

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Luke 23:1-12

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 23. Today, we will read verses 1-12.

In chapter 22, we saw that Jesus was first brought before the Jewish council. There He acknowledged two things: that He was the Christ and that He was the Son of God. Especially when He confessed that He was the Son of God, to the chief priests, scribes, and elders of the Jews, this was considered blasphemy against God. As a result, they became determined to put Jesus to death. However, at that time they did not have the authority to carry out death penalty. Therefore, chapter 23 begins by recording how the upper class of Jewish society used Roman politics to bring about the death of Jesus.

Verse 1: "Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate."

Pilate was the governor at that time. Historical records describe him as a cruel, cold, and ruthless man. According to Roman authority, he held the power of life and death over the people of Judea. Yet, in his handling of Jesus' case, he appears somewhat weak and indecisive, which seems inconsistent with his historical character.

There is a historical background that helps explain this. When Pilate first took office, his headquarters were in Caesarea by the sea. He intended to move his troops into Jerusalem. Therefore, when he first entered Jerusalem, he did so with great display, bringing Roman military standards into the city. These standards bore the image of Caesar, which the Jews regarded as an idol. Bringing such banners into Jerusalem was considered an extreme act of desecration.

As a result, many Jews and elders protested. Given Pilate's personality, one might expect him to suppress the opposition without hesitation. After all, he was Rome's appointed governor and possessed the power of life and death. So he surrounded the protesters with soldiers. Unexpectedly, the Jews lay down on the ground and stretched out their necks, prepared to die.

For Pilate, this was a profound lesson. From that incident onward, he became much more cautious in dealing with the Jews. He learned that whenever matters concerning God were involved, they were absolutely uncompromising and willing to lose their lives for their convictions.

Verse 2: "And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.'"

In reality, their accusations were completely false. In the Jewish council, they had condemned Jesus because He claimed to be the Son of God. But Roman authorities generally ignored religious disputes. Therefore, they transformed a religious issue into a political one.

Their primary accusation was that Jesus was misleading the people and forbidding them to pay taxes to Caesar. Of course, this was a lie. Remember what Jesus had taught earlier: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." He never taught people to refuse taxation. Yet this became their main charge against Him.

They also said that He claimed to be "Christ, a King." Christ means Messiah. The Jews of that time expected the Messiah to come and restore the kingdom of Israel. According to the Old Testament, the Messiah would be both King and Priest. Therefore, they seized upon the kingly aspect and tried to turn it into a political issue by declaring that He was the King of the Jews.

In truth, Jesus' coming occurs in two stages. The first time He came as a Priest, bringing God's people—and Gentiles who believe in Him—into God's presence. It is only at His second coming that He will return as King. Thus, the accusations they brought before Pilate were entirely deceptive.

Verse 3: "Then Pilate asked Him, saying, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered him and said, 'It is as you say.'"

Luke's account here is very concise. He seems intent on summarizing the event and emphasizing only the main points. The fuller details are recorded in the Gospel of John. In John 18:33–37, Pilate asked Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?"

Jesus then gave a remarkable response: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered: "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Jesus spoke many words to Pilate. Church history contains various traditions concerning Pilate's ultimate fate. One tradition says that he later repented and was saved. It suggests that the words Jesus spoke during this trial continued to work upon his conscience long afterward.

Verses 4–5: "So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no fault in this Man.' But they were the more fierce, saying, 'He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.'"

Luke records this partly to show, through the testimony of a Roman official, that no political crime could be found in Jesus. At the same time, he highlights the weakness and impotence of politics. This was true then, and it remains true today. The kingdom of God does not need political assistance, nor has politics ever truly advanced God's kingdom. Politics is built upon compromise. Once public pressure grows loud enough, justice is often sacrificed.

When they declared, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place," the mention of Galilee unexpectedly gave Pilate a way out.

Verses 6–7: "When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time."

Pilate's authority was actually greater than Herod's. However, the two men had been at odds because Pilate had previously offended Herod by encroaching on his authority. As soon as Pilate heard that Jesus was a Galilean, he treated Him as a political bargaining chip. Since he owed Herod a favor after their earlier conflict, he sent Jesus to Herod. This both pleased Herod and relieved Pilate of a politically troublesome case.

Verse 8: "Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him."

This Herod was the immoral ruler who had married his brother's wife, been openly rebuked by John the Baptist, and later had John executed because of a rash promise made during a birthday celebration.

He was fascinated by Jewish religious matters, especially the reports he had heard about Jesus. At one point he even thought Jesus might be John the Baptist risen

from the dead. He had long desired to see Jesus. Now Pilate had sent Jesus to him, and he was delighted. He hoped to witness some miracle.

Verses 9–10: “Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.”

When Herod saw Jesus, he became very excited. He spoke to Him repeatedly, asked many questions, and wanted Him to perform miracles. Yet Jesus answered him not a word. Jesus knew exactly what kind of man Herod was. He understood that Herod regarded Him merely as a source of entertainment. Herod had no genuine desire for righteousness; otherwise, he would never have killed John the Baptist. Therefore, Jesus remained completely silent.

We can imagine the scene. Herod was eagerly trying to engage Jesus and persuade Him to perform miracles. Meanwhile, the chief priests and scribes stood nearby, loudly accusing Him. The entire situation was chaotic. Yet in the midst of it all, Jesus alone stood silent. Just as the Scripture says: “He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth.”

Verse 11: “Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.”

Pilate had hoped to pass this difficult problem on to Herod. But Herod could not extract a single word from Jesus. Therefore, he had no choice but to send Him back to Pilate.

Verse 12: “That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.”

This inevitably reminds us of David's words in Psalm 2: "Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against His Anointed."

Jesus Himself declared that His kingdom is not of this world. Every child of God today must understand this truth. Certainly, we are still citizens of earthly nations. We should fulfill our civic responsibilities and act according to a clear conscience. But we must never place our hope in the kingdoms of this world to advance the kingdom of God. That was not true in Jesus' day, and it is still not true today.

Pilate and Herod are classic examples of politicians. Indeed, the powers of this world often become allies when opposing Christ or His followers. Especially in the last days, God's Word tells us that the circumstances of Christians will become increasingly difficult. May God help us by giving us a pure conscience, enabling us to follow the Lord wholeheartedly without placing our hope in the systems of this world.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You. Your attitude toward the world is also the attitude that we should learn and imitate. Help us to recognize the true nature of the world and the true nature of politics. When we face various forms of opposition and persecution, may we not lose our faith. Bless my life today. We pray in the Holy Name of Jesus Christ.