



## “Jesus Is Accused”

Luke 23:1-12

February 28, 2021

The title of this morning’s message is *Jesus Is Accused*. Even as I think this is a fair summary of what we find in this portion of Scripture this morning, somebody might ask how is this even possible. Jesus is accused?

What does the word accused mean? To be accused is to be charged with doing wrong. To be accused is to be charged of breaking the law; of being a criminal. Yes, what we find here in this portion of Scripture is that Jesus was accused relentlessly.

So how is that even possible? The testimony of Scripture and the record of its history reveals that Jesus is holy. Jesus was, Jesus is, and Jesus always will be without blemish. Pure. All that He has ever done, He has done in love. His heart is kind. The moments that we read where Jesus did in fact raise up His voice and rattle cages and issue rebuke, He did so in the face of evil that needed to be confronted; that needed to be warned. Jesus is holy, holy, holy.

Yet we have this sermon titled *Jesus Is Accused*. What is up with that?

Perhaps a more accurate sermon title would have been *Jesus Is Falsely Accused*.

The history of the human race is filled with false accusation. Is it not? We human beings are so prone toward this that God included this issue in His top ten, didn’t He? What is the Ninth of the Ten Commandments? I always remember the Ten Commandments in the King James Version of the Bible. Exodus 20:16 KJV

**<sup>9</sup>Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.**

Notice that commandment. It does not say thou shalt not lie. Although in the pages of Scripture, Old and New Testaments, we find repeated instructions that we are not to lie; that we are not to be dishonest, but the Ninth Commandment is focused in on a particular form of dishonesty—of lying.

That commandment is talking about lying against a person. Distorting the reality about another person in such a way that their character is maligned. That is what bearing false witness is all about, and this morning we see people not only telling lies, but we see people maligning the character of Jesus Christ in a furious and intense kind of way.

As we look into Scripture this morning and as we receive what it has for us, as we see how all of these false accusations were heaped upon Jesus, I pray that by God’s grace we will be humbled to confess our sin of bearing false witness against Jesus and anyone else and that we will, by the grace of God, be painstakingly resolved to always speak the truth about Jesus and about anyone else.

Brothers and sisters, this must be from the grace of God. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals to us and makes us sensitive to our own sin. We need to be receptive to the work of the Spirit in our lives about how we have in fact been guilty of these things.

It is by the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of fallen people like us, giving us a new desire for holiness, that we have this kind of determination in love to always speak that which is true about God and others. I pray that as we take in the account that is before us, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus will be moving us in this direction.

As we enter into the storyline of Luke, you recall that last week we considered the Lord's trial before the Great Sanhedrin, which was kind of like the supreme court of the land of Israel. This week we move forward from the religious trial into the civil trial.

In the same way that there were three hearings that were involved in the trial before the Sanhedrin, moving forward we will see that there were three hearings that proceeded before the civil authorities as well.

First there was an appearance before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator of the region of Judea. After that, Jesus was sent by Pilate to Herod Antipas, Rome's appointed tetrarch of the region of Galilee. After that, Herod would send the Lord back to Pontius Pilate.

This morning we will observe the first two of those three hearings. Moving into Luke Chapter 23, we are now under the morning sunshine of the Passover Holiday. We know this day was Good Friday. The crucifixion was just mere hours away.

Here we will see as the Great Sanhedrin became the jury, then transformed themselves into the prosecutors, where they would accuse Jesus. We will take this in two parts. First, we will read of their urgent accusation before the civil authority, Pilate, who was very reluctant to have anything to do with it. He just kind of wanted to distance himself from the whole thing. He was a reluctant authority in these matters.

So we will see the Sanhedrin's urgent accusation against Jesus before a reluctant authority. Then we will see their vehement accusation before a frivolous authority who thought that this was just going to be a good time.

So in the midst of this, I pray that Jesus will be revealed to us. I pray that we will be revealed to ourselves, and that we will be driven into the grace and the mercy of the One that we see suffering for sinners like us, because there is no greater love than the love that is displayed here.

We proceed into the text. First, the case against Jesus included:

### **1. Urgent accusation before a reluctant authority (23:1-5)**

Let's go into the story. Luke Chapter 23 and Verse 1:

**<sup>1</sup>Then the whole company of them...**

That is all seventy members, we would understand, of the Sanhedrin.

**<sup>1</sup>Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. <sup>2</sup>And they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.” <sup>3</sup>And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” <sup>4</sup>Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.” <sup>5</sup>But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”**

So we see the first few waves of accusation that were coming against Jesus. The urgent arguments of the Sanhedrin were met with an uncharacteristically passive response from Pontus Pilate. Reading through what is written about Pilate in the writings of the Jewish historian, Josephus, we see that Pilate was a cruel man. He was a tough customer.

Here we have this situation where the Sanhedrin came and leveled all their accusations against Jesus, even saying that he claimed to be Christ, a king. Pilate took all of this in and he asked Jesus if He was the Christ. Jesus gave the same affirmation that we talked about last week, You have said so.

And Pilate said, I find no guilt in this man. What was up with that? If you get into what is written of the hearing before Pilate in Matthew Chapter 27 you find a couple of things. First, Pilate discerned that the Sanhedrin was filled with envy toward Jesus. Pilate could smell the rot in their accusations.

Also, it is stated in Matthew’s record that Pilate’s wife was having premonitions about the whole thing. She was having dreams and she was telling Pilate to watch out for the situation. These things got into Pilate’s head. With these things in the picture, Pilate said, I find no guilt in him.

This is what was happening with Pilate. We see him being kind of reluctant about the issue. In stark contrast of Pilate, we see the intensity of the Sanhedrin and their urgency in accusing Jesus. They leveled several accusations against Him.

It is very easy for anybody who has been reading through the Gospel record to see how bogus the accusations were. The Sanhedrin’s said, He tells us not to pay tribute to Caesar. That is not what Jesus said. In fact when they asked about paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus gave such a memorable response that I am guessing that most of us here can repeat it verbatim—render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and render unto God what is God’s.

This talks about how Jesus was going around whipping up the people into a frenzy. No, Jesus was seeking to calm things down. The feeding of the five thousand, get them in groups of fifty so that they did not get out of control.

All these accusations were being leveled against Him, but perhaps the most grimacing and troublesome is the first thing we read in what the Sanhedrin's said against Jesus. Verse 2:

<sup>2</sup>...**“We found this man misleading our nation**

R.C. Sproul said something about this that I just had to write down because the simplicity and the depth of it just registered in my heart. Sproul said:

Every single day politicians mislead the people Just read the paper But the Lord Jesus Christ has never misled a single soul.

Amen! *The Lord Jesus has never misled a single soul.* When we take in the truths of Jesus, we will say with King David in that familiar Psalm, Psalm 23:

<sup>3</sup>**He leads me in the paths of righteousness  
for his name's sake.**

He leads you and me in the right way. When it talks about being led in the paths of righteousness, it is not talking about being led in a path of self-righteousness, where somehow we ourselves, sinners that we are, muster up the ability to gain merit in the sight of God.

Rather, He leads us in the paths of gift-righteousness. He helps us to understand that God requires righteousness and we don't have that. Every day of our lives reveals this. But by grace, God in Christ gives righteousness as a gift to those who will believe in Him, having the work of the Spirit happening in their coming to faith in Christ. There is the gift of righteousness. They are given a righteous standing in God's sight.

Then with the gift of the Holy Spirit, God begins to help us to live in accordance with the standing we have before God. We grow! Jesus will never lead us astray. If we have ears to hear and have eyes to see, Jesus is first going to lead us to the cross, where we will see the gravity of our sin.

At the cross we will see that there was a fountain of blood that will cleanse our every spot and stain. He will lead us straight to the cross and He will lead us to the empty grave, where we will see that life in the Messiah simply does not end. We are joined to the life of God in Him and in Him we live forever.

God will lead us to the Day of Pentecost and the ongoing gift of the Holy Spirit. The Third Person of the Triune God comes to dwell within His people to lead them, teach them, comfort them, to console them. He will lead us through the waters of baptism, where we declare to everybody the sign of the covenant and that we are alive in Christ.

He will lead us to the pages of Scripture, where He will write living oracles upon our hearts by which we will long for the ways of the Lord. We will know the Lord and be empowered to walk in His ways. Jesus is going to lead us in the right way.

Jesus is going to lead us to the church, the fellowship of the redeemed where we will join company with fellow strugglers, where we help each other out, where we nurse each other's wounds, where we spur one another on in love and good deeds. Jesus is ultimately going to lead us home to Paradise after we have served Him for however many years and decades we have in this life. Jesus is going to lead us in the right way.

In a world where there are so many untrue things being spoken about Jesus, understand that we have the sinful tendency within us also to distort or to shrink back. Brothers and sisters, when we see falsehood being heaped upon Him in an accusatory way, let us be resolved by the Spirit to be those who speak forth truth about Jesus.

Moving forward we see that there was something here that triggered Pilate's thought. Something got Pilate's attention in what the Sanhedrin's said in the midst of their accusations. Famously, with the language of John's Gospel, Pilate just wanted to wash his hands of the whole thing.

In their accusations, the Sanhedrin mentioned the region of Galilee. The emphasis was on this place. They said, He has been stirring up trouble from Galilee all the way down to this place, even this holy place, even Jerusalem. Pilate questioned them about Galilee, and told them he could hand the situation off to somebody else. His jurisdiction was Judea and Samaria, and Galilee up north was under the jurisdiction of Herod.

Guess who just happened there in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast? King Herod! So Jesus was then sent to Herod, but Jesus would not go alone. You can believe that His accusers were biting His heels as they went and continued the false accusations against Jesus.

Now we move forward and we see the:

## **2. Vehement accusation before a frivolous authority (23:6-12)**

Somebody who thought that it was all going be whole barrel of monkeys; a whole lot of fun. So we see what is written in Luke Chapter 23 and Verses 6 through 12:

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

Here in this portion, we see the Lord's second hearing before the civil court. Before we set our attention on the vehement accusations leveled against Jesus, we must think about the frivolity of King Herod.

Understand that there is a whole series of Herod's presented to us in the pages of the New Testament. Herod was the family name of a dynasty that was in power at the time of Christ. The Herod we have here is not the same Herod that ruled at the beginning of the Gospel. In the infancy and toddlerhood of Jesus, Herod the Great ruled.

This here was not Herod the Great. Herod the Great was the father of Herod Antipas, who we now have before us now. What a difference between these two men with the same name. Herod the Great was a man who was driven by a desire for power and control and accomplishment.

Herod Antipas was a man who lusted after pleasure, the things that money could buy, and sensuality. These two Herod's were very different from one another. Recalling our series at Christmas, when the Magi came into Jerusalem saying, Where is the one who is born King of the Jews, Herod the Great, saw this toddler-Christ as such a threat that he was willing to slaughter the innocence of Bethlehem.

This Herod, his son, did not say, Oh, a threat. Rather he said, Oh, what a treat. Oh, how fun. How splendid. What a holiday treat for this Passover Day! Jesus is here? He is coming now? Oh, boy, maybe we will see a miracle!

You can just anticipate how this went. Herod wanted to see a sign, so he began probing Jesus about the things that He had done and said, all in an effort to see a sign. Maybe Herod said, Jesus, here is a cup of water. I heard you can turn water into wine. If you do this, I will get you off the hook.

Herod was totally irreverent and flippant. Okay that didn't work, so here is my breakfast table, Herod said. Jesus, I heard you can feed a lot of people with meager resources. Why don't we feed this whole Roman battalion? That would be so cool. Let's do that! Herod was just going on and going on, trying to get Jesus to do this kind of thing.

Frivolous. Flippant. Looking for a good time. Brothers and sisters, let us be careful. I'm not intending to say that certain places of gathering have this same exact spirit that Herod had, but we must be careful about driving things with the desire to be entertained or dazzled in the house of worship.

There are a great number of churches that have gone that very direction. I will resist the temptation to talk too much about churches that engage in all kinds of antics to get people into the door and keep them there. Some of them seem to be inspired by comedians more than the prophetic vision of deep Bible teachers and theologians, who have shed blood through the years.

It all seems to be driven by a guiding principle that church should be fun. I like fun. Fun is good. I laugh a lot. But the attitude that church should be fun is not the driving principle of any Sunday gathering.

There ought to be a spirit of holiness and reverence, knowing that God in heaven is worshiped by angels who see Him as holy, holy, holy! There should be a sense of awe and the fear of the Lord that characterizes Christian worship. In that, let's be glad. Let's have glad hearts. Let's have joyful spirits because He has purchased for us an awesome, awesome salvation.

Our hearts are lifted in what Christ has done for His church. But the gathering of the church ought not be defined by frivolity. There needs to be gladness and there needs to be gravity. There needs to be joy and there needs to be reverence and there needs to be fear, as we think about the great price that Jesus paid to purchase us and bring us into His Kingdom.

As we think about Herod again, whatever he asked, he was asking relentlessly. He was extensive in his questioning and requests of Jesus. There was just this interesting element in Verse 9, where it says that Herod questioned Him at some length.

Herod was really, really pressing down and trying to get information, or more likely, to get Jesus to do things. But Jesus it says that Jesus made no answer. No answer! Jesus was in fact silent before the accusations coming at Him in the other courts in the sense that He was not trying to muster up a defense of Himself.

However, Jesus did say some things before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate. Like we said last week, He was saying things not to get off the hook but to keep Himself on the hook. He spoke forth affirmations. He spoke forth even glorious statements about what was going happen—now they will see the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven.

Jesus said things but with Herod, the picture given to us here is that Jesus was utterly silent. He would not say a single word. And Herod got torqued. Herod finally just got fed up with the whole thing. Herod wanted to see a sideshow. Jesus was not going to have any of that. Herod got fed up and angry, so he began with the mockery and beatings along with his soldiers.

As reprehensible as Herod's behavior was, he was only outdone by the Sanhedrin because there in the midst of all that, their continued accusations were the background music just driving it forward. Before Pilate, the Sanhedrin were urgent but then there was an increase in their ferocity. Now they were vehement.

I just picture a pot on a stovetop. The water is already super, super hot. You don't want to stick your finger in that pot of water. The bubbles are already coming up, but they Sanhedrin took the heat dial and turned it on full blast so that when they were before Herod, the water was bubbling and boiling furiously.

I think that this was because Pilate's response was somewhat unexpected. They made this case before Pilate and Pilate asked Jesus if He was the Christ, the king of the Jews. Then Jesus gave Pilate an affirmation by saying, You have said it. You have said so.

Then Pilate, he said, I find no guilt in Him. What?! So the Sanhedrin were thinking, Woah! Wait a minute. This thing might not go our way. So just the fury and the intensity of the situation increased all the more. You can image how the accusations were searing. You can

imagine how the Sanhedrin were filled with manipulative deceitfulness, saying things about the Lord.

Not only was Herod engaging in mockery and the guards engaging in scorn, but the Sanhedrin, these men who were wise, who knew how to manipulate things were doing it even more, and there you had Jesus standing before it all silent.

Have you ever had somebody say false things about you? If so, you may realize how hard it is to keep your mouth shut. It is hard to keep your mouth shut even when somebody says something not nice about you and it is true! Somebody says something not nice and it is true and you get angry and flustered and say how dare you judge me!

Even when somebody brings a valid criticism, we get all defensive. How much more when there are blatant, horrendous lies being showered down? The Sanhedrin's were ripping into Jesus' character, speaking falsehood and He was there silent.

As we look upon our Messiah, I pray that we will see that in Christ there is no greater love than the love of Groom for His bride, because He endured this for those who will come into His saving grace; those who will come and trust in Him.

Jesus was there silent, not because He could not speak but because He would not speak. Jesus could have unsheathed the sword of His mouth. In the same that it was by God's Word that they were created and sustained, Jesus could have brought them down to nothing in a word, but He would not because He knew that all of the slander was the vehicle that would move Him forward to the cross.

While they meant it for evil, God meant it for good and redemption, so that a sacrifice could be made for our sin. I pray that as we paint this picture of Jesus standing there in that windstorm of false accusation, that our hearts will love Him; that the Holy Spirit will be moving within us to know and love and worship and praise the Messiah that is presented before us here in this text.

I pray that you will love Him by saying, I am a sinner in need of the cleansing flow that only You can provide. I pray that you will love Him by saying, Lord, not only do I need that initial moment of being saved, but I need You to be working in me all my life to help me so that I will only say things that are true about You and other people that surround me.

I want to finish with an application that really began stirring in my heart this week. I don't know about you but I like being comforted. Do you like being comforted? I like being consoled and soothed. I like getting up in the morning for my 6:15 AM cup of coffee and opened Bible, looking for a word of encouragement from Scripture.

So often that encouragement comes but sometimes there is a hand that reaches up from the pages of Scripture and slaps me right in the face. Scripture does that often! Yes, correction and reproof are needed if we are going to grow in holiness by the grace of God working in us.



So, yes, we need to get smacked at times. Sometimes we need to have some sense smacked into us from Scripture. We see all these false accusations being heaped on Jesus and we are capable of this too! I am going to challenge you further. You are guilty of this as well. So am I.

Somebody might say, Why? I have never said a scornful thing about Jesus in my life. Even if I grant that, I want to talk about one way in which you are guilty of this. I pray that we will be sober about the things that we say.

Here is something that I would like to point out. In my experience as a pastor, I have had front row seat to a lot of conflict through the years. If you don't think that conflict happens in local churches, read your Bible again.

If you are coming to Bethel Grace and thinking maybe you have a perfect and stress-free church, sorry! Conflict happens. There are spats and there are feuds and there are arguments sometimes among the people in this church just like in Philippi. Just like in Thessalonica. Just like in Galatia. It is all there in the Bible.

I have had a front row seat to a number of them. In some situations I am there among others to help mediate conflict. And whether you believe this or not, I hate to burst any bubble about your pastor, but I have been involved in some disagreements as well.

In the midst of those conflicts, what I have felt rise up in me and have also observed in other Christians, is that the dragon of self-righteousness gets awakened. It is then that your pride will start rearing its ugly head and with it will come the tendency and the willingness and the desire to distort the truth in our favor.

We will bend the facts toward our advantage. To exonerate ourselves over the one that we are in conflict with, we will even speak falsely of the person on the other side of the argument or the situation at hand.

Some of us are just pathological liars. We just lie even if it is not in a conflict. We will talk smack about other people even if there is no controversy happening. How many times have you manipulated the picture to make yourself look good and the other person look bad? You make yourself look like the innocent victim and the other person is the mean, evil villain.

But if somebody starts probing in on the details, you might start getting a little bit defensive because they are going to uncover other factors that are involved in the disagreement that you are in. Then you might not look so good, but we cover over that and talk about what the other person has done that is so terrible.

There is something that Jesus said, granted in another context, but it applies to this issue as well. Whatever you have done to the least of these, you have done to Me. Lying about a child of God is lying about Jesus Himself. Distorting the facts in a conflict with another Christian is distorting the facts about Christ Himself, who that Christian is also joined to.

When Christ confronted Saul as he was breathing threats and persecuting the church of Jesus, what did Christ say to him? He said, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? To harm a brother or sister in Christ is akin to harming Jesus Himself. That does not include physical blows only. That includes slander. So often lying and distorting the truth about somebody else does much more harm than a physical brawl.

Physical abuse is sinful and wrong and I don't want to minimize that. Threatening anybody with physical force is sinful and it is wrong. And talking about people behind their backs, slandering them, distorting truths about them is sinful and is damaging and is harmful and it is wrong. Jesus intends to cleanse His church of such practices.

This is why I say that in the midst of all of this, I pray that the Lord will give us the ability to see how we also are guilty of breaking the Ninth Commandment, and that our hearts will be humbled and made sensitive to it, and that by the grace of the Lord and because of something beautiful that the Lord is putting before us, we will have the desire to make painstaking efforts to always speak truth in love.

Let us allow this word from Ephesians Chapter 4 to guide the path forward. How are we to relate to one another in the body of Christ? Verse 25:

**<sup>25</sup>Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.**

Moving down to Verse 29:

**<sup>29</sup>Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths**

None! Some expert said somewhere that in a marriage relationship if there is a 9:1 positive-negative ratio, there is a very good chance of a healthy relationship. Will Jesus allow that ratio? No! 10:0!

**<sup>29</sup>Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths**

Oh, that is hard! Do you feel your need for the grace of God for His cleansing and for His forgiveness and for the Holy Spirit to help whip things into shape, so that you are perusing holiness by the grace of God? We don't have it in ourselves and the Holy Spirit needs to recreate it.

I hope you are feeling it! Because we want our church to be a place where there is actual refreshment and not a place of heaviness. Amen?! No man can conquer the tongue. Neither can a woman. We need the Holy Spirit to get control of our capacity for speech.

**<sup>29</sup>Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup>And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be**

**put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.**

Those final five words empower it all. Gospel! God in Christ forgave you. If God in Christ has forgiven you, He is going to cause a new passion to rise up to bless and to give grace and to encourage, rather than to strike out to slander and to lie against another person.

Go to the cross. Go to the cross. Go to the cross and see the price that was paid for your sin and rejoice that the price was paid. Go to the empty grave and see how you might be empowered to live in newness of life.

Let's close in a word of prayer.