

The Tree of Life is a weekly teaching summary.

The Tree of Life for week ending 03/14/04.

The Trials of the Lord Jesus Christ

Part 2. John 18, Luke 23.

This past week we began to look at the six trials of our Lord Jesus Christ and how they relate to our main passage in **Phi 4:8** which says, *“From now on, members of the Royal family of God, whatever is true [doctrinal], whatever is honorable [noble or worthy of respect], whatever is just [fair or right]...let your mind dwell on these things.”*

There are many injustices in life, and if you let your mind dwell on those things, they will drive you crazy. As you go forward in the spiritual life, you need to let your mind dwell on what is just and fair. People will be unfair, but you must not lower yourself to their level. No greater example exists for us of one being just and righteous while being treated unjustly than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the only celebrity of the Christian faith.

Except for one short interrogation, the six trials He endured were unjust in every way. The One on trial was the only One who never committed one act of personal sin. The number **six** in Scripture represents humanity, and the entire human race was involved in these trials in some way (**Heb 12:2-3**).

The day our Lord and Savior died was a day like none other, a day filled with paradoxes. It was the darkest day in the history of time, and yet it was the brightest of all days. The injustices that nailed Him to the tree satisfied the justice of God. The evil acts of men who formed a murderous plot to end his life, proved that they were mere instruments in the hand of a sovereign God whose purposes were being carried out precisely as He planned them, **Isa 53:10, Pro 16:4**.

Luke begins to record the abuse our Lord suffered in **Luk 22:63-64**, *“And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him, and beating Him. And they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, ‘Prophesy, who is the one who hit You?’”* By the time they finished beating and scourging Him, his image was no longer recognizable as a man, **Isa 52:14**. No one else could have stood up to this punishment without fainting or even dying. **Luk 22:65** continues, *“And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.”* Ironically, they had brought him before the Sanhedrin to accuse Him of blasphemy.

Our Lord was then escorted to the second trial, before Caiaphas the high priest, whose one agenda was to *find* Him guilty (not *prove* him guilty). This was another illegal trial, held at night and based on false witnesses with prejudice and violence in the court. Any reasonable court of law would have already thrown out the case, but the Lord Jesus Christ was now a pawn in the hands of an unjust, prejudiced crowd and a religious system determined to take Him to the Cross. The scene grows even uglier in **Luk 22:66**, *“And when it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber...”*

The first two trials, before Annas and Caiaphas, were held at night illegally. This next trial was held early the next morning. It is now daylight, about 6:00 AM. Under Jewish Law, a sentence of death could never be carried out the day it was given. A night must elapse so the court might sleep on it, and perhaps their condemnation might turn to mercy. But the Sanhedrin was far from keeping its own regulations. **Luk 22:67-68** continues, “*If You are the Christ, tell us.’ But He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer.’*” The Lord would not reveal His claims to those who were asking in order to *reject* rather than examine them. Silence is His answer to ingrained prejudice masquerading as honest inquiry. However, He gave them the supreme sign of His Messiahship in **Luk 22:69-71**, “*But from now on **the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.***’ And they all said, ‘Are You the Son of God, then?’ And He said to them, ‘Yes, I am.’ And they said, ‘What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.’”

They will now parade him before Pilate for a fourth trial, where Scripture declares that Jesus witnessed an “honorful confession,” **1Ti 6:13**. Pilate served as governor of Judea from A.D. 26 to 36, and his biography is saturated with brutality. Multiple revolts that had broken out during his term had brought him under investigation by the Roman government. He lived in Caesarea but was visiting Jerusalem because it was Passover; he was there, strangely enough, to maintain law and order. He would later be banished to Gaul where he would commit suicide. One wonders if he was haunted by this decision concerning Jesus, which went against his better judgment.

In **Luk 23:2**, “*They began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation [lie] and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar [lie], and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King [another lie].’*” This is an outright lie, **Mat 22:21**, “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s.*” In the first two trials, they accused our Lord of blasphemy; however, they now invent a new accusation they hope will work with the Romans. Until now, nothing was said about tribute to Caesar.

In **Joh 18:28**, “*They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium [hall of judgment], and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.*” This was the day the memorial supper, the Passover, would be eaten, representing *the death of their Messiah!* Eating the lamb was a picture of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, yet they had rejected Him. Therefore, the Jews took Jesus to the Roman governor in an attempt to avoid Jewish law, which forbade them from trying someone in court on a holy day. **Joh 18:29-30** continues, “*Pilate therefore went out to them, and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this Man?’ They answered and said to him, ‘If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.’*” They have no evidence against Jesus.

Pilate was the only one who gave Jesus Christ an objective hearing. In **Joh 18:31-32**, “*Pilate therefore said to them, ‘Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.’ The Jews said to him, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death’ [Pilate had the discernment to observe the innocence of Jesus, but not the character to free Him.], that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.*” Our Lord knew exactly what they would do to Him, but He still pressed on, for you and for me, **Heb 12:2**, “*who for the joy set before Him*

endured the cross, despising the shame.” Here was the King of the Jews about to be subjected to the lowest form of Gentile punishment.

In **Luk 23:7-8**, the Lord is sent to King Herod, and the fifth trial begins: “*And when he [Pilate] learned that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time. Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.*”

Herod viewed Jesus as a mere entertainer, and had wanted to meet Him for a long time, and now he gets his chance, **Luk 23:9-11**, “*And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.*” The Lord Jesus Christ treated him with the ultimate insult, not in rebuking him, but in simply ignoring him, which must have infuriated Herod, **Luk 23:11**, “*And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, they dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.*”

Here comes a sixth trial, and by now, Pilate is beside himself, **Luk 23:13-16,18-25**, “*And Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, ‘You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.’ [This is the only honest judgment during these six unjust trials.] No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. I will therefore punish Him and release Him.’*”

We see John’s account in **Joh 18:33-34**, “*Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’*” Pilate expressed his frustration when asking the first question; his second question seeks information, **Joh 18:35**, “*I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me; what have You done?*” This received a direct answer, **Joh 18:36**, “*Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’*” Jesus Christ would not have a kingdom of this world until Satan’s defeat at the Cross. He will still have an earthly kingdom, but it would not be established on earth at that time. The physical kingdom of Christ on earth awaits His Second Advent at the beginning of the Millennium. (Today, He has a regenerate kingdom of Church-age believers, known as the Church or the Body of Christ.) Therefore, He states that His kingdom is not of this world.

Joh 18:37-39 continues, “*Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, I find no guilt in Him. But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?*” Realizing that Jesus was innocent, Pilate would make it possible to release an innocent Person, get himself off the hook, and help the religious leaders save face. However, in **Luk 23:18-25**, “*But they all cried out together, saying, ‘Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!’ (He was one who had been thrown into prison for a certain insurrection made in the city, and for murder.) And Pilate,*

wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, but they kept on calling out, saying, ‘Crucify, crucify Him!’ And he said to them the third time, ‘Why, what evil has this man done? **I have found in Him no guilt demanding death**; I will therefore punish Him and release Him.’ But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail. [Knowing he was already under investigation and that the release of Jesus would incite yet another riot, Pilate gives in.] And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand should be granted. And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.”

Our Lord was born at a time when the Jews executed criminals by stoning, however all the prophecies stated He would be crucified. Consider the odds of the Old Testament prophecies being fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

- The blood on both doorposts and over the door prophesied the Cross, **Exo 12:7**, fulfilled in **1Co 5:7**.
- The brazen serpent lifted up in **Num 21:9** was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in **Joh 3:14, 12:32; Heb 12:2**.
- The mocking and contempt of our Lord’s enemies in **Psa 22:6-8** was fulfilled in **Luk 23:35**.
- His hands and feet being pierced in **Psa 22:16** was fulfilled throughout the Gospels, as in **Mat 27:31, Mar 15:24**.
- The casting of lots for His garments in **Psa 22:18** was fulfilled in **Mat 27:35**.
- The prophecy that not one of His bones would be broken was written in **Psa 34:20**, and fulfilled in **Joh 19:34-36**.
- The betrayal of Judas Iscariot in **Psa 41:9** was fulfilled in **Luk 22:47-48**.
- The prophecy of the gall and vinegar in **Psa 69:21** was fulfilled in **Mat 27:34**.
- The physical abuse and humiliation of Jesus in **Isa 50:6** was fulfilled in **Mat 26:67**.
- His dying for our sins in order to save us was prophesied in **Isa 53:5**, and was fulfilled throughout the entire New Testament, as in **Rom 5:6-8**.
- His silence as He approached the Cross in **Isa 53:7** was fulfilled in **Mar 15:4-5**.
- His crucifixion in **Isa 53:12** was fulfilled in **Luk 23:33-34**.
- The piercing of His side in **Zec 12:10** was fulfilled in **Joh 19:34**.
- The nailing of His hands and feet in **Zec 13:6** was fulfilled in **Joh 20:27**.

These Jewish leaders, under the control of Satan, would not let up until Jesus was removed from the scene. Religion became the champion of a despicable criminal rather than the perfect, matchless Son of God. Convinced of the innocence of Jesus, Pilate still attempts to release Him. His second attempt is recorded in **Mat 27:24-25**, *And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, “I am innocent of this Man’s blood; see to that yourselves.” And all the people answered and said, “His blood be on us and on our children!”* He had just declared again the innocence of our Lord under Roman law, and in a symbolic act he called his servant to bring in a bowl of water, and he washed his hands publicly in front of the entire crowd. The custom of washing hands indicated that the accused was innocent. Pilate cast a vote that all could see and understand (**Deu 21:6-9**). Some 30 years later on the pavement on which Pilate washed his hands, the Romans would crucify 36,000 Jews. The historian Josephus vividly

describes the horrors of what happened on this very spot. Little did the Jews realize what they were saying in **Mat 27:25**, “*His blood be on us and on our children!*”

The events that followed are beyond our imagination. We cannot imagine the physical torture. He drags the crossbeam along the Via Dolorosa, His route from Pilate’s judgment hall to Calvary. Most of the artists who have painted Jesus Christ on the Cross understood nothing of His cruel treatment. They have portrayed a skinny figure with scrawny shoulders and bony frame, appearing weak and half-starved. In reality, Jesus Christ was the most powerful Man who ever lived! To receive those severe blows and still survive, he had to be extremely strong. To be accurate, a painting of Jesus Christ as He hung upon the Cross should depict a powerful body and neck beneath a bloodied, beaten mass for a face, His features completely mangled, **Isa 53:5**.

In spite of all the injustice and brutality He endured, He is still caring for others, **Luk 23:27-28,32-33** “*And there were following Him a great multitude of the people, and of women who were mourning and lamenting Him. But Jesus turning to them said, ‘Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.’... And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.*” This was capital punishment of the worst degree—completely naked, in this terrible twisted position, continually pushing Himself up to breathe, and pulling against the spikes in His hands and feet. Like the thousands of lambskins stretched in the mid-morning sun that day in preparation for the Passover, so the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, lay stretched beneath the burning skies of Judea. God’s Passover Lamb was there for all to see.

It was the most ghastly altar upon which any human sacrifice had ever been offered. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, hung suspended between heaven and earth as the Supreme Sacrifice, atoning for the awesome burden of the sins of all mankind, making reconciliation between God and man. The worst suffering did come until, in **Mat 27:46**, “*Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’*” The Father turned His back as His Son bore the sins of the entire world in that horrible moment of time, and at that same moment Satan’s doom was secured. You and I were in His thoughts as He bore the sins of the human race, **2Co 5:21**. Finally, in **Luk 23:46**, “*Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit.’ And having said this, He breathed His last.*” The final complete ransom was paid, and then He died. Such an extreme price for our salvation calls for such extreme gratitude and obedience to our Lord.

How did He live through such punishment? *Because he had you in mind!* He was thinking of you and me, because He had to get to the Cross! He must pay the penalty of sin, which is spiritual death. He did all of this because He must be “made sin for us.” His physical death did not provide salvation; it signified that *His work was finished* and established the basis for *resurrection*. What a Savior we have! All He had to do was snap His fingers and thousands of angels would have come to His aid. He remained sinless in spite of the most intense temptations. His restraint was magnificent, for if He had ever lost His temper, there would be *no salvation*.

Joh 19:19-22 *And Pilate wrote an inscription also, and put it on the cross. And it was written, "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." Therefore this inscription many of the Jews read, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek. And so the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but that 'He said, "I am King of the Jews."'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."*

For a more detailed study, order tapes 0190-1130 to 0190-1133.