

110. God on trials – Part 2

February 11, 2018

Last Sunday we studied 3 of the 6 trials of Jesus that were nothing more than a gross miscarriage of justice one after another within a few hours period. Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane in the middle of the night by the detachment of soldiers that was sent by the high priests of the temple. They already came up with their own execution verdict before the trial was started. The trials were nothing more than formality to get what they wanted. They were like blood thirsty wolves that were coming for a lamb, in this case, the Lamb of God, Jesus.

This morning we are going to study the very short fourth trial by Pilate and the fifth trial by king Herod. We will learn that our Lord Jesus Christ endured all this crazy mockery for our eternal life because of His love.

Another important thing we must note in our minds is that though Jesus was the Defendant in these trials, His knees were not shaken, nor was He hyperventilating. The people who thought that they were the judges in this case, they were the ones actually putting themselves in judgment of God.

A. THE FOURTH TRIAL BY PILATE

John 18:28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.

Between v24 and 28 Jesus went through the second and the third Jewish trials as we studied – one at the home of Caiaphas, the current high priest, and the other by the Sanhedrin which was the supreme court of the Jews at “Council Chamber” which was located in the Hall of Hewn Stone at the east side of the temple. This was the only place they could carry out their official business. So they had to bring Jesus here and waited for the sun to rise.

The Sanhedrin had a very short meeting and rushed to judgment against Christ and took Him to Pilate who was at the Praetorium in the Antonia Fortress at the temple mount in Jerusalem during the Passover season. It was customary for the Roman governor to be in Jerusalem during this time in case there were any outbursts of Jewish nationalism that would lead to riots against Rome in the streets of the capital city of Israel.

V28 shows me one of the lowest parts of human depravity coupled with hypocrisy at its worst. These Jewish religious rulers didn't have one bit of a problem to accuse an innocent Man Jesus with the concocted false charges and they were conspiring to murder the Man in their hearts, yet they didn't want to go into the Gentile's residence because of any possible ceremonial defilement from there. What an irony!

B. THE FALSE ACCUSATIONS AND PREDETERMINED VERDICT

John 18:29-32 Pilate then went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this Man?” 30 They answered and said to him, “If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.” 31 Then Pilate said to them, “You take Him and judge Him according to your law.” Therefore the Jews said to him, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,” 32 that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.

Pilate's initial question was the normal opening inquiry of a trial. Pilate was proceeded by the usual routine of Roman law and would not automatically pronounce a sentence without knowing the alleged crime. The high priest no doubt knew that Jesus was not guilty of any crime under Roman law and that there was no evidence to support a charge.

In response to Pilate's initial question, the Jewish religious leaders didn't answer him directly rather they skirted around the question. According to Luke 23:2, they came up with three charges:

Luke 23:2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, "(1) We found this fellow perverting the nation, and (2) forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, (3) saying that He Himself is Christ, a King."

Even though a life of a Jew didn't mean anything to him, the last thing Pilate had in mind was to get sucked into a Jewish controversial court case, especially during Passover. So He tried to push the issue back to them and let them handle it. Pilate thought, "If you want to kill Him so bad, do it yourself."

Then, you have to wonder why these Jewish rulers insisted crucifixion over stoning Jesus. They wanted to shame Jesus as much as possible by having Him on the cross – dying an excruciatingly slow death with shame of nakedness in public. Besides, they remembered the Scripture that says,

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23 his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

Jesus was to bear the curse of the law and become a curse for us; and in order to do this, He had to hang on a tree that is a cross.

C. THE MISERABLE END OF THE BETRAYER

Matt 27:3-10 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? You see to it!" 5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. 6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood." 7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced, 10 and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."

There are a few things I want you to notice in the miserable end of the betrayer Judas:

1) Remorseful, but not repenting

Judas was remorseful for what he has done to the innocent Man Jesus. Instead of turning to God with a repented heart, he turned to the religion and the religious leaders. Of course, they promptly rejected him, "You have served the purpose. Hit the road, Jack, and don't you come back no more, no more."

There is a tremendous difference between remorse and repentance. Remorse is that I am sorry that I got caught. But repentance requires more than being sorry. It requires turning away from what I have done and do what is right.

2 Corinthians 7:10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

2) A typical method of the devil

This is a typical method the devil uses. He entices us to take the bait of temptation. After we fall into the trap, the devil condemns us for it. However, for those who came to God with repented heart must remember that God has forgiven you and He doesn't remember your sins anymore.

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

3) The difference between Peter and Judas

Peter and Judas both failed Jesus in the same evening. One went to hell, the other went on to great things for the Lord. What was the difference? They each chose a tree. Judas chose a tree from which to hang himself. Peter chose a tree upon which to look. Truly, there is great power in seeing the Cross. Judas hung himself on the tree and lost his eternal life, but Peter depended on the One on the tree and found his eternal life.

4) A pathetic piety

The hypocrisy of the chief priests is truly pathetic. They didn't want to "defile" themselves with the price of blood, even though it was a price that they themselves paid.

D. PILATE ON TRIAL

Matt 27:11-14 Now Jesus stood before the governor. And the governor asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" So Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

Pontius Pilate was the sixth Roman governor to serve in Judea. He was in big trouble politically at this point. He was not liked by the Jews because he did things that deliberately violated their law and provoked them. To make the matter worse, he had been warned by Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar that if he made one more trouble to Rome, he would be removed from his post. So he really didn't want another controversial thing on his plate.

The Jewish leaders expected a favorable result when they took Jesus to Pilate. Secular history shows us that he was a cruel, ruthless man, almost completely insensitive to the moral feelings of others. Surely, they thought, Pilate would put this Jesus to death without even blinking an eye.

As I mentioned, the Jewish leaders knew that the original charge, blasphemy would not stick with Jesus, since Rome had multi-gods. So the Jewish leaders changed their charge against Jesus to insurrection, preventing the tax to Caesar and assuming the title of king. These were definitely political charges, the kind that a Roman governor had to handle.

Pilate focused on the third charge – that Jesus claimed to be a king – because this was a definite threat to Rome. If he could deal with this “revolutionary” properly, Pilate could please the Jews and impress the Emperor at the same time.

However, Jesus didn’t come up with a majestic defense, no instant miracle to save His own skin. Jesus gave Pilate the same simple reply He gave to the high priest. That amazed Pilate. Pilate couldn’t believe that such a strong, dignified man – as beaten and bloody as He was – would stand silent at these accusations.

When we think that we need to defend our faith from unbelievers, we would usually be better off staying silent and trusting God to defend us.

E. TO HEROD’S COURT

Luke 23:4-12 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.

Herod never took Jesus seriously. He wanted to see some miracles of Jesus as an evening entertainment. When Jesus refused to entertain him, Herod entertained himself by mistreating Jesus.

To this kind of person, considering having faith in Jesus is nothing more than believing a silly myth; to this kind of person, God’s Word is nothing more than religious mumbo jumbo; to this kind of person, God’s work is nothing more than coincidence; to this kind of person, God’s miracle is nothing more than an entertaining element; to this kind of person, following God’s way is a joke.

Are you this type of person who thinks that faith in God is a joke or something for a mentally weak person? If you are, you have no true hope, no true joy in your life, but it is void. Your happiness is temporary and you know that your heart is empty all the time.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) A lesson from Judas and the Jewish religious rulers: Don’t sell off what you have in Christ for all the popularities, benefits, and convenience that the world uses to entice us.

2) A lesson from Pilate: Don’t be threatened by the world’s influence. They always come and go, but the truth of our God remains forever.

3) A lesson from Herod: Don’t take the truth of God as a joke or silly tales. If you do, you will regret it.