

**Message #116****Luke 23:1-7**

All of us have seen in our lifetime and heard stories of a misuse of justice. Just recently, there was a story of a woman who spent 35 years in prison for a crime she did not commit. In fact, it was DNA evidence that proved she didn't commit it and led authorities to the man who did.

Every now and then someone is released from prison because everyone got the facts wrong. Just a couple of years ago here in Michigan a man received 1.5 million dollars after spending 45 years in prison for a murder he did not commit.

But there was a criminal court case much more unjust than these cases. It was the court case against Jesus Christ. He was tried, He was convicted and He was executed and there was not one bit of evidence that He ever did anything wrong one time in His life. Even the most powerful judicial authorities in the world could not find anything He did wrong. He was totally innocent and everyone knew it and yet the court convicted Him and gave Him the death penalty.

As we come to this part of Scripture, what we see is this:

**THE CONVICTION AND CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS CHRIST WAS THE GREATEST MISUSE OF JUDICIAL POWER EVER BECAUSE WHEN JESUS CHRIST WAS BEING TRIED AS A CRIMINAL, NOT EVEN THE MOST POWERFUL OFFICIALS COULD FIND ONE THING HE EVER DID WRONG.**

Both Pilate and Herod examined Jesus Christ and could not find one thing wrong. These were two of the most powerful men in the judicial and political Roman world. Neither of these men could find anything Jesus had done that would demand death. Yet they try Him, condemn Him and execute Him. But this complete misuse of justice is solving judicial issues at the Throne of God. Even though what is happening to Christ is pathetic, it is also salvific.

Dr. Luke very carefully chronicles what happens. In these verses there are four actions that occur:

**ACTION #1** – The actions and allegations of the whole Sanhedrin. **23:1-2**

These religious and political leaders were all dirty and corrupt. This is the same group that had arrested Christ (22:47); tried Christ (22:54); mocked Christ (22:63) and beat Christ (22:64). They were not interested in what was just or right and so all of them decided to drag Jesus Christ to see Pilate.

The reason they are dragging Christ before Pilate is not because they want Jesus to get a fair hearing or trial; but because they knew that **Pilate is the only Roman official who could pronounce the death penalty (John 18:31).**

The Jewish Sanhedrin led Christ to the Roman judgment hall (Praetorian) and pretended to be so spiritual that they would not even go inside themselves because they would be defiled, having been on Gentile property before the Passover (John 18:28). So they just stood outside and Pilate came out to them.

These are the religious leaders who are frauds and hypocrites. They are not interested in getting Christ a fair trial. They are not interested in what is fair, right, just and true. They want to get rid of Jesus Christ. They want to kill Him and this is how they must do it.

But even though these frauds are doing this, we must always remember that Jesus Christ is allowing this to happen to Himself. He could have destroyed all of them by a word. But He knew He needed to go to that cross and He allowed all of this to happen for us.

According to **verse 2**, “they began to accuse” Christ. That means they began to make accusations against Jesus Christ and level charges against Him.

There are three specific false allegations and charges made against Jesus Christ that are all political. Collectively, if these charges would have been true, which they are not, they would have established a case of high treason, which to Rome was the worst possible crime.

Treason was a crime that could be punished by deportation to a prison island, by feeding one to wild animals, by burning one at the stake or by crucifying one on a cross. Roman officials did not look favorably on any form of insurrection and these Jewish leaders are inventing false charges to try to get Jesus convicted of this very crime.

**False Charge #1** - Jesus Christ is misleading the nation. **23:2a**

The present tense participle “misleading” means they are claiming that Jesus is continually twisting and perverting and distorting the nation by leading it away from its original intent (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 111).

What a lie this is. The original intent of God for the nation Israel was that she become a nation totally and completely blessed by Him and esteemed by all nations of the world and Jesus was trying to move the nation in that direction.

The problem is He told them they needed to “repent,” which was a message they did not want to hear. **He was not misleading the nation; the phony religious leaders were misleading the nation.**

**False Charge #2** - Jesus Christ is forbidding the payment of taxes. **23:2b**

This is just a flat out lie. Jesus clearly taught the people that they should pay their taxes (Luke 20:25). They are alleging that Jesus was continually going around telling people that they should not pay their taxes to Caesar, who was the Emperor of Rome. This is the kind of lie that could get anyone crucified.

**False Charge #3** - Jesus Christ is falsely claiming He Himself is the Christ King. **23:2c**

Actually this is true. Jesus Christ is the Christ and is the King. But time and time again, He specifically told people not to tell or broadcast that (Luke 5:14; 8:56; 9:21).

Jesus did not walk around telling people “Hello, I am the Messiah King.” He did tell them that He was the Messiah and did miracles to prove that He was who He claimed to be but He certainly did not walk around continually saying that.

Now the religious Sanhedrin wanted to be sure to add the fact that He claimed to be King because that would again carry more condemnatory weight with Pilate than just the claim He was the Messiah.

Jesus Christ did not come to mislead the nation, He came to save it.

Jesus Christ did not tell people to refuse to pay taxes, He told them to pay them.

Jesus Christ was the Messiah and He was the King, but He did not continually broadcast that.

These guys are lying and they are not telling the truth.

**ACTION #2** – Pilate responds to the allegations of the Sanhedrin. **23:3-4**

Pilate was a shrewd politician. He did not rise to the pinnacle of Roman political power by being someone gullible and silly. Pilate was governor of Judea (Luke 3:1). He knew about the hypocrisy of these religious Jews and he knew they hated the Romans. He was fully aware that religious Jews do not, most of the time, turn someone in for execution because they rebel against Roman authority. Normally, an insurrectionist is deemed a Jewish hero.

Jesus Christ is standing before Pilate and is surrounded by religious and political frauds. He is surrounded by soldiers and Annas, Caiaphas, Ananias and others. They were all there.

Pilate had two responses to these charges:

**Response #1** - Pilate’s response to Christ. **23:3**

Both Matthew and Mark point out that Pilate knew that these guys were not operating out of jealousy. They were envious of Jesus Christ and His power that He had with the people (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).

It is interesting that even a heathen like Pilate could spot the phony religious people.

Pilate asks Jesus whether or not He is the King of the Jews. Pilate doesn’t seem to be impressed with the charges of insurrectionism; he simply wants to know whether or not He is the King of the Jews.

Pilate asks Christ right to His face whether or not He is the King of the Jews. Jesus' answer is "you say." The text does not read "it is as you say." The text reads, "you say." In other words, you have been saying I am the king of the Jews. Apparently Pilate had been saying this about Christ. We don't know exactly who Pilate had been saying this to. We know his wife had a dream about Jesus and did not want Pilate to turn against Him and said He was a righteous man (Matt. 27:19).

This shows the Omniscience of Jesus Christ in knowing that Pilate had been saying Jesus was the King. In fact, Pilate had this inscription put above Christ on the cross, which the leading Jews did not want him to do (John 19:18-21; Luke 23:38).

**Response #2** - Pilate's response to the multitude. **23:4**

Pilate then turned to the chief priests and the crowds and said, "I find no guilt in this man." Do you see that? Pilate is publicly stating that I have found no cause, no culpability in Jesus Christ for which He could be blamed.

It is right here when Pilate should have set Christ free. By his own judicial determination and judgment, Jesus Christ is completely innocent.

But Pilate was too much of a politician to take a stand for righteousness and truth. He recognized what was true, but he wouldn't do the right thing. He wanted to do what the people wanted him to do, not what God wanted him to do.

**ACTION #3** – The Jewish crowd continues to make false allegations against Christ. **23:5**

Once the people heard that Pilate concluded Jesus was innocent, they became fierce in their opposition. They started frantically making any allegation possible in order to get Pilate to kill Jesus Christ. They are afraid that Christ may walk so they begin to stir up more and more stuff.

Some of them alleged that Jesus was stirring up people all over Judea, which of course was Pilate's territory. The truth is, they were the ones stirring the pot. They claimed He had been stirring things ever since He had been in Galilee.

Now Pilate did not particularly like Galileans. In fact, based on his track record he was vicious against Galileans (Luke 13:1). The religious Jews thought if they could somehow connect Christ to both Galilee and Judea, they would have a good chance of convincing Pilate to kill Him.

**ACTION #4** – Pilate responds to the Jewish crowd. **23:6-7**

Pilate's response to all of this was to let someone else figure out what was right. As soon as he discovered Christ was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod.

This was Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great. He was in Jerusalem for the Passover festivities.

This Herod was a powerful man. He ruled over  $\frac{1}{4}$  part of the world and he lived in Galilee. Sending Christ to Herod was the easy way out. He figured the blame would be off him, so for Pilate this is a good political move.

So as Christ was standing in this trial:

- 1) One disciple is a traitor.
- 2) Other disciples have abandoned Him.
- 3) One disciple denies Jesus Christ.
- 4) Jewish religious leaders are hypocrites.
- 5) Pilate is too weak to do what is right.

Jesus is going through all of this and not one person can find one thing wrong with Jesus Christ.

So why in the world would they sentence Him to die on a cross? Why would He allow Himself to go through all of this? He did it for you and for me.

Christ took the mockery, the beatings, the farce trials, the accusations and was crucified for us. He did it all for us. He had to die for you and for me.