

A Human Court Sentences the Judge

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 July 2014

Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Let's turn together now to Luke, a passage we read from near the end of chapter 22 to chapter 23, down as far as verse 25.

And the passage, as you realize reading through it, is one which sets out for us the examination and the trial of Jesus, as well as his condemnation in the final verdict that Pilate brought forth for his crucifixion.

Luke doesn't give us all the details. We need to go to the other Gospels for some additional details. And Luke, in fact, has compressed these events in the life of Jesus so that they don't take up as much space in his Gospel as in some of the other Gospels.

But nevertheless, he gives us the main features of it and he adds some details that are peculiar to himself. The mockery that you find described in verses 63 to 65 really connect with us, connect for us, what we've seen previously of Christ being arrested and betrayed by Judas Iscariot and now brought before the assembly of the Jews, the council, as it's called here, these religious officials that brought out this verdict against him in terms of what they themselves, theologically, if you like, would require to have established.

Then it went from there to the civil power who alone had the power of condemning someone to death. But this is verses 63 to 65, a kind of bridge for us across into the account you have here of the way in which Jesus was treated.

[1 : 56] And it really is, not only these two verses, three verses 63 to 65, but right through the passage we'll see this evening, some of these very solemn things that are recorded for us in the way Jesus was treated, are really still pretty much the same in principle and in practice with the way that Christ is still treated by the opinions and the actions of people today.

He's no longer in this world physically as he was then. If he had been, if he were as he had been, it would have been today exactly the same.

Because you find this mocking, this ridiculing, this attack against him, the way that he's treated and mistreated, that's all built into the kind of writings, the kind of opinions, the way in which people behave towards Christ in the world of our day.

Nothing's changed except that he's no longer physically in the world. But he's given the same treatment nevertheless. And indeed, all the way through this passage, we'll find things as they come up that really are a reflection of how the world, if the world is left to itself, if antagonist, if you take these opening verses there, 63 to 65, you can say, well, if antagonism is allowed to be let loose, antagonism against God, antagonism against the teachings and the claims of God, this is what it does.

This is what that antagonism, unless it is reigned in and controlled and governed by God himself, this is actually what it's about. And the two things we want to look at are the examination of Christ by these various people, these various bodies, the Jewish council, Pontius Pilate, and then Herod, and then the condemnation of Christ and the verdict that was brought out against him by Pontius Pilate under pressure from the Jewish leaders and the people.

[4 : 10] Now, Luke is not, as some people might suggest today, Luke is not giving us in this account something that is simply against the Jewish people as a people.

And it's very difficult in evangelism when people are evangelizing Jews, like those who work for CWI or any of these organizations, that are primarily concerned with bringing the gospel to the Jews.

One of the difficulties they face is that there's so much in the gospel records of Christ of the Jews and the part they played in his condemnation.

And it's very important to present things in a way that does not suggest that this is just simply a racial thing that's written against the Jews as such.

It's simply being factual that this is exactly what happened. And not all Jews are therefore lumped together as if none of them ever believed in Christ or wanted to do anything meaningful and proper to him.

[5 : 22] So the examination, first of all, was by this Jewish council. When the day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both the chief priests and the scribes. And they then made a statement or a kind of question, if you are the Christ, tell us.

But he said to them, if I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you, you will not answer. Now he's going by what he knows perfectly well. These Jewish leaders and the people in this assembly, in this council that were now putting him on trial, how they felt about him, how they saw him.

He knew very well, exactly as he said, if he was going to say, yes, I am the Christ, they would immediately reject that. There was no point to actually saying this to them positively.

And not only so, but if he asked them questions, even if they were designed to get their opinions out, they would refuse to answer them accurately. He knew that. It had happened already.

We've seen it as we've gone through Luke. And so what you see is that Jesus came at this moment to realize that because this was the time when he had to give himself to this sham trial and to this unjust verdict, he knew exactly what to do and how to treat these people.

[6 : 42] And then what he says is quite remarkable. If you are the Christ, they said, tell us. If I tell you, you will not believe. And if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

Now when Jesus said that, as these Jewish leaders knew very well from their own knowledge of the Old Testament, Jesus was actually claiming by this to be nothing less than God.

The Son of Man, in the prophecy of Daniel, is a divine figure. The Son of Man, as a title for Jesus, that he took to himself and used of himself, is not just a description of his humanity.

We mustn't think that the Son of God describes what he is as God, and the Son of Man describes what he is as man. The Son of Man, taken from Daniel's prophecy, is a divine figure.

A figure equal to God. A figure that is himself divine. And this is who he now claims to be. He is claiming to have a divine identity.

[7 : 53] And that from now on, he shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God. Where is that? It is in the government of the whole universe. God is the governor of the whole universe, of the whole creation, of everything that exists, of all the movements, of human beings, and the comings and goings, of empires and rulers, all the way down through history.

It is the right hand of the power of God that has overseen, and actually planned, and purposed, everything to do with all of these things. And what he is saying is, you will see the Son of Man, you will see himself, this Jesus, at the right hand of the power of God.

And you notice these words, from now on. Jesus is really saying to them, your time is over. You've refused to deal with my claims positively, to accept me.

You have not up to now, at all, dealt seriously with what I've been saying, with what you've seen, with the miracles that you've seen, with all the people that have already come to accept me.

But you have not done that. He's saying to them effectively, what he's saying is, from now on, this is how it's going to be. In other words, he's really saying, you might also find this included in it.

[9 : 18] He's really saying to them, it doesn't actually matter what you think. It doesn't matter what you do to me. It doesn't matter what your actions will be. It doesn't matter what the immediate future will actually turn out.

This is how it's going to be. You will find it to be this way. From now on, the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

That is, he says, my destiny. This is what I am bound towards. This is what it's going to be. Actually, as it turns out, this is how it's going to be. You can do what you like.

You will have the liberty of treating me as you will. But this will be the outcome. This is how it's going to stand. And you and I have to remember that.

It doesn't matter what people think about Christ tonight. It doesn't matter how strong their opinions are. It doesn't really matter in that sense what we think of him ourselves.

[10 : 21] Though we trust everyone here actually has come to believe in him and commit their life to him. And as we followed Luke, I've come to answer the question that he actually repeats time

and again, who is this man?

Who is he for me? That you would say as I would want to say, he is my savior. He is my Lord. Whether we're able to say that or not, this is not going to change.

The son of man will be at the right hand as he is now of the power of God. People's opinions come and go. Movements against God's church come and go.

Ridicule of Jesus come and go. Atheistic movements rise and then disappear again to be replaced by others. It's been like that all the way down through history.

It's like that in our own day. And it doesn't matter how vehement they are, how persuasive they are, how many millions of people they might get to follow them. This is how it's going to be.

[11 : 24] This is not going to change. Whatever human opinions may say, you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of the power of God.

God is God. Christ is Christ. Righteousness is righteousness. Truth is truth.

Salvation is salvation. Heaven is heaven. Hell is hell. Opinions come and go. They don't change these things.

That's why it's imperative that you and I take note of what Luke is saying, of what the Bible is telling us here. Because it's bringing this to us again and again so that we'll see how Luke is focusing here again on this great question that he's been placing before us all the way through his book.

Who is this man? It's there really in the way that these people say to Jesus, if you are the Christ, tell us. It's built into that very statement.

[12 : 34] Luke is again reminding us that the important thing for us is who is this man? What is his identity? Is he just a human being? Was he just a very skillful orator?

Was he somebody who came as a kind of philosopher into the world? Was he a moral teacher, just a mere example of how to live a good moral life? And you see, the way that Luke is putting it, you're faced with only two alternatives.

Either Jesus is who he claims to be, or else you reject him, like these people in this Jewish council did. That's why Luke goes on to the question, are you then the Son of God?

And he said to them, you say that I am. Now it's interesting, he didn't actually say, yes I am.

Because their idea of the Son of God was very different to the way Jesus himself knew himself to be the Son of God.

They had a distorted view of what it meant to be the Son of God. So he didn't come clean and just simply say to them, yes I am. He didn't deny that he was, but he put it in such a way that really is the equivalent of saying, you are right in saying so.

[13 : 59] And they understood that he was in fact agreeing with that and with this, that they in fact understood that he was saying, yes I am.

That's why they said, what further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from our own lips. Now there is an example again of how people reject Christ and the ground on which they reject him.

It does not fit with their own opinions, with their own views of what a good life means, of what salvation means, of what it means to have a proper relationship with God.

Every rejection of Christ is on the basis of human opinion. Mere human opinion. Their opinion is, this man can't possibly be who he claims to be.

It doesn't fit with our conception of what it means to be the Son of God, of what it means to be the Messiah. So we have all the testimony that we need. We have heard this blasphemy from his lips because that's what they mean.

[15 : 07] They actually accuse him here of blasphemy. The word is not used, but that's the verdict. He has uttered blasphemy. He has claimed to be God when we know that he's not.

That's their opinion. That's what they're certain of in themselves. Therefore they reject him. But what is human certainty compared to the truth of God?

That's what we have to be careful about. That our view of Christ is not governed by our own opinion, but rather that our mind is shaped by the word of God itself, by the revelation God has given us in his word as to who Jesus is.

And all the way through the Gospel of Luke, our minds should have been shaped by now if they hadn't been when we began the Gospel of Luke and studied it together.

By this stage we should have come to have our minds shaped to a right opinion of Christ, to a proper view of Christ, to an acceptance of Christ, to a realization that this indeed is the very Saviour

that I need, and that there is no other Saviour shaped to meet the need of my soul.

[16:21] But he is. That's why you have this wonderful account that Luke has given us often. That's the Jewish council, but they couldn't condemn him to death themselves.

They found him worthy of being put to death, but the sentence of death needed to be given by the Roman authorities. The Jews, of course, were under the Roman Empire and Roman government at this time.

So, the whole company of them arose and they brought Jesus before. Pilate, who was the Roman governor in that district, and they began to accuse him. Now, it's interesting that the accusation that they laid against Jesus is really threefold.

There are three elements to it. Each of them kind of building up what they hoped for Pilate would be a serious accusation. First of all, he was misleading our nation.

And secondly, he was forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar. Now, he never did that, of course.

They are distorting things. They are making it out that this was the case when it wasn't.

[17:29] And the third part of it was probably the most serious as far as Pilate was concerned. He is saying that he himself is Christ, a king. And for a Roman governor to hear that somebody was setting out to be a king was really, could appear to be a threat of an uprising against Rome or against Caesar, against the powers of Rome.

And the Jewish council and the leaders hoped that that's what Pilate would make of him. So, Pilate then asked him, are you the king of the Jews? The four gospels, very interestingly, the four gospels actually have these exact same words spoken by Pilate at this time.

Are you the king of the Jews? And again, in a similar way to the answer he had given to the Jewish council, Jesus said, you have said so. He knew again that Pilate was in no position really to understand what Jesus would mean if he said, yes, I'm a king.

He would make a wrong view, a wrong use of that. He would have the wrong view of it. So, again, Jesus didn't deny it, but he put it in this sort of enigmatic way. In any case, if we come hurriedly through that, Pilate actually said to the chief priest, I find no guilt in this man.

But they were urgent, saying he stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee, even to this place. Now, it's interesting, we'll see it in a moment, we'll leave it until we come to the end of things where Pilate comes to sentence Jesus to death.

[19:05] Pilate knew in his heart that Jesus was not guilty of any of the charges that were brought against him.

And in fact, as we'll see, he tried himself very earnestly and repeatedly to release him, to have him released. But eventually, he was pressurized into condemning him or pronouncing condemnation against him.

But here, he heard something that seemed to Pilate to be a way out of his predicament. He heard that he was from Galilee. And that the puppet king under the Romans in Galilee, this Herod, he had jurisdiction there.

And in fact, Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at that time. And that was a pretty amazing providence. because this Herod had for a long time wanted to meet with Jesus.

He'd heard a lot about him. He'd been longing to meet him. He was really desperate to see him.

And when Herod saw Jesus, Pilate actually arranged that he would be sent over to Herod to be questioned by him, to take him over under his jurisdiction.

[20:23] When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad this man was excited. This wicked king, he was excited at the appearance of Jesus.

There he was. He had been longing to see him for many, for many months, maybe years. He had heard so much about him. And there he now is right in his presence.

Just what he had been longing for all of these days, all of these months. And now it's happened. He was excited. Why? Was he interested in his soul?

Was he really concerned to be saved? Did he want to embrace this Jesus as his king? Well, just read on. He desired to see him for a long time because he had heard about him and was hoping to see some sign, some miracle done by him.

There you have it. Why did Herod get excited when he saw Jesus? Because he wanted to be entertained by him. He wanted Jesus to perform a miracle.

[21:34] There's something spectacular that would actually entertain Herod and that Herod would be able to say to his bodyguards and to his household, wasn't that just amazing? What a great man

this is.

Let's keep him here for our entertainment. That's what Herod was interested in. He wasn't interested in the claims of Jesus. He wasn't interested in really who this Jesus was. He just wanted something to entertain him from what he had heard about the ability of this Jesus. This was something new, something that would be a novelty for Herod.

And so, he questioned him at some length. Jesus wasn't there for a short time. Herod went about the business of questioning him for quite a while.

And this Herod, who wanted Jesus to entertain him, is the only person in the scriptures before whom Jesus was completely silent.

[22 : 39] said nothing. That's what Jesus does with people who just want to use him for entertainment.

And many thousands of people will actually find that out to their cost. Sadly, when you see people ridiculing Jesus, being actually a subject of crude crude jokes, and blasphemous language, and ridiculed in articles, in interviews, and all the rest of it, when they're really just making sport of Jesus and looking for some entertainment at his expense, there is a day coming when serious questions will need to be asked by them as they face this Jesus, as this Jesus faces them.

And when they come to ask the questions, and hope that Jesus will give an answer, when their soul really is agitated and alarmed, when Jesus stands before them as their judge, and then they begin seriously to deal with him.

Nothing. There is nothing for them. Their time is gone. They had their opportunity. Their day is past. And for those who make light and jest of the Son of God. There is nothing really much more solemn in Scripture than that verse.

[24 : 16] He made no answer. Imagine if you go to Christ with a question, and you are met with silence. What turmoil that will be for your soul.

What a turmoil that would be as you go to him with, like Herald here, questioned him at some depth, at some length. But to be met with a silent Jesus is terrifying.

Because when you go to Jesus, like the thief on the cross at his crucifixion, you make a request, you hope that he will answer you.

That you'll hear something from him to assure you. Silence means I want nothing to do with you. Your time has passed, Herald. You had your chance.

Now you've made sport of me, and I have nothing to say to you. And so, he and his bodyguards, the soldiers, treated him with contempt and mocked him.

[25 : 30] And then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. They actually gave him what were probably just Herald's own cast-offs, garments that were fitting for a king but that Herald had ceased to use because they had been replaced by newer ones.

So they decked him out in that, sent him back to Pilate, arrayed in the splendid clothing of a king because they thought, well, he's just a joke, so we'll make a joke out of him.

That's how they treated Christ. When you read that tonight, how does it make you feel? what do you feel in your heart when you read about this ridicule beginning at verse 63, the mocking, the beating, the blindfolding of him, and then people hitting him and saying, guess who did that to you?

Mocking the claim that he was a prophet. Then the mistreatment in terms of misleading information and wrong accusations and lies, then Herod's hoping to be entertained and the mocking.

How does it make you feel? Do you feel anything? does it move your heart? Do you realize, as I must realize, that Jesus put himself through all this for our sake, for our benefit, for our good, for our salvation.

[27 : 30] So Pilate then is faced with Jesus again. He was sent back to him. And as Pilate then came to this point in his life, once again he comes to say repeatedly, I find no fault in this man.

I don't find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. I will therefore punish and release him. There was a Roman scourging had two forms.

If somebody was going to be released without being crucified, sometimes even if they weren't found guilty of anything, just to kind of teach them a lesson that they should be very careful never to come back before the Roman judicatories again, they would give them a scourging, a lighter kind of scourging than the scourging Jesus eventually had before he was crucified.

If you were going to be crucified, the scourging was much more severe, because the scourging was by a whip or whips tied together, tied to a piece of wood and these strips of leather that made up the

scourge had built into them little pieces of bone usually.

You can just imagine when you were flogged with something like that, what damage it did to your body. That's what Jesus was flogged with. But Pilate here is saying, I will give him the lesser flogging, I will punish him and then release him.

[29 : 07] And that's when the crowd demanded that he would be crucified. So let's look at the condemnation briefly. First of all, a very shocking substitution. They all cried out together, verse 18, away with this man and release to us Barabbas.

And then Luke tells us who he was, a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murdered. This man was guilty. He was a criminal, he was a murderer. He had started an insurrection, an uprising in the city and somebody had been murdered by him in the course of that. So he was thrown in jail, he was waiting his execution. son of a father.

Son of a father or father's son. It's ironic because as you read the gospel of Luke, you know who this Jesus is by now. The question that Luke has been posing has been abundantly answered. This is the son of God. This is the son of the father. father. This is the son of the father has sent into the world. This is the son of the father who has come to deliver his people, to save his people by the death of this son.

[30 : 22] And here is Barabbas, son of a father. Guilty, condemned greatly, but released. And the innocent son of the father is condemned instead of him.

Isn't there something shocking about that, you see? How could they do this? How could they possibly bring a man like Barabbas out of jail and say, let's have this man released, but let's have this innocent man Jesus that Pilate and Herod have both found not guilty of any of these accusations.

Let's put him in jail instead and let's crucify him instead of Barabbas. Shocking, you say? Yes, it's shocking. It's meant to be shocking. Luke is giving it to us so that we will be shocked.

But you see, that's the way that God comes to deliver sinners from death. Because what you have there is a miniature of the way that God saves through Christ.

The guilty you and I as sinners are held under God's condemnation justly. We deserve that. That's where we're at.

[31 : 46] And along comes this innocent one. And a substitution takes place. He goes into prison for us. He takes the death we deserved.

and so we are released. The son of the father. So that we can become sons of that father too. The one deserving of death is released. Because the one undeserving of death takes its place. That is the essence of the gospel of salvation.

that is how God saves sinners. That is how you come to be released from the bondage of your sin and the guilt of your sin. Because Jesus takes your place.

And you come to be freed from his condemnation. Well, there is a miniature picture for us.

[32 : 53] Even in that detail itself, God is telling us this is what this Jesus is about in the ministry that is now his. Barabbas is released.

And then there is a shameful capitulation. Because Pilate addresses them once more desiring to release Jesus. But they said they kept shouting crucify him, crucify him.

This is the first time we find them saying this. And a third time he said to them, why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.

But they were urgent demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted.

He released Barabbas and he delivered Jesus over to their will. the main blame is undoubtedly laid at the feet of the leaders and the people of the Jews.

[34 : 00] But Pilate is not without blame. We may feel sorry for Pilate. Pilate caught up in this situation. We may feel great sympathy for Pilate.

What else could he do? Well he could have released him. He had the power to do so. And when he said here four times this man is innocent that should have been itself enough to guarantee that Christ be released.

It was an injustice not to release him. God gave Pilate many opportunities not to deliver Christ to death.

Even his wife warned him. You find it in the other Gospels. have nothing to do with that holy man. She had a dream. And from that dream came the warning to her husband Pontius Pilate.

Don't have anything to do with that just man with this Jesus. God had given Pilate many opportunities to think of what he was doing to change his mind or rather to have his own decision set out and established to release Jesus.

[35 : 23] But he gave in. He capitulated, he collapsed under the weight of the pressure from the Jews. And in fact in that as well there was his own personal prestige at stake.

If he didn't do it the Jews could make trouble for him. He might lose his post. He might fall out of favor with Caesar and Caesar would move him on to some outpost where he would not figure anymore where it would be a has-been.

And so Pilate capitulated. He gave in the pressure got to. And he delivered Jesus over to their will. Now that packs a theological punch. Whose will is Jesus governed by?

The will of God. We've actually seen that Jesus himself is in charge of all of these events from the moment of his arrest and indeed before. And it's the will of God that governs the whole thing because God has sent his son into the world for this purpose.

[36 : 43] That he would die this death of the cross in the place of his people. And yet you find here the Bible says that Pilate delivered Jesus over to the will of those who wanted to crucify him.

There's a theological poser, the will of God, and yet underneath it they can do what they like with him. That's what they did.

They had their way with Jesus. We've called the title of our, given our study a title, if we can do that, a human court sentences the judge, the judge.

It's an amazing thing. Because what you're seeing here is the judge of all, the son of God, the one who will yet come to judge the earth of the last day, and he has given himself to be judged.

He has given himself to these false accusations, to this ridicule, to this shame, to this suffering, to this imprisonment. He has given himself to this sentence of death unjustly, in a human sense, written over him.

[38 : 05] The judge has been sentenced by the court. Nothing like it has ever happened, and never will again.

Just think of what that means. As far as what was necessary to be done, to deliver us from our sins. Is sin less than serious? Is God's dealing and treatment of sin less than serious?

When you see what Jesus gave himself to, the judge of all the earth, the son of God, can we treat sin less than seriously?

can we treat our lostness less than seriously? When all of this happened, willingly, on the part of Jesus, he gave himself to all of this.

[39 : 13] Well, how does Paul draw a conclusion from all of this? Let me just remind you of what it says in Romans chapter 8, and we'll finish with that quotation.

The judge sentenced by a human court, condemned to death, given over to die, the death of the cross. This is how Paul put it.

This is the use that you and I must make of it. What shall we then say to these things? if God be for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

What you've been reading of tonight, and what we've been thinking of tonight, is nothing less than the greatest evidence of the love of God. of God's love for sinners, he did not spare his own son, but delivered him up for us all.

[40 : 32] Have you made him your king, your friend, your saviour, so that when you meet him as your judge, he will not be silent for you, but will welcome you into his kingdom.

Let's pray. Lord, our God, we know that you pose such great questions, and that you address us by them from your word.

Lord, we thank you that they are questions of eternal importance, and we thank you that you have provided the answer to. We bless you that you have addressed us this evening through the sufferings of our saviour, through all that happened in his experience, so that we might be delivered from our sin.

We bless you that these things are made clear to us, so that when we come to meet you, we will have no excuse if we are not saved. O Lord, our God, we pray that as we consider these great truths together, that we might be brought through them and through consideration of them to embrace and to welcome you as our saviour and king.

Hear us now, we pray, and pardon our sin. For Jesus' sake, Amen.