

GUILTY, THOUGH PROVEN INNOCENT

Luke 22:63-23:25

U.S. legal system established the axiom: "Innocent, until proven guilty."

Though some people debate how consistently we apply it,

it's an established principle we accept as the norm for a just society.

Luke demonstrates that opposite occurred in our Lord's case..

Evidence demonstrates that

Jesus is condemned, though proven innocent!

TRIAL 22:63-23:25 Jesus' trial is described in Luke 22:63-23:25.

Wiersbe: "The trial of Jesus revealed both the wicked heart of man, and the gracious heart of God. When men were doing their worst, God was giving His best. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

***Jesus' trial took place in various stages,
all of which point to His innocence.***

Nevertheless, He's condemned.

BEFORE THE COUNCIL 22:63-71

Unjust mistreatment

Jesus is abused illegally by the guards without a cause

22:63-65 *The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. 64 They blindfolded him and demanded, "Prophecy! Who hit you?" 65 And they said many other insulting things to him.*

Jesus' captors mock, blaspheme and mistreat Him.

Trial before the elders (the Sanhedrin) 22:66-71

At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. ⁶⁷ "If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸ and if I asked you, you would not answer. ⁶⁹ But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

⁷⁰ They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, "You are right in saying I am." ⁷¹ Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."

Although religious leadership isn't interested in

discovering the truth about Jesus, they accuse Him

because of His claim to be Son of God, that is, Messiah

In the questioning Jesus makes clear what the issue is:

They aren't looking for truth.

They're seeking a basis for condemnation.

They won't give serious consideration to His answers,
unless those answers serve to condemn Him.

If they ask Him whether He is Messiah, and if He answers directly,
complete with Scriptural evidence, they won't turn to Him.

They'll just use it against Him.

Their hearts are set against Him.

They won't answer questions themselves, if they're asked.

Their purpose is to trap and condemn Him.

Leaders demonstrate:

it's possible to spend your entire life hearing the Word of God.

You can know it and quote it, and still not seek the truth.

You can still reject Jesus!

Their only interest in Jesus is to get rid of Him

-they don't want to know the truth!

At various phases of trial a direct question is asked about who Jesus is.

In each case He responds "You say it."

This is an affirmation of agreement, much like *"You said it!"*

There's nothing illegal about claiming to be Son of God,
if you are the Son of God.

They never investigate His claim.

They refuse to consider the evidence.

BEFORE PILATE 23:1-5 *Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate.² And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."³ So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.⁴ Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."⁵ But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."*

Pilate finds no reason to condemn Jesus.

You have to understand some things about Pilate.

He's not exactly the Christian's ideal of a "god-fearing" ruler.

He's a crass pagan politician.

He treacherously killed Jewish people and is hated by them.

He sent armed spies undercover into a protesting mob;

they savagely silenced many by drawing knives on them.

EVEN PILATE understands that Jesus is innocent!

On this occasion, his desire for justice shines—alongside the darkness revealed by Israel's religious leaders who set this trial up.

Pilate tries to side-step the issue.

Other accounts tell us that he told *them* to try the case.

It's an issue of their law, not his.

But that also rules out the death penalty.

Their law can't be used to kill offenders.

Pilate tries to give it away to Herod.

Pilate tries to escape issue by annual Passover prisoner release.

Pilate tries to acquit Jesus.

They're determined not to let Pilate release Him.

He must take a stand against them, or surrender to the pressure.

They present three charges against Jesus:

1. He's corrupting the nation—leading people astray

This isn't Pilate's concern!

2. He's prohibiting payment of taxes—A false charge.

Their view! Jesus directs people to pay their due to Caesar.

Pilate never addresses issue—Perhaps he heard that counsel.

3. He claims to be a king.

From Jewish perspective this is blasphemy/heresy

From Roman perspective it's treason.

It's intended to sound like insurrection.

Pilate investigates the charges and finds Jesus innocent.

There's NO BASIS FOR CONDEMNATION!

BEFORE HEROD 23:6-12 *On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean.⁷ When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle.⁹ He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.¹⁰ The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him.¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.¹² That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.*

Pilate's decision is confirmed by Herod also.

Herod is excited.

He heard about Jesus. This is his chance to see Him personally.

He hopes to get a little free entertainment—to see Him "do some tricks!"

Herod gets nothing for his effort, except a political friendship with Pilate.

Jesus doesn't even answer his questions!

Jesus' silence may be because of Herod's *inquisitiveness*,

but lack of genuine *interest in discovering the truth*.

His idle curiosity is disappointed.

Herod demonstrates his attitude about Jesus by joining in the mockery,

dressing Him up as a make-believe king and making fun of Him.

The agreement between Pilate and Herod form basis for friendship between the two, who previously opposed each other frequently.

Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate without intervening in the case.

23:15 affirms: Herod's conclusion agrees with Pilate's and becomes basis for their new alliance.

PROCLAMATION OF INNOCENCE 23:13-17 *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people,¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death.¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."*

Pilate is convinced of Jesus' innocence.

He repeats it various times in his attempt to release Jesus.

PUBLIC PROTEST 23:18-23 *With one voice they cried out, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again.²¹ But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"²² For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."²³ But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed.*

Listen to the dialogue!

Who wants to release the Savior? A pagan politician!

Punishing Jesus at all is the result of pressure.

Why punish an innocent man?

"I'll punish Him, because I know you want to get Him,

but that's as far as I can go because He hasn't done anything!"

The more Pilate attempts to persuade them,

the more vehement their response becomes.

Descriptive words keep getting stronger.

Finally, Pilate gives in to the pressure of the Jews to crucify Him

The Jews are the protagonists

Don't think this is same crowd that acclaims Jesus king a few days earlier.

Evidences that this crowd is planted:

Leaders are afraid of what the crowd will do if they witness the arrest.

They're deliberately avoiding the crowd!

It's too early in the morning for the crowd,

who don't know what's happening, to be up and around the palace.

There was a mob with the leaders that night at the arrest.

A tourist was standing in front of *the Mona Lisa*. After examining the picture for a long time, he remarks: "I don't see anything so great about that!"

A guard responds, "Sir, that painting is not on trial. Your taste is."

So it is with Jesus. He's not on trial. He's the standard.

It's Israel that's on trial; it's humanity that's on trial that day!

SENTENCING BY CONCESSION 23:24-25 *So Pilate decided to grant their demand.²⁵ He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will.*

Pilate's decision:

Jesus is condemned, not on the basis of law or legal precedence, but on the basis of crowd pressure.

They choose the release of an insurrectionist and murderer,

a known sinner, over Messiah who could take away their sin!

Pilate gives in to their demands

and releases an insurrection-leading murderer.

Pilate lets them have their way with Jesus.

That doesn't let Pilate off the hook for the wrong he does.

It does demonstrate who takes the initiative in killing Jesus:

the very people who should have been most excited at His coming.

WHAT TOOK JESUS TO THE CROSS?

1. Luke's view: unjust accusation and public pressure, against all legal justice and precedent, led by "God's own people"

2. REAL answer – God's love. No one took His life.

Listen to His dialogue with Pilate from John 19:7-11

The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." 8 When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, 9 and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. 10 "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" 11 Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

Mark 10:45 Jesus came to give His life as a ransom for us!

John 10:17-18 *The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."*

Jesus went to the cross, not because of the legal case against Him, but because He chose to go.

He endured the oppression of the cross for us, because of our sin.

He willingly bore what we deserve—That we might have life!