

High Priests, Pilate and Herod on Trial

by Anton Bosch

This sermon delves into the trials of Jesus before Pilate and Herod, highlighting the lack of conscience in some leaders, the importance of standing for truth over convenience, and the need to unite around the truth of the gospel. It emphasizes the contrast between those who reject Jesus and those who stand for Him, urging listeners to be like the spotless Lamb of God shining in a dark world.

Scripture: Luke 22:63, Luke 22:66, Luke 23:1, Luke 23:13, Luke 23:26

Topics: "Standing for Truth", "Conscience in Leadership"

Description

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Transcript

Luke chapter 22, we continue our study in the Gospel of Luke and we're obviously in the days before the day of Jesus' crucifixion. We're going to be here for a little while. We ended with verse 62 last week.

Verse 63 of Luke 22 Now the men who held Jesus mocked him and beat him, and having blindfolded him, they struck him on the face and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is the one who struck you? And many other things they blasphemously spoke against him. And as soon as it was they, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led him into their council, saying, If you are the Christ, tell us. But he said to them, If I tell you, you will by no means believe.

And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer me or let me go. You're after the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God. And they all said, Are you then the Son of God? And so he said to them, You rightly say that I am.

And they said, What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from his own mouth. Then the whole multitude of them arose and led him to Pilate. And they came 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.

Then Pilate asked him, saying, Are you the king of the Jews? He answered him and said, It is as you say. So Pilate said to the chief priests in the crowd, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the man was a Galilean. 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. 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.

Then he questioned him with many words, and he answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes stood and vehemently accused him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated him with contempt and mocked him, arraying him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him back to Pilate.

That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other. So they had now arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. They brought him, first of all, to Annas, the high priest emeritus.

He was the retired high priest, but he still retained influence. They brought him to Annas. From Annas, they had shipped him across to Caiaphas, and that's basically where we find the story now.

Now it gets a little confusing, because each of the gospel writers highlights different aspects of the trial of the Lord Jesus. Luke gives us a summary. While Luke is very detailed in many other aspects of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus, when it comes to these final hours, he gives us a very brief summation of the things that happened.

So the fact that he excludes certain things does not mean that they didn't happen. It simply means that for the sake of keeping the account to the point that he's trying to make, he doesn't go into all of the details. And of course John, at the end of his epistle, said that if everything Jesus said and did had to be written down, the world wouldn't contain the books.

And so obviously none of the gospel writers gives us a word-for-word, blow-for-blow account of things that happened, but they give us the highlights. When I come back from the United Kingdom, I will do a report, and I will take 15 minutes to tell you what happened in 18 days. I think it's about 18 days.

Now obviously in that 15 minutes, I can't put 18 days into 15 minutes. And what the gospel writers are doing is they're putting 33 years into 23, 24 chapters. And so clearly what they are doing is they're highlighting certain things that sums things up and that gives the main point of what is going on.

And so let me give you a rundown of the various trials, and then you'll be able to fit it in as we go along. And look, so we begin obviously with Annas. So they take Jesus to Annas first of all.

As I said, Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas. He was very influential, still very much ran things. And so you'll see references to the chief priests.

Normally there would only be one chief priest, but Annas was still very much influential. And then Caiaphas was in fact the appointed high priest. Remember, not appointed by God through the tribe of Levi, but appointed as a political appointment by Rome.

So he goes from Annas to Caiaphas, and then he goes to the Sanhedrin, the 70 members of the elders of Israel, together with the high priest making 71, who has the casting vote. He is tried by them, so that's three trials, if you will, all of them unjust. And that is the Jewish part of his trial, being tried by his own people.

Then he's handed over to Pilate. Pilate does a preliminary trial, sends him down to Herod. Herod sends him back to Pilate.

Pilate does the final trial, and Pilate hands him over to be crucified. So in effect there are three trials, if you will, under the Jews, and there are three under the Romans. Pilate, Herod, and then Pilate again.

All right, so now we're at the beginning. So Peter denies Jesus in Annas' trial, and now it says the men who held Jesus mocked him and beat him. The men who held him—remember that these are not the Romans.

At this stage it's all in the hands of Israel, of the people of Israel. And so the men who held him was the temple police. They were—this was an entirely Jewish thing.

One of the things that struck me as I studied the passage again is just how balanced the indictment against Israel and the Romans is. I know people like to pick sides and say, well, you know, it was the Romans. No, it was the Jews.

Well, obviously it was both. And as I've listed the trials, I've told you there's three on one side, three on the other side. Initially it's the Jews who capture him, and it is Jewish temple police who mistreat him, and then the Romans take over.

And, of course, this is a pattern which you see right through the book of Acts. You find exactly the same pattern. Paul would go to a town.

He would begin to preach in the synagogue. The Jews would reject him. They would hand him over.

Many times the Jews would hand him over to the Romans. The Romans would take Paul and beat him up or put him out of town or whatever they would do. So this would become a pattern of the Jews handing Jesus, and then later on Paul, and obviously later on the church, over to the Roman authorities.

So these are Jesus's own people, the Jews, who should have known better. And they mocked him, and they beat him. Now one of the things in the background, of course, is that not only is this the Lord Jesus, but this is God in the flesh.

This is God in the flesh. And so they are not only beating up the man Jesus, they are not just mocking the man, but they are mocking God himself. And as we'll see in the verses to come, the whole issue revolves around, are you in fact God? And I'm just summarizing that.

So verse 64, they blindfolded him. They struck him on the face and asked him, saying, prophesy, who is the one who struck you? Now Jesus had been prophesying all along. Right at that moment, the whole thing with Peter was taking place.

And Jesus had prophesied the night before, before the cock crows, you'll deny me three times. And that was happening while this is happening. Remember, these things are not sequential.

Some things are happening in parallel. And so while this trial is going on, and they're beating up Jesus, at the same time Peter is fulfilling the very prophecy that Jesus made the night before. And of course, all of what is happening here is prophesied in the Old Testament.

And Jesus himself, not so long before, while he was still on the road from Galilee to Jerusalem, said that he would be taken, and he would be beaten, and he would be despitely used. So the very thing that they were doing, he had prophesied several weeks before. But obviously, he is not going to prophesy on demand.

Here's the thing with fallen man, is they want God to perform things on demand. We'll see in a moment that Herod does the same thing. He wants Jesus, you know, like a circus monkey, to perform tricks and do some miracles.

You know, that's the only use they have for Jesus sometimes, is, you know, just, you know, entertain us. That's really what they're wanting. And obviously, Jesus is not going to play their kind of game.

Jesus says nothing. He doesn't respond. And then verse 65, many other things, they blasphemously spoke against him.

And so remember that at this stage, he is not convicted yet. Now also remember that this is not America, where you are innocent until proven guilty. That concept doesn't seem to operate here.

And so they, part of the process of conviction would also be torture, and that is part of the reason why they beat him. You'll remember that the Bible speaks, uses the term, they examined him. Examining him means to torture him in order to get him to speak the truth.

Even until not so long ago, this was a common practice in many societies, still is in some societies. And so even though he is not convicted, they are speaking blasphemous things against him and again, the Scripture draws a veil. Remember, there's this thing that we find in all the gospel writers, is that there are some things that we just don't get the details of, because they are too painful.

They are just too blasphemous. They are just too ugly to include in the Scriptures. And so it simply says, they spoke blasphemies against him.

Doesn't tell us what it is, and it's not right for us to speculate what that would be. When the Scripture draws a veil over things, we ought not to try and dig into them. Now, as soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led him into their council.

So this is the third trial. So this is the Sanhedrin, the elders of the people and the chief priests and the scribes. And remember I said that there were 70 of them.

Some were Sadducees and some were Pharisees. The Sadducees, the high priest always came from the Sadducees. They were the liberals, if you will.

The Pharisees were the conservatives, the Sadducees were the liberals. The Sadducees had sold out to Rome and they had this deal going with Rome, that they could, that Rome would appoint the high priest and they could skim the top off the temple taxes for themselves. They were given all sorts of privileges and in exchange they had to keep the people in line.

And so remember that for this reason, I think it was Caiaphas who said that it's better that one man die for the people. He wasn't saying that in an atoning way, in the sense that we understand it. We understand that Jesus died for us.

What he was saying is Jesus is a troublemaker and he's going to get, he's going to, he's going to foment an insurrection and then we're going to get into trouble and we're going to lose our privilege and our position. So it's better he dies than we have trouble. And Rome comes down and brings the soldiers and remember Rome would have no problem of coming in and killing several hundred people just to make a point, just to quell any kind of insurrection.

And so these are then the ones who come together. Obviously there are some empty seats. Now there have been extensive studies on the illegality of particularly this trial of the Sanhedrin and it was illegal on about 25 or 28, I don't remember exactly, different points, different points of their law that they were breaking in this process.

One of the points was that the, and we'll pick up one or two others as we go along, but one of the points was that the decision for a capital offense, the decision for someone to be executed had to be unanimous. It had to be 100%. Remember I spoke earlier that sometimes you would have a 50-50 vote, so you'd have 35-35 and then the high priest would have that casting vote.

In the case of a capital offense it had to be unanimous. Now it was not unanimous and also they had to all be there. Now how do we know it wasn't unanimous? Well we know of two who either were not there or would have abstained or who would have voted against.

Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. They were disciples and followers of Jesus. They would not have agreed to his crucifixion.

And remember that after Jesus dies they ask for the and they go and bury him. So we know that it wasn't unanimous. Anyhow, so they have this mock trial.

Now remember you've already had two preliminary trials, which again is unconstitutional. Well they don't have a constitution, but against the law. You have a trial with everyone present, but they'd already had trials with Annas and with Caiaphas and they had already said he is guilty, even before he comes to the Sanhedrin.

So the purpose of the Sanhedrin is it's a mock trial, simply to legitimize what the high priests had already decided. And of course that was illegal. So the question is, if you are the Christ, the Messiah, the word Messiah is the Hebrew for the Greek word Christ, same word meaning the anointed one, the Son of God.

If you are the Christ, tell us. Now Jesus had told them many times. Remember here's one of the things that those who do not believe in the divinity of Jesus, who don't believe that Jesus is God, they love this argument of saying Jesus never claimed to be God.

Well that's absolutely bogus. Many, many times right through Jesus's ministry there are points at which he makes statements that clearly makes him to be God. Jesus said before Abraham was, I am, using the name of God, saying that he is eternal, that he has no beginning nor end.

In other words, that he is God. And of course this is the thing that they are going to try and get him on. Now remember again, we have two different legal systems.

We have the Jewish one, based on the Old Testament, but added to that all of their own laws and things, and then we have the Roman one. Their laws are different. So they change the accusation, because the accusation that they would bring to a Jewish trial would not stand in a Roman trial.

So in the Jewish trial, and we will see this, I'm jumping ahead, but in the Jewish trial the accusation is blasphemy, that he has made himself to be equal with God. That's the accusation, and it requires death if he is found guilty of that. Of course they don't have the power to kill anyone or to execute anyone, and so that's why they have to involve the Romans.

Now if they went to Pilate and said, well this man says he's God, Pilate would laugh at them, because in the Roman understanding there are many gods. And yeah, so maybe he's a god, you know, it's no big deal, you know, we have Zeus and we have Arodite and we have this one and that one and the other one, we have all these gods, so no big deal. So they change the accusation to one of insurrection when they get to Pilate.

So you can see again, it's totally, it's a sham. Anyway, so it draws around, are you the Christ? And he said to them, if I tell you, you will by no means believe. Now this is a very important statement that Jesus is making.

It's very simple. I mean, you know, Jesus saying, what's the point of telling you? Because if I tell you you're not going to believe me. And if I deny it, he says, if I also ask you, you will by no means answer me or let me go.

So if I say I am the Christ, you won't believe me. And if I say I'm not the Christ, you won't let me go. In other words, you've made up your minds.

I know you've made up your minds, he says. And you know, that's simple. And yet he has the insight, obviously he's God, he knows, but he understands that this is a waste of time.

Now the reality is that today we have many gainsayers, many who oppose the gospel, many who oppose the truth. I get those emails all the time. I get comments on the videos all the time.

And most of the time I don't bother to answer. And people say, well you're rude, you should answer. No, this is why I don't answer.

Because you can see in the statements that the individual makes, that they are not interested in the truth. They are simply interested in making their point, whatever that point, their point is. In fact, one was on one of my YouTubes this morning, saying quite terrible things about me.

Well, what's the point? He's made up his mind. There's no way I'm going to convince him. He's listened to my preaching, and he's decided that I'm, that I'm fake.

So what's the point? So Jesus just doesn't, doesn't answer. But he does say, now remember that Jesus is not trying to get himself out of a corner here. Jesus understands that the will of God has to be done, and that the will of God is that he would be handed over to the Romans, and he would be crucified.

And so he's not trying to defend himself. In fact, in this verse, he is giving them ammunition. Because he says, hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.

Now remember, the Son of Man is a messianic title. This is making himself equal to God. We'll see in a moment, there's another title Jesus uses, the Son of Man.

Also a title making him equal to God. And so when Jesus says the Son of Man, he is in fact saying, I am the Christ. I am the Messiah.

And not only will you see me as you're seeing me now, being beaten up with blood and spit running down his face as they spat upon him, but you will see me at the right hand of the power of God, at the right hand of the majesty. Remember that this is where Stephen saw him. Stephen, when they stoned him, Stephen says, I see Jesus at the right hand of the majesty.

He happened to be standing at that point. The fact that he will be seated, we're going to see this idea in the book of Hebrews, when we continue in the book of Hebrews, that Jesus as a high priest sat down, meaning that he is sitting in a position of power and of authority, that the work is done. He is not standing like the priest in the Old Testament because the work is never done, so they have to stand all the time making sacrifices.

No, he sits down, having made once for all the final sacrifice. And so he's going to be seated at the right hand of the power of God. Then they said, are you then the son of God? And he said to them, you rightly say that I am.

You rightly say that I am. In other words, he's going to do the same thing with Pilate. You say it.

You said so. And obviously he is saying that is the truth. So notice in the previous verse he says the Son of Man will sit.

Next verse he says, they say are you the Son of God? They understand these are the same things. These are, you know, whether you and there are technical differences between the Son of God and the Son of Man, just like there are between his title of Lord and of Jesus and of Christ. There are slight differences between those, but they are pointing to the same individual.

They speak of the same person, the second person of the Trinity. And so they then all say, are you then the Son of God? So they're rephrasing the question. The first question was, are you the Christ? Then he says, no, I'm the Son of Man.

And then they say, are you then the Son of God? And he said to them, you rightly say that I am. Now I'm not sure whether in those last words, I am, he is using the divine title. It's very possible, but I think that it's difficult to prove it, and so I'm not going to make that statement.

But it's very possible that that is what he is intending. Because remember, the fact that the word rightly is in italics, in other words, that was not in the original. The original says, you say, I am.

In fact, that is also not there. So you say, I am. Verse 71.

And they said, what further testimony do we need? Now remember again the argument of those who reject that Jesus is God. They say Jesus never claimed to be God. Now he had just used three words in which he claimed to be God.

And if you say, well, you know, those were just words that he said, you know, it doesn't mean anything. It doesn't mean that he claimed to be God. Well, look at their response.

How did they understand this? And this is important when we understand, when we interpret scripture to understand, how did they understand it? So that we understand what it means. You see, we have sayings in different languages. When I first came to America, I heard people pray in the prayer meeting for somebody who was under the weather.

And I was quite offended by that. And I understood that that means that they were not well, they were sick. But in South Africa, if someone's under the weather, it means they're drunk.

So what does it mean you're under the weather? Well, you have to understand how people in that community understand that word. There are many other examples like that. And so we need to look at the response, and that will tell us exactly what Jesus said and what Jesus meant.

So what's their response? They said, what further testament do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from his own mouth. In other words, he's committed blasphemy. He has called himself God.

So they themselves admit, even though they're as perverse as they are, that Jesus is God, certainly that he claimed to be God. They're not saying he is, but that they claim to be God. Then the whole multitude of them rose and led him to Pilate.

Now again, the chief priests are talking. One of the things in a trial like this, one of the rules, was that in coming to a conclusion, the most junior members must speak first, and then eventually the high priest speaks. You say, well, why is that? Well, this is a very simple but very important principle, and a principle that I try to apply in business meetings.

I try not to speak first. I try to get others to speak first. Because what happens if the high priest speaks first? What are the junior members going to say? What he said.

And that can lead to injustice, because whatever he said may not be the right thing. So let's hear from everybody, from the junior first, all the way up the line. Then we'll get an honest opinion of the group.

It's a very wise principle that they built in. But the high priest made up their mind. They made the decision.

They said, we don't need any further proof. This man's a blasphemer. Let's get rid of him.

So again, the procedure wasn't followed. And so the whole multitude of them arose and led him to Pilate. So obviously they are meeting.

Again, there's a question as to whether this meeting should have been private, and as I understand it, it should have been a private meeting, but with the 71 members. But this is obviously happening in the public arena, and the multitude are there, and they're saying to them, you know, this man has blasphemed. And so the whole bunch, the whole crowd, and again we don't know how many people this is, but a multitude is a lot of people.

And they rose, and they led him to Pilate. And they began to accuse him. This is now before Pilate.

We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king. Now you see how the accusation has changed. The first accusation now is that he's forbidding paying taxes.

The second accusation, sorry, that he is perverting the nation, number one. Number two, that he is forbidding to pay taxes. And number three, he is saying he is a king.

But they had found him guilty of saying he was God. But obviously that wouldn't hold in the Roman court. But if he said, if he said he is the king, he is then standing in opposition to Caesar, and Pilate, and everybody else down the line.

And this is insurrection. This is rebellion. And this cannot stand.

So you can see how they, in some aspects, totally changed the accusation, and in some aspects it's a subtle change. But they're adjusting the charge sheet to the judge. And so we found him perverting the nation, forbidding to pay taxes.

Of course Jesus never forbade the paying of taxes. He himself paid taxes. You remember that they find the coin in the fish's mouth, and Peter pays the taxes on one occasion.

Another occasion they said, should we pay taxes to Caesar? And Jesus said, show me the coin. And he says, give to Caesar whose image is this. And they said, it's Caesar's.

And he said, give to Caesar what is his. So is Jesus saying, don't pay taxes to Caesar? No, clearly he is saying, Caesar's image is on here. This is his money.

Give it back to him. But give God what is his. So he never forbade the paying of taxes.

And then saying that he himself is Christ, a king. Well, he did claim to be Christ. But he clearly was not preaching a kingdom, now theology.

He was not preaching that he was the king, and he was going to throw Rome out. Of course, that's what they wanted. That's what the Jews wanted.

But that wasn't what Jesus had come for. And he made it clear that he wasn't on that king trip thing. That he was the Messiah, and that he was a spiritual king of a spiritual kingdom.

And this will come out later in the trial with Pilate, the second trial with Pilate again. Then Pilate asked him saying, are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him and said, it is as you say. And again, pay attention to the italics.

It is as is an italics. So the original only has you say. In other words, you say, I am the king of the Jews.

And remember, this would be the accusation that Pilate would put on the superscription, on the piece of paper that would be attached to the head of the cross in three languages, Jesus the king of the Jews. And of course, this is the heart of the question. So verse 4, Pilate said to the chief priests in the crowd, I find no fault in this man.

I don't quite understand this verse, because obviously there is no fault in Jesus. But if Jesus had claimed to be a king, and Pilate says, are you the king? And Jesus says, well, you said it. If that was really the way Pilate understood it, then why does he say, I find no fault in him? So clearly Pilate does not see Jesus as a threat.

Does he see Jesus as just some crazy nut who was claiming to be something? Well, that's very possible. I don't know. But clearly Pilate doesn't find fault with him.

I want for us, well, let me hold that when we come to Herod, because I want for us to see the difference in the conscience of these various men who are trying Jesus. Annas and Caiaphas, I'll group those together, Pilate and Herod. All right, so he says, I find no fault in the man.

And of course, he'll say that again in the second trial. But they were the more fierce saying. He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.

Now, they're pressing the various buttons. And the thing that Pilate is most afraid of is insurrection. Pilate was a weak governor.

He had had trouble in the kingdom or in his jurisdiction before. And remember that Rome, that Caesar, would take no nonsense. And if a governor wasn't doing his job, if he wasn't collecting the taxes, and if he wasn't keeping the rebels under control, that guy would be out.

He could be killed, he would just be deposed, and somebody else would be put in his job. The purpose that Pilate had was to keep order, to keep the people in subjection under Roman authority. That's why he had soldiers, and that's why he had the job.

Pilate was weak, and we'll see his weakness in the next part of the trial. But Pilate, or any of these Roman governors, were terribly afraid of insurrection, because that would mean war. There was only one way to deal with insurrection, and that is to bring in the army.

And they would bring in the army, they would kill several hundred people, they would quell the rebellion, and that would be the end. But it's never the end, because there's always murmuring and complaining afterwards. There's always rebellion afterwards, and in the process, this has cost money to bring the soldiers in.

They're losing money on taxes and productivity, and remember that Rome is all about money and power. Those are the things that they're interested in. And so he is on a thin edge.

Pilate has had, as I've said, he's not performed very well up to now, as far as Rome is concerned. So if he has a rebellion on his hands, he's got trouble. In fact, that's why he's in Jerusalem.

Pilate's headquarters was elsewhere. But he comes to Jerusalem at the time of the feast with his army, with the express purpose of intimidating the Jews and making sure that there is order. But remember, there's thousands of people come from all over Israel, from all over the world, to the feast.

And this is a potential hotspot for trouble. And so Pilate is in town specifically to keep order and to keep the city in check. And so the threat of Jesus stirring up the people, this really touches a hot button with Pilate.

So Pilate's really, really concerned about this. So what you see in Pilate is, and we'll see this again in the second trial, he's divided. He looks at Jesus and he doesn't see a problem.

Does he see Jesus as the Christ? Does he see him as the Savior? No, I don't think he does that. But he recognizes that Jesus is not what the people are saying he is. But at the same time, he's got a job.

And his title and his money and his status is all dependent on his job. And remember, these Roman governors were incredibly ambitious. Not only did they want to keep their job, but they want to move up and they want to eventually be part of the council.

They eventually want to be in Rome or have bigger territories. So all of his personal agenda stands against what he sees in the man Jesus Christ. And of course he has to decide between the two, and at this point he can't decide.

And so what he does is he sends Jesus to Herod. So they say he stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning with Galilee to this place, to Jerusalem. So referring to the fact that Jesus has spent the last year traveling from Galilee all the way to Jerusalem, preaching as far as he was going.

And so they're saying, you know, he's not just done this here, he's doing it all over the show, he's just causing trouble. And so when Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the man was a Galilean, which Jesus was. Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the Galilean, the area up in the north.

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. So interesting that Herod is there in Jerusalem. Now he's able to sidestep the issue, pass the buck.

Well this is not my jurisdiction, this is Herod's jurisdiction, because he's from that area. So he packs him off to Herod. Now who is this Herod? Remember there are many Herods in the Bible.

This is the Herod who killed John the Baptist. Remember that he had a strange relationship with John the Baptist. This Herod had stolen his brother's wife and married her.

And John said to him, you can't do this. This is wrong. Now on what basis is John able to speak to Herod, who is a Roman governor? Well on the basis that Herod had claimed the title King of the Jews.

Herod in fact was half Jewish. He was more Edomite, the people against whom God has indignation forever. Amalek, that whole tribe, for those who remember those studies, he is part of those people who come from Abraham ultimately, but at the end of the day were against the people of God.

But he wants to sell himself as Jewish. So he keeps Jewish customs, and he tries to be Jewish, and he may well be in Jerusalem at this time to show his Jewishness, and he's attending the feast, and doing all of these kinds of things. So he desperately wants to appear to be Jewish.

So he likes John the Baptist. He loved to hear John the Baptist preach. But he imprisons John, but John is imprisoned in the same castle that he lives in.

So John is down in the dungeon, and he's living upstairs. And every now and then he would bring John out of the dungeon to preach to him. What that was about I don't fully understand.

It seemed that he had some conscience at that point, and that what John was preaching affected him in one way or the other. But remember, just like Pilate, he is torn between two things. He is torn between what he knows is the truth, because he understands, clearly from what I can see, that what John is preaching is truth.

But he also has his allegiance to Rome. But more than that, he has his allegiance to his wife, Herodias, who he had stolen from his brother Philip. And so he's torn between these two things.

But he protects John. But Herodias hates John. His wife hates John, because John was the one who pointed out, you can't be doing what you're doing.

And you know how the story ends. Herodias tricks him in a very, very, very immoral way. When Herod was having a party, and they were all nice and drunk, instead of bringing out the prostitutes to dance, she sends in her own daughter to dance.

And she does the sensual dance, and Herod, in his drunkenness, makes the promise, and he says, you know, whatever you want, I'll give you, even to half my kingdom. Salome's mother, Salome is the girl, Salome's mother, Herod's wife, had obviously set this all up. Salome says, well, I don't know, what do I ask for, you know, big white horse, castle, whatever.

So she goes to ask her mother. Her mother says, ask for John the Baptist's head. Salome adds, in her perversity, adds to it on a plate.

Herodias didn't ask for the plate, but Salome added the plate. And so there's Herod. Herod has to make a decision.

In fact, this is really, I think, the crux of what I want us to understand this morning, and I know we're running late. Herod had to make a decision concerning John. Does he kill John and retain his conscience? Not saying he's saved, but at least keep an open door for God's Spirit to continue to work with him, because clearly God was working with Herod.

Or does he sell that for the esteem and the honor of the people around him? Because, because remember, he had made a note, he had made a promise. If he didn't keep that promise, he would lose face with all his drunken buddies, and even though they're drunk, they'll remember. Oh yeah, Herod, he's weak.

He made a promise, and he couldn't fulfill the promise. He couldn't even kill that Jewish prophet. And Herod makes the wrong decision, and Herod's conscience dies at that point.

So remember I said that we want to briefly look at the difference between these different consciences. Annas and Caiaphas have no conscience at all, never had. Jesus exposed them for their hypocrisy, for their abuse of the nation, and they wanted him dead.

They wanted him out of the way. They were not interested in the things of God. They were not interested in the Messiah.

They were simply interested in their cozy position as the high priest of the nation. Pilate has some conscience, and right through to the end, you can see Pilate wrestling with his conscience. Herod used to have a conscience, but the day he killed John, his conscience died.

And now, as he sits in judgment of Jesus, he has no conscience left. His conscience is dead. And so he sends him to Herod.

It's also Jerusalem at the time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad, for he had desired a long time to see him, because he had heard many things about him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by him. So remember I spoke about the circus monkey, so he's hoping Jesus will perform some tricks.

And this goes back to, and that's why I reminded you of the story of John the Baptist. He loved to hear John the Baptist preach. For what exact reasons, we're not sure.

And he wants, he's been wanting to see Jesus for a long time. Now remember a little while back, there was a there was a report that, watch out for Herod, because Herod wants to kill you. Remember that? So Herod sees Jesus as entertainment, but he also sees Jesus as an enemy.

So he wanted to see Jesus, because he'd heard about these miracles, hoped Jesus would perform a trick for him, and then he questioned him with many words, but he answered him nothing. He answered him nothing. Why does Jesus not answer him? Because his conscience is dead.

What's the point? What's the point in trying to convince Herod of anything? Remember Jesus is not trying to get out of the cross, but he's still interested in souls. He's still interested in seeing Pilate, and Annas, and Caiaphas, and Herod saved. Remember Judas, he wanted to see Judas saved right up to the very end, but he doesn't bother with Herod, doesn't say a word, because he understands Herod is long gone.

And so he questioned him with many words, so he made speeches, and Jesus just said nothing. Of course this reminds us, remember last week we were in Isaiah 53, as a lamb before a shearer's is dumb, he opened not his mouth. And so Jesus is fulfilling Isaiah 53.

And then verse 10, and the chief priests and the scribes stood and vehemently accused him. So they're now putting pressure on Herod, and Herod with his men of war, Roman soldiers, treated him with contempt and mocked him. So he's not even giving him the respect that he gave John.

He is mocking Jesus, and he arrayed him in a gorgeous robe. We're not exactly sure what that means, but certainly it was, I think the word gorgeous here is a good word, an elaborate gown of some sort, faking this idea that he's the king. So let's dress him like a king.

And of course they're beating him up all along, and he sends him back to Pilate. But I want you to also see something very important here, in this whole process. Herod does not indict him.

Herod does not find him guilty of any crime. If he found him guilty, he would have said so, and he would have had him crucified right there and then. But the fact that he sends him back to Pilate means that he finds him not guilty of the charges.

The fact that he despised him, that he didn't like Jesus, that he mocked him, that's another thing. But from a legal perspective, the Jews could not find him guilty, so they have a mistrial. Pilate does not find him guilty, so he sends him to Herod.

Herod does not find him guilty, so he sends him back to Pilate. And we'll see next time that Pilate still finds him not guilty, but kills him anyway. That very day, Pilate and Herod became friends with each other.

These are political animals, and they have their political fights and feuds, but they become friends. They're reconciled, because previously they'd been at enmity with each other. Here's a truth that's still true today, that people who are not natural friends will unite against the truth, will unite against the truth.

In a political sense, we have the liberal left and we have the conservative right, and I don't want to end on a political point, but when it comes to the truth, they will unite against the gospel. Remember what I'm telling you. There are people who oppose the truth, who are of totally different doctrinal persuasions within

the sort of Christian realm, and yet when it comes to opposing the gospel, they will unite.

They will stand together. We see this in legislation, and we see this in theology, and we see this in churches. Truth should be a uniting factor.

Lies and mistruths should never be the basis on which we unite. And yet I see Christians over and over uniting, because they're against the same thing. But if that problem wasn't there, they would be at each other's throats.

And so it's become popular in many parts of Christianity today for people to define what they're against, or what they don't believe, rather than what they do believe. And so we'll unite with these guys, because we don't like those guys. Very recently, a very, very conservative, theologically conservative preacher in this area, who for many years preached against TBN, and I'm just using this as an example.

There are many examples, preached against Trinity Broadcasting Network because of its false gospel. But he now appears on Trinity Broadcasting Network, together with another preacher that he always spoke against, simply because they're united in their fight for a political position, some political standard. I don't want to get into it, because otherwise we get sidetracked.

So what happened to your principles? So now the guy who used to be your enemy becomes your buddy, because we're against the same thing. Folk, we do not unite because we're against the same thing. We unite because we are for the same truth.

We're for the same truth. As I go on this trip, there are churches that will have me, because I stand against certain things that they stand against. But we have very little else in common.

I will not preach on those platforms, because the basis of our unity is not a common enemy. The basis of our unity is the common truth of the gospel. And we need to, this is becoming a real problem in churches today.

May God help us, that we may not be like Pilate and Herod. Even though they were enemies, united because they hated Jesus equally. But that we may be those who love the Lord Jesus, and unite with others who love Him.

That the basis of our fellowship is truth, and not against error. Not against error. And folk, I know there are people who say, well, it's the same thing.

If you're for truth, it means you're against error. No, it's not the same thing. There are many people who are against error, but they're not for truth.

All they are is against. They just like to fight with everybody. No, we need to be for the truth, and we need to unite around the truth.

Father, we said many, many things this morning, covered a lot of ground. We pray that You'd help us to understand, help us, Lord, to understand what it is You're speaking to us. Lord, we think particularly of the issue of conscience, and how that there are those who never had a conscience.

And then there are those who had a conscience, but seared it and killed it, by killing the truth spoken by Your prophet. And then there are others, Lord, who in the end will sacrifice their conscience for the sake of convenience and expediency. Lord, we pray that we may be those who hear Your voice, and Lord, who

obey Your voice no matter what the cost.

Lord, if it costs us our friends, if it costs us our position in society, if it costs us our jobs, if it costs us whatever, Lord, help us to be those who will stand and defend the truth. Lord, and that we would unite with others who stand for truth, not uniting against common enemies, but uniting for the same truth. And Lord, I pray that You'd help us to get these things clear.

Lord, that we may not fall in the traps that these men fell into. Lord, that we may not be guilty of the same sin of rejecting in the end Jesus Christ. But Lord, that we may find Him to be the spotless Lamb of God.

And Lord, as we look at all of this mess, and we look at all of the politics going on in these passages, Lord, we thank You that in the midst of all this darkness and this perversity and all of this lack of morality and integrity stands the spotless Lamb of God, never sinned, never did the wrong thing, never said the wrong word, shining, as it were, in the midst of a dark and perverse generation. Lord, I pray that You'd help us to be like that today. Lord, that we individually and as a church and as people may be those who stand out in the darkness of this world.

And Lord, while everything else around us is decaying and everything else is decaying into immorality and sin and evil and wickedness and even Christians falling away from the truth, Lord, we pray that we may be those who shine as a light in the midst of a dark and a perverse generation. We ask this in Jesus' name. And so Lord, I pray that You'd go with us now, keep us, protect us, bring us together again safely on Your appointed time.

I ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

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