

JESUS WAS TRIED AND CONDEMNED IN OUR PLACES

Luke 22:63-23:25

Key Verses: 23:25

“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.”

In today’s passage Jesus is tried and condemned like a criminal who deserved the death sentence. There was no basis for a charge against him. But he was mocked, insulted, beaten, flogged, tried and condemned to crucifixion. It was a total miscarriage of justice. It was unbearable. Of course, Jesus’ case is unique. But many people have suffered terrible injustices. One man spent 19 years in prison due to a false charge; another man served 26 years for a crime he did not commit.¹ Sally Clark, an Englishwoman, was accused of murdering her two infant sons in 1998.² On the basis of flawed statistical evidence, she was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. She was reviled as a murdering mother and hated by her entire nation. But after three years, suppressed evidence was brought to light which exonerated her. She was released. But she had been badly wounded by the injustice. To cope with it, she drank alcohol excessively, and died in 2007 from alcohol poisoning. She could not bear the unjust condemnation. But Jesus is different. Even though Jesus was falsely accused, he did not react like a victim by defending himself, or reviling his enemies. Rather, he was humble and submissive, like a lamb led to the slaughter, in obedience to his Father. The only time he spoke was to testify that he is the Son of God. Why did he have to suffer this injustice? Why was he tried and condemned? Was he too weak to defend himself? No. There is deep meaning in his trial and condemnation. Let’s learn its meaning to us.

First, Jesus was wounded in our places (22:63-65). Jesus had been taken to the house of the high priest (54). While Peter was denying him three times, Jesus was being abused. The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him (63). In America, a person is considered innocent until proven guilty and should not be mistreated in any way by his arresters. But Jesus was badly abused before any kind of trial began. They mocked him as a prophet by blindfolding him and then punching and beating him at random. They demanded, **“Prophecy! Who hit you?”** And they said many other insulting

¹ <http://list25.com/25-worst-cases-of-people-being-wrongly-accused/>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sally_Clark

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things to him. A little later, Jesus was also ridiculed and mocked by Herod's men (23:11). Jesus was also flogged (Jn 19:1). As we have seen in "The Passion of the Christ," it was the most brutal form of torture. Almost anyone mistreated like this would become insanely angry. One young man watched his older brother get shot to death after a minor misunderstanding. He later said that if he had a gun he would have shot the killer immediately. As the Almighty God, Jesus could have destroyed his enemies. But Jesus did not say or do anything. He simply received the insults and beatings quietly, like a lamb led to the slaughter (Isa 53:7). Jesus knew that this was God's will for him. As Isaiah had prophesied, he was being treated like the worst of criminals, "**numbered with the transgressors**" (Lk 22:37).

Why did Jesus have to be treated like this? Peter explained to the scattered, suffering early Christians, "**...Christ suffered for you.... 'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.'** **When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; 'by his wounds you have been healed'**" (1Pe 2:21-24). **First of all, Jesus was wounded to heal us.** We are all wounded people in one way or another. The degree may differ. Some are very badly wounded, while the wounds of others seem milder. But a wound is a wound, and it makes people miserable. Wounded people suffer, sorrow and groan over their wounds. Wounds often come from unjust treatment, broken relationships, rejections or failures. The closer a relationship is, the more deeply a person is wounded if it is broken. This is why the wounds of divorce, parental abandonment, and children's rebellion are so painfully deep. When Christian brothers or sisters turn against each other it can be devastating. Wounded people may seem okay most of the time. But when they remember their bad experience, they fall into self-pity, sorrow and resentment. Suddenly they become a different person. One prominent Christian leader shared with me his experience. From time to time he would suddenly hear an inner voice that cursed bitterly. This drove him into a feeling of helplessness, isolation, and even despair. When he shared this with his wife, she told him, "Didn't you write a book about how Jesus heals wounded people? Why don't you read your own book?" He realized that he himself needed Jesus' healing. Regardless of our position: pastors, elders, missionaries, shepherds, or of how long we have followed Jesus, we all have wounds that need to be healed. Wounded people

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have no peace in their souls. This is why we need Jesus. Jesus heals us and gives us real peace. So we should not remain in a victim's mentality and be miserable and complain about others. We should come to Jesus for his healing. Those who have been healed by Jesus can be instruments of healing for others. As we see deep unrest these days, fueled by racial, ethnic, economic, and religious tensions, it feels that our nation is being ripped apart. No politician can solve these problems. But Jesus can. Jesus can heal our wounds and bind up our hearts and enable us to truly love one another. For example, Ken Hutcherson grew up in Alabama in the 50's and 60's. At a young age, he was trained by his uncle to hate white people. As a football player he had many chances to inflict pain on white players. But after meeting Jesus he changed. One day he heard the Lord's word, "I died for white people too." Later, he married a white woman, had four children, and became senior pastor of a large, mostly white church. Let's come to Jesus so that we can find peace, be happy, and be a blessing to others.

Second, Jesus was tried and condemned in our places (22:66-23:25). At daybreak, the Sanhedrin—consisting of elders, chief priests and teachers of the law—met together and Jesus was led before them (66). They asked directly, **"If you are the Messiah, tell us"** (67a). Jesus answered, **"If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer"** (67b-68). Jesus knew that they had already made up their minds to condemn him to death. They were not interested in the truth, only in finding a way to condemn him. Nevertheless, Jesus did not miss the chance to preach the gospel to them: **"But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God"** (69). Jesus meant that he is the promised Messiah who would receive power and glory from God the Father through his suffering (Ps 110:1; Da 7:13-14). Jesus' crucifixion would not be the end. God would raise Jesus from the dead; he would ascend into heaven and be seated at the right hand of God to reign over all things. At this crucial moment, Jesus testified to the truth that he is the Messiah. Because of this he was condemned. The Sanhedrin understood what Jesus meant. They all asked, **"Are you then the Son of God?"** Jesus replied, **"You say that I am"** (70). The Greek expression is more than an affirmative answer. It implies that, knowing the answer, the questioner now has a moral responsibility which would have a consequence. They condemned the Messiah as guilty of blasphemy (71). But actually they were condemning themselves.

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Though the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus, they did not have the authority to carry out a death sentence. So the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate, the Roman governor (23:1). Romans were tolerant toward religious matters, but they took political issues seriously. To incite Pilate, the Sanhedrin members changed the charge against Jesus: **“We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king”** (2). Jesus had not undermined Roman authority or taxation. In fact, Jesus had said, **“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s”** (20:25). But the Sanhedrin blatantly lied. Pilate was smart enough to understand what was going on, so he ignored the first two charges. But he questioned Jesus on the third one, asking, **“Are you the king of the Jews?”** Jesus knew that if he said, “Yes,” he would be condemned to death. Nevertheless, Jesus answered **“You have said so”** (3). Jesus clearly identified himself as the king of the Jews. And he implied that Pilate had a moral responsibility after knowing this truth.

As Jesus testified to the truth, he set an example for us to follow. Apostle Paul charged Timothy: **“In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ...”** (1Ti 6:13-14). Here, **“this command,”** means to live out and share the gospel. This is not easy in a hostile environment. So we must live in the sight of God and Christ instead of before people. We should see with an eternal perspective. Jesus said, **“...do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him”** (12:4-5). Testifying about Christ is not a Christian hobby; it is the means by which salvation spreads. As a student, I took a speech class in which the professor’s goal was to discredit Christian faith. When I acknowledged my faith in Christ, he humiliated me before the entire class. It was not easy to endure. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, I could defend my faith with wisdom and grace. As a result, one of my classmates believed in Jesus. Later, the professor said, “I am afraid of that man,” meaning me. When we look at Jesus, and depend on the Holy Spirit, we find courage. We need not worry about this ahead of time. When the moment comes, God will give us the Holy Spirit, who enables us to testify about Jesus without fear (12:12).

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After hearing Jesus' answer, Pilate realized that he was not a political threat to Rome. So he announced, **"I find no basis for a charge against this man"** (4). 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"** (5). Pilate realized that this issue would not be resolved reasonably or easily. When he heard the word "Galilee," he thought he found his way out through a jurisdiction matter. He sent Jesus to Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, who was also in Jerusalem at that time (6-7). Herod was interested in Jesus and wanted to see him perform a miracle. He was like a little boy playing video games (8). But Jesus did not respond to Herod at all (9). Then Herod changed from a hedonist to a sadist. After ridiculing and mocking Jesus, Herod dressed him in an elegant robe and sent him back to Pilate (11-12).

Though Pilate had tried, he could not avoid responsibility. Again he summoned the Sanhedrin and repeated that he found no basis for a charge against Jesus, and neither did Herod (13-15). Pilate should have released Jesus. But the mood of the crowd was growing more hostile and irrational by the moment. Pilate tried to satisfy the crowd by punishing Jesus (16). Then he tried to compromise by releasing Jesus based on a Passover custom (17). But the whole crowd was persuaded by the religious leaders and shouted, **"Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"** (18; Mt 27:20). Barabbas was an insurrectionist and a murderer (19). Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to the crowd again (20). But they kept shouting, **"Crucify him! Crucify him!"** (21) Just a few days earlier, the people had welcomed Jesus with praise (19:38). But now, this crowd turned against him. Pilate tried very hard to release Jesus. He spoke to the crowd for a third time, **"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"** (22). But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed (23). So Pilate decided to grant their demand (24). 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 (25).

In this event, we find that Pilate repeated again and again that there was no basis for a charge against Jesus (4,14,22). As the official Roman judge, he affirmed that Jesus was innocent. Nevertheless, he condemned Jesus to death because he was afraid of the crowd and the religious leaders. Jesus was not condemned for his own sin. Then why was he condemned? It was because of

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our sin. As Isaiah prophesied, God made Jesus the offering for our sins (Isa 53:10). Apostle Paul said, **“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”** (2 Co 5:21). In the Old Testament, whenever people committed sin or made a mistake, intentionally or unintentionally, they incurred guilt. To assuage it, they had to offer an animal sacrifice. The effectiveness was temporary. These sacrifices had to be offered again and again. In truth, it was impossible for the blood of animals to take away human sins (Heb 10:4). These sacrifices anticipated Christ, the perfect sacrifice. The blood of Christ cleanses our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we can serve the living God (Heb 9:14). Jesus offered himself once for all to solve our sin problem fundamentally and permanently (Heb 10:10). In this way, Jesus is able to make holy those who come to him. Hebrews 10:14 says, **“For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”** This is the reason Jesus was condemned.

Jesus was condemned in our places to set us free from condemnation. Romans 8:1 declares, **“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus....”** **“Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies”** (Ro 8:33). In human courts, a judge’s declaration “guilty” sends a person to prison and even to death. On the other hand, the declaration, “not guilty” sets a prisoner free to live a normal life in society. The jurisdiction of human judges and courts are limited to this world. However, God’s declaration determines a person’s eternal destiny. Those whom God declares “guilty” will spend eternity in the fiery lake of burning sulfur (Rev 21:8). There is no appeal and no way out. On the other hand, those whom God declares “not guilty” receive the forgiveness of all their sins—past, present and even future—the gift of eternal life, and the promise to inherit God’s kingdom. This is only possible through Jesus who was condemned in our places. Jesus was condemned for the wickedness and hypocrisy of the religious leaders. Jesus was condemned for the moral failure of Pilate who compromised with evil. Jesus was condemned for the unfaithful crowd, who were easily influenced by evil. Jesus was condemned for the rebellious murderer Barabbas. In reality, we are all sinners, like those in this passage. Titus 3:3 says, **“At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”** Each of us should know that Jesus was condemned for our own sins. As a result, we are free from

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all of our guilt feelings and sense of condemnation. When we have this conviction we can be happy and healthy and live a holy life. We can love and serve others instead of judging them.

We tend to evaluate ourselves based on our performance. When we do well, we feel that God is pleased with our deeds. But if we are negligent in morning devotion, testimony writing, or other things, or if we make a mistake or commit sin, we feel that God condemns us. Guilt feelings occupy our hearts and we fall into a state of self-condemnation. If we stumble in the same way again and again, we become fatalistic, thinking that God gave up on us. Not only do we condemn ourselves, but we also condemn others and are condemned by others based on human standards. As a result of this, everyone is too wounded to do anything. Relationships between people break down. But God does not credit us or condemn us based on our performance. God justifies us solely based on what Jesus has done for us. When we accept Jesus, who was condemned in our places, God declares us “not guilty.” Our sins are forgiven and we gain free access to God. Furthermore, we are adopted as God’s beloved children and become heirs of his kingdom. Since this is all by God’s grace, we have no right to condemn ourselves or others. This is truly a great blessing. Jesus was condemned in our places. Through this we can be right with God and live in peace with others. Let’s accept Jesus’ deep grace and become sources of grace and blessing to others. May this grace transform our campuses and our nation to be a holy nation.