

A "Not Guilty" Verdict and A Capital Sentence

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- [0 : 00] Luke 23, verses 1 to 25. Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate, 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.
- And Pilate asked him, Are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him, You have said so.
- Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, I find no guilt in this man. But they were urgent, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.
- When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time.
- When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desire to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him.
- [1 : 20] So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him.
- And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.
- Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people 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.
- Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him.
- But they all cried out together, Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas, a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.
- [2 : 33] Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus. But they kept shouting, Crucify! Crucify him! 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. But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified.
- And their voices prevailed. So Pilate decided that their demands should be granted. 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. This is God's holy and authoritative word. In the movie, The Shawshank Redemption, the protagonist, Andy Dufresne, is sentenced to life in Shawshank State Penitentiary for the murders of his wife and her lover, despite the fact that he's not the one that committed the murders.

And in the penitentiary, Dufresne is repeatedly abused and raped, and the viewer is struck by the injustice of it all. His conviction meant that a criminal went free.

[4 : 03] Someone who deserved to be in his place was not charged for his guilt. But through it all, Dufresne maintains his innocence and perseveres in hope.

It's an old movie, but I won't spoil the ending for you. In our passage today, we see a similar story. Jesus is repeatedly declared innocent.

But the Jewish people failed to recognize their king and insist on his condemnation. And ultimately, we learn from this passage that we are implicated in Jesus' death.

We are the reason he died. He was our substitute. He was the atoning sacrifice. And that's the main point of this passage, that Jesus Christ is the innocent Son of God who was condemned in our place to justify us.

And we'll talk first about his innocence and then his silence and lastly his sentence. So let's first look at Jesus' innocence in verses 1 to 5. The Jewish council, as you recall from last week, just concluded their investigation of Jesus.

[5 : 17] And they asked Jesus in verse 70, Are you the Son of God then? And Jesus affirmed it, saying, You say that I am. So that they indignantly declared, What further testimony do we need?

We have heard it ourselves from his own lips. He's blaspheming. So then it says in chapter 23, verse 1, The whole company of them, probably the entire council and the Jewish leaders that were gathered, they arose and brought Jesus before Pilate.

Now Pilate is the Roman prefect who governed Palestine, the Jewish people, from 26 to 36 AD. But it leads us to ask the question, Why did these Jewish leaders bring Jesus to him?

Why didn't they pass the sentence and punish him themselves? And this betrays their malicious intent because even though the Jewish leaders and the Sanhedrin, which is the highest religious ruling authority among the Jews, did have a wide range of options for punishing people, their own people.

They had the ability, the judicial power, but they were not allowed to execute anyone. John 18, 31 tells us that. And so their intent is plain here.

[6 : 32] They will not stop until Jesus is dead. They know that capital sentences can only be passed by the Roman governor, so that's why they bring him to Pilate.

And so they begin to accuse him in verse 2. We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.

Now instead of referring to Jesus by name, they call him this man. The word man actually isn't there literally in the Greek. Literally, it's actually this one. It's a very derogatory way of referring to someone.

They're saying, this one is a rabble rouser. They're not giving him the dignity of calling him by his name or by his actual title, this one. And their first accusation is that Jesus is misleading the Jewish nation.

And then their second accusation is that he is forbidding them to give tribute to Caesar. And these are very strategically chosen accusations because the primary responsibilities of a Roman prefect, that's Pilate, was maintaining law and order and collecting money, basically enriching the Roman coffers, managing the finances.

[7 : 46] Now both of these accusations hit at those exact points because if Jesus is misleading the nation, then he might be causing a stir and destroying, disturbing the law and order of the state.

The second accusation is that he forbids people from paying tribute to Caesar, in which case, Pilate's responsibility to manage the finances for the Roman emperor is in peril.

So these are very cleverly designed schemes to pressure Pilate to do something about Jesus. They're trying to tell Pilate, your job is at risk because of this one.

Now both of these accusations are false. Jesus was not misleading the nation. He was the only teacher that was in fact rightly leading the Jewish people. In Luke chapter 9, verse 41, Jesus called the Jewish nation a faithless and twisted generation and that word twisted is the same Greek word that is translated as misleading here in verse 2.

So the Jewish leaders are now kind of turning the table on Jesus and putting on him the charge that he had leveled against them. You dare to call us twisted and misled?

[9 : 01] We were fine until you got here. You're the one that is misleading and twisting our people. The second accusation is even more blatantly false because we know from Luke 20, verses 24 to 25, Jesus plainly told people that you should pay taxes to Caesar.

He said, Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have? They said, Caesar's. And he said to them, Then refer to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.

So Jewish leaders are clearly not after truth or justice. They're just bent on destroying Jesus and they will lie even to get it done.

They saved their most explosive and the only true accusation for last. They accused Jesus of saying that he himself is Christ, a king.

And notice how the Jewish leaders kind of deftly slip in their explanation that the term Christ means king. Earlier when they were questioning Jesus, they only asked him, If you are the Christ, tell us.

[10 : 06] Christ does mean king because it means anointed one. But it has a very specific historical and religious content. It's the messianic king.

It is primarily a historical and theological term that does have political implications. But that's not the emphasis. But what the Jewish leaders are here emphasizing is the political aspect.

He calls himself a Christ, a king, mind you. Well, don't you know we only have one king? Isn't Caesar king? He claims to be king.

He's accusing Jesus of sedition, which of course would have been threatening to Pilate. So Pilate latches onto that word that's interesting to him, concerns him king. He asks Jesus in verse 3, Are you the king of the Jews?

And Jesus answers him, You have said so. And Jesus' response to that question is the focal point of verses 1 to 5. It's right at the center of a mirroring structure, a chiasmic structure that points to and highlights that response.

[11 : 11] You have said so. Now Jesus is not hiding the fact that he's the messianic king. I mentioned to you last week in Matthew 26-25. After Jesus predicts his betrayal, Judas, the one who would betray Jesus, asks Jesus, Is it I, Rabbi?

Is it me? Am I going to be the one that betrays you? And then Jesus knowingly responds to him with the exact same phrase, You have said so. So that phrase does not mean you said it, not me.

It means, rather, yes, it is as you say. So Jesus is affirming that he is the Christ. He is a king. However, there is an important difference that we have to note between Jesus' idea of kingship and these Jewish leaders' idea of kingship.

Because while Jesus did claim that he is the messianic king, the Christ, Jesus did not mean that he is king in an earthly, geopolitical sense that people typically imagine.

The way the Jewish leaders were imagining, the way Pilate was imagining. Jesus was not a political revolutionary with imperial ambitions. In a more detailed account of this conversation between Jesus and Pilate in John 18, verses 33 to 38, Jesus tells Pilate in more detail this, My kingdom is not of this world.

[12 : 39] If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that I might not be delivered over to the Jews.

But my kingdom is not of this world. And then Pilate asks a follow-up question, So you are a king? And then Jesus answers, You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I've come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. So that seems to be the context behind Pilate's ruling here because Luke doesn't include this full dialogue, but Pilate perceives that Jesus is not a threat to Rome.

He's not an insurrectionist trying to rally the Jewish people to rebel against Caesar. And he recognizes that the Jewish leaders are in fact jealous of Jesus and they're trying to frame him and they're accusing him falsely.

And that's why Pilate announces this in verse 4. Pilate said to the chief priests in the crowds, I find no guilt in this man. And then that should have been the end of the trial.

[13 : 50] The judge has rendered his verdict. Jesus is innocent. But the trial continues. It says in verse 5, But they were urgent, saying, He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee, even to this place.

They're trying to strike fear into Pilate's hearts by referencing Jesus' widespread acclaim. He's teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee, even to this place, the capital of the Jewish people, Jerusalem.

Yes, this country preacher from Galilee has spread, his message has spread even to here. And you are about to let this man go? They're trying to paint Jesus as a rebel who poses a threat to Rome, when in reality, they're the ones that are rebelling against Rome's verdict.

They're the ones that are rebelling against God's anointed chosen king. And so here, even this pagan governor is willing to admit what these Jewish leaders themselves are refusing to acknowledge, that Jesus is guiltless.

This is Jesus' innocence. But the Jewish leaders' passing statement that Jesus is from Galilee catches Pilate's attention. It says in verses 6-7, when Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.

[15 : 11] And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. Verse 12 tells us that Pilate and Herod were not in good terms.

So it seems unlikely that Pilate is here trying to be deferential toward Herod or trying to do him a favor. Rather, Pilate is probably trying to pass off a troubling case, a troublesome case to Herod, since Herod is the Rome-endorsed Jewish client king over the Jewish people, over Galilee.

It's similar to kind of a higher court in the U.S. remanding it, a case back to the lower courts to deal with it themselves. And so Pilate's saying, I don't need to deal with this.

Jesus is a Galilean. Send him to Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas, just so you know, is not Herod the Great. Herod the Great is the one that massacred the male-borns all under the age of two at the time of Jesus' birth out of a desire to kill Jesus.

Herod Antipas, however, isn't much better. And he was the Tetrarch of Galilee. And he would have been in Jerusalem for the Passover feast at this time. And so Pilate takes advantage of that and sends Jesus to him.

[16 : 21] But even though Pilate's trying to pass off a difficult case to Herod, Herod, it's a favor for him because we find out in verse 8, when Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad for he had long desire to see him because he had heard about him and he was hoping to see some signs done by him.

Herod was ecstatic about entertaining a Jewish celebrity. He had long heard about Jesus' miracles, his works, and he had become famous all throughout Galilee and Herod had wanted to see Jesus.

But as James Edwards, a Bible commentator, puts it, to desire Jesus because of signs and wonders, health and wealth, powers and privilege, or any other or ulterior purposes is not to desire Jesus.

What draws you to Jesus? The greatest gift that God offers to us is himself.

It's the gift of his Son, the triune God, the Holy Spirit. The gift, the greatest gift that God offers to us is reconciliation with him, restoration to his presence, a relationship with God, a redemption from servitude to sin and Satan so that we might serve God.

[17 : 56] That's what salvation is. But if you come to God, if you come to Jesus for some other tangential benefits, for social respectability with friends, financial assistance, to satisfy your curiosity, then you're not seeking Jesus.

a 17th century English poet that I like named Robert Herrick has a couplet that kind of captures this.

He says, Will thou my true friend be? Then love not mine, but me. Will you come to God for him, not merely for what is his?

Do you love the giver of all good gifts? Or do you just love what he can lavish on you? Notice the repetition also of the word see in verse 8.

When Herod saw Jesus, He was very glad for He had long desire to see Him because He had heard about Him and He was hoping to see some sign done by Him.

[19 : 17] It's repeated three times in this single verse, the word see. In Luke 11, verses 14 to 36, Jesus contrasted those who hear the Word of God and keep it from those who seek from Him a sign from heaven.

And He called those who seek signs an evil generation, saying that the only sign that will be given to them is His preaching, His proclamation of the good news of salvation.

And so with that background in mind, verse 8 tells us a lot about what kind of man this Herod is. Herod had heard about Jesus, but he did not believe in Jesus.

Instead, he sought signs. Jesus' words were not enough for him. He wanted to see Jesus. He wanted to see His miracles. He was, I won't believe it until I see it kind of guy.

But as Romans 10, 17 tells us, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ. Yes, Jesus did perform signs and wonders that proved His messianic identity, and He did that for those who were genuinely seeking Him and were humbly putting their trust in Him.

[20 : 37] But Jesus never panders to settled skeptics who are merely looking for a spectacle. And Herod was such a person. Are you here this morning with the desire to see?

I want to exhort you instead to hear and believe. there's evidence enough in what you hear. There's power enough in the good news that you hear of Jesus Christ.

And so, it says in verse 9, Herod questioned Jesus at some length, but he made no answer. This is Jesus' silence. And it's a fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 53, verses 7 to 8, which is a prophecy about the Messiah.

It 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 it shears is silent, so He opened not His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away and asked for His generation who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of My people.

[22 : 05] Jesus is the atoning sacrifice. As John 1.29 tells us, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world and asked sheep before its shears is silent, so Jesus makes no answer to Herod.

He silently led to the slaughter so that He might die for the transgressions of His people. But while Jesus is silent, His accusers are very loud.

He said in verses 10 to 11, the chief priests and the scribes stood by vehemently accusing Him and Herod with his soldiers treated Him with contempt and mocked Him. Then, arraying Him in splendid clothing, He sent Him back to Pilate.

Now, Herod's true colors don't take long to come out. He wasn't a genuine seeker, so when Jesus refuses to oblige Him, Herod's curiosity quickly turns into contempt. And because Jesus refused to entertain Him with spectacles, Herod and His soldiers turn Jesus into a spectacle.

And this is so degrading and humiliating for Jesus. Right? Jesus acknowledged that He's the Christ, the Messianic King, so Herod and His soldiers used that against Him, arraying Him in splendid clothing.

[23 : 20] It's probably some kind of regal garment, a royal garment. And they're mocking Him. So you think you're a king? Well, here!

We've dressed you up as king. They're trying to strip Jesus of His dignity. Seems so cruel, but isn't that what we do sometimes?

We pay lip service to Jesus as our king. When our hearts are in reality far from Him. We dress Him up as king in our lives.

While like Herod, staying seated firmly on the throne ourselves. On the throne of our own lives. But Jesus will not stand to be mocked.

It's only those who truly submit to His lordship, His kingship, that become citizens of the kingdom of God. So have you humbled yourself before Jesus? Have you submitted all of your purposes and priorities to Him?

[24 : 22] Or is Jesus just a mock king in your life? Because no matter how much Herod and his soldiers humiliate and ridicule Jesus, no matter what their opinion of Jesus is, it doesn't change the fact that He is king, the fact that He is the Son of God, the fact that He is the Lord before whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess.

That's the promise of God's word. Maybe you have not yet pledged allegiance to Jesus and you're here this morning. Maybe you've only confessed Jesus with your mouth, but you don't believe that in your heart.

But no matter what you do, how you regard Jesus and how you treat Jesus can never strip Him of His authority, glory, and power, and dignity.

So will you actually submit to Him today? Herod, after his trial of Jesus, sends Him back to Pilate and through that exchange it says in verse 12 that they become friends.

By extraditing Jesus to Herod, Pilate was acknowledging Herod's legitimacy and influence and Herod was a very ambitious client king and so that forged a relationship, mended their fences.

[25 : 42] And it says in verses 13 to 16, Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people 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. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us.

Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. I will therefore punish and release him. This is now the second declaration of Jesus his innocence.

And this time, it's both Herod and Pilate who declared Jesus guiltless. And that's significant because according to Deuteronomy chapter 19 verse 15, which is the Old Testament law that talks about the criteria for witnesses, it says that a single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed.

only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. So now with Herod and Pilate both declaring Jesus to be innocent, that legal, biblical standard has been met.

[26 : 56] Jesus really is innocent. And that should be the end of it. He should go free. But he is the atoning sacrifice, like the Passover lamb that was supposed to be blemished.

Jesus is the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world who is blameless. And he is going to his slaughter. He should have let him go, Pilate, if he were really concerned with justice.

But he is eager to please the crowd. So he offers a compromise in verse 16, offering to punish and release Jesus. The word punish here is a euphemism for whipping.

There were two types of whipping that the Romans used. It is not totally clear which one is in view by this word punish. But typically prior to crucifixions, Romans used a scourge.

It is a leather whip woven with bits of bone and metal, notorious for flaying people's backs and pushing them to the brink of death.

[28 : 02] And they used a euphemism for it. Such a harsh word, punish. They punish and release them. That's what Pilate wants to do. But the mob will not relent.

And this brings us to my final point, Jesus' sentence. It says in verse 18, but they all cried out together, away with this man, and released to us Barabbas.

If you're exceptionally detail-oriented, you may have noticed that if you're using the English Standard Version, it skips verse 17. It goes from verse 16 to verse 18.

But you will find a footnote at the end of verse 16 which says, here, or after verse 19, some manuscripts add verse 17. Now, he was obliged to release one man to them at the festival.

So just so you know, because there's so many conspiracy theories out there nowadays, no one is trying to edit the Bible or hide certain details. this verse is omitted for the simple fact that it is probably not part of the original manuscript.

[29 : 07] The earliest and best manuscripts of the Gospel of Luke does not have this verse in it. And this verse is typically what you call a gloss, like an explanation that people added in the later years to add greater clarity to a passage.

It's kind of like the notes you find in your study Bibles. But that became part of the manuscript as time went on. But it does supply a helpful context and the context is confirmed by Matthew 27 15 and Mark 15 6.

And that context is this, that it was a custom for the Roman prefect to release one prisoner during the biggest Jewish festival of the year, the Jewish Passover.

It was customary for the Roman prefect to release one Jewish prisoner as a favor for the Jewish people. And that's why they are demanding Barabbas.

And Luke adds with a touch of irony, in verse 19, that this was a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder.

[30 : 11] Insurrection is exactly the crime that the Jewish leaders are trying to accuse Jesus of. Excuse me. And this man had actually done it.

He was an actual insurrectionist. And Luke continues in verses 20 to 21. Pilate addressed them once more desiring to release Jesus but they kept shouting crucify, crucify him.

And that word address and the word kept shouting are very similar words in the Greek. They share the same root word. So it's almost like a shouting match and it's a game of chicken.

Who's going to stand down first? The Pilate's calling out to the people to release Jesus but the people call back to him, crucify, crucify him and it's unusual to repeat the word like that, two imperatives in one.

It's almost like they're chanting at this point. It's a protest. Crucify, crucify. Will you stand down Pilate or will you marshal your military forces to pacify this mob?

[31 : 15] And the crowd is incredibly vicious, right? They're calling for this cruel and unusual punishment of crucifixion. It's the most brutal form of capital punishment that existed in the ancient world.

So bad, in fact, the Roman Empire deemed it too cruel for Roman citizens. Only slaves and foreigners were ever subjected to crucifixion. And it's not, they had much more, many other way more efficient ways of killing criminals.

But this is what they reserved for people that they wanted to make an example out of. Don't ever do what this guy did because that's what will happen to you. Torture and execution wrapped in one, that's exactly what these Jewish leaders and the crowd are seeking.

So there's no legality to their demand at all. Pilate has declared him innocent, so this is a lynching. It's mob action. And Pilate tries to exert his authority and regain control of the situation one last time in verse 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.

[32 : 36] Luke specifically notes here that this was the third time that Pilate declared Jesus' innocence. He did it in verse 4 and again in verse 14 and now here in verse 22 and 3 is often a symbolic number in scripture that signifies completeness.

And so Peter denied Jesus three times. He disavowed Jesus completely. And here Pilate declares Jesus innocent three times, meaning he is completely vouching for Jesus' innocence.

He is certain of his innocence. The proper judicial authority has declared it three times. But it says in verse 23 they were again urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified and their voices prevailed.

To survey this passage one more time with me, look at how vehement and obstinate these people are. After Pilate's first declaration of Jesus' innocence, he said in verse 5 that they were urgent.

After his second declaration of innocence, he said in verse 18, they all cried out together, kept shouting crucify, crucify. And then in verse 23, again after the third declaration of innocence, they were urgent once again, demanding with loud cries that Jesus should be crucified and their voices prevailed.

[33 : 56] They're very loud. Luke is making note of that. Very loud and clamorous crowd. But the contrast that with Jesus, all he ever says during this entire trial is you have said so in verse 3 in Greek, that's just two words.

He made no answer to Herod, verse 9. Jesus is silent, the mob, the crowd is loud. Let that be a lesson for us.

The way our world works is often like the saying, let he who shouts the loudest be heard first. The students who go to the professor's office hours most frequently to negotiate their grades end up getting the best grades.

The special interest groups that lobby the loudest to get politicians to pass the legislations that they want, get what they want. The social media mobs who retweet and like the most posts win the trending battles of the culture wars.

But let Jesus' trials remind you that the loudest voice isn't always the right one. Nowadays, there are many voices that demean and dismiss the word of God, that criticize Christ and his church, and the volume seems to be increasing with each passing ear, but remember that the loudest voice is not always the right one, so stand firmly on God's word, hold fast to your Christian convictions and principles, and remember that no matter how numerous and how loud the voices around you get, the voice of God trumps them all.

[35 : 49] We should stand up for Christ and bear witness to him, but unfortunately Pilate doesn't do that. It says in verse 24, so if Pilate decided that their demand should be granted, Pilate stands down and grants the mob their wish to crucify Jesus.

Now looking at Jewish and Roman history, it's not hard to understand Pilate's fear and concession here, because Pilate's tenure as governor over the Jews was very turbulent.

On one occasion, he had the Roman military flags brought in and installed all over Jerusalem, and that flag had the image of Emperor Tiberius on it, which is of course illegal to Jews because the Jewish law bans images because they're considered that idolatrous.

And so the Jews staged a massive protest in front of Pilate's home, and he threatened to kill them, which is what Roman governors typically did, but they refused to relent, and so Pilate gave in in that instance.

Pilate was trying to build an aqueduct to get water to come into the city, but he didn't have money, so he decided, well, there's plenty of treasures in the Jewish temple, I'll go and pillage the temple, so he went to the temple and took the treasures and used that to build the aqueduct, which of course angered the Jews, and they protested once again, and this time he actually did kill the Jews, and it led to a confrontation.

[37 : 22] And Luke records another instance in Luke chapter 13 verse 1, Pilate apparently killed some of the Galileans who had brought offerings to God in Jerusalem, and he mixed their blood, these worshippers' blood, with their sacrifices.

So Pilate was obviously, I mean, he lasted a while, but it was a turbulent relationship. He's very aware that his Jewish subjects are capable of mobilizing and protesting, and especially during the Passover feast when there are hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims from all over the world gathered in Jerusalem.

So he assesses the situation, and he's a sure governor, he thinks, I better back down this time, not right now. So even after having declared Jesus innocent three times, he sentences Jesus to execution.

And it says in verse 25, he released a man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

It's hard to miss the irony of this substitution, right? Jesus is the innocent one who is condemned for some trumped up charge of insurrection, but an actual terrorist, an insurrectionist, is pardoned and released to the public.

[38 : 51] And Luke summarizes this event this way in Acts chapter 3 verse 14, you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.

A murderer, a taker of life is released, and the giver of life is condemned. Furthermore, the name Barabbas is an Aramaic name that means son of the father.

Jesus was declared over and over again throughout the gospel of Luke to be the son of God the father. At his birth, he was called the son of God.

God addressed him as my beloved son at his baptism. Jesus called God my father. Chapter 2 and chapter 10, he declared himself to be the son of God during his trial before the Sanhedrin chapter 22.

The son of the father, Barabbas, goes free because the son of God the father takes his place. It's hard to imagine a more dramatic portrayal of Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf.

[40 : 05] Luke alluded to Isaiah 53 earlier in this passage. It says in Isaiah 53 verses 11 to 12, out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied.

By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoiled with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors.

Yet he bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors. Jesus the righteous one bore our iniquity so that we might be accounted righteous.

The innocent one whose record should have been cleared was numbered with the transgressors, and he died in order to make intercession for transgressors like us.

We were the insubordinate children who had rebelled against God our Father. We were the insurrectionists that tried to overthrow God our King and to establish our own rule and to live for ourselves selfishly.

[41 : 25] We were on death row. Eternal death row. And we were completely helpless to do anything to clear our record, to undo our past.

When Satan, the accuser of God's people, leveled his charge at us, all we would have been able to do was plead guilty and be sentenced to eternal death and damnation.

Because that's the only fitting punishment for people who are guilty of sedition against an eternal and infinitely worthy God. But Jesus, Jesus stood condemned in our place 2,000 years ago on the cross.

The Bible doesn't tell us the mechanics of how this happened. It doesn't give us a step-by-step kind of metaphysical explanation of how Christ was our substitute and representative, but it does tell us that Jesus bore our sin and received our guilty verdict, that he was condemned so that we might be justified.

All the sins that we have committed, all that is sordid and filthy in our lives, all that is prideful and ugly and wicked and evil in our lives, placed on Jesus, who should have never been associated with such things, who is worthy, who is perfect, who is the Son of God, who is innocent.

[43 : 13] He takes it upon himself so that we might go free. There's a famous story that has been told over and over again about a man named John Duncan.

And in one of his lectures at a college, he burst out with a question, asking all of his class, do you know what Calvary was? What? What?

And then with tears on his face, he reportedly said, it was damnation. He took it lovingly.

That's what the cross was. It was damnation. And Jesus took it lovingly in our place. And it's because Jesus, the Son of God was condemned, that we can now be declared righteous, justified, and adopted as God the Father's sons and daughters in the family of God.

Amen. Amen.