

**Luke 23:1-12**  
*The Congregation of the Wicked*

NKJ Luke 23:1 Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate.

2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

3 Then Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered him and said, "It is as you say."

4 So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man."

5 But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."

6 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 to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.

8 Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him.

9 Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.

11 Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

12 That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

I'll be reading the entire section, but we'll only be dealing with the first vignette - Christ before Pilate today, we'll look at Christ before Herod in detail next week.

Go ahead if you would and turn in your bibles to Psalm 22 - which you just sang part of. This is an amazing Psalm because although it was written by David hundreds and hundreds of years before the crucifixion, it is a prophecy of what would happen to Christ that was literally fulfilled.

Christ himself even cries out the first line of this psalm from the cross "*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*" "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

NKJ Psalm 22:1 To the Chief Musician. Set to "The Deer of the Dawn." A Psalm of David. My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?

2 O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; And in the night season, and am not silent.

3 But You are holy, Enthroned in the praises of Israel.

4 Our fathers trusted in You; They trusted, and You delivered them.

5 They cried to You, and were delivered; They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.

6 But I am a worm, and no man; A reproach of men, and despised by the people.

7 All those who see Me ridicule Me; They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

8 "He trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"

9 But You are He who took Me out of the womb; You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts.

10 I was cast upon You from birth. From My mother's womb You have been My God.

11 Be not far from Me, For trouble is near; For there is none to help.

12 Many bulls have surrounded Me; Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.

13 They gape at Me with their mouths, Like a raging and roaring lion.

14 I am poured out like water, And all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.

15 My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

16 For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

17 I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.

18 They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.

The words of the Psalm cannot possibly refer to an experience in the life of David, with its almost verbatim quote of Matthew 27:43 “He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him” the talk of his hands and feet being pierced and gambling to divide up his clothing and so on. Clearly the psalm speaks of the agony of great David’s greater Son Jesus. As he stands now, dragged from Sanhedrin to Pilate’s court surrounded by what the Psalm calls the “congregation of the wicked.” It’s amazing isn’t it? All of these forces hate one another, Pharisees can’t stand the Saducees or the Herodians, and the feeling is definitely mutual, all of them despise the Roman occupiers to whom they are beholden, and yet now they have united, they have a common cause, they must destroy Jesus. This is no coincidence; the devil and his children who love darkness must extinguish the light that has come into the world.

But at first it seems like Pilate isn’t going to go along with them. We know Pilate despised the Jews, and so when they first ask for a summary judgment saying in John 18:28 “***If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.***” he doesn’t give it to them, so they have to trot out charges. Now they can’t accuse him of Blasphemy before Pilate, because there is no Roman law preventing that, so they bring up 3 false charges:

- 1) We found this fellow perverting the nation – *stirring up a rebellion* – clearly Christ wasn’t doing that.
- 2) forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar – that was just an out and out lie, Christ had even commanded that men should *render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s*
- 3) saying that He Himself is Christ, a King – Well that was true, Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, and He admitted that even here before Pilate. But what the Sanhedrin mean by Christ is not what Christ means by it. The Sanhedrin is implying that He claims to be an earthly political king, a new King David, which Jesus had denied again and again. And even said “***My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.***”

Pilate knows that even that charge isn’t true, the Sanhedrin were no lovers of Roman rule, and certainly he was not blind and could see the man before him

had already been beaten. He knew that if they wanted Jesus dead it was not because of a political problem with Roman rule – it was because they personally hated Him. So he pronounces Jesus innocent. Now in a regular trial, that would have been it. But the chief priests and elders want Pilate to know, they will not be accepting anything other than a sentence of death. So they say, “He’s stirring up the country” and then drop this not so subtle mention of Galilee which was a hotbed of rebellion against Roman rule. It would be like saying Tikrit or Falujah today. Pilate, this all started in Galilee you know.

Now they expect that this will nail the case shut, but instead in the mention of Galilee, Pilate sees one last way out of having to sentence Jesus to death – the time honored political ritual – pass the buck. He realizes that the ruler of Galilee, Herod Antipas, is in town for the Passover so he sends Jesus off to the Hasmonian palace to be judged by him. Which no doubt enraged the Chief Priests and the Sanhedrin to no end.

Now what applications can we draw from these events? I want to suggest two applications for you.

- 1) ***The first, is what we can learn from the fact that Jesus was persecuted and accused by the world even though he was completely innocent –***  
 Why did the things that Jesus said enrage them so, because they were lies? No, not at all, because it was the truth! Again and again God had sent his prophets into the world to convict his people of their sins and lead them to repentance. They came into the world to tell them what the situation was and to warn them of the peril of staying in that course, but also to implore them to accept the mercy of God.

But they would not accept that mercy because to do so, would imply that they were sinners in need of it in the first place. So they preferred the false prophets who told them everything was right between them and God. Because Elijah condemned the people of Israel for their religious pluralism, he is called a “troubler of Israel” by Ahab. John the Baptist has the audacity to call Herod’s illegitimate marriage to his brother’s wife what it is and he

gets beheaded. God's only begotten Son comes into the world preaching repentance and salvation through faith, and now He is about to die.

***Mat. 10:25 "It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they call those of his household!"***

Well then don't be discouraged if when you tell people the truth about their situation, they don't compliment you for it. Or if they falsely accuse you! If you study both the word and the history of the church, the best of the saints have always endured the most vigorous persecution. Really only the world's toadies get off scot free. Brothers and Sisters, that should *embolden you to be vigorous in your witnessing*.

2) The second why was Jesus *almost entirely silent* before Pilate.

After all, Christ could have made an incontrovertible argument against the ridiculous charges that were being made against him. Paul, when he was falsely accused went to the uttermost to use the Roman system instead of meekly accepting death at the hands of the mob. Why didn't Jesus.

Why didn't Christ speak when he could easily have refuted the false accusation against him? Because while He is innocent We are guilty and he was standing in our place.

***So then, the Son of God stood, as a criminal, before a mortal man, and there permitted himself to be accused and condemned, that we may stand boldly before God. His enemies, indeed, endeavored to fasten upon him everlasting infamy; but we ought rather to look at the end to which the providence of God directs us. For if we recollect how dreadful is the judgment-seat of God, and that we could never have been acquitted there, unless Christ had been pronounced to be guilty on earth, we shall never be ashamed of glorying in his chains. - CALVIN***

5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, And who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

9 And they made His grave with the wicked -- But with the rich at His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

2 Cor. 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Christ was silent, so that we might not be, so that we might enter boldly into the holy of holies and cry out “Abba, Father!” So that by his enduring wrath, we might have peace with God. ***So that we might not have to stand in the congregation of the wicked on the last day.***