

I. On Trial Before Pilate and Herod (Lk. 23:1-25)

- A. Then the Crowd of Them (vs. 1) The whole crowd in view here is the high judicial court (Sanhedrin 70 Elders), the Pharisee's, Sadducees, Scribes (Lawyers), and the Mob. Everyone in this crowd had become filled with murderous rage inspired by Satan to see Jesus crucified.
- B. Pilate (vs. 1) Pilate normally resided in the provincial capital at Caesarea. He was presently in Jerusalem because of the Passover season, which drew huge crowds and possible civil unrest to the city. All historical evidence strongly suggests that Pilate was a cruel, ruthless, bloodthirsty ruler. I believe it's safe to assume that the Jewish leaders believed that Pilate would easily be persuaded to give them the death sentence they desired.

"His corruption, his acts of insolence, his rapine, his habit of insulting people, his cruelty, his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never-ending gratuitous and most grievous inhumanity." - Philo

- C. The Accusation (vs. 2-5) Under Roman law the Jewish leaders were not allowed to put anyone to death for a crime so they had to bring Jesus before Pilate. They also knew that Pilate would care little for their issues with Jesus concerning theology and the Torah (Old Testament) so they targeted some of the implications of His claim to be Messiah.
- He stirs up or perverts the nation of Israel. In other words He is insisting on revolution or rebellion against Rome.
 - He forbids the people to pay taxes to Caesar.
 - He claims to be the King of the Nation in place of Caesar.

The original Greek text suggests that Pilate questioned Him with the tone of sarcastic empathy. "You? The King of the Jews?". You can imagine that Jesus did not appear to fit the descriptions of the accusations being raised against Him. Even though Jesus replied that He in fact was the King of the Jews, no words of hatred for Rome, no wild eyed threats, just a calm gentle man whose face was swollen and bleeding from the beatings he had taken from the council of the Sanhedrin. Pilates verdict was instant. "I find no fault in this man."

- D. Sent to Herod (vs. 8-12) We read earlier in Luke's gospel that Herod wanted to meet Jesus (Lk. 9:9) and now Jesus was brought to him in chains. Herod was also not impressed nor felt threatened by Jesus' Messianic claims. Instead, Herod viewed Jesus as an entertainer. Differently from His response to Pilate, Jesus would not even acknowledge Herod's questions. This infuriated Herod and more beatings and mockings ensued. Pilate had offered Jesus to Herod as a token of peace to their animosity with each other, and Herod in return offered Jesus back to Pilate dressed in a robe, thus mocking Jesus' claims and showing Herod's support for Pilate's authority. Just as the belief in the truth of who Jesus is unites hearts in love and righteousness, the rejection of who Jesus is unites hearts in hate and sin.
- E. Sentence of the Innocent One and the Freedom of the Murderer (vs. 13-25) It is of note that Pilate was known for his murderous ruthlessness and yet he strongly sought to render a verdict of innocence of the alleged crimes and release Him. He came up with a way out. It was his custom to release one prisoner per year as a way of retaining some endearment from the Jews. He proposed to release back into their midst a very well known murderer, thief, and anarchist named Barabbas. Surely any rational person would choose to have Jesus released back into their community rather than Barabbas and Pilate is stunned when the people cry out for the release of the known dangerous criminal and the crucifixion of the known innocent one. Here we see the divine exchange that we have all come to believe upon with tears of gratitude, that the innocent one died in place of the guilty and the guilty one was set free.
1. I Find no Fault in this Man for a Third Time - In verse 22 Luke makes a significant statement that Pilate declared his verdict of innocence a "third time." This is very significant biblically as repetitions of three signify a clear statement of ultimate or totality of truth. (examples: Jesus and Peter "do you love me? Feed my sheep", Holy repetition in heavenly worship, repetition of "Woe to you")
 2. Delivered Jesus to their Will - Luke highlights the guilt of the Jewish people more than the other gospel writers. His goal was certainly not to incite antisemitism but rather to pronounce that Jesus died because of His chosen people for his chosen people. It makes this story of sacrificial and ultimate love, and God's magnificent leadership so much more powerful. He came to His own, and through their rejection of Him, He gave them all eternal life and freedom. (Gen. 50:20; Rom. 8:28)

II. Death Sentence Carried Out (Lk. 23:26-49)

- A. The Procession (vs. 26) After enduring an extremely intense sleepless night and multiple beatings, Jesus is sentenced to a Roman scourging and crucifixion. The scourging consisted of being flogged by a multiple stranded whip with both heavy stones meant to crush and bruise bone and flesh, along with sharp shards of rock and bone to lacerate and rip skin and muscle. He was then forced to carry the crossbeam weighing roughly 100 pounds for 650 yards uphill through a jeering satanically charged mob.
1. Simon Carries the Cross (vs. 26) Not much is known of Simon, however I believe that he was chosen for this moment to be a shadow of the follower of Jesus. The antithesis of Simon Peter who claimed he would follow Jesus to the death, now this man Simon of Cyrene actually takes up Jesus' cross and follows Him. As a side note, it is traditionally held that Simon of Cyrene became a believer through this experience and his sons were leaders in the early church. (Lk 9:23; Mk 15:21; Rom. 16:13)
- B. Do not Weep for Me (vs. 27-31) Just a few days ago, Jesus wept over the city and the inhabitants that would receive God's just judgment for their rejection of Him. Now we see the height of their rejection of Him and He is unmoved in His weeping love for them and insists that their sorrow is misplaced upon His suffering. The depths of His unoffended love for fallen people is absolutely unimaginable but yet here it is in plain sight for all to see and know. The verse He uses is actually a reference to the last days judgments of God upon a world who has wholeheartedly rejected His unyielding merciful reach for them. (Is. 2:19; Hos. 10:8; Rev. 6:16)
- C. They Came to the Place called the Skull (vs. 33) You will only find the word Calvary as it appears in the Bible only at Luke 23:33. It means "skull" and refers to the skull-like hill on which Jesus was crucified, also known as Golgotha, which is the Aramaic name of the location where Jesus was crucified outside of Jerusalem.

"Although the Romans did not invent crucifixion, they perfected it as a form of torture and capital punishment that was designed to produce a slow death with maximum pain and suffering." (Edwards)

The combination of scourging and crucifixion made death on the cross especially brutal. The victim's back was first torn open by the scourging, then the clotting blood was ripped open again when the clothes were torn off before crucifixion. The victim was thrown on the ground to fix his hands to the crossbeam, and the wounds on the back were again torn open and contaminated with dirt. Then, as the victim hung on the cross, each breath caused the painful wounds on the back to scrape against the rough wood of the upright beam.

When the nail was driven through the wrists, it severed the large median nerve. This stimulated nerve produced excruciating bolts of fiery pain in both arms, and often gave the victim a claw-like grip in the hands.

Beyond the extreme pain, the major effect of crucifixion was to restrict normal breathing. The weight of the body, pulling down on the arms and shoulders, tended to fix the respiratory muscles in an inhalation state and hinder exhalation. The lack of adequate respiration resulted in severe muscle cramps, which further hindered breathing. To get a good breath, the victim had to push against the feet, and flex the elbows, pulling from the shoulders. Putting the weight of the body on the feet produced searing pain, and flexing of the elbows twisted the hands hanging on the nails. Lifting the body for a breath also painfully scraped the back against the rough wooden post. Each effort to get a proper breath was agonizing, exhausting, and led to a sooner death.

“Not uncommonly, insects would light upon or burrow into the open wounds or the eyes, ears, and nose of the dying and helpless victim, and birds of prey would tear at these sites. Moreover, it was customary to leave the corpse on the cross to be devoured by predatory animals.” (Edwards)

Death from crucifixion could come from many sources: acute shock from blood loss; being too exhausted to breathe any longer; dehydration; stress-induced heart attack, or congestive heart failure leading to a cardiac rupture. If the victim did not die quickly enough, the legs were broken, and the victim was soon unable to breathe because of the posture of the crucified person.

“The most significant thing about Jesus’ suffering was that He was not, in any sense, the victim of circumstances. He was in control. Jesus said of His life in John 10:18 no one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. It is terrible to be forced to endure such torture, but to freely choose it out of love is remarkable.” - Guzik

- D. Father Forgive Them (vs. 34) Once again, love on public display in a way that we cannot yet realize, Jesus cried out for the mercy of God upon His executioner's ignorance of the depths of wickedness that they were attempting to accomplish. If there was ever a moment that Jesus would have been justifiably self focused it was in this moment. Rather than praying for himself or simply staying focused upon his misery, He turns His heart toward his tormentors and intercedes for them. (Is. 53:12; Rom. 8:34; Heb 7:25; 1 John 2:1)
- E. The Criminals Next to Him (vs. 39-43) Both criminals ridiculed Him and mocked Him as they were initially crucified together. However, one criminal came to believe in both His innocence and His identity. Jesus assures the new convert that they would both be in Paradise (literally Garden City) that day. This thief who trusted in Jesus at the last moment is given access to the same eternal life as everyone else. This may not seem fair, but in the larger picture it gives glory to the grace of God, not to human merit in salvation. (Mat. 20:1-15)
- F. Darkness the Sixth Hour to the Ninth Hour (vs. 44-45) The 6th hour is 12 noon and the 9th hour is 3pm in our culture. A Roman historian named Phlegon wrote: "In the fourth year of the 202nd Olympiad, there was an extraordinary eclipse of the sun: at the sixth hour, the day turned into dark night, so that the stars in heaven were seen; and there was an earthquake." The crucifixion took place during Passover season, and Passover is always held at a full moon. A natural eclipse of the sun is impossible during a full moon.
- G. The Veil Torn (vs. 45) The tearing of the temple veil signified at least two things. First, now man has free access to the throne of grace by the cross. Second, no one should ever think again that God dwells in temples made with hands. Matthew notes that the temple veil was torn from top to bottom. God tore it from heaven instead of man tearing it from earth.
- H. He Breathed His Last (vs. 46) Luke tells us that Jesus cried out in a loud voice. This is very significant and shows once again that Jesus was choosing to give up His life and in control of His death. At the point of death during a crucifixion, the victim can barely breathe, let alone yell. However, Jesus cried out for the earth to hear, "It is finished", which is literally translated, "paid in full". Then He committed His soul to His Father and chose to breathe His last.
1. Passover Lamb - According to the Jewish Talmud, the passover lamb was to be killed at the 9th hour (3pm) in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem.

“His work on the cross accomplished, Jesus yielded His living spirit to God the Father as He yielded His body to death on the cross. This shows that Jesus gave up His life when He wanted to and how He wanted to. No one took His life from Him; He gave it up when His work was finished. Jesus is not a victim we should pity, but a conqueror we should admire.” - Gusik

III. Burial (Lk. 23:50-56)

- A. Joseph of Arimathea (vs. 50-51) Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrien which tells us that not all Jewish religious leaders were against Him (Nicodemus for another example). Customarily, the bodies of crucified criminals were left on their crosses to rot or be eaten by wild animals. But the Jews wanted no such horror displayed during the Passover season, and Romans were known to grant the corpses to friends or relatives for proper burial.
- B. Buried Him in the Tomb (vs. 53-56) They were unable to properly prepare the body of Jesus for burial because of the coming Sabbath. So in hurried preparation, Jesus' body was placed in a borrowed tomb. Tombs like this were very expensive. It was quite a sacrifice for Joseph of Arimathea to give his tomb to Jesus and shows the depth of love that Joseph had for Him.