—23:4-5
 - i) The verdict—⁴ *So Pilate said to the chief priests and to the crowds, “I find no guilt in this Man.”*
 - ii) The resistance—⁵ *But they (the whole assembly) were insisting, saying, “He incites the people, teaching throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee as far as this place.”*

2) Jesus is examined by Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee—23:6-12

- Remember that the Herods were descendants of Esau. Herod was merely a curious, insincere inquirer who wanted Jesus to perform at his bidding.
- a) Pilate sends Jesus to Herod Antipas for examination—23:6-7 ⁶ *Now when Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. ⁷ And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him over to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem in those days.*
- b) Herod’s investigation and humiliation of Jesus—23:8-11
 - i) ⁸ *Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had wanted to see Him for a long time (cf. 9:9), because he had heard many things concerning Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.*
 - ii) ⁹ *Then he questioned Him of many things, but **He** (emphatic) answered him nothing (made no legal defense).*
(1) Jesus does not dignify these proceedings by answered Herod. (cf. Is. 53:7)

- iii) ¹⁰ *Now the chief priests and the scholars stood by, vehemently bring charges against Him.*
 - iv) ¹¹ *Then Herod with his soldiers, (Herod personally did these 3 things)*
 - (1) *after treating Him with contempt*
 - (2) *and mocking Him, dressed Him in elegant clothing (similar to a candidate for an office or a king)*
 - (3) *and sent Him back to Pilate.*
 - c) Luke's explanation of political acquaintances—23:12 ¹² *Now Pilate and Herod became friends with each other in that very day, for they had previously been at enmity with each other.*
- 3) Jesus is again declared innocent by Pilate, the ruler of Judea—23:13-25**
- a) Pilate states Jesus' innocence a second time—23:13-17
 - i) "Not Guilty" in Judea—23:13-14 ¹³ *Then Pilate, when he had summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ said to them,*
 - (1) Their charge is bogus—"You^{pl} have brought this Man to me, as one who is misleading the people,
 - (2) The verdict—and behold, **I** (emphatic), *having examined Him before you^{pl}, have found **no** (emphatic) guilt in this Man concerning the charges you^{pl} have made against Him.*
 - ii) "Not Guilty" in Galilee—23:15 ¹⁵ *Indeed neither has Herod, because I sent you^{pl} to him;*
 - (1) *and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.*
 - (2) Thus, Luke presents 2 witnesses to Jesus' innocence (cf. Deut. 19:15)
 - iii) Attempt to release the innocent Man—23:16-17 ¹⁶ *Therefore, after I have punished [paideu,w] (physically or verbally) Him, I will release Him"*
 - (1) ¹⁷ *(for it is necessary to release one of them at the feast).*
 - b) Pilate states Jesus' innocence a third time—23:18-25
 - i) The demand for an unjust exchange—23:18-19 ¹⁸ *Then they all screamed at once, saying, "Take this Man away, and release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹ (who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.)*
 - (1) At this point Pilate has Jesus scourged (John 19:1)
 - ii) The second attempt to release the innocent Man—23:20-21 ²⁰ *Therefore Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, ²¹ but they kept shouting, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"*
 - iii) The third attempt to release the innocent Man—23:22 ²² *Then he said to them the third time, "Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt deserving death. Therefore, after I have punished Him, I will release Him."*
 - iv) The loudest voices win—23:23 ²³ *But they were insistent (like stormy weather), demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and the chief priests prevailed.*
 - (1) At this point Pilate declares his own innocence (Matt. 27:24)
 - v) Pilate caves in to their sinful pressure—23:24-25

- (1) ²⁴ *So Pilate decided to grant their demand.*
- (2) ²⁵ *And he released to them the one for whom they were asking, who had been thrown in prison because of insurrection and murder,*
- (3) *but he handed Jesus over to their will.*
 - (a) “It is the will of the people, rather than justice, that Pilate ultimately submits to.” (Thompson)
 - (b) Pilate’s friend in the presence of the emperor had been executed 1½ years earlier. He needs to keep the peace of Rome at all costs. He is vulnerable to being replaced.
 - (c) Mob justice is an oxymoron, since the whim of a mob rarely (if ever) leads to genuine justice. (Kostenberger and Taylor)

4) Things we need to remember:

- a) Jesus, the Innocent, was treated as the Guilty in our place, so that we the guilty might be declared righteous.
 - i) Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 7:26-27
- b) Jesus willingly endured this mistreatment in submission to the Father’s will.
 - i) Cf. John 8:28-29; Heb. 10:5-25