

THE KING OF THE JEWS

“This Man Has Done Nothing Wrong”

by Greg Kilgore

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“That isn’t fair!” We’ve heard it at school, we’ve heard it on the ball field, we’ve heard it in movies, and we’ve heard it in our own homes. Likely we have even said these very words ourselves. We feel inside ourselves a need to let others know when things are not fair and complain when things we think are fair do not actually happen.

GOD’S GRACE WHEN WE DESIRE FAIRNESS

The truth is no one should want God to be fair to us. What we have often failed to realize is that our sinful rebellion has so corrupted us that we truly are not able to understand what is fair on our own. We really do not know what is fair because our sinful pride has blinded us. We think fairness is based on what we deserve. But the fact is we truly do not know what we deserve considering our sinfulness against God.

The person who says he wants God to be fair to him does not truly understand who he is and who God is! He does not understand the holiness of the Almighty God and the sinfulness of fallen man.

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ shows us that we need God to be unfair to us. For everything that happened to Jesus on the way to and including the cross is what we deserve: punishment and death. In our sinful rebellion against God, we are the ones who deserve what Jesus endured. He was sinless but took our punishment for us.

Nothing is more unfair than the grace of God that He has shown us in His Son, Jesus Christ. When we understand our sin properly, against the righteousness of God—the holy God we offend—we see that we truly get what we do not deserve in Christ.

THE HORRIFIC WONDER OF THE CROSS

On the cross Jesus experienced hell—He became a curse for us. He did this so that one day we could be saved from our sin and its consequences. The death of Jesus was horrific. He was forsaken, not for anything He did or deserved but forsaken for us! Do you see the horror of the only sinless One to ever live suffering and dying on the cross? He did that all for us.

This shows us that though the cross was horrific, it was also a wonderful act of love. Romans 5:8 says that God proved His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That there is true love.

WHY JESUS DID NOT COME DOWN

Why did Jesus not come down from the cross, knowing that He could? Why did He stay? Certainly, with Jesus being divine, He had the power and the ability to come down with angels at His beck and call.

The soldiers mocked Him, dividing up His clothes and insulting Him. They yelled, “If you are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!” The irony of their mocking is that Jesus could have descended from the cross to save Himself. It was not the nails that kept Jesus on the cross, He stayed because of His love for His people. He stayed to rescue us from sin. Jesus loves His people so much that He bore our sin and punishment on the cross. He stayed because it was the only way for any of us to be saved from the eternal punishment due for our sins.

The cross
accomplishes the
payment we need to
be brought into right
relationship with our
eternal King.

WHAT THE CROSS ACCOMPLISHES

What does the cross of Jesus accomplish? Salvation! And at the heart of this salvation is redemption. Redemption is the work of Christ to bring repentant sinners back into right relationship with God.

Back at the beginning, in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve sinned against God. They trusted the word of Satan over the word of God, and they sinned against God. Sin entered the world, and along with sin came the wages of sin: death. What did God do? He did not wipe out the human race then and there. God had every right to do that—He is the Creator—He did not have to save anyone.

God could have treated humans the same way He treated the fallen angels. In 2 Peter 2:4 it says that God did not spare the fallen angels but cast them into hell. God could have done the same thing right then and there in Genesis 3 to humanity.

Instead of casting Adam, Eve, and all humanity into hell for their sin, God promised to send a deliverer. Genesis 3:15 speaks of One who would come and crush the head of Satan. God promised redemption, He promised to restore those who have trusted in His Deliverer to a right relationship with their Creator.

Without the cross, all would be cast out of God’s presence, but now through the cross, all who place their faith in Jesus are welcomed into relationship with the Almighty God! The cross accomplishes the payment we need to be brought into right relationship with our eternal King.

ALL OF HISTORY CENTERS ON CHRIST

All of history centers on the life and death of Jesus Christ. The good news of the gospel, however, does not end with our Savior and King crucified on the cross. Yes, His life ended, darkness covered the land, the earth shook, and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. But when those who buried Jesus’s body closed the tomb with a large stone, it was not the final time light would penetrate inside. Three days later, Jesus exited the tomb as the King who holds the power over sin and death! Jesus’s resurrection reveals His victory over all, which allows us victory over all as well!



THE ACCUSED KING



+ SESSION OUTLINE

1. Jesus, the King of the Jews, is wrongly tried (Luke 22:66-71).
2. Jesus, the King of the Jews, is wrongly accused (Luke 23:1-5).
3. Jesus, the King of the Jews, is wrongly condemned (Luke 23:13-25).

Background Passage: Luke 22–23

+ WHAT WILL MY GROUP LEARN?

Jesus was arrested, tried, and condemned to die, even though He did no wrong.

+ HOW WILL MY GROUP SEE CHRIST?

Jesus was condemned to die although He did no wrong. In this, Jesus became the perfect substitute for us, bearing our sins on the cross to provide forgiveness. All who have trusted in Christ are no longer under condemnation but have been declared righteous by God.

+ HOW SHOULD MY GROUP RESPOND?

Because we have been forgiven of our sin, we cast aside guilt and shame when we sin and instead repent with assurance that we are always loved and accepted by God.

GROUP TIME

Group content found in the Daily Discipleship Guide is included in the shaded areas throughout the session.



SCRIPTURE HANDOUT

Scan this QR code for a reproducible handout of this session's Scripture passages.



CHRIST AS KING

Scan this QR code for a brief theological reflection on Jesus as the promised King and an explanation of the imagery in the poster.

INTRODUCTION

ASK: As participants arrive, ask: **What are some examples of situations in which you know what to expect but it's still hard to move forward?** (visiting family who are hard to be around; ripping off a bandage; getting a filling for your teeth at the dentist)

EXPLAIN: Jesus knew He had to suffer. He knew He had to sacrifice Himself. But it was still a difficult and agonizing time. Putting us above Himself, however, He endured and persevered in His mission.

SUMMARIZE: Help your group understand the **setting** for this session.

- After three full years of ministry, the time had come for the promised Messiah—the ultimate Prophet, Priest, and King who had been anticipated for millennia—to finish what He had started. His mission was clear and His resolve strong. Through the enabling strength of the Spirit by the unshakable will of the Father, the Son of God set His face to the cross. Much suffering awaited Jesus, some of which would be physical, but it would also be emotional as He watched His followers and friends abandon Him, betray Him, and become a part of condemning Him to death.

OPTIONAL QUESTION: Why is endurance so hard? (we can be selfish, lazy beings; endurance involves much self-denial; we tend to forget about end goals and instead get caught up with momentary desires; we are tired and weak and don't have the strength to endure)

TRANSITION: Call attention to **PACK ITEM 11: CHRIST AS KING**, specifically the left half, and say: "Jesus knew exactly what this day would entail, yet our King endured to the end for the sake of the gospel, for us, and for God's glory. Let's look at those last hours in the Gospel of Luke."



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POINT 1

JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS, IS WRONGLY TRIED (LUKE 22:66-71).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 22:66-71** from his or her own Bible.

66 When day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes. And they led him away to their council, and they said, **67** “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe, **68** and if I ask you, you will not answer. **69** But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.” **70** So they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them, “You say that I am.” **71** Then they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

EXPLAIN: Using the content below, explain from **verses 66-68** the following idea (DDG p. 102):

After Jesus was arrested, the Jewish religious leaders didn’t follow their own rules for trials as they tried to trap Jesus into the charge of blasphemy.

- Though Rome ruled the day, the Jews enjoyed much autonomy—especially when it came to religious matters. The Sanhedrin was the organization that ruled over Jewish affairs and took care of their legal matters. This group of leaders included seventy members, presided over by the high priest.¹ The role of high priest was originally established by God to be the mediator between Him and His people. By the time of Jesus, the high priests were dominated by extra-biblical rules rather than a covenant-relationship with God. The Sanhedrin opposed Jesus from the get-go and plotted against Him.
- After the last supper, Jesus was betrayed and arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. He was taken to both Annas, the former high priest and likely still a very influential religious leader (John 18:13), and Caiaphas, the current high priest (John 18:24). According to Jewish law, the Sanhedrin could not hold trials at night, but Jesus was dragged back and forth between informal proceedings with leaders after hours in hopes of settling the problem of Jesus once and for all.
- The issue at hand was Jesus’s claim of being the Messiah. Jesus had previously displayed His divine nature and supreme power, but these religious rulers proved hardhearted and still did not believe. Though they wanted Jesus to make the claim that He is the Messiah, Jesus knew the truth would fall on deaf ears. Thus, Jesus chose at this point not to give them the clear-cut confession they desired.

ASK: In trying to prove Jesus wrong, the religious leaders ended up not realizing their methods were wrong. We sometimes can be like that as well. Discuss the following question (DDG p. 102):

What are some examples of Christians using wrong methods when trying to share the truth? (in the way we share the gospel without mercy; in the way we speak against homosexuality or abortion without compassion for the person; in the way we might argue about politics without grace)

HIGHLIGHT: Using the content below, explain from **verses 69-71** the following idea (DDG p. 102):

Jesus's claim of divinity was punishable by death. No other accusation or testimony was needed for the religious leaders.

- Jesus rightfully claimed to be the Son of Man who will be seated at the right hand of God, a reference to being the Son of God and divine.
- The scheming leaders' response showed that Jesus's significant statement was not lost on the Sanhedrin: "Are you the Son of God, then?" (v. 70). They made the connection that Jesus was professing to be the Son of God. It is notable that their question includes "the." Just as "son of man" is found in the Old Testament, so are mentions of "sons of God," which can also refer to angelic beings (Gen. 6:2; Job 1:6; Pss. 29:1; 82:6). But in this instance, the religious leaders were trying to trap Jesus into saying that He is the supreme Son of God. Furthermore, this title also implies kingship, as it was used to refer to a king representing God's rule (2 Sam. 7:13-14; Ps. 2:7).
- Jesus is truly human and divine. He is *the* Son of Man and *the* Son of God, titles that have both human and divine connotations. He is the promised One, the Savior of the world. He is Christ, the King of kings. The Sanhedrin denied Jesus's claim of divinity and accused Him of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death. They needed no other accusation or testimony.

DISCUSS: Any of us could have been in that group of religious leaders. Ask (DDG p. 102):

What reasons did the religious leaders have for wanting Jesus condemned? (anger at Him calling them hypocrites; disbelief that He really could be the Messiah; jealousy at all His followers; being undone by His orthodox way of seeing Scripture and religion)

TRANSITION: With a formal declaration of guilt in hand, the Jewish leaders set their sights on involving the local regent, Pilate. Jesus's claim to be the kingly Son of God was bound to be inflammatory to the Roman rulers. The Sanhedrin sought to seal the deal through an imperial condemnation and execution.

SON OF MAN

Jesus often referred to Himself as the Son of Man, a well-known term to faithful Jews. "Son of man" is seen over 90 times in the book of Ezekiel. Additionally, a messianic prophecy from Daniel 7:13-14 spoke of "one like a son of man" who will receive an everlasting dominion, indestructible kingdom, and glory among all peoples (all three reserved for God alone). Paired with the reference that the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of God's power (Ps. 110), Jesus claimed to be the Christ promised long ago.

POINT 2

JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS, IS WRONGLY ACCUSED (LUKE 23:1-5).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 23:1-5** from his or her own Bible.

1 Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. **2** And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” **3** And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” **4** Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.” **5** But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

EXPLAIN: Using the content below, explain from **verses 1-3** the accusations made against Jesus (DDG p. 102).

The Jewish leaders made three accusations against Jesus: (1) misleading the nation, (2) opposing Roman taxes, and (3) claiming to be king—all twisted truths geared toward influencing Pilate to condemn Jesus.

- Having condemned Jesus on a religious basis, the Sanhedrin sought to have Him denounced politically as well. Jesus was brought to Pontius Pilate, who alone carried the power to order that Jesus be executed (see John 18:31).² The Jewish leaders presented three accusations against Jesus: (1) misleading the nation, (2) opposing Roman taxes, and (3) claiming to be king.
- First, they claimed Jesus was leading the Jews astray, threatening the Roman peace. Of course, this was wholly untrue. Similarly, the second indictment seems to have been a lie about Jesus’s answer to the question: “Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not?” (Luke 20:22). Jesus answered in favor of paying taxes, but the religious rulers needed something that might trigger a response from Pilate. Only the third allegation—Jesus stating He is the Messiah—held any sort of veracity. Jesus had claimed to be the promised Messiah, and so, Jesus did claim to be the King of the Jews.
- Pilate could not allow for any sort of threat of insurrection to go unchecked, even if he did not believe that threat existed. So he inquired about the third accusation by going to the source. But Jesus answered Pilate in the same ambiguous way He did the Sanhedrin, “You have said so” (Luke 23:3).

ASK: Jesus was persecuted and wrongly accused, so we, His followers, can’t expect anything less. Let groups of 3-4 discuss the following and additionally to consider why Christians might be accused of such (DDG p. 102):

What are some things Christians are wrongly accused of at times? (being bigots; not being intellectual; hating LGBTQ+ people; wanting to condemn people to hell; having a purely political agenda)

PONTIUS PILATE

Roman governor in Judea who came into power around AD 26. He was so anti-semitic that he brought “into Jerusalem military insignia bearing the image of Caesar in flagrant defiance of Jewish law. . . . He brutally suppressed protest by planting armed soldiers, disguised as civilians, among the Jewish crowds.”⁴



Scan this QR code for a look at an archaeological find establishing the existence of Pilate as a Roman governor of Judea.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

“As our greatest good comes through the sufferings of Christ, so God’s greatest glory that he has from his saints comes through their sufferings.”⁵

—Thomas Brooks (1608–1680)

HIGHLIGHT: Using the content below and **verses 4-5**, highlight (DDG p. 102):

Though Pilate found Jesus innocent, the enemies of Jesus continued to accuse Jesus of wrongdoing.

- Pilate saw nothing about Jesus that was deserving of death. The governor's jurisdiction was within that of legal civic matters. So his declaration of Jesus's innocence addressed the charges brought before him that pertained to Roman rule. He determined that the assembly's allegations against Jesus stemmed from a religious matter outside of his jurisdiction, issues that needed to be taken care of within the Sanhedrin, not by Rome.
- Instead of accepting this proclamation of innocence, the Jewish leaders continued to push their agenda. They presented Pilate with more "evidence" of the supposed provocation and negative influence of Jesus on the people. In the vein of accusing Jesus of misleading the people, the Jewish leaders said that Jesus was inciting the people. In a short time, their accusation against Jesus went from deceptive leader to that of an agitator and instigator of rebellion against Rome.
- By bringing up where Jesus taught, specifically Galilee (v. 5), the Sanhedrin members may have been attempting to recall for Pilate a former tax revolt led by a Galilean in AD 6.³ If Jesus was Galilean, then perhaps He held the same tendency toward rebellion. Through this new accusation, the Jewish leaders further painted a false portrait of Jesus as a man filled with dissension, chaos, and revolution.

DISCUSS: Even Pilate, a Roman governor who hated Jews, found no guilt in Jesus. Discuss the following (DDG p. 102):

How does knowing Jesus lived a holy and innocent life but still dealt with persecution and injustice encourage you when you face similar troubles? (helps me persevere in hard times; encourages me to always do right; reminds me that good does prevail)

TRANSITION: The Sanhedrin had hoped to persuade Pilate of Jesus's threat to Rome, but they were unsuccessful. Their reference to Galilee provided Pilate a way out of this pickle: Galilee was under someone else's jurisdiction. Therefore, Pilate could pass this problem to Herod. But the Galilean loophole didn't work out the way Pilate had hoped. Jesus was sent to Herod, but Herod also found no fault in Jesus and no reason to condemn Him, though Herod and his soldiers did mock and beat Him. So Herod returned Jesus to Pilate (vv. 6-12).

POINT 3

JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS, IS WRONGLY CONDEMNED (LUKE 23:13-25).

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 23:13-25** from his or her own Bible.

13 Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, **14** and said to them, “You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. **15** Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. **16** I will therefore punish and release him.” **18** But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”—**19** a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. **20** Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, **21** but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” **22** A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.” **23** But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. **24** So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. **25** He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

EXPLAIN: Using the content below, explain from **verses 13-23** (DDG p. 103):

Again Pilate found no guilt in Jesus, but because of the insistent cries of the crowd, he condemned Him.

LUKE 23:17

Omitted from early manuscripts and modern-day Bible translations, having little textual support. It was most likely added, not by Luke but a scribe, just to explain the custom of releasing a prisoner.

BARABBAS

A prisoner at the same time as Jesus. In Matthew 27:16, Barabbas was a notorious prisoner. In Mark 15:7, he was a rebel and murderer. In Luke 23:19, he was an insurrectionist and murderer. And John describes him as a robber (John 18:40).

- Pilate once again declared to the Jewish leaders that there were no grounds by which he could charge Jesus. With his declaration in verse 16 to have Jesus whipped and released, Pilate attempted to close the civil case against Jesus. But suddenly, the people joined in against Jesus as well. Those who had so recently warmly welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with shouts of “Hosanna!” were now calling for His crucifixion.
- There was a custom that during the time of the Passover feast, the governor of the region would release from captivity a prisoner of their choosing (see Matt. 27:15; Mark 15:6; John 18:39). The crowd demanded the release of Barabbas—the type of wicked criminal they had accused Jesus of being.
- Luke points to a third time that Pilate declared Jesus as not guilty (Luke 23:22).
- Crowd control was a real factor for Roman rulers like Pilate. The mass of people was becoming a powerful posse of demanding voices, ready to erupt. A riot was imminent, and Pilate either had to release Jesus from custody with an official ruling of “not guilty” or condemn Jesus for crimes He did not commit. The former was sure to kickstart a revolt. The latter was certain to result in an unjust tragedy, but the people’s voices had to be heard.

DISCUSS: The crowd, like sheep without a shepherd, can be dangerous. Ask the following question (DDG pp. 100,103):

From Day 4 in the DDG: **Why is mob rule so effective?** (the voice of many is exponentially more powerful than one; the frenetic energy of a mob is dangerous and unpredictable; people tend to follow the masses without reason)

READ: Without Christ, we are like sheep without a shepherd, following the masses blindly, enslaved to sin. Read the following doctrine (DDG p. 103):

Key Doctrine #43: Enslaved to Sin: Because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, all of humanity has inherited a sin nature that inclines them toward sin and rebellion. Human beings are enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:17), continually living with the propensity to transgress God's commandments whenever possible. It isn't until one experiences salvation through the work of Christ that he or she is able to overcome sin's enslavement through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2).

EXPLAIN: Using the content below and **verses 24-25**, explain that all are guilty.

- Because human beings are enslaved to sin apart from Christ, we are all found guilty. Whether we are the religious leaders, the crowds, or Pilate. We twist truth and condemn true goodness. But Jesus doesn't leave us there. He came and died so that we would be free from sin's enslavement.
- Pilate saw no way to avert this crisis, so he acquiesced to the will of the crowd. This was a massive injustice for which he rightfully stood guilty, yet it was also part of God's holy plan set forth long ago. Regardless of the religious rulers' denial of Jesus's deity, the people's rejection of the Messiah, or Pilate's limitations to do what was right, God's sovereign will to crush His Son, the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53:4-6), for our salvation could not be thwarted.

DISCUSS: Though we as believers in Christ are no longer enslaved to sin, we still sin. Ask (DDG p. 103):

What can we do to sin less? (stay in close relationship with Jesus in prayer and Scripture reading; have someone to keep us accountable; remember that we are able to say no to temptation; rely on the Holy Spirit's power)

REVIEW: Use #4 through #8 on **PACK ITEM 2: PASSION WEEK MAP** and the events of Friday on **PACK ITEM 3: PASSION WEEK TIMELINE** to visualize and summarize the events on this day in Jesus's life in this session.

TRANSITION: Jesus faced an unjust trial, resulting in a guilty verdict. Yet Jesus endured so that He could free the very people who sent Him to His execution.



MY RESPONSE

SAY: Jesus was condemned to die although He did no wrong. In this, Jesus became the perfect substitute for us, bearing our sins on the cross to provide forgiveness. All who have trusted in Christ are no longer under condemnation but have been declared righteous by God. Because we have been forgiven of our sin, we cast aside guilt and shame when we sin and instead repent with assurance that we are always loved and accepted by God.

HEAD:

The only perfectly just One was unjustly treated. He obediently endured mistreatment and scorn from the very ones He planned to rescue. We too have dishonored Jesus through our own disobedient actions. Even though He knew we would betray Him, Christ provided a way out by saving us from our sin.

If Jesus suffered without sinning, how are we to try to endure our present sufferings?

HEART:

Jesus willingly walked into a stormy situation that would lead to His death. He allowed lies to run rampant and refused to set the record straight, all because of the compassionate will of His Father to save the souls of humankind. As we embrace the sacrifice of the King of the Jews, we can experience the mercy and grace of God for eternity.

Knowing Jesus suffered unjustly, how can we thank Him for His desire to do the Father's will in enduring suffering and dying for us?

HANDS:

Any one of us could have been in that angry, demanding mob. Though we believers have been saved by Jesus and the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we continue to sin. When we do, we resemble our sinful forefathers who shouted, "Crucify Him!" Our sin is what necessitated Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. His love for the Father is what drove Jesus to His crucifixion. The Father's patience and compassion for us is what sent Jesus to earth to fulfill His sacrificial mission. Praise be to God for His salvation!

Knowing Jesus has taken away our enslavement to sin, with whom can we share this good news for their salvation also?

PRAY: Jesus, thank You for enduring false accusations and false condemnation that we may no longer be condemned. May Your goodness and holiness flow in us that others may see You and believe the good news of Your salvation. Amen.

VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"Surely corruption is ingrained in our hearts, interwoven with our very natures, has sunk deep into our souls, and will never be cured but by a miracle of grace."⁶

—Thomas Boston
(1676–1732)

POINT 1: JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS, IS WRONGLY TRIED (LUKE 22:66-71).

+ COMMENTARY

“These words aroused intense interest. All joined in the question that followed. Whereas before they had asked Jesus to say whether he was the Christ, now they ask the direct question, Are you the Son of God, then? As men are sometimes called sons of God, we must understand the definite article as important (‘the’ not ‘a’ Son of God). They are asking whether Jesus claims a special relationship to God. His reference to the Son of man and to the place of God’s right hand must have seemed to them a claim to a higher place than that which they understood the Messiah to occupy. For them a claim to be Messiah might be a mistake, but it was not blasphemy. But this was something different; it linked Jesus to deity. His reply means something like, ‘That is your word, not mine. I would not have put it like that, but since you have, I cannot deny it.’ Moffatt renders, ‘Certainly I am’, but this is too definite. I. Abrahams denies that the expression renders a rabbinic idiom, and we cannot take it as a common expression. But the context shows that it must be taken as an affirmative. The point is that Jesus’ understanding of the term differed from theirs; but he could not disown it and his answer recognizes this.”⁷

+ ILLUSTRATION

One day, an elderly lady hosted her extended family in her home for a holiday lunch. After enjoying the food and family fellowship, many began cleaning up the aftermath. While standing at the sink, which had a clear view of the backyard, one relative mentioned how nice the grass in the backyard looked. The matriarch replied, “Rats?! In my backyard?” Several members of the family tried to explain to her that there were no rats, only good-looking “grass” in the backyard. But it took several attempts to explain the situation before this grandma could let go of the idea that rats were taking up residence behind her home.

Though this was an innocuous situation, having your words misunderstood can be frustrating for all involved. There are countless situations in which our words may be misheard, misconceived, or misconstrued. Sometimes it is the case of an innocent mistake. Other times, it is an intentional act and twisting of truth. The misunderstanding recorded here in Luke’s Gospel was a critical one—it was a matter of life and death. Instead of digging in His heels and proving His point, Jesus allowed the scene to play out. How hard it must have been to be wronged,

EXTRA

shamed, and misconceived. We must not forget that Jesus was not only fully God, He was also fully man. What we feel when we are misunderstood, Jesus felt too.

POINT 2: JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS, IS WRONGLY ACCUSED (LUKE 23:1-5).

+ COMMENTARY

“Let Us Stand on the Truth (23:1–5) Pilate’s court/state supreme court. They would have killed the Lord then, but there was a problem: The Romans had conquered Israel, and because the Jews were under Roman occupation, they could not carry out a death sentence themselves; only Rome could do that. So the Jewish court refers the case to the state supreme court. They bring the Lord to Pilate. Verse 2 says they actually change the charges. They accuse Jesus of ‘misleading our nation, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is the Messiah, a king.’ Of course, the first two charges are not true and the last charge is manipulative. They’re trying to paint Jesus as a public menace and a threat to the Roman government. In fact, another Gospel writer tells us that they tried to put Pilate in an awkward position. They tried to say that Pilate would not be loyal to Caesar if Pilate didn’t condemn Jesus. So Pilate questions the Lord: ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ The Lord admits it plainly with the words, ‘You say so’ (v. 3). Again, another Gospel writer tells us that Pilate felt like he was the superior: he told Jesus he had power over the Lord’s life. But the Lord responds by saying, ‘You would have no authority over me at all if it hadn’t been given you from above’ (John 19:11), and, ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (John 18:36). The Lord is not only Messiah but also King of Heaven and Earth. Pilate finishes his interrogation and actually finds Jesus not guilty (v. 4). Verse 5 says the priests kept insisting that the Lord was a threat to the government. At this point, public opinion is interfering with justice.”⁸

+ ILLUSTRATION

On the morning of October 7, 2016, in Izmir, Turkey, Pastor Andrew Brunson was arrested by local officials. They stated the cause of arrest was that they found him to be a threat to national security. At this point in time, Brunson and his family, U.S. citizens from North Carolina, had peacefully lived and faithfully served in Turkey for over 23 years. Pastor Andrew was detained with no official offenses charged against him. After being held for 63 days, he was transferred to a counter-terrorism center and later given a court trial with charges of being an armed terrorist group member. There was no basis or evidence for these indictments. The judge condemned Pastor Brunson as guilty of terrorism and sent him to a Turkish prison, where he remained until July 2018. He was then put on house arrest until a hearing on October 12, 2018, when he was finally released and able to return to the United States.⁹

As believers in Christ, if Jesus was wrongly accused, there will be times when we are wrongly accused for our faith as well.

POINT 3: JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS, IS WRONGLY CONDEMNED (LUKE 23:13-25).

+ COMMENTARY

“The situation was beginning to become crazy. Here were priests demanding the execution of Jesus on the ground that he was attempting to overthrow the political authorities. Yet these very priests would not themselves bow to the political authorities; and what is more, they were calling for the release of a known political activist who in a recent civil disturbance in the city had committed murder. . . . At this crucial moment in the narrative we cannot help noticing the insistent repetitions in Luke’s language: ‘But they insisted with loud voices asking that he might be crucified. And their voices prevailed. And Pilate . . . released one who for insurrection and murder had been cast into prison, whom they asked for, but Jesus he delivered up to their will . . . It is only a few verses since we were listening to the prayers of another petitioner before another authority: ‘If thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine be done’ (22:42). That was the king at prayer, and one day as a result of that prayer he would sit at the right hand of the power of God and have the government of the universe entrusted to him. How different the priests and the people. Standing before the properly constituted political authority (see Rom 13:1-7) whose sacred God-given task it was to protect the innocent and condemn the guilty, these priests insisted on overriding the will of the political authority and on having their own will done. Their own will was that the innocent be condemned and a murderous insurrectionist be released. But whatever becomes of people who insist on their own will like that?”¹⁰

+ ILLUSTRATION

A famous quote states, “To love is to risk not being loved in return.”¹¹ When love is true, it is sacrificial. This is the type of affectionate attachment that drives you to do that which you never dreamed you would do. It is a devotion that demands that you do what is best for your beloved, even if it includes difficult decisions, sleepless nights, relinquishing personal preferences, and choosing to serve instead of being served. When you love someone that deeply, in the face of danger, you would die to save the other. Jesus took on the condemnation due to us. He willingly walked through betrayal, beatings, and having the criminal Barabbas chosen over Him. At any point, Jesus could have said, “Enough!” But He endured it all for love. First and foremost, each step toward the cross was an act of love for His Father. Yet His journey to the cross was also love on display for all of humanity so that you and I could enjoy eternity in the loving presence of God.

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