



7 Last Steps to the CROSS

Jesus' Path to the Crucifixion in the Gospel of LUKE

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Audio Text - Step 6

Step 6 - Luke 23:7-12 - Trial Before Herod

This is the sixth of a series of eight articles on the theme, *7 Last Steps to the Cross*. This message looks at when Jesus was sent by Pilate to be tried before king Herod. This can be said to be a trial within a trial in that Jesus was still under trial before Pilate. But at Pilate's own initiative, he sent Jesus to Herod for his judgement. We can recount that, at this point of time, Jesus had been betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, mocked by Roman soldiers, prosecuted by the Sanhedrin, and sent to Pilate by that Jewish Council to seek His execution. Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot, denied by Peter, mocked by the Roman soldiers, and condemned to death on a cross by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council.

We read in Luke 23:6-12 (ESV) that

⁶When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. ⁷And when he learned that he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him over to Herod, who was himself in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸When Herod saw Jesus, he was very glad, for he had long desired to see him, because he had heard about him, and he was hoping to see some sign done by him. ⁹So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. ¹⁰The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. ¹²And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other.

No Relief for Pilate

I suggested, in the last message, that Pilate took the step to send Jesus to Herod to search for a way out of his own dilemma. If Herod decided to execute Jesus, Pilate would be relieved of having to do so. As it turned out, Herod also found Jesus innocent and sent Him back to Pilate. Therefore this did not solve Pilate's dilemma. Instead, we now have two Roman officials who had Jesus on trial and testified that He was innocent.

From another perspective, sending Jesus to Herod was also Pilate's attempt to find backing for his intent to release Jesus. Herod was a Jew who was appointed as a Roman governor. He held an equivalent position to Pilate. If Herod pronounced Jesus innocent, perhaps the Jewish Council will agree to release Him. From either perspective, Pilate could gain something.

Herod Mocked the Christ

Herod, on his part, was initially glad to receive Jesus because he had long heard of Him and wanted to see Him perform miracles. But when Jesus made no answer and did no miracle, Herod became angry. He and his soldiers mocked Jesus. As a joke, they dressed Him up in splendid clothing and sent Him back to Pilate. Herod, thus, reflected another dark side to our fallen human nature. We can easily treat others as if they are only for our entertainment. What they do and who they are is only for our amusement. When the amusement pass, we denigrate the person and make the person a joke for our own cruel enjoyment. This was particularly ironic and contradictory if we remember that Herod was a Jew who governed as a Roman official. His ridicule of Jesus added to the Jewish authority's intent to kill Him to demonstrate that Israel rejected their Messiah.

Another wicked side of our fallen human nature that this event revealed is how the powers and authorities of this world, like the Sanhedrin, Pilate, and Herod, are quite happy to denigrate and belittle those who are under their power and control. They do so rather routinely even when those they judge are innocent and deserve no penalty or harshness. We are very inclined to abuse what power or authority we have simply because we can! This is especially so when we believe that those we mistreat are not in a position to retaliate.

This Fallen World Unites Against God

It is very remarkable that this event brought Herod and Pilate together as friends, when they were previously enemies! Whatever else it may have implied, when Pilate sent Jesus to be tried before Herod, he was showing Herod great respect as a fellow Roman official whose counsel and judgement he valued. Herod clearly appreciated the gesture, especially since, as our Bible text tells us, he had long heard of Jesus and wanted to meet Him and see Him perform miracles. But the twist in the outcome, when this event made them friends, demonstrated that, in spite of divergences in this fallen world, it is united in mocking and belittling the Anointed One of God! At this juncture, we can foreshadow that when Pilate eventually gave in to the demand of the Sanhedrin to have Jesus executed, he thereby agreed with them to put Jesus to death. So even adversaries in this fallen world, agree to act against God. It should be clear to all true disciples of Christ that, because we belong to Christ, we are liable to face the same kind of enmity from this world as Christ our Lord and our God did.

Godly Power and Authority

In stark contrast to the worldly way of using power and authority, we note that in Mark 10:42-45 (ESV) Jesus called His disciples to Him and said,

⁴² ... “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

For all who are disciples of Christ, for those who belong to the Kingdom of God, whatever power or authority we have are to be used to serve those we oversee. Power and authority are to be used to uphold righteousness, truth, and justice, in a loving way. It is the total reverse of the worldly ways practiced by the Jewish Council, Pilate, or Herod.

Jesus Himself was setting for us the ultimate example of how to exercise power and authority to uphold righteousness, truth, justice, and love. He, who is God, who came down to be born as a man, and as the Messiah of Israel and all humankind, was walking to the cross to die for our sins so that we may be saved!