

Jesus before Pilate

Luke 23: 1-7

The events of that faithful night so long ago continue to move in rapid pace. While praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was arrested by the multitude and brought before the Sanhedrin. There He was falsely accused in a mock trial and condemned to death. Following their decision, the Sanhedrin took Jesus before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor over Jerusalem.

It would be foolish to assume Pilate knew nothing of Jesus. The Sanhedrin had been accompanied by a Roman guard when Jesus was arrested. Certainly Pilate knew of this Man, and prior to speaking personally with Jesus, would have gladly condemned Him. Pilate was not a friend of the Jews and fervently sought to prevent any turmoil and unrest among them that might gain the attention of his superiors in Rome.

As we move through our text this evening, we continue to see the sinfulness and utter wickedness of men contrasted with the abundant grace of God. The Jews may have felt as if they had gained the upper hand, but the proceedings were progressing according to the sovereign will of God. Let's consider the [details](#) of the text as we think on: [Jesus before Pilate](#).

I. The Accusation of the People (1-2) – These verses reveal the determined accusation of the Jewish council. Notice:

A. Their Unity (1) – [And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate](#). After condemning Jesus on a charge of blasphemy, the entire multitude rose and led Jesus to stand before Pilate. The council was united in their hatred of Jesus, as well as their resolve to rid the world of this Man and His influence. The Sanhedrin was comprised of Pharisees and Sadducees, having opposing theological views, and yet they are united in their hatred of Jesus.

- The world around us remains united in hatred for Jesus. He cannot be avoided. All must decide what they will do with this Man, just as those before them, and many choose hatred rather than embracing the only means of salvation and reconciliation to God.

B. Their Testimony (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](#). As the multitude gathered before Pilate, they testified against Jesus. Although the accusations were completely fabricated and unsubstantiated, they stood united in their condemnation. The people accused Jesus of perverting the nation, literally *turning away, seducing, and misleading them*. He was accused of tax evasion and outright treason against the government.

- Many today may use a different choice of words, but the accusations remain the same. They deny the fact that Jesus is the only means of salvation, claiming such teaching is misleading. Jesus had clearly declared to render unto Caesar that which was Caesar's but they lied to Pilate. When others cannot find credible arguments against Jesus, they fabricate lies. The majority today deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Lord of lords and King of kings. The world remains united in opposition to Jesus and those who choose to follow Him.

II. The Inquisition of Pilate (3-4) – After their accusation, Pilate begins to question Jesus. Notice:

A. The Proposition (3a) – *And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews?* This was not an inquiry of honor or support for Jesus. Pilate did not view Jesus as the Christ, the promised Messiah of God. He is simply wanting Jesus to incriminate Himself in such a way that he would be justified in passing sentence against Him.

- One can sense the sarcasm and lack of compassion in Pilate's voice. Jesus had been battered and abused by the Sanhedrin. He stood before Pilate bloody and bruised. He certainly did not have the appearance of a king. Those among us in the world continue to display the same sarcasm and skepticism regarding Jesus. Their minds have already been settled before they examine the evidence regarding Jesus.

B. The Declaration (3b) – *And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.* Jesus did not hesitate in His response to Pilate. He affirmed that Pilate was correct in his question. It was as he had said: Jesus was in fact the King of the Jews, the Christ of redemption, Sovereign over all, and Savior of the world.

- This claim was nothing new. Jesus had revealed Himself as the Son of the living God on many occasions. He had never once shied away from declaring who He was and why He had come to earth. He had revealed and confirmed His deity, even though the majority rejected Him. The denial of the Sanhedrin and Pilate did not detract from His deity and the rejection of most today doesn't alter who He is or what He accomplished. Jesus possesses a name that is above every name. It is at the name of Jesus that every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

C. The Admission (4) – *Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.* Pilate declares after examining Jesus that he finds no fault in Him. This is not a declaration of support or sympathy for Jesus, but simply a review of the facts.

- Throughout the proceedings of the trial and the coming crucifixion, Jesus was never declared guilty. His innocence is maintained throughout, but that doesn't dispel the hatred of the Jews or the death sentence Pilate will impose. When one takes the time to examine the truth concerning Jesus, a declaration of innocence is always discovered. He was convicted of crimes He had not committed. He suffered in agony upon the cross, bearing the shame and guilt of our sin, not His own. He endured the righteous judgment of God in His body so we could escape what we deserved. The innocent suffered and died for the guilty. God robed in flesh was crucified so humanity could live.

III. The Determination of the People (5) – The multitude was not pleased with the declaration of innocence Pilate offered. They were determined to rid Jerusalem of this Man. Consider:

A. Their Anger (5a) – [And they were the more fierce...](#)The council was enraged at the decision of Pilate. They were determined to secure a guilty verdict. Their response reveals the anger and hatred they had for Jesus. They were not interested in truth or justice; they simply wanted Jesus dead and removed from their midst.

- Do we not see the same anger and rage today? Jesus is the major point of contention around the world, and the animosity toward Him and those who believe is increasing in America. Jesus is the dividing line for all humanity. He is the one Person that all must consider and choose how they will respond to Him. He cannot be ignored! When humanity is pressed concerning Jesus, they become enraged and violent.

B. Their Appeal (5b) – [And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.](#) The Sanhedrin knew they had to convince Pilate to condemn Jesus. They would not be satisfied with anything less. Since their initial accusations had not convinced Pilate, they accused Jesus of creating strife and discord over all Israel, from Galilee to Jerusalem. They wanted to present Jesus as a danger to society.

- Although their accusations were misguided, they further confirmed the deity and influence of Jesus. Everywhere He went, Jesus touched and shaped lives. He had gathered a following over all Israel. He had proven to those who would look by faith that He was in fact the Christ.
- Jesus is certainly not accepted by all people, but His influence spans the entire world. There are believers in every corner of the world. Even in places where Christianity is repressed and punishable by death, believers can be found. The world has tried for centuries to silence the Gospel, but Jesus still saves and His followers remain!

IV. The Transition of the Proceedings (6-7) – Here we find that Pilate sends Jesus to Herod in order to be examined of him. Consider:

A. The Jurisdiction (6-7a) – [When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean.](#)

^[7a] [And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod.](#) Pilate was not supportive of Jesus, but he sought a way to escape passing judgment on Him. He feared the Jews would protest and cause an uprising if their demands were not met and this would look unfavorably on his ability to maintain order over his jurisdiction. Upon hearing Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod. Pilate sought to pass the buck and allow Herod to rule in the case.

- Many today have heard the facts concerning Jesus. The evidence has been presented and it is clear. Yet many choose indecision concerning the truth they have received. One cannot be indecisive regarding Jesus. Indecision results in a decision of rejection. You cannot expect someone else to decide for you concerning Jesus. It is a decision we must all make personally!

B. The Corruption (7b) – [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.](#) We find that Herod was in Jerusalem at that time. It was the time of the Passover. Jerusalem would have been filled with tens of thousands of Jews. Herod too had no desire for the things of God, but sought to manipulate the people for political and personal gain. This is the same man who beheaded John the Baptist for simply declaring truth.

- Jesus was facing a death sentence and His fate was being tossed about in a political arena. None were concerned with truth or justice. As we will see, Pilate and Herod both were seeking personal gain through the proceedings. Many view Christianity and a relationship with Christ as nothing more than a tool for profit. Many profess Christ, but do not know Him personally. Some only associate with the church in order to gain personal wants and desires.

- Both of these men sought advantage regarding Jesus, but never saw Him for who He truly was. They examined truth and rejected it. Their decisions would have eternal implications. Rather than embracing truth and receiving Christ, they sought personal gain and profit. Many continue this path today. Their view of Jesus is distorted due to personal desires. If they don't embrace Jesus as the Christ and believe on Him by faith, they will die in their sin as these did. Rejecting Christ is not a decision that is reserved for this life alone. It carries eternal weight!

Conclusion: The multitude and Pilate witnessed Truth but rejected it. You too have heard the truth. How will you respond? Have you believed in Jesus as the Christ?