



As we moved with Luke from the garden to the courtroom, we saw that Jesus' trial was far from fair. If there's one thing Luke wants us to notice from his account – it is Jesus' innocence (Pilate declares it three times – in v4, 14, 22). There was no basis for a charge against Jesus. He did not deserve to die. This trial was a sham and a travesty of justice.

As we walked through the passage, we saw Jesus' guiltlessness in five distinct episodes, before five different groups/individuals:

1. Guiltless before the guards (22v63-65)

How ironic that as the guards mockingly demanded Jesus prophesy they were fulfilling his prophecy! (See Luke 18v32-33.) Yet he bore it without complaint.

2. Guiltless before the Jewish council (22v66-71)

The Jewish council united against Jesus. Their questioning was empty – they were simply looking for a confession they could use to condemn him. But their vitriol was no surprise to Jesus, nor did it prevent him from speaking the truth.

3. Guiltless before Pilate (23v1-7)

Pilate knew almost immediately that none of the accusations against Jesus were legitimate. Look at how clearly he declared his verdict in v4. But when an opportunity to pass responsibility to Herod came, Pilate was quick to take it. Yet Jesus silently trusted himself to God's verdict, not Pilate's.

4. Guiltless before Herod (23v8-12)

Herod was delighted to see Jesus, but his curiosity was quickly shown to be shallow and self-interested. Jesus wouldn't rise to Herod's bait. He was not here to entertain, satisfy or impress Herod. He held his tongue and remained silent.

5. Guiltless before the crowd (23v13-25)

Pilate boldly and openly declared his verdict several times, but in the end, he bowed to the cries of the crowd who – with one voice – called out for the one guilty of insurrection to be released and the one unjustly accused to be crucified.

And this surely, is where we see ourselves? Our sins may not be the same as Barabbas', but they are no less serious, no less worthy of God's judgment, no less to blame for Jesus' death on the cross, we know from Romans 3 and Isaiah 53.

Like Barabbas, we deserve God's guilty verdict. But like Barabbas, Jesus gets our guilty verdict, if we trust him, and we receive his innocent verdict - v14-16. What a saviour we have!

Here are a few questions you could use to get your group started...

1. What different stages does Luke relate for us of the trial of Jesus?
(You might want to compare the accounts of Matthew, Mark and John)
2. What does Luke emphasise in his account?
3. How would you describe Jesus' words, actions and manner through his trial? Why do you think he speaks, acts and behaves as he does?
4. How do the different groups/individuals he interacts with respond to Jesus? What is the same and what is different in their responses?
→ How do we see responses like these in people today?
→ Are we ever tempted to respond to Jesus like this?
5. What can we learn from Jesus' example here about how to hold ourselves when we're under pressure? What might this look like during Covid-19?
6. What encouragement can we take from seeing how Jesus takes Barabbas' place? How can we apply that particularly in light of Covid-19?
7. What light does Isaiah 53 shed on these events? How does it encourage us?