

## **JESUS WAS CONDEMNED IN OUR PLACES (The Great Exchange)**

Luke 22:63-23:25

Key verses 23:25 “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.”

My opening question is, “How do you respond to injustice?” In times of injustice, our emotions and actions vary. Some react with anger, seeking retaliation, while others may withdraw in despair or become indifferent.

Luke knew that the first century Christians would go into fiery persecution. Apostle Paul said all who live a godly life will be persecuted. (2Tim 3:12) All Christians then and now will suffer. And we need to be equipped to face it.

This passage screams injustice. Innocent Jesus was mocked, shamed, beaten, and condemned to death, while the murderer Barabbas was released from death. At the same time this passage proclaims the great exchange: Jesus was condemned in Barabbas’ place and in our place.

Through this message, let us see how Jesus dealt with such injustice and how he willingly made the greatest exchange. May we personally accept his great exchange first and then practice it.

### 1. Jesus’ unwavering hope as the Son of Man

At the high priest’s house, Jesus’ ordeal began in earnest. In 22:63, the guards began mocking, then blindfolding him and beating him in the face, and “... ask(ed) him, ‘Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?’” Luke summarized all they did as “blaspheming him.” Jesus is the Creator God who created the heavens and earth. They mocked his divinity. And Jesus bore it all quietly.

In Luke 22:66-23:25, we see how Jesus dealt with trials, sufferings and injustice. Firstly, Jesus held firmly to his steadfast hope. In verse 66, Jesus was first led to the court of the Sanhedrin. Its members, the chief priests and the scribes, a total of 70 sat in the front row, and the splendidly dressed High priest sat in an exalted judgment seat staring down on beaten and bloody Jesus.

How had they come to this point? Throughout the passion week, Jesus and the religious leaders increasingly clashed. When Jesus entered Jerusalem on a colt, as the promised Messiah King, they were alarmed. As his first act, Jesus dared to enter their temple, their territory, their profitable temple business, and cleared it of the money changers and animal sellers. Jesus called the chief priests and scribes a den of robbers. In their increasing fury, they demanded to know by what authority he did these things. When their social status, their power, and financial security was threatened by Jesus, they sought to destroy him. Though they were unable to trap him in public, at last they found one charge they could use to kill Jesus. Jesus as the Christ was claiming to be David's Lord. He implied that he is the Lord God. And finally, through the betrayal of his disciple Judas Iscariot, they had their long awaited opportunity to try and kill Jesus.

What was their first charge? Look at verse 67. "If you are the Christ, tell us." Look at verses 67b-68. "But he said to them, 'If I tell you, you will not believe, and if I ask you, you will not answer.'" Jesus knew it would be futile to tell them. They had made up minds- they were set on killing Jesus.

However, Jesus was not intimidated. He said in verse 69, "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." Jesus' words were a bold answer to their question. His resurrection, his ascension into heaven, his sitting at the right hand of God, and finally his second coming will be undeniable proof that he is the Christ. Jesus knew they would use his words to kill him. Nevertheless, he revealed his true identity. It was also his warning of their ultimate destruction. Most of all, it was his unwavering hope under life-threatening oppression.

Let's learn his hope. First, his hope was firmly grounded on the promises of God. 'The Son of Man' is from Daniel 7:13-14 and "being seated at the right hand of God" is from Psalm 110:1. Second, he shall be seated by God. God himself will reward the suffering Christ, by exalting and seating him at his own right hand. Third, "at the right hand of the power of God." God will give him his power and authority to rule and judge as God himself. Though the religious leaders looked powerful, Jesus will ultimately judge them with the power and full authority of God. Fourthly, "from now on." His hope was not in the future, but "from now on." Jesus' words of certainty are shocking. The high priest was sitting on the judgment seat high above Jesus, while Jesus stood below beaten and bleeding. But Jesus' certainty of this hope made him victorious. His sure hope gave him courage, dignity and even joy. In the same way, all who follow Christ in the race of faith will suffer. You and I will suffer. But Hebrews 12:2 challenges us to "look(ing) to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." As we suffer, may we fix

our eyes on Jesus, sitting at the right hand of God and be filled with his inexpressible courage, victory and joy.

## 2. Jesus' identity as the Son of God and King of the Jews

How did the prosecutors understand Jesus' unwavering hope? (70) "So they all said, 'Are you the Son of God, then?'" They correctly interpreted Jesus' testimony as his claim to be the Son of God. According to their monotheistic theology, if anyone claims to be the Son of God, he is claiming to be equal with God. To them, no man can claim to be the Son of God. It was the worst sin: blasphemy deserving death. How did Jesus answer them? Look at verse 70b. "And he said to them, 'You say that I am.'" Jesus never said, "I am not" like Peter. "Then they said, 'What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips?'"(71) They took Jesus' answer as his own admission that he is the Son of God. And the judge of the court, the high priest, sentenced him to death.

What irony and truth- the Son of God was condemned to death because he is the Son of God!

Why was it so important for him and for us to know that he was condemned and died as the Son of God? Because only perfect and guiltless Jesus, as the Son of God, can meet God's righteous standard. No human being, no animal is perfectly holy and without sin. Only the Son of God could satisfy God's holy righteousness.

It was clear- Jesus was without guilt. The whole council brought him to Pilate, the Roman governor and presented several charges against him. Pilate, however, was interested in only one charge. "Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate wanted to know if Jesus was a political or militant threat. Jesus answered him, "You have said so" (3b). Pilate saw through the religious leaders' lies. "Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, 'I find no guilt in this man.'" (4) However, pressured by the religious leaders, Pilate then sent him to King Herod, hoping Herod would deal with Jesus. But Herod too found no guilt in Jesus and sent him back to Pilate (15a). Again Pilate reiterated, "I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges" (14); and lastly, "I have found in him no guilt deserving death" (22). Their verdicts prove that Jesus had no sin and that Jesus is truly the Son of God.

What does the charge, "King of the Jews" mean? If Jesus was not a political king, then he must be a spiritual king. As the King of the Jews, Jesus came as the final representative for his people. Adam, the first representative of mankind, sinned by disobeying God. Then sin entered the world and all became sinners (Ro 5:12). In the same way, Jesus, as the King of the Jews, represented not only the Jews, but all of

humanity. Jesus was sentenced to death both as the Son of God and as the King of the Jews. His identity as the Son of God and as the King of the Jews is closely related to his identity as the Lamb of God.

### 3. Jesus' silence as the Lamb of God

When Jesus was bombarded with all kinds of charges, mockery, beatings, punishment, and vehement accusations, how did he deal with it? "He made no answer." (9b) He was silent. Jesus' silence meant no quarreling, no anger, but complete submission and peace.

His silence is the silence of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. Isa 53:7 says, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth." Jesus knew what God was doing and why. Isaiah 53:6 says "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." It was the Lord's will to place on his innocent Son Jesus, the Lamb of God, all my sin and your sin, my guilt, and my rebellion. And Jesus obeyed God's will in silence. He willingly made the sins of the world his own. He silently took our humiliation, punishment, shame and condemnation as his own— this is the great exchange. Praise you Jesus and thank you for taking my sins willingly on yourself!

### 4. The Great Exchange

In 18-25 we see the worst injustice turn into the greatest exchange. The crowds began to cry, "Away this man, and release to us Barabbas"-- a man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder (18-19). The destiny of Jesus' and Barabbas' life hung in the balance as Pilate fought against the Jews along with the crowds. Pilate, three times tried to release the guiltless Jesus (16, 20, 22). But they urgently demanded Jesus' crucifixion. Who won? Verses 23-24 say, "But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted."

Who benefited from this ultimate injustice? Barabbas! Let's read verse 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." Humanly speaking, it was the greatest travesty of justice in human history. Sinful humans condemned the Son of God to death. Where is truth, where is justice? But in this injustice, ironically, the great exchange happened.

What is this great exchange? 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." Barabbas' sin was removed from him and laid on Jesus, the pure Lamb of God. Barabbas was declared sinless while the holy Son of God became sin. Barabbas became righteous while Christ was declared guilty. There was no condemnation for Barabbas while Jesus was condemned. Barabbas was set free from prison and his death sentence as Christ took his place on the cross. This is the great unequal exchange God himself did for us, for our salvation. God condemned his one and only Son, to death in the places of sinners so that anyone who believes in Jesus shall not be condemned. We in Jesus are declared justified, righteous, innocent, guiltless as if we have never sinned. What an amazing and unfair exchange!

But how is this possible for us? If we are honest, we know that we are sinners. We see daily our pride, anger, rebellion, selfishness, cowardice, and the wickedness of our thoughts. How is it possible that God would consider me righteous, without sin, as if I never sinned? This is possible only when we, by faith, place our sins on Christ, believing in his sacrifice for me. In the Old Testament the people laid their hands on their lambs before the priests sacrificed them. (cf. Lev. 4:4,15,24,29) By doing so, they believed that their sins were transferred to their lamb. So, right now imagine that the Lamb of God, Jesus is in front of you. Will you lay your hands on him confessing and transferring all your sins to him? And now believe that Jesus was condemned in your place. And finally, claim and believe that there is no condemnation for you in Jesus Christ. (Ro 8:1)

Last year, I was furious because of a sense of injustice. Unlike Jesus, I was not silent but rather erupting in anger, despair and fear. God, however, didn't leave me in the darkness. While preparing a message I realized I was blind to what God was doing. God exposed my sins of idol-worship, for the desire for honor, respect. I worshiped myself. When God opened my spiritual eyes, I could see Jesus condemned and crucified in my place for my sins of idol-worship. I dared to lay my sins on him and he renewed his forgiveness of sins, and made me the righteousness of God. I could accept Jesus as the King of my heart. When the great exchange happened, I had the courage to forgive and love God's people all the more. Thank Jesus who made the great exchange for me and for you and who enables me to practice it by his grace.

Today, we see how Jesus dealt with trial, mockeries, humiliation, sufferings and injustice. He held firmly to his unwavering hope and identity. He silently became the Lamb of God. He made the great change by being condemned in our place so that we could become the righteousness of God. We thank and praise Jesus for his self sacrificing love that sets us free from the prison of guilt and condemnation and gives us a new life of righteousness. Now how shall we live? Through the lens of the Great Exchange we are called to live like

Christ and through Christ as we deal with all kinds of injustice and trials. We're challenged to live courageously to share the gospel of the Great Exchange to the ends of the earth. We love sacrificially and forgive unconditionally those who have caused us pain. Through this Easter Season, may we accept the great exchange and live a life of thanksgiving, love and forgiveness.