

Luke Study 17
Lk 22:66-23:25

Introduction

Having been arrested, Jesus is now tried before a series of judges: the Jewish leaders, Pontius Pilate, King Herod, and, finally, the court of public opinion. This is the absurd situation of God being tried by his creatures; the arrogance of humanity presuming to judge God, not the other way round. Yet Jesus still continues to go through with his plan to die for us and save us. There is great arrogance here, but even greater mercy.

Read 22:66-71

1. Who is Jesus brought before?
2. What do they tell him to do in v.67?
3. How does Jesus answer? What does he mean?
4. What do they then ask him in v.70?
5. How does Jesus answer?
6. What do they take Jesus' answer to mean?

Jesus is taken before the Jewish religious authorities and they demand that he tell them if he is the Messiah. Jesus refuses to answer: if he says he is, they won't believe him, and if he asks them their opinion, they won't respond (just as they didn't respond when he asked them what authority John the Baptist conducted his ministry by). In other words, this court is a sham: it's only after one answer, and refuses to be transparent. In any event, Jesus is about to be above its jurisdiction: he will soon be seated at the right hand of God. Pouncing on Jesus' description of himself as 'the Son of Man' and interpreting that to be equivalent to 'the Son of God' - i.e., God's end-time king, the Messiah - the leaders ask if that is who he is. Jesus replies, 'You say that I am,' meaning, 'Yes.' The leaders are outraged: this is blaspheme to them and they don't need to hear anymore. But because they have no jurisdiction to kill anyone, which they want to do to Jesus (19:47), they take him to someone who does: Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate.

Read 23:1-7

7. What do the leaders accuse Jesus of in front of Pilate?
8. Are these charges true? (See 20:20-26)
9. What does Pilate ask Jesus?

10. How does Jesus answer?
11. What is Pilate's finding?
12. What happens next?

The leaders accuse Jesus of two things in front of Pilate: encouraging people to refuse to pay the Roman tax, and claiming to be the Messiah. The first charge is clearly false: just that week, in the temple, Jesus had said that Jews should pay Roman tax. But the second 'charge' is true, and Pilate hones in on that: does Jesus claim to be the Messiah? Again, just as Jesus did before the Jewish leaders, he says that he is. But Pilate doesn't think this is enough for a conviction. Perhaps he has heard Jesus say, 'The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed,' (Lk 17:20) and interpreted this to mean that it is not a political kingdom, and so not a threat to Roman rule. But either way he finds no grounds for a conviction. However, the leaders insist: Jesus is a threat to public peace and has been ever since he started teaching in Galilee, in Israel's north. Pilate sees a way out of having to deal with this: instead of continuing to argue his point, he seizes on the fact that Jesus is from Galilee and sends him to King Herod, Rome's puppet king in that area, as the right person to try him. Herod happens to be in town, so it's perfect. And so Jesus is 'handed over' again.

Read 23:8-12

13. Read 9:1-2, 7-9. What context does this give to v.8?
14. What does Herod do to Jesus?
15. How does this affect the relationship between Herod and Pilate?
16. Read Acts 4:23-31.
 - a. Who does this say Jesus is?
 - b. What does it say Herod's conduct against him constituted?
 - c. How does God fit into the picture of all this?

Herod had wanted to meet Jesus for some time. He had heard about his miracle working back in Galilee, and now that he was in Jerusalem he finally had the chance to meet him. He quizzes him, but gets no response. So he mocks him and sends him back to Pilate. This has the benefit of cementing the relationship between Herod and Pilate: before now, they had been enemies, but now they're friends. But in the eternal frame, it is a short term gain. As Acts 4:23-28 makes it clear, by aligning himself with Pilate in his eventual condemnation of Jesus, Herod becomes complicit in the murder of God's anointed, the Christ. He becomes representative of the 'kings of the earth' who 'band together against the Lord and his

anointed,' those who 'rage and plot' against him. As the psalmist says, this can only end badly: these plots are 'in vain.' Unbeknown to the conspirators, they're playing into God's hands: 'They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen' (Acts 4:28). The 'Son of Man . . . will be delivered over to the Gentiles' (Lk 18:32) but 'on the third day he will rise again' (Lk 18:33). And that will be bad news for those who killed him. But for now, it seems like the people trying Jesus still have the upper hand, and so we return to Pilate.

Read 23:13-25

17. What does Pilate tell the chief priests, the rulers, and the people?
18. How does the 'whole crowd' respond? What is the back-and-forth between them and Pilate like?
19. What opinion do you have of Pilate in the end?

Pilate tells the crowd, again, that he can't find any reason to punish Jesus. But the crowd want blood. They demand that Pilate release Barabbas - a terrorist and murderer - and crucify Jesus in his place. Pilate resists again, and a third time, but in the end, the crowd wears him down. He frees Barabbas and condemns Jesus to death. Pilate may not be vengeful, like the leaders and the crowd, but he is weak: even though he has complete power to enact his own will, 'he surrendered Jesus to their will' (23:25). The handing of Jesus over to the Gentiles is complete (18:31-33).

Some questions to reflect on before you pray

- According to Acts 4:23-28 Jesus' trials before both Jewish and Gentile courts represent the opposition of the world in its entirety against God and his rule. How do we see the world continue to rebel against God and his king?
- According to Acts 4:26 (quoting Psalm 2), this rebellion will be 'in vain.' But rather than punish the world for its rebellion, God sends Jesus' disciples to 'speak the word of God boldly' to them, i.e. preach the gospel of forgiveness. How should this shape our own response when we see people rejecting God's rightful rule over them?