

The Great Exchange

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[0 : 00] Let's pray and then let's get into God's word. Heavenly Father, as we prepare to hear your word,!

Now just imagine for a moment you're a Christian in the early church and your message to the world is to come and place your absolute trust in a man who has been crucified on the cross. Now to us Christians in the 21st century, that no longer sounds scandalous because we associate the cross straight away with loving sacrifice.

But in the ancient world, crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals. So, if Jesus was condemned and crucified, why would anyone listen to him?

What credibility does he have? How could anyone trust a crook? And that is precisely why in today's passage, Luke wants to establish Jesus' credibility beyond all reasonable doubt.

[1 : 34] You see, if Jesus' credibility is not substantiated, then the message he preached and the movement he founded collapses.

Our faith will be in vain. But here is the upside. If we are certain Jesus is credible, then we can be certain his promises are reliable.

So how can we have certainty about Jesus' credibility? This is where Luke comes in. Do you remember why Luke bothered to write what he wrote?

Luke 1 verse 4 tells us. It is to give his readers certainty of the things you have been taught. And so Luke can help us be certain of Jesus' credibility.

And the way he will do that today is by helping us to, number one, be clear on his identity. Number two, be convinced of his innocence.

[2 : 45] And as a result, number three, be confident in his intention. So let's work through each of these points today, step by step. First of all, Luke helps us to be clear on Jesus' identity.

At this point in the story, Jesus has already been arrested and he's awaiting trial. But the guards certainly aren't waiting around.

Without any hesitation, they start mocking and beating him. Verse 63. Pauli's brutality, as you can see, isn't just a 21st century thing.

But why? Why are they doing this? Notice it's all because they think he's a faker.

Verse 64. You can just hear their taunts, can't you? As they blindfold him, they say, Show us your magical powers, Jesus.

[3 : 51] Prophecy. Aren't you the great one? Don't you know all things? If you really are who you say you are, tell us who is hitting you right now.

And of course, the point is, they don't believe in the slightest he's anyone special. They are clearly aware of the claims regarding his identity, but they treat him simply as a criminal, a circus animal, to be abused for their sick enjoyment.

But are they right? Does Jesus really have no prophetic insight? Because if you have been reading through Luke's gospel, this scene should cause your mind to recall Luke 18, where Jesus has specifically predicted he will be mocked, flogged, and killed.

This scene should make you recall the parable he told in Luke 20, where the vineyard's tenants beat the owner's servants, symbolizing the repeated persecution of God's prophets.

And so what's going on here actually vindicates his prophetic status. What he said will happen is happening.

[5 : 24] The soldiers are actually providing evidence concerning his identity, even as they laugh in his face. But that is just the beginning.

For Luke will remind us Jesus isn't just a prophet, he is something more. Look at verse 65. There the soldiers are said to insult him, but actually the word translated insulting is literally blasphemous

in the original language.

And Luke's choice of words is significant. You see, what does it mean to blaspheme? It's to speak against God. It is the very thing the Jewish council will accuse Jesus of.

But Luke makes clear the real blasphemy is happening in this very scene. By treating Jesus this way, they are insulting God.

And if that is true, then what is Luke implying about Jesus' identity? There can be only one conclusion.

[6 : 36] The one they are mocking and beating is the same God who made them and gave them life. But perhaps we are still not clear.

If so, the next scene will leave us in no doubt. Jesus is now brought before the council of Jewish leaders, and the whole reason he is on trial is once again because of his identity.

You see, these leaders are no different from the soldiers. They demand, verse 67, to know whether Jesus is the Messiah. But not because they are really seeking to discover the truth.

They have already made up their minds because he isn't. And they simply want him to make that claim so that they can say, he is a blasphemer.

Like the soldiers, they refuse to regard him as someone special. And that's why in verses 67 and 68, Jesus refuses to give them a straight answer.

[7 : 48] If I do give you a proper answer, he says, you won't believe me anyway. Isn't that what you have always been like time and time again?

Just go back to all those episodes that we read about in Luke 20 when they asked him in sincere question after in sincere question just to trap him.

And hey, Jesus says, what about the times I have asked you a question in verse 68? Never answer it. Because if you did honestly answer what I asked all those times back in Luke 20, you have to admit I am who I say I am.

But Jesus says, since you're so keen to figure out my identity, let me mention my credentials to you one more time. Verse 69.

But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God. Jesus is combining two Old Testament images here. One from Daniel 7, verse 13 to 14, and one from Psalm 110, verse 1.

[9 : 10] both are images of enthronement, of divine power and authority. And that should have struck a chord of fear deep into their souls.

You see, what is Jesus really saying to them? He is saying, although you are judging me right now, the reality is I'm your judge.

Or in the words of one commentator, you might think you have the right to make a judgment about me. But at the end of the day, the judgment that truly counts is the one made by the Son of Man.

So proceed carefully, guys. Have some fear of God. But sadly, they have no fear.

Once again, Jesus' words in verse 67 prove true. Even if I tell you, you will not believe me. All they can think about is getting him to make that crucial confession which will prove their case.

[10 : 29] And so they try again, verse 70. Are you the Son of God? And he simply replies, you say that I am.

You have said so. Jesus is putting the ball in their court. If you are so desperate to find me guilty, then go ahead.

Admit it then. Agree that I am the Son of God. God, then you can charge me. And that's what they do.

They take his lack of denial as an admission of guilt. But here is the absurdity of it all. In the end, what is Jesus actually guilty of?

Only of being the Messiah and the Son of God. That's what they find him guilty of. That's the verdict they cast.

[11 : 35] And so in an ironic way, his identity is made plain, even in a sham trial. That's what Luke wants to point out.

Ultimately, you can't keep the truth about Jesus buried. We might try to silence it, push it aside, or cover it up, but we can't do it forever.

In the end, the truth about who he is will eventually come true. It's shown true even as the soldiers mock him, and it's shown true even as the Jewish leaders interrogated him.

So don't try to suppress the truth. Don't worry if others keep doing so. They might refuse to acknowledge Jesus is God's King for now, but one day it will be clear as daylight. He is the Christ, the Son of God, the Son of Man. No one will be able to deny it. So don't fight the inevitable.

[12 : 51] Don't be like the leaders who received Jesus' testimony, yet kept resisting his authority. Instead, surrender everything to him precisely because you have heard from Jesus' own lips that he is the Son of God, God's King.

Surrender your family, your friendships, your future to him. Those around you might think you a fool, but really they'll be the ones with no clue.

So hold your nerve, make sure it's King Jesus you serve. Yet being clear on Jesus' identity is only the first step.

But the question remains, even if we are clear on who Jesus is, can we still trust him? Can his credibility stand up in court given that he's been labeled a criminal?

Well, that brings us to our next step for today. We need to be convinced of Jesus' innocence. Let's move on to our next scene in Luke 23, verses 1 to 6.

[14 : 12] The Jews now rush Jesus to pilot the Roman governor. You see, they themselves have no authority to execute Jesus, but pilot does.

But notice, verse 2, how they have to make up an entirely new charge. After all, why would Pilate be interested in religious disputes regarding blasphemy?

So they've got to come up with something more attention-grabbing. 23, verse 2. And they began to accuse him, saying, we have found this man subverting our nation.

He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king. Now, that is a politically explosive charge.

Basically, Jesus is committing treason. But the problem is, it is a complete lie. Remember how, back in Luke 20, Jesus actually taught the complete opposite?

[15 : 20] Give to Caesar what is Caesar's. Pay your taxes. And sure, while Jesus is the Messiah, he isn't one in the way that they claim.

He wasn't leading a political revolution. And once again, the irony is thick, isn't it? Back in verse 71, the Jewish leaders cried out, what further testimony do we need?

We have all that we need to find him guilty. But before Pilate, it turns out, they have to invent more false testimony simply to gain a hearing.

But Pilate has no time for all this scheming. So he asks, rather dismissively, are you the king of the Jews? After all, Jesus hardly looks like one, having just been beaten and sleep deprived.

And while in the other Gospels we know that they have a bit more of a conversation, Luke is only interested in telling us what Pilate ultimately concludes, verse 4.

[16 : 36] I find no basis for a charge against this man. And let's be clear, Pilate isn't shy about crucifying rebels. If Jesus even seemed like a threat, Pilate wouldn't hesitate to have him killed.

but to him, an external observer, it's just a no-brainer. Jesus is clearly innocent. Next case, please. But this isn't what the Jews want and so they try again, verse 5. Look, this guy stirs up people everywhere. He's a threat. Come on, Pilate, you better stop the revolution while you have the chance.

But think about the case they are making. It is a strange accusation, isn't it, when we have seen just last week how almost, well, basically all of his followers abandoned him.

What kind of stirring up of the people is that? It's strange to be accused of stirring up people when Jesus has been pretty quiet rather than making rousing speeches throughout.

[17 : 48] Once again, their charges have zero basis. And so Pilate's probably getting a bit annoyed at this point.

Why are these guys wasting his time? But now he spots a procedural loophole. Ah, this guy is a Galilean, eh? Good thing I know that Herod happens to be in town and this is his jurisdiction.

So let's just have Herod deal with you. Bye-bye. And off he ships, Jesus, the king, Herod. And Herod is more than happy to receive Jesus.

He's heard about him a lot and now, finally, he has a chance to see this guy up close and personal. And what he is hoping for is for a fun magic show from Jesus, verse 8.

That is how he perceives Jesus. Not as the Messiah, but as an entertainer. At the very least, verse 9, he is hoping that Jesus can answer some of his trivia.

[18 : 53] But Jesus doesn't oblige him. And so Herod eventually tires of his new toy and dresses him up for fun and sends him back to Pilate.

But here is the point. In Herod's eyes, Jesus might have been a disappointment, but he is still innocent.

For even though the chief priests and the teachers of the law piled on the accusations, Herod doesn't see any basis to charge Jesus with anything either.

And that is confirmed by Pilate himself later on in verse 15. And that is the conclusion Pilate wants to decisively convey.

Look, he says, I have examined Jesus, Herod has examined Jesus, and guys, both of us agree. He has done nothing to deserve death.

[19 : 54] This guy is no criminal deserving of crucifixion. But alright, alright, as a concession, why don't I just give him a nice little whipping? That's what the punishment referred to here means.

Why don't I just give him a little whipping and then release him? Now, this wasn't just a slap on the wrist. The Roman whips were typically leather cords with metal and bone which, when used, tore flesh.

You can imagine just how painful that is. but Pilate isn't exactly committed to principled justice. He just wants this case off his plate.

So he hopes that a little whipping will appease the crowd. But it just won't be appeased. Pilate appeals to them to be reasonable and let him release Jesus, but verse 21, they keep shouting, crucify him.

And for the third time, verse 22, he says, why? What crime has this man committed?

[21 : 14] He has done nothing wrong. And that, my friends, is what Luke wants you and I to hear.

Over and over and over again, we keep hearing, Jesus is innocent. And it is said by people who don't really have a stake in the matter.

but even corrupt Pilate and corrupt Herod are convinced he isn't guilty. And over and over and over again, we keep seeing that the charges brought against Jesus simply cannot stick.

They are baseless. They are lies. They are just empty statements by people who want to get rid of Jesus. And so why is Jesus actually crucified?

What crime has he committed? Answer? Nothing. From one perspective, it is simply a miscarriage of justice.

[22 : 28] The only reason we will see him hanging on the cross next week is simply because a Roman governor ultimately bowed to pressure from an increasingly restless mob and so decided to execute this man.

But even he knows this man is innocent. And so the picture Luke is painting for us is unambiguous. You see, so far, what has Jesus been found guilty of?

Only one thing, of being the Messiah and the Son of God. He's been found guilty of being who he says he is. Other than that, he is completely blameless.

And so we can be absolutely convinced of the innocence of Jesus. But here is one more question for us.

If so, then what exactly is happening here? Is Jesus just the unfortunate victim of a power play? is he just collateral damage?

[23 : 42] You see, if that is all he is, then the claim of the Christian message, the gospel, to be the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes rings hollow.

Jesus might be innocent, yes, but how can he be savior? How can such a message be credible? look is not done yet.

To help us be certain that Jesus and everything he stands for is credible, he needs to help us take one more step, to be confident in the intention of Jesus, to be confident in the intention of Jesus.

You see, yes, Jesus was an innocent sufferer. He was definitely treated unjustly, but he wasn't just a victim of corrupt forces.

Do you remember last week how Jesus quoted Isaiah 53 verse 12, and he was numbered with the transgressors? And do you remember how he said everything that was about to happen next was a fulfillment of that scripture?

[24 : 59] In other words, everything that is happening here is an intentional fulfillment of Isaiah 53. In fact, you can find echoes of Isaiah 53 everywhere in this account.

Take verses 2 and 3, for example. Now, doesn't Jesus at this point have no beauty or majesty? Hasn't he been despised and rejected by mankind?

He's been mocked, beaten, and insulted. Or take verse 7. On the screen, he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. And isn't that Jesus silent before Herod?

Or take verse 8, by oppression and judgment he was taken away. Now, isn't that his experience by participating in a sham trial?

[26 : 14] You see, everything that Jesus does is purposeful and intentional. It is part of God's outworking of his plan. And that is certainly the interpretation of Peter later on in Acts 2, verse 23.

This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. Claire, sorry, could you switch to the next slide? And you, with the help of wicked man, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.

God's what is God's plan? What is the intention of the Son of God? Is it to identify with those who suffer and show solidarity with them?

Now, that is certainly a part of it. We can be certain Jesus can sympathize with all those who suffer unjustly because he has gone through it himself.

But Jesus' intention is not merely to sympathize with the innocent. Rather, it is to be the innocent one suffering in place of the guilty.

[27 : 30] Because right at the heart of Isaiah 53, we find this written, but he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. And Luke tells us we can be certain that is what Jesus is on his way to accomplishing.

In fact, he couldn't make it clearer. because look again at verse 18. We are now introduced to a man called Barabbas.

He is a convicted criminal, already proven guilty of murder and sedition. He is guilty of what they accused Jesus back of in verse 5, of stirring up the people.

He is a man destined to die. And he should. The punishment fits the crime. But the crowd says, release him.

[28 : 47] It seems as if there was a tradition of releasing a prisoner during Passover, and Pilate wants to release Jesus. He says so at least three times. But the crowd says, no, swap him for Jesus instead.

Let Barabbas go. And let Jesus take his place instead. And under pressure, that is exactly what Pilate does in verses 24 and 25.

He gives in to their demand. He releases the guilty Barabbas and surrenders the innocent Jesus to his will, to their will.

You see, here is the picture that Luke is painting for us. everyone in the end is guilty. Pilate certainly was.

He didn't hesitate to dish out a whipping to an innocent man. And in the end, he didn't hesitate to let an innocent man die, just to make sure that he kept the popular vote.

[29 : 58] He was willing to compromise to save his own skin. He is not innocent. Neither is Herod.

We know even from other parts of the Bible that this is not a good man. This is a guy who resorted to dodgy means to marry his brother's wife, who lusted after his stepdaughter.

This is a guy who liked having theological discussions with John the Baptist but had him thrown straight into prison the moment John challenged him on his lifestyle. And he hasn't changed.

Once again, he treats the matters of God as matters of entertainment. Something fun to dabble in, but the moment he doesn't get what he wants, he treats Jesus with contempt.

He is not innocent. And what about the crowd? notice verse 13. Who is there?

[31 : 03] The chief priests, the rulers, and the people. This is everyone from every walk of life, basically.

And with one voice, verse 18, the whole crowd is begging for the blood of an innocent man. How quickly they can change. They hailed him as a king not long ago, but now they've decided they want blood.

This is canceled culture in its most extreme form. They're not innocent either. But what does Jesus do?

Does he at any point speak up? Call on the angels? Ask God to prove his innocence? God to know. No. Because that is not his intention.

His intention is to go through with this great exchange. The innocent for the guilty. You see, Jesus is not just anyone.

[32 : 13] Remember, the only thing that he's been found guilty of is of being the Messiah and the Son of God. Fully divine, yet fully human. So he can represent us.

And yet, unlike every other human being who has ever lived, he is completely innocent. He is blameless, faultless, righteous. But now he is taking the place of the guilty to die in their place. death. That's what's going on. And perhaps the best way to capture the wake of what is going on is to put yourself in the shoes of Barabbas.

Now, just imagine the scene. You are in jail, waiting to die, and you know deep down you deserve it. And one day, the soldiers come for you, and you take a deep breath and you think, this is it. They are taking me to be executed. But through your confusion, they tell you, you're being released. Why?

[33 : 30] And now your eyes are directed to another man carrying a cross. The very cross you're supposed to be carrying, you realize.

you discover this guy chose to take that cross for you. It was supposed to be you nailed to that cross, but it's him instead.

He, the innocent one, bears all the shame and guilt that is associated with that disgraceful cross, while you, the guilty one, are released and set free.

imagine your shock. Why me? Why is he taking my place? And that is the question we should all ask.

What's going on? That's why Jesus came. That's why he lived a completely sinless life. That's why he chose to be silent and beaten and be unjustly sentenced.

[34 : 42] all so that he could perform this great exchange, the guiltless, that is him, for the guilty, that's us.

You see, only he could make that exchange. Because of his identity and his innocence, only he is capable of going to the cross for us.

And his credibility is not just some mere technicality, but essential for our eternal destiny. And he chose to do it.

That's how credible our Lord is, not just because he's righteous, but because he's willing. That, my friends, is the message of the gospel.

God's will be confident in his intention. You know, as we close, the truth is sometimes we put Jesus on trial in our hearts, don't we?

[35 : 45] we accuse Jesus of certain things, we hold something against Jesus, perhaps we find him guilty of not being someone wholly good because he hasn't given us what we wanted, or he hasn't healed someone we love.

Or we find him guilty of not being completely trustworthy because we think he hasn't kept all of his promises to us. But the truth is nothing we accuse him of will finally stick.

Because here is the amazing truth, Jesus is completely innocent, and yet he used the greatest miscarriage of justice in human history to bring about the greatest good we could possibly receive.

Luke has made us certain of that by the way he tells his story. And if he did all that, how can he not be someone wholly dependable?

So doubt any doubts you have, and doubt not just your doubts about Jesus, but any doubts you have about your own status in Christ. Because here is what you know if you are a believer today.

[37 : 05] Jesus is your spotless sacrifice. You can trust his death. you can know all your sins, no matter how horrible they are, have been paid for on the cross.

Remember what Pilate kept saying about Jesus? I find no guilt in this man. And that is what God will say of you too if you trust his promise, if you believe he has made this great exchange for you. you can be certain of that. And the wonderful thing is the more you are certain that Jesus is credible, the more courageous you will be to live for him and to tell others about him.

So let Luke strengthen your certainty about Jesus' credibility and then go live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Let's pray. Father, I pray that even as we take in the words of a familiar passage, I pray that we will not take what Luke has written for granted and certainly we will not take the sinless life that Jesus has lived for granted because we know that if Jesus was not blameless we have no hope at all. [38 : 40] But thank you that we can be completely convinced of his innocence and therefore we know that that great exchange he has performed is completely credible.

So help us to strengthen our confidence and strengthen our resolve to keep living for him in light of his credibility.

All this we pray in the name of Christ. Amen. Amen.