

## The Trial Of Jesus Part 4

### Then [Herod] Questioned Him With Many Words.

Text: Luke 23:4-12

Suggested Hymns:

305, 167, 62, 148, 304

1) Pilate

2) Pilate send Jesus to Herod

3) Background of Herod

4) Herod sees Jesus

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Luke 23:4-12, *<sup>4</sup> So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." <sup>5</sup> But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."*

*<sup>6</sup> When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. <sup>7</sup> 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.*

*<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing.*

*<sup>10</sup> And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today we are considering part four of *The trial of Jesus*. The pertinent words for today are; *Then [Herod] questioned [Jesus] with many words*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

### 1. Pilate

The examination of Jesus by Pilate resulted in an emphatic, *“I find no fault in this Man.”* Now what ought to have followed? The unjust verdict of the Sanhedrin ought to have been reversed, the prisoner released, and, if necessary, protected by a Roman guard.

But why was this not done? Aside from the decree in the counsels of divine mercy that Jesus should die for the sins of the world, Pilate, with all his bold front, was a coward and did not have the nerve to resist. This the accusers knew. They were confident that, if they would persist, they would see the fulfilment of their foul design.

An incident in the early life of Pilate may best explain. Some years before, Pilate arrived with a supply of new ideas, and resolved to move the headquarters of the army from Caesarea to Jerusalem. Resolved and done. Roman legions with clanking swords, shining helmets, armoured breast-plates, and military signs on which were affixed the Roman eagles and the effigy of the imperial master, were seen in Jerusalem. And who was there to resist?

But to the minds of the people the images were idolatrous, and their presence in the Holy City itself was a gross insult and desecration.

There was no objection to the image of Tiberius on the denarius, especially if sufficiently multiplied. Neither was there objection to the blades on the end of the handle and the spears on the shaft. But there was serious objection to the golden ornaments on the tip of the military poles.

Soon a noisy delegation rushed down to Caesarea with well-spiked protests against the introduction of idolatrous images into the Holy City. And besides, what is the idea of bringing them in stealthily in the night-time, as had been done? Furthermore, they reminded Pilate that, when former governors made their entry into the city, it was without those idols on the top of the poles.

Pilate refused. He was still a new governor, and he had to learn. For five days he refused. Finally he was so irritated that he gave the order to disperse the noisy mob and, if necessary, to cut off their heads, since there was no other way to silence their mouths.

“All right!” they cried and stretched forth their necks, saying that they would rather die than have their city defiled. In the end Pilate had to carry out the images of his imperial master and store them in a warehouse at Caesarea.

Such was the governor, and such were the people with whom he had to deal. For the sake of the effigy of his master he could not afford to provoke a revolution and wreck the revenues of a tribute-producing province.

## 2. Pilate Sends Jesus To Herod

The word of Pilate *“I find no fault in this Man”* was but a signal for the release of an angry clamour. Charges and accusations were hurled from every direction. The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Pilate, hopelessly in the air, weakly turned to Jesus Himself. *“Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!”*<sup>1</sup> But Jesus, with His life at stake, was the only calm person in the assembly and answered nothing, so that Pilate marvelled.

Suddenly, however, in the midst of the confusion a way out of the difficulty seemed to open itself to Pilate. He heard the word “Galilee.” *“He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.”*

The mention of Galilee was intended to excite prejudice against Jesus, as Galilee was a hotbed of insurrection. But to Pilate’s mind, there was suggested a way to rid himself of the terrible responsibility and at the same time to flatter Herod, who was present in Jerusalem for the Passover.

This he could do, in accordance with Roman law, by transferring to him the prisoner to whose jurisdiction, as a resident of Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth belonged.

Glad to rid himself of this detestable business, he sent the Prisoner and His accusers down the hill to the nearby ancient Maccabean palace, in which Herod resided on his visits to the capital city.

## 3. The History Of Herod

In order to understand the following, we must briefly review a bit of Herodian history. After the death of ‘Herod the Great’ his dominions were divided by Rome among three of his sons, in order to facilitate keeping the country under control.

Archelaus received Judea, soon to be taken from him at the request of the people themselves and to be administered by Roman governors, of whom Pontius Pilate was fifth in line. Philip received Iturea and the northern regions, while

Antipas received Galilee and a strip of land east of the Jordan; and at the time when Christ was brought to the latter, after thirty years, both were still in the enjoyment of their possessions.

Like his father, Herod Antipas was a builder, and corrupt, but in other respects he was very unlike his father — he lacked ability and diplomacy. He took a fatal step when he entered into an adulterous union with Herodias, his niece and another brother's, Herod Philip's, wife, which brought about the death of John the Baptist.

When John the Baptist, that stern wilderness preacher of repentance, began to set the hearts of men afire, Herod Antipas was interested and invited him to his palace and heard him gladly, until John said, *“It is not lawful for you to have her.”*<sup>2</sup> That was pressing the matter of repentance too far.

From then on Herodias conceived a bitter hatred against John the Baptist. We know what happened. On the king's birthday Salome, Herodias's daughter by a former marriage, danced before the drunken crowd. The king was pleased and promised, *“Ask me whatever you want, and I will give it to you.”*<sup>23</sup> *He also swore to her, “Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom.”*<sup>3</sup>

The young witch, well drilled by her mother in the craft of hell, asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter, and she was not refused. The executioner was sent to John in the dungeon. No time for preparation is given, nor needed. A few minutes, and it is all over. The guard returns. And Herodias receives her ghastly dish.

This awful crime filled the country with horror. Herod himself was troubled by the accusations of his conscience. When the fame of Jesus reached Herod, he thought that He was none other than John the Baptist risen from the dead.

That is just like many people who do not believe in God, but are foolish enough to believe in ghosts. Or just like avowed and otherwise educated atheists who are stupid enough to be deceived by fortune-telling frauds.

Feeling the hatred of his subjects, Herod Antipas, who was at best only an Idumean Sadducee, turned more and more to foreign customs. His court was famous for Roman and Greek imitations. And especially the professional

conveyers of pleasure, the charlatans and fakers of the day, jugglers, and the like, were welcome at his court.

Herod's annual visit to the Passover at Jerusalem was altogether conventional and inspired not so much by devotion as by the hope of amusement.

#### 4. Herod Sees Jesus

When Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad. This appearance of Jesus promised excitement. And then what a compliment to have Pilate send him a prisoner! Indeed, we are told that as a result of this act of unexpected attention the former enemies became friends.

But most of all his delight was increased by the hope that this great Galilean miracle-worker would entertain him with two or three choice miracles for his particular benefit. And why not? This was a prisoner's chance to turn influence in his favour. No doubt he thought that Jesus would grasp the opportunity to show His skill.

In this way Herod reveals his estimate of the person of Christ. And it just about corresponds to what many people still think of Christ today. Thus Jesus is put down in Herod's mind on the level with a conjurer or dispenser of magic.

At once Herod addressed Jesus in the friendliest manner and questioned Him with many words. We can imagine the welcoming smile. In his eagerness Herod forgot altogether the purpose for which Pilate had sent Him. But Jesus answered him nothing. But Herod never noticed it and rambled on. He liked to hear himself talk.

He himself in his day had done some strong theological thinking. He had views on religion and wanted to voice them. Even so today we have prominent people, scientists, and ex-rulers with insides on the hereafter, which they want their fellow-men to share.

He had theories to ventilate, puzzles to propound, and remarks to make. Very often the unbeliever, the irreligious, the atheist, and the scoffer have a good deal to say about religion. *Then he questioned Him with many words.* Just imagine, the most shallow, silly chatter is poured into the suffering ears of the silent Son of God. *But He answered him nothing.*

At last Herod had exhausted himself. He waited for Christ to speak. He waited. But Jesus never uttered a word. Silence continued. At last the old chatterer grew angry. But Jesus did not utter a word.

Jesus was silent so that the words of John the Baptist might continue to ring in his ears, *“It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.”*<sup>4</sup> *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”*<sup>5</sup> *“Every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”*<sup>6</sup>

Herod is through speaking. And now the accusers begin. <sup>10</sup> *And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him.* The same old charges are poured out, and, it seems, this time into receptive ears.

Then the corrupt, positioned around the debased throne chime in. *Then Herod, with his men of war, treated [Jesus] with contempt and mocked Him.*

Mocking Jesus harmless innocence and ridiculing His candidacy for the Messianic throne, they throw a gorgeous robe over His holy shoulders. And midst indecent laughter and cruel insults, Herod sends Jesus back to Pilate, with whom as a result he now again had become friends.

Thus in their common cause against Jesus, Pilate and Herod became friends. But the records do not state that the friendship brought about by such unholy circumstances was very enduring.

Nevertheless it is true that the cause against Christ and Christianity does make strange associates and friends. But a thousand times better it would have been for Pilate and Herod to have sought to retain the friendship of Jesus.

Herod Antipas and Pilate have been compared with each other. Both men find Jesus harmless, not in the least dangerous, and at most a fanatic. But Herod laughs at Jesus and makes a great joke of him. Herod simply wants to see a performance by Jesus for entertainment, whereas Pilate is impressed more and more by Jesus, goes to great lengths to set Him free, and labours to rid himself of the blood-guilt of His death.<sup>7</sup>

So the question is; Are we friends of Jesus, and are we glad to see Him? And why? What are your views on religion, and what do you think of Christ?

May your answer be that of Peter, ***“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ”***<sup>69</sup> ***“Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. ”***<sup>8</sup> Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 15:4

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 14:4

<sup>3</sup> Mark 6:22-23

<sup>4</sup> Mark 6:18

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 3:1

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 3:10

<sup>7</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Luke*, Columbus Ohio:Wartburg Press, 1945, p1112-1113

<sup>8</sup> John 6:68-69