

LUKE

Chapter 23

Jesus Before Pilate

Then the whole company of them arose and brought him before Pilate. 2 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.” 3 And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” 4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.” 5 But they were urgent, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, from Galilee even to this place.”

23:1 *the whole company.* The body of the Sanhedrin (Mt 26:59; 27:1) who had met at the earliest hint of dawn (22:66). (CSB)

The whole body of the Jewish Council (22:66). (TLSB)

τὸ πλῆθος—The Sanhedrin is the organized group behind this; soldiers and “crowds” (23:4) are part of their “multitude” or “number.” (CC p. 890)

brought *him before Pilate.* Chief Roman administrator, who alone could authorize capital punishment; he governed Judea AD 26–36 (cf 3:1). Pilate was ordinarily in Caesarea but came to Jerusalem to oversee the Passover festival with its crowds of pilgrims. (TLSB)

The framework is again significant for this trial. The Jewish day that began at sundown Thursday continued with the predawn trial before the Sanhedrin (22:66), so Jesus’ appearance before Pilate would be an hour or so after dawn.

W. Arndt, *Luke*, 458, speculates that Jesus would have appeared before Pilate around 6:00 a.m. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 851, suggests:

As soon as possible in the morning Jesus is taken before Pilate, who conveniently happens to be in Jerusalem (instead of the seat of Roman government, Caesarea) on account of the Passover festival. The Roman working day began extremely early, but if the Jewish proceedings took place very early, there is no need to suppose ... that Luke has made it impossible for Pilate to be consulted at his normal working hours. (CC p. 892)

The location is not given, but Pilate most likely received Jesus and this delegation from the Sanhedrin at the Fortress Antonia, which is located at the northwest corner of the temple court (see figure 8). Luke describes the group that brought Jesus to Pilate in comprehensive terms: “the entire multitude of them” (ἅπαν τὸ πλῆθος αὐτῶν). This would encompass the “chief priests and captains of the temple and elders” (22:52) who arrested Jesus; the Sanhedrin, which was composed of chief priests and scribes (22:66); and also the men (22:63) who were holding Jesus in custody. Those who speak to Pilate in 23:1–5 are the Jewish religious establishment described in 22:66. (CC pp. 892-893)

It is important to consider those who are bringing charges against Jesus. In the course of this trial, Pilate will speak to “the chief priests and the crowds” (23:4; τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ τοὺς ὄχλους). “Chief priests” is most likely Lukan shorthand for the Sanhedrin, but it is more difficult to know who comprised “the crowds.” Some of these people might have been with the first arresting party (22:47), and others may have joined in at the house of the high priest (cf. 22:55), but perhaps now that daylight has arrived a larger group is gathering before Pilate. At this point, the crowds do not express hostility toward Jesus, but they are associated with the chief priests (23:4), and Luke pictures them as members of the same multitude. *Responsibility for the death of Jesus is beginning to spread beyond the Jewish religious establishment to include more of the Jewish people.* (CC p. 893)

In bringing Jesus to Pilate, the Sanhedrin is proceeding toward a request for the death penalty since the Roman authorities could condemn to death, while the Sanhedrin did not normally have the authority to do so. “The decision to seek Jesus’ death from Pilate is specifically a rejection of Jesus as Messiah.” Another of Jesus’ prophecies is now coming to fulfillment: “he will be delivered to the Gentiles” (18:32). *The trial before Pilate too is part of God’s plan and Jesus’ destiny! Jesus will die at the hands of, and for the sake of, Gentiles as well as Jews.* (CC p. 893)

The trials of Jesus now reach a new level. Luke’s gospel has referred to Pilate twice before: first, when the evangelist placed the ministries of John and Jesus in the context of world history (3:1), and second, when he reported Pilate’s slaughter of the Galileans during the Passover (13:1–3). Both references treat Pilate as a significant Roman figure for the Jewish people. The second reference also reveals that Pilate is ruthless in accomplishing his goals. This characterization of Pilate and his responsibility for Jesus’ death are affirmed also in extrabiblical literature. The Roman historian Tacitus (A.D. 56 [?]-116 [?]) recorded that “Christ, the source of that name [Christian] was executed by the procurator, Pontius Pilate, while Tiberius was reigning.” Additional references to Pilate occur in Josephus and an inscription found at Caesarea. (CC p. 893)

There is no indication from Luke’s narrative that Pilate has any sympathy for the Jews or that he has any agenda besides securing his position under the favor of his Roman superiors. His judgment of Jesus will be based on expediency: how Jesus affects his ability to govern Judea under Rome.

J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1116, says this about Pilate’s agenda: “It is important to recognize that in our accounts Pilate is no noble protector of the innocent (John 19:12 comes closest to this). We see, rather, the actions of a pragmatist, whose central agenda (beyond the protection of his own position) was the promotion of Roman interests in this rather backward province ... for Pilate, Roman interests were supreme.” (CC p. 894)

The hearer will find it ironic that Pilate violated Israel’s holiness laws with the scandalous slaughter of worshipers in the temple (13:1–3), but when confronted with Jesus, who was accused by the Jewish leaders of stirring up the people, Pilate at first declares him innocent of this charge (23:4). Pilate’s record suggests that if he were to perceive Jesus as guilty or even as suspicious, he would not hesitate to put him to death. But his concern for any one man would be far outweighed by his desire to maintain order in Judea by appeasing the Sanhedrin, and above all, he would not risk any action that might be interpreted by Rome as insubordination. (CC p. 894)

Pilate. The Roman governor had his main headquarters in Caesarea, but he was in Jerusalem during Passover to prevent trouble from the large number of Jews assembled for the occasion. (CSB)

23:2 The Jewish Council condemned Jesus for blasphemy (22:70–71), but Pilate heard political charges: *misleading our nation*. Inciting unrest against Rome. *forbidding ... tribute*. Violating the tax code (clearly a lie; cf v 22). *saying ... Christ, a king*. Pilate could not ignore treason, i.e., a claim to be king. (TLSB)

accuse – κατηγορεῖν—See comments at 6:7 (during the Galilean ministry) and 11:53–54 (on the journey to Jerusalem), where the religious establishment began to establish charges against Jesus. This is a technical term for legal charges. (CC p. 890)

this man – τοῦτον—“This man” is placed first in the Greek for emphasis. Some have suggested that here it is derogatory (cf. J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1117; R. Stein, *Luke*, 574; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1474). The meaning then would be akin to “this guy” in English. (CC p. 890)

The scribes and chief priests had planned to lay their hands on Jesus and bring him to trial before the (Roman) governor (20:19–20). They now carry out their plot as they present their accusations to Pilate. As the trial unfolds, the hearer will note that Luke has provided balance in shaping his narrative: he frames this scene with two accusations by the Sanhedrin (23:2, 5). Luke first records that the Sanhedrin introduced their list of charges against Jesus by saying to Pilate, “This man we found [εὑράμεν] ...” (23:2). When Pilate renders his verdict, he says to the Sanhedrin, “I find [εὐρίσκω] no legal cause in this man” (23:4) The hearer is struck by the irony of this: Jesus’ fellow Jews, who chafed under Roman oppression, claim to find him guilty of three major offenses, whereas Pilate, the despised pagan governor, finds Jesus innocent of all charges. This irony underscores the hypocrisy of Jesus’ Jewish opponents in betraying an innocent Jew to a Gentile whose hands were already brightly stained with Jewish blood (13:1–3). (CC p. 894)

misleading our nation. Large crowds followed Jesus, but he was not misleading them or turning them against Rome. (CSB)

διαστρέφοντα—The six other occurrences of this word in the NT all refer to theological, religious perversion of the truth, *not* political rebellion or sedition. (Mt 17:17; Lk 9:41; Acts 13:8, 10; 20:30; Phil 2:15) That is generally true of its meaning in the LXX too. However, it does have political overtones in Ex 5:4, where Pharaoh accuses Moses and Aaron of turning Pharaoh’s people away from their work. Cf. also 1 Ki 18:17. Ironically, Jesus is charged with perverting or corrupting the Jewish people as a nation, specifically by advocating that taxes be withheld from Rome. In fact, the reason why Israel and Judah fell and were exiled in the OT period and why God continued to allow his people to be dominated by heathen nations—first Greece and then Rome—was because *the people* were spiritually corrupt. Their payment of taxes to their pagan conquerors should have reminded them of their own sin and should have led them toward repentance. (CC p. 890)

The Sanhedrin levels three coordinate charges against Jesus: “perverting [διαστρέφοντα] our nation,” “preventing [κωλύοντα] the giving of tribute taxes to Caesar,” and “saying [λέγοντα] that he himself is Christ, a king” (23:2). The hearer knows immediately that the second charge is false, for Jesus has argued *for* the paying of taxes to Caesar (20:20–26). The third charge is *theologically* true (see comments on 22:67), but false in the political sense the charge assumes in this context before Pilate. It is the first charge, “perverting our nation,” that is the major accusation leveled against Jesus before Pilate. Paying taxes to Caesar and claiming to be Christ, a king, are intended as examples of how Jesus has been “perverting our nation.” (CC pp. 894–895)

See the textual note above on this Greek verb for “pervert” in 23:2. R. Stein, *Luke*, 574, comments: “For ‘subverting’ cf. Luke 9:41; Acts 13:8, 10; 20:30. In the last three references it means *to seduce from the true faith*; but since these charges were brought before the Roman governor, it means here ‘to seduce from loyalty to the empire.’ ” J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1119, adds this: “The charge that is laid against Jesus is that of perverting the Jewish nation. This language, otherwise used in the Greek Old Testament and in Luke-Acts in a Jewish or Christian religious context, is quite striking in its connection here with a charge of undermining Roman political authority!” (CC p. 895)

forbidding us to give tribute. Another untrue charge (see 20:25). (CSB)

he himself is Christ, a king. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, but not a political or military king, the kind Rome would be anxious to eliminate. (CSB)

χριστὸν βασιλέα—These two words stand side by side, explaining each other. This wording would help Gentile hearers of Luke’s gospel understand that the title “Christ” entails a claim to kingship (cf. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 853; R. Stein, *Luke*, 574), as is clear in OT passages such as Gen 49:10; Num 24:17–19; 2 Samuel 7; Isaiah 9, 11. But Pilate would hear this charge in political terms as rebellion. (CC pp. 890-891)

“King” would be interpreted by a Roman official as “a leader of the resistance.” Josephus reports that it was common for rebellious Jewish leaders to claim to be a king, but they posed no serious threat to Roman power: “As the several companies of the seditious lighted upon anyone to head them, he was created a king immediately, in order to do mischief to the public. They were in some small measure indeed, and in small matters, hurtful to the Romans.” (CC p. 895)

Although we do not know the circumstances of Pilate’s bloody treatment of the Galileans in the temple in 13:1–3 (either from Luke or secular sources such as Josephus), it was obviously something well-known in Jesus’ world and something with which the Sanhedrin would have been familiar. It is possible that those Galileans were suspected of some sort of insurrectionist activity and that is why Pilate was so bold as to come after them in the temple, a serious offense to the Jews. In any event, the Sanhedrin knows that Pilate will go to extreme measures to keep peace in his jurisdiction. Therefore, they portray Jesus as an insurrectionist: one who is guilty of inciting the people to rebellion. (CC p. 895)

23:3 *King of the Jews?* Pilate focuses on the political claim of kingship. (TLSB)

you – Affirmation, but not a simple yes. (TLSB)

σύ ... σύ—The pronoun “you” occurs first, in the emphatic position, in both Pilate’s question and Jesus’ answer. “*You* are the King of the Jews?” lends an air of incredulity to Pilate’s question. He can’t believe that the one standing before him is the man everyone has been talking about. Jesus’ response is also emphatic: “*You* [Pilate] say so.” Jesus had responded to the Sanhedrin in similar language in 22:70. (CC p. 891)

Pilate chooses to question Jesus about the third charge, since a claim to be a rival king would mark Jesus as a revolutionary. Pilate ignores the allegation that Jesus is the Christ and asks whether he claims to be “the King of the Jews” (23:3). The Sanhedrin had already asked Jesus about his messianic claims (22:66–71). Pilate now asks him about his status as king. But the questioning is similar. Moreover, the hearer knows that the Messiah and the King of the Jews are

both titles of the same person. Perhaps even Pilate senses this, for he came to Jerusalem at Passover, the time when Jewish messianic fervor was at its highest. (CC p. 895)

Pilate's question to Jesus, "You are the King of Jews?" is incredulous. Pilate sees how ridiculous this charge is if "King" is to be understood in a political sense. Jesus was rejected by the Sanhedrin and the other powerful Jewish leaders. If Jesus was inciting a revolt, no one of political importance was following his leadership, and Jesus, with his frightened disciples, posed no threat. "This man" (23:2) was as far removed from the throne of the Jews as anyone could possibly be. In fact, the sign that will adorn Jesus' cross, "The King of the Jews is this one" (23:38), is just another attempt to mock Jesus' claims as absurd from the Roman perspective. (CC p. 896)

Yes. Jesus affirms that he is a king, but then explains that his kingdom is not the kind that characterizes this world (Jn 18:33–38).

As in the trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus gives an answer that cuts two ways. "You say so," he says to Pilate (23:3). Sufficient evidence that Jesus is the true religious King of the Jews was provided by his teaching and miracles. In fact, that he is on trial for trumped-up political charges is further testimony that his ministry has precipitated drastic reactions. But the catechumen knows that Jesus' kingship is not derived from the authority of Rome, and Jesus wishes to take nothing away from Caesar that under God has been given to Caesar (20:20–26). Rather, Jesus' kingship derives from his position as the "Son of God" (1:35). His kingship is in fulfillment of OT prophecies such as Gen 49:10; Num 24:17–19; and 2 Samuel 7, which were uttered long before Rome was founded. The angel announced to Mary that "the Lord God will give to him the *throne* of his father David, and he will be *King* over the house of Jacob forever, and of his *kingdom* there will be no end" (Lk 1:32–33). And his disciples shouted triumphantly as he entered Jerusalem, "Blessed the Coming One, the *King*, in the name of the Lord" (19:38). (CC p. 896)

23:4 chief priests – τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς—The chief priests were a main element in the group that arrested Jesus (22:52), tried him in the council chamber of the Sanhedrin (22:66–71), and lodged the formal complaint (23:1). (CC p. 891)

Spokesmen for the Council. (TLSB)

crowds. First time involved. Townspeople were awakened at about 6 a.m., when Roman officials began work. (TLSB)

CHARGE – Pilate sees Jesus' innocence. (TLSB)

αἴτιον—This is a technical term in legal actions for "charge, ground for complaint" (BAGD 2 a). There was no evidence of guilt and no reason to prosecute Jesus. (Cf. Acts 10:21; 13:28; 22:24; 23:28; 25:18, 27; 28:18, 20)

Jesus is most certainly "the King of the Jews," but it was obvious to Pilate that Jesus was not a king who gave Rome any reason to be concerned. From Pilate's vantage point, Jesus was not the kind of king to be feared or fought; he was a weak leader with no following, a laughable "king." Hence his first verdict of innocence: "I find no legal cause in this man" (23:4). Jesus is not a seditionist and poses no danger to Rome. Pilate declares Jesus innocent—the first of three such declarations (also 23:13–16, [20], 22). The evangelist portrays Jesus as the innocent, suffering, righteous man portrayed in Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms who is unjustly accused and persecuted (see the excursus "The OT Witness to Christ"). (CC pp. 896–897)

23:5 *were urgent* – ἐπίσχυον—The imperfect accents their insistence as a continuing, persistent pleading with Pilate, like the widow in the parable (18:1–8). The implied subject is “the entire multitude” (23:1), which includes “the chief priests and the crowds” (23:4). (CC p. 891)

When Pilate refused the verdict, they brought sharper accusations. (TLSB)

stirs up – They claim His teachings incite against Rome. (TLSB)

ἀνασείει—The only other NT occurrence of this verb is in Mk 15:11, where *Jesus’ opponents*, not Jesus, are guilty of “stirring up,” or “inciting,” the people to ask for Barabbas instead of Jesus. However, in Matthew’s gospel Jesus does cause Jerusalem (21:10), the earth (27:51), and the guards at the tomb (28:4) to be “shaken” (σειώ). Cf. also σειώ in Heb 12:26; Rev 6:13. (CC p. 891)

teaching – διδάσκων—This circumstantial participle explains that Jesus stirs up the people by *teaching*. On διδάσκω, see comments at Lk 4:15 and 9:2, 6. (CC p. 891)

The Sanhedrin’s charge (23:5) encompasses all of Jesus’ teaching, from his Nazareth sermon (4:14–30) to his teaching in the temple (19:47–21:38). It illustrates the Lukan geographical perspective and reflects the pattern of his gospel (Jesus’ Galilean ministry [4:14–9:50]; his journey to Jerusalem [9:51–19:28]; his teaching in Jerusalem [19:29–21:38]). The catechumen, who has heard the teaching of Jesus from the beginning of the gospel, knows that it is Jesus’ catechesis that stirs up the people and earns the enmity of the religious establishment. Ironically, throughout the gospel Jesus has accused members of that establishment of a catechesis that leads to eternal death: they abuse “the key of knowledge” (11:52); their leaven is hypocrisy (12:1); they misuse possessions (16:14). In fact Jesus’ teaching of the Gospel as the Great Reversal (E.g., Lk 6:20–49; 13:30; 14:11; 18:14; 22:24–27) is (to them) subversive. But Jesus’ catechesis that leads to his own death will also lead to life by way of his resurrection. The evangelist’s promise to Theophilus in the prologue, viewed in light of 23:5, is that Luke’s gospel will give Theophilus assurance that the catechesis of the church accurately reflects Jesus’ teaching from Galilee to Jerusalem (1:4). (CC pp. 897-898)

Pilate recognizes that Jesus’ radical teaching poses no threat to the Roman status quo, but the Sanhedrin’s reference to his teaching “having begun from Galilee” gives Pilate the opportunity to pass this problem to Herod, whose jurisdiction is Galilee. This is the reason Jesus is sent to Herod, to be tried for the third time. (CC p. 898)

Surprisingly, after the first verdict, Jesus’ accusers do not rest but continue to accuse him of subversive activity meriting death. This continuation of the accusation is unique to Luke’s gospel. The charge is basically the same. Although a number of details surface in the accusations by the Sanhedrin, the underlying charge is that Jesus is guilty of sedition. “Perverting our nation” (23:2) and “incites the people” (23:5) amount to the same thing. But as the Sanhedrin reformulates the charge, they attach a qualifying clause: “He incites the people, [by] *teaching* [διδάσκων] throughout all Judea, and having begun from Galilee until here.” Perhaps Pilate declared Jesus innocent because he knew he was a religious *teacher*, not a rebel. The Sanhedrin responds by emphasizing that dangerous linkage: *Jesus is a revolutionary and must be put to death because of his teaching. Jesus will be crucified because of his catechesis.*

Judea. May here refer to the whole of the land of the Jews (including Galilee) or to the southern section only, where the region of Judea proper was governed by Pilate. (CSB)

Galilee was not under Pilate's jurisdiction, but the charge shows Jesus' teaching caused a wide-scale problem. (TLSB)

23:1–5 The Jewish leaders bring Jesus before Pilate, seeking a death penalty. In weakness, we, too, may wrongly accuse the Lord of fighting against us, making problems for us, or not listening to us. Jesus bore every false accusation so that He might be our Savior. • Preserve us, Lord, from falsehood, that our life and witness to You remain true. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus Before Herod

6 When Pilate heard this, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. 7 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. 8 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. 9 So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer. 10 The chief priests and the scribes stood by, vehemently accusing him. 11 And Herod with his soldiers treated him with contempt and mocked him. Then, arraying him in splendid clothing, he sent him back to Pilate. 12 And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other. 13 Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, 14 and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was misleading the people. And after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of your charges against him. 15 Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us. Look, nothing deserving death has been done by him. 16 I will therefore punish and release him."

23:6–7 Jesus' appearance before Herod occurs only in Lk. *Galilean*. Jesus was raised in Galilee (2:39; 4:16). (TLSB)

23:7 *Herod's jurisdiction*. Although Pilate and Herod were rivals, Pilate did not want to handle this case; so he sent Jesus to Herod (cf. v. 12). (CSB)

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled Galilee, part of his father's kingdom, under the Romans as tetrarch 4 BC–AD 39. Pilate hoped to transfer responsibility for Jesus to Herod. (TLSB)

ἐκ τῆς ἐξουσίας—Here ἐξουσία denotes the realm over which Herod had authority to govern, hence "jurisdiction."

Ἡρώδου—Herod Antipas is mentioned thirteen times in Luke, first at 3:1, which indicates his historical importance. (Lk 1:5 refers, of course, to Herod the Great.) (CC p. 899)

In the historical setting of Jesus' trials, it makes sense for Pilate to send this Galilean to Herod, since Galilee was Herod's territory. This transfer of Jesus' case probably was not a legal necessity but was a show of deference to Herod by Pilate. In Roman law there was some precedent for sending an accused man back to his home territory for trial, but only if there was an exceptional reason. Normally a defendant was tried in the territory of his crime by the official over that territory. (CC p. 901)

A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint 1978) 28–31, concludes:

The point of the question put to Paul [Acts 23:34] ... was not to protect the rights of the accused, or those of another governor, but to enable the procurator or proconsul in question to avoid a tiresome affair altogether, if he felt inclined, either by expelling an accused person from a province to which he did not belong, or by a refusal of jurisdiction. As for Herod and Pilate, it is worth observing that Herod the Great, according to Josephus, had the abnormal privilege of extraditing offenders who had fled from his kingdom to other parts of the Roman empire. Possibly some remnant of this privilege underlay the sending of Christ to the second Herod [Herod Antipas]: most of the activities of Christ had taken place in Galilee (p. 31).

In the passage to which Sherwin-White refers, Josephus comments, “Caesar had given such a privilege to no other king as he had given to him [Herod], which was this:—that he might fetch back any one that fled from him, even out of a city that was not under his own jurisdiction” (*War* 1.474 [1.24.2], *The Works of Josephus*, trans. W. Whiston [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987]). (CC p. 901)

in Jerusalem. Herod’s main headquarters was in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee; but, like Pilate, he had come to Jerusalem because of the crowds at Passover. (CSB)

Like Pilate, Herod was in Jerusalem because Galilean pilgrims regularly went there for Passover (cf 13:1). (TLSB)

Like Pilate, Herod was in Jerusalem for the Passover, and it is quite probable that Herod would be staying in the Hasmonean palace, just west of the temple court, a short distance from the Fortress Antonia, where Jesus had just appeared before Pilate (see figure 8). Jesus’ case was complex, and in sending Jesus to Herod, Pilate may have hoped to transfer responsibility to the tetrarch of Galilee. Luke had already established that Jesus was from Galilee (1:26; 2:4; 4:16), and Peter’s Galilean origins were key in identifying him as a disciple of Jesus (22:59). Luke had also stated that Herod was the tetrarch of Galilee (3:1), and he is a significant figure within Luke’s narrative. (CC pp. 901-902)

at that time – ἐν ταύταις ταῖς ἡμέραις—A similar expression was used earlier in the visitation (1:39) and in the calling of the Twelve (6:12), and its most significant use will be in the Emmaus story (24:18). The reference here is to the week of Passover and the three days of Jesus’ passion and resurrection (see figure 7). See also comments at 24:18. On the expression ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ταύταις at 24:18, see A. A. Just Jr, *The Ongoing Feast*, 44–45. (CC p. 899)

The first hearers of Luke’s gospel would not be surprised when Herod reappears in Jesus’ final hours. Luke 13 foreshadowed the roles of Herod and Pilate in Jesus’ death: Pilate slaughtered Galileans in the temple (13:1–3), and Herod reportedly sought to kill Jesus (13:31–33). Herod had also put John the Baptist in prison (3:19–20) and then beheaded him (9:7–9). How ironic that Pilate and Herod, two rulers notorious for executing punishment hastily, when given the opportunity to put Jesus to death, declare him innocent before his Jewish accusers. (CC p. 902)

J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1122, attempts to reconcile 13:31–33 to Herod’s acquittal of Jesus here:

Jesus in Jerusalem will not be the political liability to Antipas that, perhaps, Antipas judged him to be when Jesus was in Galilee (13:31). Also, Antipas would need to consider his response in the light of Jesus’ popular appeal. Mockery is no statement of innocence; it looks rather more like a measured strategy, designed to undermine the public image of Jesus without creating a direct confrontation. (CC p. 902)

23:8 *desired to see him*. Herod was worried about Jesus' identity (9:7–9) and had desired to kill him (13:31), though the two had never met. There is no record that Jesus ever preached in Tiberias, where Herod's residence was located. (CSB)

Herod had heard stories of Jesus (9:9) and hoped to see a miracle. (TLSB)

ἦν γὰρ ἐξ ἱκανῶν χρόνων θέλων ἰδεῖν αὐτόν—This and the following constructions in 23:8 emphasize Herod's ongoing desire to see Jesus. Luke first reported Herod's wish and its cause in 9:7–9. Also, 13:31 may be a (distorted?) report of Herod's wish. (CC p. 899)

Herod had sought for a long time to see Jesus because of what he had heard about him, specifically, that he was some sort of prophet (9:7–9). (In Luke's prophet Christology, Jesus is both teacher and miracle worker first, and on the basis of this, he is rejected by Israel.) Herod's desire to see Jesus had come from what he had *heard* about Jesus' teaching and miracles, or in other words, about his prophetic characteristics. While Herod was subsequently portrayed as an *anti-Christ* in his desire to kill Jesus (13:31–33), here in the passion narrative Herod appears as the *anti-catechumen* in that he has *heard* about Jesus and wants to see his miracles, *but for all the wrong reasons*. Herod seems interested in miracles for their entertainment value, and not as a demonstration that already now in Jesus the kingdom of God is presents and active. Jesus has already spoken against those who demand a sign from him and said that the only sign that will be given to them is the sign of Jonah, i.e., Jesus' resurrection (11:16, 29). Jesus therefore refuses to give Herod any answer or sign, for his resurrection is imminent. Thus, Herod's desire to see Jesus reinforces Luke's prophet Christology, showing how even secular rulers like Herod knew about Jesus' teaching and miracles but missed their purpose: to point to Jesus' ultimate miracle, where he will release all creation from its bondage to sin. Those who fail to understand Jesus' ministry as the fulfillment of the OT will also fail to be convinced by Jesus' resurrection (16:31). (CC p. 902)

23:9 *questioned him at some length* – ἐπιρώτα—This imperfect, reinforced by the prepositional phrase “with many words,” implies that Herod repeatedly asked Jesus questions. (CC p. 899)

Herod badgers Jesus “with many words” (23:9). But no matter how many words Herod hurls at him, Jesus remains silent, a *sign* that he is completely in control of the situation and he is willingly submitting to the Father's plan. But Herod fails to perceive this. (CC p. 903)

no answer – Cf Is 53:7. (TLSB)

ἀπεκρίνατο—This aorist contrasts with the earlier imperfects. Herod keeps hammering Jesus with questions, but Jesus does not answer any of them with even one word. (CC p. 899)

Jesus' silence here is not inconsistent with his brief utterances in his previous two trials. He is prepared to give testimony in answer to honest or authoritative questioners but will neither brook fools nor argue with those who are unwittingly carrying out God's plan. Here literally, and through the entire passion narrative in spirit, Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 53: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth” (Is 53:7). (CC p. 903)

23:10 *stood by* – εἰστήκεισαν—The main verb is placed first in the Greek for emphasis: the chief priests and scribes joined Herod in badgering Jesus, although they did not ask questions but hurled more accusations at him. (CC p. 899)

chief priests and scribes – οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς—This is Luke’s customary designation for the two main groups that had members in the Sanhedrin. (Cf.also Lk 19:47; 20:1, 19; 22:2, 66) This is the last time that the “scribes” (γραμματεῖς) are mentioned in Luke’s gospel. (CC p. 900)

Members of the Jewish Council. At least some went along to argue. (TLSB)

accusing – κατηγοροῦντες—This is the same verb for accusing as in the trial before Pilate (23:2), when the Sanhedrin accused Jesus. See comments at 6:7 and 11:53–54. (CC p. 900)

But the chief priests and scribes cannot contain themselves in the face of Jesus’ silence. They continue to accuse Jesus as they have before. The religious establishment’s persistence in accusing Jesus of all manner of crimes stands in contrast to the imperturbability of Pilate and Herod, who consider him innocent of the charges the Sanhedrin has compiled. (CC p. 903)

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 368, says: “Most of all, the behavior of Pilate and Herod alike throw into even greater relief the malice and deception of the Jewish leaders who are intent on getting rid of Jesus.” (CC p. 903)

23:11 *soldiers*. Or, guards who had come with him to Jerusalem. (TLSB)

treated him contempt and mocked – ἐξουθενήσας ... ἐμπαίξας περιβαλῶν—The three aorist participles in this section designate accompanying actions. The first two (“having treated with contempt” and “having mocked”) go together to describe what Herod and the soldiers did to Jesus while he was in their custody. The third participle (“having put”) goes with the main verb, “sent back” (ἀνέπεμψεν), and describes how they prepared Jesus for his return trip to Pilate. The verb ἐξουθενέω occurs only two other places in Luke-Acts: in the description of how some (represented in the following parable by a Pharisee) treat other people with contempt (Lk 18:9) and in the description of Jesus as the stone rejected by the builders (Acts 4:11). Both pertain to how Jesus is treated here. (CC p. 900)

Herod and his soldiers demonstrate their contempt by mocking Jesus, as the soldiers of the Sanhedrin did at the beginning of the trials (22:63–65).

J. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke*, 80, notes that Herod will treat Christians in the same sort of way he treated John the Baptist and Jesus: “(a) he imprisons Christians and their sympathizers (Lk 3:19–20; Acts 12:3–5); (b) he tortures them, and seeks to kill them (Lk 9:7; 13:31; Acts 12:1–2, 19); (c) he shows general hostility to them (Acts 4:27). John the Baptizer, Jesus, James, and Peter are all threatened by him.” (CC p. 903)

Herod has apparently concluded that Jesus is politically harmless, as well as innocent of the charges of the Sanhedrin. But this does not stop Herod from treating Jesus shamefully to show what he personally thinks of this strange teacher who refuses to entertain him with a miracle or display his wisdom with words. (CC p. 903)

splendid clothing – λαμπράν—It is unclear whether this garment is symbolic of innocence (white) or part of the mocking (bright, splendid, as for royalty). Perhaps, in irony, it is both. (CC p. 900)

Although some of the people acclaim Jesus as a teacher and prophet and some even hail him as king, Herod will show them what kind of king he thinks Jesus is. He adds to the shameful mocking by dressing Jesus in elegant clothing. This act of humiliation is ironically also a declaration of Jesus' innocence. Thus Herod continues the rejection of Jesus by Jew and Gentile alike. Jesus' prophecy that "he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and he will be mocked and mistreated" (18:32) came to fulfillment before Pilate, and the mocking and abuse continues in Herod's court. But this episode ends with acquittal, for instead of condemning Jesus, Herod sends him back to Pilate. A second authoritative witness has spoken. The hearers of Luke's gospel see that the secular authorities who had jurisdiction over Jesus judged him not guilty of the charges against him. (CC pp. 903-904)

J. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke*, 79–80, points us to the example Jesus gives his disciples in this trial:

The parallel treatment of Jesus and his Church is made thematically intelligible by an appeal to a most important text. In Lk 21:12, Jesus predicts that his followers would be "brought before kings and governors for my name's sake." James was brought before a king, viz., Herod (Acts 12:1–2); Peter would have been, except for his miraculous escape; and Paul was tried before King Agrippa (Acts 25–26) and was brought to Rome to appear before Caesar (Acts 26:32). Inasmuch as the trials and passions of Peter and Paul are paralleled to that of Jesus, there is a strong Lukan argument for a parallel to the appearance of the apostles before kings in Jesus' own appearance before Herod. Jesus, the model of a good confession (see 1 Tim 6:13), led the way, and was haled before governors (Pilate) and kings (Herod) to bear witness to the Gospel. As Jesus, so his Church. (CC p. 904)

23:12 *became friends* – Their former hostility may have come as a result of the incident mentioned in 13:1. They agreed on Jesus' innocence. Note the irony: Herod Antipas and Pilate, former enemies, are reconciled because of Jesus. (TLSB)

Herod the Great, the father of Herod Antipas, was born into an Idumean family that had converted to Judaism (L. I. Levine, "Herod the Great," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* [New York: Doubleday, 1992] 3:161). Even though the mother of Herod Antipas was a Samaritan (Josephus, *Antiquities* 17.20 [17.1.3]), Herod Antipas was likely considered at least partly Jewish. (CC p. 904)

tetrarch as enemies; it now closes with them as friends. We do not know the cause of the enmity between them. (Could it be Pilate's rash actions against the Jewish Galileans during Passover in the temple as reported in 13:1–3 or some other act of intolerance?) In any event, we do know the reason for their friendship: their common bond is forged in their opposition to Jesus. (CC p. 904)

J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1480, notes: "Though Jesus is really incomprehensible to these rulers, he makes them become 'friends.' In other words, despite the power that they wield as prefect and tetrarch they cannot free this person who stands before them guiltless. In such weakness they find camaraderie, similarity of reaction, and friendship. So as Luke sees it, Jesus, who is humiliated by such powerful figures, brings about their reconciliation." (CC p. 904)

Their reconciliation stands as a negative counterpart to that of Jesus' followers in Acts. Jesus' disciples will hold all things in common, giving selflessly out of mutual love for Christ (Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37). They will also be united in suffering persecution because of the name of Jesus that they bear (Acts 4–9). Jews and Gentiles—former enemies, like Jewish Herod and Pilate the Gentile—will be reconciled and united in Christ (Acts 10). (CC p. 904)

23:13 *Pilate...chief priests...rulers...people* – Earlier, the term describes those favorable to Jesus (19:48; 21:38). Likely not the same group who hailed Him as Messiah. (TLSB)

While Luke is the only evangelist to include Jesus' trial before Herod (23:6–12), Luke's narrative of this second trial before Pilate is briefer than that of the other evangelists.

John (18:39–19:16) provides the fullest account, recording that Pilate had Jesus flogged and that Jesus appeared wearing the crown of thorns and a purple garment. John also provides the most dialog between Pilate and Jesus' accusers. R. Stein, *Luke*, 581, n. 102, compares Luke to the other synoptic gospels and notes that Luke (23:18–25) leaves out the chief priests' role in inciting the crowd to choose Barabbas (Mark 15:11), Pilate's reference to Jesus as King of the Jews (Mark 15:9, 12; cf. Matt 27:17, 22, which use the title "Christ"), and the explanation of the custom of releasing a prisoner to the people (Mark 15:6–8). The latter custom was presumed but not mentioned by Luke. Probably he expected his first readers to know this tradition (cf. Luke 1:4) and interpret the account accordingly, much like Luke's modern reader does. (CC pp. 908-909)

Throughout Luke's account of the betrayal, arrest, and trials of Jesus, the evangelist has carefully noted those who participated in the process leading to Jesus' death. Both Jews (22:47–71) and Pilate (23:1–7), a Roman Gentile, have been involved. In this second trial before Pilate, Luke contrasts Jesus' innocence, as declared by Pilate and Herod, with the demands for his death. (CC pp. 908-909)

Luke's description here of Jesus' opponents is somewhat different than earlier (22:52, 66; 23:1, 4, 10). Luke states that Pilate called together "the chief priests and the rulers and the people" (23:13; τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας καὶ τὸν λαόν). Earlier in the gospel Jesus interacted with individual "rulers" (8:41; 14:1; 18:18), but this (23:13) is the first time they appear collectively and as Jesus' opponents. "Rulers" (ἄρχοντες; 23:13) may replace or include the "scribes" (γραμματεῖς), since previously in the trials of Jesus, Luke has described the Sanhedrin as consisting of "chief priests and scribes" (22:66; 23:10). "Rulers" (ἄρχοντες) might also include the "elders" (πρεσβύτεροι), who are mentioned only in 22:52 (cf. also πρεσβυτέριον, "Sanhedrin," or more literalistically, "council of the elders," in 22:66). "Rulers" (ἄρχοντες) may also simply be a general term for the leaders in the Sanhedrin other than the chief priests. Luke does not refer to the "scribes" (22:66; 23:10) anymore after 23:10. He will refer to the "chief priests" (22:52, 66; 23:4, 10, 13) once more, in 24:20. He will speak of "rulers" again twice. In 23:35, the rulers at the foot of the cross will scoff at Jesus and say, "He saved others; let him save himself, if this one is the Christ of God." In 24:20 the "rulers" are named again, for the final time in the gospel, and they, together with the "chief priests," are the ones responsible for Jesus' execution. It seems most likely, then, that the "rulers" are essentially the same group as the "scribes": they are members of the Pharisaic party, and their power comes from being on the Sanhedrin, or at the very least, from having their representatives on the Sanhedrin. (CC p. 909)

See the excursus "The Opponents of Jesus in Luke." The parallel to Lk 23:35 ("rulers") in Mt 27:41 has "the chief priests, mocking, with the scribes and elders ..." And Mk 15:31 has "the chief priests, mocking to one another with the scribes ..." In both cases, representatives of the

entire Sanhedrin are mocking Jesus. Luke's ἄρχοντες, "rulers," may be shorthand for those Pharisees who were members of the Sanhedrin. Cf. also Lk 14:1, where Jesus went to dine at the house of one of "the rulers of the Pharisees," τῶν ἀρχόντων [τῶν] Φαρισαίων. Lk 14:3 indicates that others invited to the house of this ruler of the Pharisees were "lawyers and Pharisees," νομικοὶ καὶ Φαρισαῖοι. Scribes are not mentioned in that context, but many of the leaders of the Pharisees were scribes. (Scribes and Pharisees return to the Lukan vocabulary in 15:2 in the introduction to the chapter's three parables.) E. E. Ellis, *The Gospel of Luke*, 193, defines "ruler" as "a Sanhedrin member who belonged to the Pharisees or a leader of the Pharisee party." BAGD, s.v. ἄρχων, 2 a, implies that "rulers" were members of the Sanhedrin, but they could be either Pharisees or Sadducees. (CC [. 909)

With the inclusion of "people" (λαός) in 23:13, Luke also implicates the larger Jewish nation in bearing responsibility for the death of Jesus. But how significant was their involvement? Is the guilt of the *people* "softened by ignorance," while "the lion's share of the blame falls on the Jewish leaders, carefully distinguished from the people as a whole"? Or has Luke taken pains to suggest "the broadest possible Jewish representation of the Jews in keeping with his interest in presenting Israel's formal rejection of God's prophet"? The theme of Jesus' rejection by Israel is important. It was foreshadowed in Luke 4 in Jesus's own sermon at Nazareth, and it now finds fulfillment in the trials of Jesus. Therefore, (CC pp. 909-910)

although Jesus is not without some popular support, the crowd as a whole is lined up with his opponents, who are led by the chief priests. With them [the chief priests], they [the people or the crowd] insist before Pilate on Jesus' guilt (23:4–5, 13–14), call for the release of Barabbas (23:18), call for Jesus' crucifixion (23:21, 23), and stand around watching it (23:35). (CC p. 910)

Israel's rejection of Jesus is part of Luke's two-phase prophet Christology. The leaders of the "people" (λαός) were hostile toward Jesus in 22:66, and the "people" themselves are hostile in 23:13–14, but uncertain in 23:5, 35. (They will later repent and be sympathetic with Jesus; cf. 23:27, 48; 24:19). The "people" are clearly implicated in the death of Jesus, along with the religious authorities. Lk 23:13 is the first time Luke portrays the people as a whole as opponents of Jesus. It is a pivotal verse for Luke and climactic in his portrayal of the opposition of Jesus. Although the people had seen Jesus as "a prophet mighty in deed and word" (24:19) and they were generally supportive of him in 19:48; 20:1, 6, 19; 21:38; 22:2, the people now join forces

In 23:35, the (still hostile) leaders (ἄρχοντες, "rulers") will be distinguished from the "people" (λαός), who silently observe Jesus' crucifixion. At Jesus' death, the "crowds" (probably the same as the "people" in 23:35) react with remorse: "And all the crowds that were present at this sight, having watched the things that happened, were returning home, beating their chests" (23:48). Although the people are implicated in the death of Jesus (23:13), Luke will record how quickly their attitude again becomes favorable toward Jesus, and they express deep sorrow for their crime. Cf. R. Tannehill, *Narrative Unity I*, 165–66, 197–98; J. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts*, 66–67, 228–29. (CC p. 910)

with the chief priests and rulers in their condemnation of Jesus. (CC p. 910)

Perhaps the people rejected Jesus because he did not meet their messianic expectations. In the same pattern as the Emmaus disciples (24:19–21) but already in the days *before* the crucifixion, they might have experienced a certain disillusionment about this miracle-working prophet who was journeying so steadfastly to his death. (CC pp. 910-911)

23:14-25 This scene is a confrontation between Pilate and the group composed of “the chief priests and the rulers and the people” (23:13). Three verdicts of innocence and three attempts to release Jesus are opposed by three demands for his death or crucifixion. Luke highlights Jesus’ innocence, his rejection by the leaders and now also by the people, and Pilate’s cowardice. But in this tug of war between Pilate and the hostile group, the inexorable plan of God that Jesus must die by crucifixion becomes the legal sentence. The irony for the hearer is extraordinary. Pilate and Herod, the political rulers of Judea and Galilee, find no guilt in Jesus and want to set him free; the Jewish leaders and people accuse Jesus of sedition, demand his crucifixion, and would rather set free a convicted revolutionary and murderer like Barabbas. (CC p. 911)

J. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke*, 82, suggests: “Luke insinuates that this choice [of Barabbas over Jesus] is an act of apostasy.” Neyrey goes on to note reports in Acts that “contrast Jesus and his followers with genuine rebels” (5:35–39; 21:38). Regarding the final trial of Jesus and these reports in Acts, Neyrey suggests: “Luke’s intention in these three episodes points to Christian innocence of rebellion, assassination, and revolt, even as it underscores how the Jews repeatedly revolted, assassinated, and plotted revolution.” (CC p. 911)

Barabbas is the seditionist and murderer, not Jesus! Luke’s double reference to Barabbas’ crimes (23:19, 25) shows the perversity of the people’s demands for Jesus’ death.

The catechumen clearly sees how Jesus will be crucified even though he is the innocent, suffering, righteous one. This is the first time in Luke’s gospel where “crucify” or “cross” occurs in connection with Jesus. Up until this point in the narrative, it has only been used in connection with the disciples, (Cf. Jn 18:31, 38; 19:4, 6, 14–15) but it will now occur throughout the rest of the passion and resurrection narratives in connection with Jesus. (Lk 23:21, 23, 26, 33; 24:7, 20) It is the most cruel and shameful form of punishment. The crowd persists in demanding it (23:21). Again, Jesus’ prophecy to his disciples after the Last Supper is coming true: “And with transgressors he was reckoned” (Lk 22:37, quoting Is 53:12). The transgressors Jesus is reckoned with include Barabbas and the thieves on the cross, but more importantly, *all of Israel, who has now rejected Jesus to the point of demanding his crucifixion*. Indeed, “*the trial of Jesus becomes the trial of Israel*, for in unjustly condemning Jesus they bring down God’s judgment on themselves.” (CC pp. 911-912)

But one should not see Pilate as an innocent victim of the people’s persistence. His verdicts of Jesus’ innocence become progressively stronger.

L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 373–74, notes a progression in Pilate’s verdicts of innocence: “Each declaration, furthermore, becomes ever more general. The first declares him innocent of the charge brought by the Jews. The second declares him innocent of leading the people astray. The third declares him innocent of any wrongdoing deserving of death, and is introduced by the almost plaintive question, ‘what evil thing has he done?’ ” (CC p. 912)

If he believes so firmly in Jesus’ innocence, why does he twice propose scourging (παιδεύσας; 23:16, 22), and why does he condemn an innocent man to be crucified? In the past, Pilate has committed the atrocity of slaughtering worshiping Jews (cf. 13:1–3), and now by giving in to the people and delivering Jesus over to their will, *which is crucifixion*, Pilate sheds innocent blood. Luke even uses the same verb (παράδιδωμι) that he used for Judas’ betrayal of Jesus (22:4) to refer to Pilate’s capitulation to the demand for Jesus’ death (“delivered over” [23:25]). Whether Pilate ultimately understood the charges against Jesus as political or theological, Pilate has *betrayed* his office as one responsible for carrying out justice. (CC p. 912)

A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, 46–47, concludes:

There is nothing in the Roman background to make the older solution improbable: that the Jewish leaders, finding or knowing that Pilate was unwilling to confirm an execution for a purely theological offence, added or substituted an alternative charge of sedition, which Pilate ultimately accepted as the basis of his sentence. But it is equally possible, in Roman usage, that when Pilate refused a verdict on the political charge, they fell back on the religious charge, which Pilate finally accepted under the sort of political pressure that is indicated in a convincing technicality by John. The telling phrase—“If you let this man go, you are not Caesar’s friend” [Jn 19:12]—recalls the frequent manipulation of the treason law for political ends in Roman public life. (CC p. 912)

The passion narrative that began with the plot of Judas to deliver (παράδιδωμι) Jesus to the chief priests and captains (22:4) concludes when Pilate delivers Jesus over to the will of the chief priests, the rulers, and the people (23:13, 25). The next step is death by crucifixion. Lk 23:25 is the culmination of the betrayal that was anticipated in 9:44; 18:32; 20:20; 22:4, 6, 21, 22 and partially realized in 22:48. The phrase τῷ θελήματι αὐτῶν, “to their will,” fully implicates the chief priests, the rulers, and the people mentioned in 23:13. It serves as the final indictment of Israel in the death of Jesus and of Pilate’s cowardly surrender to a request that he knew was unjust. “Thus Pontius Pilate, the prefect of Judea, becomes the coward of history. Luke makes sure that his readers understand who was weak and who was strong. ‘The power of darkness’ (22:53) has prevailed. ... In the end, it is Pilate’s verdict that sends Jesus to the cross.” The church has emphasized the culpability of Pilate the Gentile by naming him in both the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds as the one by whose authority Jesus was given over to be crucified: “Jesus Christ ... suffered under Pontius Pilate” (Apostles’ Creed) and “was crucified ... under Pontius Pilate” (Nicene Creed). This act by the prefect of the Romans, who claimed to be the rightful rulers of the entire world, thus represents the rejection of the Christ by the whole world. (CC pp. 912-913)

In Acts, his second volume, Luke will continue to accent the theme of the universal rejection of Jesus. Jews and Gentiles, rulers as well as the people under their authority—all betrayed and condemned Jesus. But there too Luke’s greater concern is to show that the world’s rejection of Jesus was according to the divine plan revealed prophetically long ago, as confessed by the infant church:

“Lord, ... who spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of our father David your servant, ‘Why do the *nations* rage and the *peoples* plot vain things? The *kings* of the earth stand forth, and the *rulers* gather together against the Lord and against his Christ’ [Ps 2:1–2]. In truth there were gathered together in this city against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate*, with *nations* [ἔθνεσιν] and *peoples* [λαοῖς] of Israel, to do as many things as your hand and your *plan* [βουλή] predestined to happen” (Acts 4:24–28). (CC p. 913)

The universal rejection of Jesus, in the divine plan, leads to the universal atonement of Jesus—for the sins of the whole world—and the universal salvation of Jesus. He who was rejected by Jew and Gentile alike will be exalted as the Savior of the whole world—Jew and Gentile alike. (CC p. 913)

23:14 *misleading the people* – ὡς ἀποστρέφοντα τὸν λαόν—ὡς introduces the allegation against Jesus (BDF§ 425 [3]: “with the assertion that, on the pretext that”). The charge here is essentially the same as the first charge in Jesus’ first trial before Pilate, where “perverting our nation” (23:2; διαστρέφοντα τὸ ἔθνος) was the accusation against Jesus by the Sanhedrin. ἀποστρέφω here means “mislead, lead astray,” or perhaps “incite to revolt” (cf. BAGD 1 a β). Cf. also “he incites/stirs up [ἀνασειεῖ] the people” (23:5). Ironically, the only other occurrence of ἀποστρέφω in Luke-Acts is in Acts 3:26, where Jesus causes people *to turn away from evil*. (It also occurs at Acts 7:39 in D, where it describes how the unfaithful Israelites perversely longed to return to Egypt.) Here “subverting” is the only charge Pilate mentions. That implies that “perverting our nation” (23:2) was the main charge in the first trial before Pilate. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 370, notes: “The notion of ‘leading the people astray’ is found frequently in the OT, associated especially with idolatry and the teachings of false prophets (see Exod 5:4; Num 15:39; Ezek 13:18, 22).” J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1127, sees irony here: “In the following scene [23:18–25] we will witness the way the Jewish leadership has *perverted the People* away from ... Jesus” (emphasis Nolland). (CC p. 905)

I did not – καὶ ἰδοῦ—This expression always introduces significant statements or pericopes. It will be used again in the next verse. See comments at 1:20; 24:4. (Cf. A. A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast*, 55–56.) (CC p. 906)

not guilty of any of your charges – οὐθὲν εὔρον ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τούτῳ αἴτιον—This is almost exactly the same expression that Pilate used when he first declared Jesus innocent (23:4; οὐδὲν εὐρίσκω αἴτιον ἐν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τούτῳ). Pilate will use similar language in his third verdict (23:22). (CC p. 906)

Pilate declares Jesus innocent a second time. (TLSB)

23:15 *neither has Herod* – Herod would have understood the religious charges better, but he also found Jesus innocent. (TLSB)

ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ Ἡρώδης—The phrase is emphatic: “neither did Herod”—who might have been expected to—*find him guilty!* This is the reason Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. Cf. R. Stein, *Luke*, 580, on this phrase: “This is emphatic. It can mean *Also Herod did not* or *But not even Herod [who understands Jewish matters better than I]*” (emphasis and material in brackets are from Stein). (CC p. 906)

nothing deserving death – οὐδὲν ἄξιον θανάτου—This is the first mention of death in Jesus’ trials. (CC p. 906)

23:16 *I will therefore punish him*. Although Pilate found Jesus “not guilty” as charged, he was willing to have him illegally beaten in order to satisfy the chief priests and the people and to warn against any possible trouble in the future. Scourging, though not intended to kill, was sometimes fatal. (CSB)

Either whipping or scourging, which usually preceded crucifixion. The punishment conflicts with Jesus’ innocence. (TLSB)

παιδεύσας—Usually this means “educate” (Acts 7:22; 22:3) or “punish, discipline” (Heb 12:6–7, 10). A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, reprint 1978) 27, takes the view that Pilate has in mind a beating with clubs or rods. In this context παιδεύω may mean punishment by flogging or scourging (as the verb with the noun

“whip” means in the LXX of 1 Ki 12:11, 14; 2 Chr 10:11, 14; see BAGD 2 b γ). J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1484, describes παιδεύω as “a euphemism for the terrible Roman *flagellatio*” (the Latin term for flogging, which is rendered in Greek as φραγελλόω, as in Mt 27:26; Mk 15:15). Jesus had predicted that he would be whipped or flogged (μαστιγώω) in Lk 18:33. But at this point in Luke, Pilate does not intend crucifixion. Nevertheless, flogging was an excruciating punishment, and the fact that Pilate would have an innocent man flogged simply to appease his accusers shows Pilate’s desire to maintain order even at the expense of justice. (CC p. 906)

23:6–16 Pilate and Herod declare Jesus innocent but do not believe in Him. For us and for our lives, Jesus makes great claims. He would be our Savior and King. We thank God that others have brought Jesus into our lives and that, through His Spirit, He enables us to cling to Him always. • Lord, by Your grace and power, be the center of my life. Amen. (TLSB)

Pilate Delivers Jesus to Be Crucified

18 But they all cried out together, “Away with this man, and release to us Barabbas”— 19 a man who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection started in the city and for murder. 20 Pilate addressed them once more, desiring to release Jesus, 21 but they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him!” 22 A third time he said to them, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found in him no guilt deserving death. I will therefore punish and release him.” 23 But they were urgent, demanding with loud cries that he should be crucified. And their voices prevailed. 24 So Pilate decided that their demand should be granted. 25 He released the man who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

23:17 The overwhelming manuscript evidence is to omit 23:17 from the text. B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 179–80, notes: “The secondary character of the verse is disclosed not only by its omission from such early witnesses as P⁷⁵ A B it^a cop^{sa} al, but also by its insertion, in slightly different forms, either here or after ver. 19. ... The verse is a gloss, apparently based on Mt 27:15 and Mk 15:6.” (Cf. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 371; R. Stein, *Luke*, 581; J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1129; I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 859; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1485–86.) (CC p. 906)

23:18 *all cried* – ἀνέκραγον δὲ πανπληθεί—The assembly that cries out for Jesus’ death includes the crowds of people (23:4). (CC p. 906)

away with this man – Call for execution. (TLSB)

αἶρε ... ἀπόλυσον—The stark contrast of these two imperatives and the actions they suggest show the will of the people. They command Pilate, the ruler of Judea, to “kill” Jesus and “release” Barabbas. R. Stein, *Luke*, 581, notes: “Away with” him means *execute* him (cf. Acts 21:36; 22:22; John 19:15) by means of crucifixion (Luke 23:21)” (emphasis Stein). (CC p. 906)

Barabbas. Means “son of Abba.” Pilate offered a choice between Jesus and an obviously evil, dangerous criminal (see Mt 27:15–20; Mk 15:6–11; Jn 18:39–40). (CSB)

Luke assumes his readers were aware of the practice of releasing a guilty prisoner at a festival. (TLSB)

Barabbas. Aram, “son of the father.” Note the irony: Jesus was truly the Father’s Son (2:49; 10:21–22; 11:2; 22:29, 42). (TLSB)

Βαραββᾶν—The Aramaic name “Barabbas” means “son of the father.” J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1489, notes the irony in this name: “They scream for the release of one called Barabbas, ‘son of the father,’ and reject him who is really the Father’s son (recall 2:49; 10:21–22; 11:2; 22:29, 42).” (CC p. 906)

23:19 *insurrection ... murder*. This particular uprising is otherwise unknown but, coupled with murder, it shows the gravity of his deeds (see Jn 18:40). (CSB)

Barabbas was the sort of revolutionary leader that the Jewish leaders claimed Jesus was. (TLSB)

διὰ στάσιν ... καὶ φόνον—Barabbas led a rebellion; he was guilty of the accusation leveled against Jesus. Barabbas also committed murder in the process. These two charges against him will be repeated by Luke in 23:25. Cf. Acts 3:13–14, where Peter reminds the people that they asked for a murderer instead of Jesus. (CC p. 907)

23:21 *shouting – ἐπεφώνουν*—The imperfect tense accents the ongoing cries of the people for Jesus’ crucifixion (see also the imperfects ἐπέκειντο and κατίσχυον in 23:23). (CC p. 907)

crucify him! Crucify him – σταύρου σταύρου—These two present imperatives occur together for emphasis, and their repetition, along with the imperfect ἐπεφώνουν, captures the frenzied insistence of the crowds. On σταύρος and σταυρόω see comments at 9:23–27. This is the first time in Jesus’ trials that crucifixion is mentioned. (CC p. 907)

23:22 *third time*. See vv. 4, 14. (CSB)

For the third time, Pilate declares Jesus innocent. (TLSB)

ὁ δὲ τρίτον εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς—Luke records that this was Pilate’s third affirmation of Jesus’ innocence. Neither Matthew nor Mark includes Pilate’s three declarations of innocence. John, however, records that Pilate may have indicated that Jesus was innocent as many as four or five times. (Cf. also Lk 19:47; 20:1, 19; 22:2, 66) (CC p. 907)

23:23 *urgent, demanding – ἐπέκειντο*—This is another imperfect, denoting repeated, persistent action (see ἐπεφώνουν above in 23:21). (CC p. 907)

The crowd’s shrill anger influenced Pilate more than Jesus’ quiet innocence. (TLSB)

23:24 *decided* – Pilate simply follows the crowd’s demands, never declaring Jesus guilty. (TLSB)

ἐπέκρινεν—This is the only place this word occurs in the NT. It may be a technical term for rendering a legal sentence or judgment. Cf. “gave sentence” (RSV) R. Stein, *Luke*, 582; J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1492. (CC p. 907)

23:25 *for whom they asked – ἤτοῶντο*—The force of this imperfect is that the people “kept asking” for Pilate to release Barabbas and kill Jesus (see the imperatives in 23:18). (CC p. 907)

delivered Jesus over to them. Luke’s account is abbreviated. Pilate had already handed Jesus over to the soldiers for scourging before he was convicted (Jn 19:1–5). He now handed him over for crucifixion. (CSB)

The guilty person is free; the innocent is condemned. Pilate put his own career first, and so the Church, in the Apostles' Creed, continues to confess, "Crucified under Pontius Pilate." (TLSB)

Same Gk word used for Judas' betrayal of Jesus (22:4). (TLSB)

παρέδωκεν—See comments at 9:43b–45 and below in the commentary. Luke used this same verb for Judas' betrayal of Jesus (22:4). (CC p. 907)

23:18–25 Pilate, frightened of the crowd and blind to Jesus' identity, releases Barabbas and hands Jesus over to be crucified. Innocent Jesus is sentenced to die in place of us, who are genuinely guilty. His precious life atones for all our sins. • "They rise and needs will have My dear Lord made away; A murderer they save, The Prince of Life they slay. Yet cheerful He To suff'ring goes That He His foes From thence might free." Amen. (LSB 430:5) (TLSB)

The Crucifixion

26 And as they led him away, they seized one Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, and laid on him the cross, to carry it behind Jesus. **27** And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who were mourning and lamenting for him. **28** But turning to them Jesus said, "**Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.** **29** For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' **30** Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us,' and to the hills, 'Cover us.' **31** For if they do these things when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?" **32** Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. **33** And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. **34** And Jesus said, "**Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.**" And they cast lots to divide his garments. **35** And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" **36** The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine **37** and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" **38** There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews." **39** One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? **41** And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." **42** And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." **43** And he said to him, "**Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.**"

23:26 *they*. Soldiers in charge of the crucifixion. (TLSB)

led him away – ἀπήγαγον—The subject is not stated, but since Pilate has sentenced Jesus to death, it would be Romans under Pilate's authority who would carry out the sentence. In 23:36 (Roman) soldiers will be identified as participants in the mocking of Jesus. However, immediately preceding "they" in 23:26 is "their will" (23:25), referring to the will of the Jewish leadership and people: "the chief priests and the rulers and the people" (23:13). J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1496, argues that the Jewish leaders are the implied subject of the verb. J. Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53*, 1136, entertains that possibility too but finally opts for the Roman soldiers. By leaving the subject ambiguous in 23:26, Luke perhaps is suggesting that both the Jews and the

Romans are responsible. Jesus is going to die at the hands of—and on behalf of—both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus dies for the sin of the whole world. Cf. comments on 23:13–25. (CC p. 914)

Luke’s introduction describes the movement from the Fortress Antonia, where Pilate delivered Jesus over to the hands of his enemies, to the Via Dolorosa, where Simon the Cyrenian carries Jesus’s cross. Luke does not state who is leading Jesus away (see textual note on 23:26). Is it the Jews who called for his crucifixion or Roman soldiers carrying out Pilate’s cowardly submission to the people’s will? Pilate’s Roman soldiers no doubt were the ones who *physically* hauled him away, but Jesus has now been delivered *to the will* (23:25) of the Jewish religious establishment and the people. (CC p. 916)

Simon. His sons, Rufus and Alexander (Mk 15:21), must have been known in Christian circles at a later time, and perhaps were associated with the church at Rome (Ro 16:13). (CSB)

Cyrene. A leading city of Libya, west of Egypt. (CSB)

Modern Libya had a large Jewish population in Jesus’ day. Simon likely came to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. (TLSB)

in from the country. Perhaps camping outside the city as did Jesus and His disciples (21:37). (TLSB)

laid on him the cross. The crossbeam; the upright beam typically stood at the place of execution. Because of Jesus’ weakening condition, Simon was drafted for this task. (TLSB)

Who is this “Simon, a Cyrenian”? (Cyrene is in North Africa, present-day Libya.) It was customary for the condemned man to carry his own cross. It was unusual for someone to carry the cross on behalf of another. Luke gives no explanation for this conscription of Simon, although it is likely that Jesus’ deteriorated physical condition necessitated this action. Luke’s language might suggest that Simon the Cyrenian is a disciple of sorts, fulfilling *literally* what Jesus prophesied when he said that a disciple must take up his (own) cross and follow him (9:23; 14:27). Mark (15:21) states that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus, and the name of one Rufus (along with his mother) appears in a list of Christians in Rom 16:13. It is possible that Simon the Cyrenian became acquainted with Jesus when he was conscripted to carry Jesus’ cross and that Simon became a believer and subsequently passed on the faith to his son Rufus. If so, then it may be said that on these final steps of the journey, Jesus is followed by a catechumen who bears the burden of his cross, even though it may be unwillingly. (CC pp. 916-917)

23:27 *a great multitude* – Crowds following from sympathy and curiosity. (TLSB)

followed – ἠκολούθει—As noted in comments on 5:11, Luke consistently uses this word for discipleship in his gospel. Its use here suggests that the people as a whole now are penitent as they mourn for Jesus. See comments on λαός in 23:13. (CC p. 914)

Although here Luke does not use the same journey terminology common throughout the travel narrative (e.g., πορεύομαι, “to travel, journey,” or ὁδός, “way, road”), the hearer knows that this is the end of Jesus’ journey that began in Galilee, a catechetical journey that has created a new people of God through his eschatological teaching and table fellowship. And as Jesus is about to reach his goal, he is not traveling alone. Luke reports that “a great multitude of the people” (πολὸν πλῆθος τοῦ λαοῦ) and “women who were striking themselves and mourning for him” (23:27) followed him. These seem to be two distinct groups. “The people” generally were favorable

toward Jesus earlier in the gospel, but this is the same term used for those who just called for Jesus' crucifixion (see comments on 23:13, 21, 23). Now that Jesus' end is near, they follow him. Since they are grouped with the mourning women, they may have already begun to turn again toward Jesus in repentance, as becomes clearer later on at the cross (23:48). (These descriptions of "the people" naturally would not pertain to every single individual; only some, perhaps representing the sentiments of the majority, called for his crucifixion [23:21], and only some of the people will turn to him in faith.) These followers observe that Jesus' final catechetical lesson on the journey to the cross is a lesson in suffering. (CC p. 917)

women – Pious women customarily lamented one condemned to die. (TLSB)

mourning and lamenting – ἐκόπτοντο—To "strike oneself" as a sign of mourning is typical in the Mediterranean world even today. Cf. the middle of κόπτω also in 8:52 and τύπτω with στήθος in 18:13; 23:48. (CC p. 914)

Jesus does not directly speak to the multitude (πλήθος, neuter [23:27]) or to the people (λαός, masculine [23:27]). Rather, he addresses the women (αὐτάς, feminine plural [23:28]). In the OT "daughter(s) of Zion" represent or personify faithful Israel. So also here the "daughters of Jerusalem" represent the people of Jerusalem. There may be an allusion here to the motif of Jesus as the bridegroom and the church as his bride, as in Jesus' self-description in 5:34–35; 12:36. (CC p. 917)

The lamenting and mourning indicate that these women are in a state of deep sorrow over Jesus' fate. They strike themselves, in a gesture similar to that of the people who will beat their chests after Jesus dies (23:48). Jesus addresses these women who mourn because these women represent those within the congregation of Israel, whose center of worship is Jerusalem, who have already begun to regret their rejection of Jesus. He turns to them as he turned to Peter (22:61), and, as with Peter, *his words are meant to bring them from remorse to full repentance and faith*. Jesus' final words to the general populace before he is crucified are four calls addressed to all of Jerusalem as personified in the women. *All of Jerusalem—indeed all Israel, all humankind—is guilty of rejecting the Messiah who must suffer. Jesus now calls all to repent and believe* as he warns them of what will happen if they do not. (CC pp. 917-918)

23:28 turning – στραφείς δὲ πρὸς αὐτάς—This is the same action as when Jesus turned toward Peter after Peter's three denials (22:61). As Peter wept in remorse (22:62), the fickle crowd (see comments on 23:13) now mourns. (CC p. 914)

daughters of Jerusalem – θυγατέρες Ἰερουσαλήμ—The "daughters of Jerusalem" represent Jerusalem. Jesus used the affectionate familial term θυγάτηρ, "daughter," for a woman of faith in 8:48. Cf. also the new kinship in 8:19–21. For "daughter(s) of Jerusalem," see 2 Ki 19:21; Song 1:5; 2:7; 3:5, 10; 5:8, 16; 8:4; Is 37:22; Lam 2:13, 15; Micah 4:8; Zeph 3:14; Zech 9:9. (The daughter of Zion as representative of all Israel is part of the background of the annunciation to Mary; see comments at 1:26–38.) (CC pp. 914-915)

These words are a call to repentance in the face of impending judgment.

J. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke*, 111, again has the opposite interpretation: "Jesus' turning in 23:28, then, is not necessarily a call to repentance, but may be an act of judgment." Likewise R. Stein, *Luke*, 586, says: "It is a pronouncement of judgment and doom, not a call to repentance." But doesn't such a warning of judgment call people to repentance? Just as with the woes following the beatitudes (6:24–26), the lament over Jerusalem (13:31–35), and

the warnings about the destruction of Jerusalem and the whole world (21:5–36), Jesus’ ultimate purpose is not simply to terrify people, nor is it to gloat over the eventual punishment of his enemies. Rather, Jesus epitomizes the beatitudes by loving his enemies and seeking their deliverance from “the wrath about to come” (3:7, as did John the Baptist). God takes no delight in the death of the wicked but seeks to turn them in repentance so they will believe and live (Ezek 18:23). God sent prophets—and Jesus, the Prophet—for that purpose. (CC p. 918)

Within this series of four, the first and last warnings focus on Jesus and Jerusalem (23:28, 31) and the middle two warnings on the inhabitants of Jerusalem (23:29–30). Jesus’ first warning is an imperative to the women not to weep for him, but for themselves and for their children. With chiasmic order, Jesus contrasts himself to Jerusalem and shows that the tears of the daughters of Jerusalem should not be for him but for Jerusalem and her inhabitants.

Once again, Luke provides another *inclusio*. He began his account of Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem with Jesus’ tears over Jerusalem because she did not know the things that made for peace (19:41–42). He now closes it with the tears of Jerusalem’s daughters over the Peacemaker (23:28). In both places Jesus speaks about Jerusalem’s imminent destruction, and the passages are also linked by Jesus’ eschatological time reference “the days will come” (19:43; 23:29). (CC p. 918)

Just before he entered Jerusalem, Jesus had warned her inhabitants in specific language about the destruction about to take place “because you did not know the appointed time of your visitation” (ἐπισκοπή; 19:43–44). That visitation is *now*, as Jesus faces death by crucifixion. God has visited (ἐπισκέπτομαι) his people with redemption (λύτρωσις; 1:68) through the one to be crucified. But there should be no tears for him, since he is simply going to the goal placed before him by the Father and that goal will end in resurrection. There should be no tears for the rejected one; rather, tears should be shed for those who continue to reject him, since they will not share in his redemption. (CC pp. 918-919)

The beatitudes’ theme of the Great Reversal is in view here: Jesus, the condemned righteous man, will be vindicated, while those who condemn him will themselves be condemned. Those who smugly laugh at Jesus now will weep, but those who now weep tears of repentance will have their mourning turned into joy (6:21, 25). Normally, weeping is associated with death. Jesus directs those who would follow him to weep for themselves because they too must bear a cross (9:23; 14:27). They must die to self and to sin. Relevant here is the Lukan theme of baptism, since those baptized into Christ must die with him if they are to participate in his resurrection. (CC p. 919)

weep for yourselves and for your children. Because of the terrible suffering to befall Jerusalem some 40 years later when the Romans would besiege the city and utterly destroy the temple. (CSB)

Weeping marked both Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem (19:41) and His exit. *weep for yourselves.* Jesus acknowledges their sympathy but expresses pity for Jerusalem’s residents. *yourselves ... children.* Women and children are more vulnerable than men in times of distress. Cf Lm 2:11–12. (TLSB)

23:29 *the days are coming* – Destruction of Jerusalem (19:41–44; 21:5–24). (TLSB)

ρχονται ἡμέραι—J. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke*, 112, notes: “In Luke ‘the coming days’ are carefully distinguished from the day of the Son of Man and from the final day of judgment. In passages unique to Luke, ‘the coming days’ refer specifically to the destruction of Jerusalem.” But as this commentary has argued, Jerusalem’s destruction is an event of eschatological significance. It portends the return of the Son of Man and the end of the world. See comments at 5:35 and 17:22 (cf. also 19:43; 21:6). (CC p. 915)

Blessed are the barren. It would be better not to have children than to have them experience such suffering. Cf. Jer 16:1–4; 1Co 7:25–35. (CSB)

Ordinarily, childlessness was a shame in Israel (Gn 30:23; Lk 1:24–25), but is preferred to the coming suffering. (TLSB)

In both the OT and the NT generally, to be without child was to be considered cursed and was a reason for shame (cf. 1:25). On the other hand, for a woman’s barrenness to be reversed was like resurrection from the dead (1 Sam 2:6 in the context of 1 Samuel 1–2). But here Jesus describes the barren as among the blessed. Normally, rejoicing accompanied marriage and childbirth. But one of the beatitudes in Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain was for those “crying now” (6:21). Here Jesus tells the daughters of Jerusalem to cry for themselves and their children and says the barren will be called blessed! The reason for this is that when the destruction of Jerusalem comes, parents will have the added trauma of witnessing the destruction of their own children, which is even worse than their own suffering. It is in this vein that end-time prophets such as Jeremiah, who witnessed Jerusalem’s destruction in 587 B.C., and St. Paul did not marry or father children. (CC p. 919)

Jeremiah said,

The word of Yahweh came to me: “You must not take for yourself a wife and there shall not be for you sons or daughters *in this place* [Jerusalem].” For this is what Yahweh says about the sons and about the daughters born in this place and about their mothers who bear them and about their fathers who caused them to be born in this land: “They will die, killed by diseases. . . . They will perish by the sword and the famine” (Jer 16:1–4).

In 1 Corinthians 7 (especially vv 26, 29–32), St. Paul speaks of the desirability of remaining single in the end times, adding, “those who weep [should live] as if they are not weeping, and those who are rejoicing as if not rejoicing” (1 Cor 7:30). (CC p. 919)

Nevertheless, the fact that Jesus here pronounces a *beatitude* introduces a note of Gospel hope, just as in the beatitude that those who weep now will one day rejoice (6:21; cf. 23:28). Those who weep and are childless have hope because God creates *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Where there is only death, God can grant new life. Jesus has demonstrated his ability to raise the dead and change weeping to joy (e.g., 8:49–56). According to the new kinship (8:19–21), those in Christ, even if barren and bereft of blood relatives, are part of the new family of God. In this way, then, the prophecy may come true: “Sing, O barren woman, you who has not given birth; burst into song and shout, you who has not been in labor, for more numerous are the children of the desolate woman than the children of the married woman” (Is 54:1). (CC p. 920)

23:30 *then they will begin to say* – λέγειν . . . —The quote is of Hos 10:8, which is also quoted in Rev 6:16.

Fall on us! People would seek escape through destruction in death rather than endure continuing suffering and judgment (cf. Hos 10:8; Rev 6:16). (CSB)

An appeal to be killed quickly. (TLSB)

The third warning is Jesus' quotation of Hos 10:8, which refers to the judgment of God on Israel for her apostasy.

Hos 10:8 is also quoted in Rev 6:16: "They say to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one sitting on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb.'" I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 864–65, notes: "Most commentators interpret the saying as a wish for an earthquake or similar convulsion to put people out of their misery ... but it could also be a desire simply to be hidden from the impending catastrophe, as in Rev. 6:15f." See J. Neyrey, *The Passion according to Luke*, 113, for a comparison of Lk 23:30; Hos 10:8; and Rev 6:16. (CC p. 920)

Jesus warns that it will be so horrible in that day that people would prefer to be crushed under the mountains than to face the wrath of God. In harmony with the flow of Lk 21:5–36, which portrays Jerusalem's destruction as a miniature model of the coming destruction of the whole world, Rev 6:16–17 puts this despairing cry in the mouths of those who face the wrath of the Lamb on Judgment Day at the end of the world. Be certain of this: the Great Reversal will come and "the kings of the earth," like Herod and Pilate, and those who are "wealthy and strong," like the Sanhedrin, will cower helplessly when the one they have despised returns as their judge (Rev 6:15). Only those who remain alert in faith will be able "to stand" (Lk 21:36; Rev 6:17). (CC p. 920)

23:31 wood is green ... dry. If they treat the Messiah this way when the "tree" is well-watered and green, what will their plight be when he is withdrawn from them and they suffer for their rejection in the dry period? (CSB)

The fourth and final warning balances the first one, since in both Jesus is contrasted with Jerusalem. In a proverbial saying, Jesus summarizes what he just said about the horror of the impending judgment that will come upon unbelieving Jerusalem, and indeed the whole world: "if to the moist wood they do these things, to the dry what will happen?" (23:31). To understand this mysterious proverb one must recognize that implied here in the eschatological context are the *fire* of God's wrath and a present/future contrast. Now—the time of Jesus' earthly ministry and the church age—is the time of green wood, when God is patient and merciful, allowing time for growth and the fruit of repentance. But just as the rainy season gives way to the dry season, the time will come when God's patience will expire and his fire will blaze over all the earth. The time available for yielding the fruit of repentance will be over—the wood will be dry, and the fruitless vine will be burned (Ezekiel 15). Moist wood burns with difficulty, whereas dry wood will burn hot and fast. Thus, it is better to be moist wood *now* than dry wood *then*, when the fire of destruction comes. (CC pp. 920-921)

J. Neyrey offers the following three explanations of this saying. The first two come from A. Plummer, the third from F. Danker. In each of these interpretations, the moist wood refers to Jesus and the dry wood to those who reject Jesus:

- (1) If the *Romans* treat Me, whom they admit to be innocent, in this manner, how will they treat those who are rebellious and guilty?
- (2) If the *Jews* deal thus with One who has come to save them, what treatment shall they receive themselves for destroying Him? ...
- (3) If *God* permits this to happen to one who is innocent, what will be the fate of the guilty?

In addition to these possibilities, all of which have some merit, the green wood may point to the recurring remnant theme in the OT. Unfaithful Israel, like a tree, would be cut down, but from the stump God would cause a faithful remnant to sprout (e.g., Is 6:13). The stump and root of Jesse would remain alive until the Messiah came; he is the branch or sprout (Is 11:1; 53:2; Jer 23:5; cf. Ezekiel 17). Even though Jesus himself will now be “cut off from the land of the living” (Is 53:8), those connected to him by faith know that God will still preserve his remnant of people by grace. But those separated from Jesus have no such hope; they are dry wood. (CC p. 921)

The green wood may also suggest the theme of resurrection. To express the idea of a new life after death, Job 14:7–14 uses the figure of a tree cut down, but with water (Job 14:9), it sprouts again. If Jesus himself is the green wood, even if he is cut down, he will live again, and those in Christ likewise have hope for new life after the conflagration has passed. (CC p. 921)

Luke’s baptismal theme too is relevant here. Beginning at Jesus’ baptism, the fire of God’s eschatological wrath is poured out on him. Jesus is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Lk 3:16–17, 21–22; 12:49–50). While Jesus himself is consumed in death as a holocaust, for those baptized into him, this baptismal fire of the Spirit does not destroy but purifies and renews. (CC pp. 921-922)

Each of these possibilities ends up with a similar meaning. Jesus’ first and fourth warnings may be juxtaposed and paraphrased: “Do not weep for me, the suffering, righteous Messiah upon whom God *must* pour his fiery wrath. Rather, weep for yourselves and for your children. This eschatological wrath will be kindled against the chaff—those who reject God’s Messiah. But those whom I will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire will be spared from the eternal flames; and though they be cut down, they too will sprout again with me to eternal life.” (CC p. 922)

23:31 If the Romans do this to one they pronounce innocent, what will they do to a rebellious city? Or perhaps, if God has not spared His innocent Son, how much worse will it be when the Romans inflict His judgment on the city? (TLSB)

23:32 *criminals* – Reflects the prophecy (Is 53:12) and Jesus’ own prediction (22:37). (TLSB)

κακοῦργοι—These criminals are literally “evildoers,” often translated as “malefactors,” the equivalent from Latin. The same term describes them in 23:33, 39. Matthew ([27:38] and Mark [15:27] use the term ληστής, “robber, bandit, revolutionary,” for them, while John [19:18] simply calls them “two others.”) The Greek word order here emphasizes that these evildoers are “with him [Jesus].” Jesus’ quotation of Is 53:12 in Lk 22:37 is being fulfilled: Jesus is being reckoned with transgressors. (CC p. 915)

Jesus’ journey ends as Luke reports that two evildoers with Jesus are led away to be executed. Jesus’ final warnings are framed by references to the movement from the Fortress Antonia (23:26) to Golgotha (23:32). Only Luke mentions these criminals before the crucifixion itself, showing once again within the passion narrative how Jesus’ prophecy after the Last Supper is coming to fulfillment: “And with transgressors he was reckoned” (Lk 22:37, quoting Is 53:12). All is proceeding according to the divine plan. (CC p. 922)

23:33 *the Skull*. Latin *Calvaria*, hence the name “Calvary” – It may have been a small hill (though the Gospels say nothing of a hill) that looked like a skull, or it may have been so named because of the many executions that took place there.) (CSB)

Jesus was crucified at the place called The Skull. The Aramaic word for skull is “gulfulta” (Golgotha); the Greek is our word cranium which was translated into Latin as “calvaria” (Calvary) (PBC)

“The place called Skull” is where the crucifixion takes place. This area is thought to have been a rock quarry that appeared from a distance to resemble a skull. Another explanation for its name is that it was regularly used for crucifixions and so was named after the dead bodies suspended there. It was outside the city, and, according to tradition, is marked today by the Church of Holy Sepulchre, which is built on the Constantinian foundations that covered both the Place of the Skull and Jesus’ tomb. (CC p. 930)

crucified. A Roman means of execution in which the victim was nailed to a cross. Heavy, wrought-iron nails were driven through the wrists and the heel bones. If the life of the victim lingered too long, death was hastened by breaking his legs (see Jn 19:33). Archaeologists have discovered the bones of a crucified man, near Jerusalem, dating between A.D. 7 and 66, which shed light on the position of the victim when nailed to the cross. Only slaves, the basest of criminals, and offenders who were not Roman citizens were executed in this manner. First-century authors vividly describe the agony and disgrace of being crucified. (CSB)

Luke’s introduction to the crucifixion and death of Jesus is brief but provides the narrative framework of persons and place. (Since time is a theme within the narrative, Luke does not include that information in the introduction.) The subject of the two verbs “they came” (ἦλθον) and “they crucified” (ἐσταύρωσαν) is not stated but is implied to be the same as those who did the bidding of Pilate and the Jewish leaders by leading Jesus away to execution (23:26). These probably were Roman soldiers, and they will be present throughout the narrative and will be named among the mockers of Jesus (23:36). One of them, a Roman centurion, will be featured at the end of the episode. The other participants at this point are Jesus and the two evildoers crucified with him. The mention of the two “evildoers” once again emphasizes Jesus’ prophecy that he would be reckoned with transgressors (Lk 22:37; Is 53:12). The other participants in this account will be introduced later: “the people,” who watch passively (Lk 23:35a) and who probably are among “the crowds” who will return home beating their chests (23:48); “the rulers” who mock Jesus (23:35); and “all who were known to him,” including women who observe what happens from a distance (23:49). (CC pp. 928 & 930)

Luke describes the actual crucifixion of Jesus with a single, simple aorist verb and pronoun: “they crucified him.” It is so brief the hearer could almost miss it. There is no detail in any of the synoptic gospels about the mechanics of Jesus’ crucifixion, although in John’s *resurrection* account Jesus shows the disciples the nail marks in his hands (Jn 20:20, 27). The simplicity of Luke’s report of the crucifixion parallels the way he captured Jesus’ birth: “And she gave birth to her firstborn son, and she wrapped him up with cloth bands and laid him in a manger, because there was for them no place in the inn” (2:7). Luke highlights these two great events in Jesus’ life—his birth and his death—by the very austerity of his account. (CC p. 931)

From the great mass of evidence that has been collected we gather that the cross was first of all planted firmly in the ground. Only under very exceptional circumstances were the crosses high. That of Jesus raised His feet no more than a yard above the ground, for the short stalk of hyssop which was 18 inches long was able to reach Jesus; mouth. A block or a heavy peg was fastened to the beam, and the victim sat on this. He either mounted it himself and was perhaps assisted by the executioners, or they lifted him up to the seat and then fastened his body, arms and legs with

ropes. Then the great nails, of which the ancient writers speak especially, were driven through the hands and the feet. (Lenski)

The agony of crucifixion needs no description. We mention only the hot sun, the raging thirst, the slow approach of death which sometimes delayed for four days. It was a great relief to the malefactor to learn that he was to die on the very day he was crucified. (Lenski)

All the evangelists state that Jesus was placed between the two malefactors, probably by the order of Pilate, although the soldiers, too, would naturally have arranged the crosses in this manner, Jesus being the one important victim. (Lenski)

The Jewish historian Josephus spoke of crucifixion as “the most pitiable of deaths.” The Roman politician and author Cicero described it as “the worst extreme of torture inflicted on slaves. (PBC)

Crucifixion was preceded by scourging with thongs, to which were sometimes added nails, pieces of bone, etc., to heighten the pain, often so intense as to cause death. In our Lord’s case, however, this infliction seems neither to have been the legal scourging after sentence nor yet the examination by torture (Acts 22:24), but rather a scourging before the sentence to excite pity and procure immunity from further punishment (Luke 23:22; John 19:1). (Unger’s Bible Dictionary)

Before the nailing or binding took place a medicated cup given out of kindness to confuse the senses and deaden the pangs of the sufferer (Prov. 31:6), usually of “wine mingled with myrrh,” because myrrh was soporific. Our Lord refused it that His senses might be clear (Matt 27:34; Mark 15:23) (Unger’s Bible Dictionary)

The crucifixion was a very barbaric and painful manner of inflicting the death penalty, which the Romans had adopted from the Phoenicians, Persians, Assyrians, and other Oriental peoples, and which they employed in the case of slaves and hardened criminals in the provinces, under no circumstance against a Roman citizen. (Ylvisaker)

one on the right – μὲν ... δέ—This construction accents Jesus’ central position between the two evildoers. This seems to be a clear allusion to Jesus as the one who fulfills Is 53:9 and 53:12. Is 53:12 was quoted by Jesus in Lk 22:37. The words of the penitent evildoer in 23:41, “this man did nothing out of place,” reflect “he did no violence” in Is 53:9. Explicit quotes from Psalms 22; 31; and 69 appear in Lk 23:34–36, 46. (CC pp. 923-924)

23:34 *Father forgive them for they do not know do* – Jesus prayed for all those blind to their actions (Ac 13:27; 1Co 2:8). Jesus’ prayer reflects His teaching (Lk 11:4) and is repeated by Stephen (Ac 7:60). Hus: “When he himself was stripped, beaten and blasphemed by the soldiers, scribes, Pharisees, officers, and priests, not even then did he pronounce any malediction, but he prayed” (*The Church*, p 285). (TLSB)

ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἔλεγεν· Πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἶδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν—The imperfect ἔλεγεν (also in 23:42) suggests that Jesus’ prayer for forgiveness for his executioners was ongoing for a period of time, rather than punctiliar (cf. BDF §§ 318 [1]; 324 [B]; 327). Nestle-Aland²⁷ and UBS⁴ place this prayer in brackets because many significant early manuscripts omit it (P⁷⁵ 1⁸ B D* W Θ). B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 180, doubts that it was part of the original and concludes that it was added by scribes “early in the transmission of the Third Gospel” (e.g., ²*⁸ A C D² f^{1,13} Koine text tradition). However, it would be unlikely that early scribes would have put these words in Jesus’ mouth unless there was a reliable, authentic tradition that Jesus did speak

them. Others who support the authenticity of this first saying of Jesus are cited in I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 868, and L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 376. (CC p. 924)

These words do not have unanimous support in the manuscript witnesses (see textual note). Nonetheless, they are consistent with Luke's development of theological themes, and within the larger Lukan context it is most appropriate that these would be Jesus' first words from the cross. There are several reasons for this. (CC p. 931)

First, God's forgiveness in Jesus is one of Luke's most prominent themes, beginning in the infancy narrative in the Benedictus (1:77), continuing with John's baptism (3:3), Jesus' sermon in Nazareth (4:18), the forgiveness of the paralytic (5:20–21, 23–24) and the sinful woman (7:47), and the Lord's Prayer (11:4). The gospel records a series of absolutions by Jesus, in which forgiveness is expressed by means of his miracles of release (see especially comments on 4:18) and his table fellowship with sinners. After Luke establishes that Jesus, the bearer of forgiveness, is the foundation of the church (Luke 1–4), he narrates Jesus' selection of a cornerstone in Peter, who receives absolution from Jesus when he is called to be his disciple (5:1–11). Jesus' final words in Luke include the scriptural mandate to preach to all nations repentance to the *forgiveness of sins* (24:47). Therefore, it is entirely in keeping with Luke's portrait of Jesus that Jesus should ask the Father to forgive those responsible for his crucifixion: not just the soldiers, but also Pilate, Herod, the Sanhedrin, the chief priests, the rulers, and indeed all people (see, e.g., 22:66; 23:1, 13 and the textual note on ἀυτοῖς, “them,” in 23:34). The hearer of the gospel knows that this absolution flows from the full and complete atonement Jesus is accomplishing for the sins of the whole world *as he speaks these very words*. Forgiveness flows from the cross, so how fitting it is that Jesus' first word from the cross is a word of universal forgiveness. (CC p. 931 & 933)

Second, “they do not know what they are doing” points to another prominent Lukan motif. The ignorance of those who crucified Jesus (including the Jewish leaders) is a Lukan theme emphasized in the preaching in Acts (e.g., 3:17; 13:27; cf. 7:25). In his gospel, Luke also repeatedly emphasizes the ignorance even of Jesus' followers, none of whom truly understood the identity of their Lord until after his resurrection, and all of whom acquiesced to his crucifixion by deserting him at his arrest. Jesus' death by crucifixion is the culmination of the inexorable plan of God that was carried out through human agents at the instigation of Satan (22:3, 31) and “the power of darkness” (22:53). The human agents are responsible even though they acted in ignorance. But the miraculous comfort of the gospel is that Jesus invokes forgiveness for those who “do not know what they are doing.” (CC p. 933)

Third, the thrust of Jesus' first words from the cross conforms to Luke's Christology, in which Jesus is the incarnation of God's love, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness for all, including God's enemies. This is a leading theme in the Sermon on the Plain (6:27, 35) and the Lord's Prayer (11:4), and it is the essence of Jesus' teaching and miracles throughout the gospel. (CC p. 933)

Fourth, this absolution in prayer form balances Jesus' absolution of the penitent evildoer—the absolution implicit in Jesus' assurance of paradise. These two absolutions, taken together, show the *now/not yet* character of Luke's eschatology. Forgiveness comes *now* through Jesus' prayer, while paradise is *not yet*—though *not yet* will become *now* for Jesus and the penitent evildoer later that very same day. (Stephen too will voice a similar absolution when he is about to enter paradise [Acts 7:60]). By praying for the forgiveness of all those responsible for his crucifixion, Jesus anticipates in his words what is about to happen with his death: atonement for the sins of

the entire world, alienated from and hostile to God. He also anticipates his absolution of one sinner (23:43) based on that atonement. (CC p. 933)

Finally, with these words included, in Luke's gospel Jesus speaks three words from the cross. The first (23:34) and last (23:46) words are addressed to the Father. Immediately following his crucifixion, Jesus asks the Father to forgive the people (23:34); at the moment of his death Jesus commits his spirit to the Father because atonement is complete and the forgiveness of sins is based on his death. (CC pp. 933-934)

Father – Πάτερ—Jesus addresses the Father at the beginning of this section when he is crucified (23:34) and at the end when he dies (23:46). See comments at 10:1–24 (10:21) and 11:2. This address is also used by Jesus in prayer at 22:42. (CC p. 924)

them – αὐτοῖς—An important question is this: Who are the referents of this pronoun? Whom is the Father to forgive according to Jesus' prayer? The nearest appropriate antecedents are the unspecified subjects of ἐσταύρωσαν in 23:33, "they crucified him." But the persons who actually crucified Jesus are not identified. "They do not know what they are doing" certainly applies to the soldiers who were unknowingly crucifying the Christ, the Son of God. Yet until Jesus' resurrection, no human participants in the gospel will truly know who Jesus is (see comments at, e.g., 8:28; 9:20). The disciples too displayed their ignorance by fearfully deserting their Lord at his arrest, and Peter in particular by his outright denial of Jesus. Therefore, this descriptive phrase does not narrow down the possible referents but actually multiplies them. It pertains to all humanity, since all, in ignorance and unbelief, have rejected Jesus. (CC p. 924)

As discussed in the textual note on 23:26, Luke has shown in his narrative of the four trials of Jesus that ultimately *all people* are responsible for Jesus' sentence to death. Jews and Gentiles are both indispensably involved in his condemnation and sentencing. But even more important is the fact that all this is a part of God's preordained plan for the salvation of the whole world, as shown by Jesus' three passion predictions: 9:22 names Jewish groups as responsible, while 9:44 has "men" in general, and 18:32 attributes Jesus' suffering and death to "the Gentiles." Therefore, when Jesus prays here (23:34) for the Father to forgive "them," in the wider Lukan context this ultimately includes the entire human race, since all are responsible for his death. (A similar theme emerges in Luke's genealogy of Jesus in 3:23–38, since his lineage is traced back to Adam, making Jesus the substitute and Savior of all who are descended from Adam.) In the commentary below, "all people" will be supplied after "them" when clarity calls for the referents to be specified. (CC p. 924)

This simple prayer is astounding; all interpretation will leave much to be added. The climax of suffering is now being reached, but the heart of Jesus is not submerged by this rising tide – He thinks of His enemies and of all those who have brought this flood of suffering upon Him. In this connection one should dwell on the whole Passion history and on the fact that it meant agony for Jesus. He might have prayed for justice and just retribution; but His love rises above His suffering, He prays for pardon for His enemies. Such love exceeds comprehension and yet reveals the source whence our redemption and our pardon flow. "Father," Jesus addressed God and even now spoke as the Son, as one who accepted filially all that His Father is permitting to come upon Him. His Father is with Him and hears His Son say, "Father," and what this Son now utters will meet a full response in the Father's heart, for He so loved the world that He sent His own Son to die for the world, and this dying is now at hand. (Lanski)

"Forgive" is not expressive enough: "remit," "dismiss," "send away" render the true sense. This is not a case of brushing away a few feathers. This is also true with regard to the ignorance.

What they were doing is defined in 1 Cor 2:8, namely this that they were crucifying the Lord of Glory, or Acts 13:27, that they were fulfilling the prophets, or Acts 3:15-17, that they were killing the Prince of Life. (Lenski)

divided his garments. Any possessions an executed person had with him were taken by the executioners. Unwittingly the soldiers (cf. Jn 19:23–24) were fulfilling the words of Ps 22:18 (CSB)

Executioners received a victim's clothing. Casting lots involves chance, yet God foresaw the outcome. (TLSB)

Psalm 22:18, "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

Introduction to Ps 22

Note on Introduction (The anguished prayer of David as a godly sufferer victimized by the vicious and prolonged attacks of enemies whom he has not provoked and from whom the Lord has not (yet) delivered him. It has many similarities with Ps 69, but contains no calls for redress (see note on 5:10) such as are found in 69:22–28. No other psalm pointed beyond itself so fully to the circumstances of Jesus at his crucifixion. Hence on the cross he took it to his lips (see Mt 27:46 and parallels), and the Gospel writers, especially Matthew and John, frequently alluded to it (as they did to Ps 69) in their accounts of Christ's passion (Mt 27:35, 39, 43; Jn 19:23–24, 28). They proclaim the passion of Jesus as the fulfillment of this cry of the righteous sufferer. The author of Hebrews placed the words of v. 22 on Jesus' lips (see Heb 2:12 and note). No psalm is quoted more frequently in the NT.)

Notes on Ps 22:17, 20–21. 22:17 Note (*I can count all my bones.* Perhaps better, "I must display all my bones." The figure may be of one attacked by highway robbers or enemy soldiers, who strip him of his garments.)

22:20-21 Note (The psalmist's prayer recalls in reverse order the four figures by which he portrayed his attackers in vv. 12–13, 16–18: "sword," "dogs," "lions," "wild oxen." Here "sword" may evoke the scene described in vv. 16b–18, and thus many interpret it as an attack by robbers or enemy soldiers, though "sword" is often used figuratively of any violent death.)

John 19:23, 24 describes the division of the garments in detail. Luke states only that it was made, and in this case by casting lots. (Lots were usually made out of small stones or pieces of wood. Sometimes arrows were used.) A common way was to place lots in a helmet and shake them until one flew out; another way was to reach in and to draw out lot by lot. If the former was used, one man was designated, and the first lot that flew out was his, the lot being marked for a certain portion of the four that had been arranged; John tells us that there were four. In case of the valuable tunic of Jesus three lots would be blank, the other would win. The clothes of the victim were the perquisites of the executioners, the victim being treated as one that was already dead. The soldiers were great gamblers. It was nothing exceptional for them to gamble for the clothes of Jesus. The clothes of the malefactors were probably divided in the same way. (Lenski)

The juxtaposition of Jesus' remarkable absolution and his nakedness on the cross would accent this Great Reversal theme of the gospel. According to the theology of the cross, the gracious power of God to save is hidden in the suffering and weakness of the Christ on the cross. Things are not what they appear to be. Throughout Luke's gospel Jesus has shown mercy to all, including

God's enemies. Now he hangs naked on the cross accused and condemned as a criminal and an enemy of God (according to the Sanhedrin)—the grossest kind of humiliation possible. The degradation of Jesus' nakedness is a significant part of the scandal of the cross. The gambling over his clothes accents his nakedness and the utter contempt shown toward him by those who carried out his death. (CC pp. 934-935)

casting lots – Ironically, Scripture is fulfilled here by gambling. Gambling relies on chance or “fate,” while Luke's gospel has carefully shown that nothing in Jesus' long journey to the cross is a result of chance or “fate”; all is part of God's inexorable plan, as shown by the quotations and allusions to Psalms 22; 31; and 69. But the soldiers seem ignorant of prophecy; “they do not know what they are doing.” They show callous disregard for the public display of nakedness and Jesus' humiliation, and by their actions add to it. (CC p. 935)

23:35 *the people stood* – εἰστήκει—The pluperfect (also in 23:49) has the nuance of “stand still, stop” (cf. BAGD s.v. ἵστημι, II 2 a) in order to give full attention to the sight. (CC p. 924)

rulers – Members of the Jewish High Council. (TLSB)

scoffed (exemutasion) – ἐξεμυκτήριζον—This same word describes the attitude of the Pharisees against Jesus after he tells the parable of the unjust steward (16:14). (CC p. 925)

Even here in public they throw their dignity to the winds, forget who they are, and like the common herd, give way to their basest passions. What they are capable of we saw in 22:63-65. They cannot now spit on Jesus, but they certainly stab Him as deep as possible with their cowardly and vicious tongues. They go on turning up their noses at Jesus, a gesture of insulting disdain (Ps 22:7), the imperfect tense is descriptive of what they did for some time. (Lenski)

Luke's chiasmic structure makes the mocking of Jesus a distinct unit. This mocking includes the impenitent evildoer's taunts. The mocking of Jesus *on the cross* is the climax of Luke's theme of Jesus as the rejected prophet. Those who mock Jesus here are (in chiasmic order) the Jewish rulers of Israel, the (Gentile) soldiers, the inscription (supplied by the Gentile Pilate [Jn 19:19]), and the unbelieving evildoer (a Jewish revolutionary?). (“Evildoer” could be applied aptly to every sinner—that is, every person.) At the foot of the cross all of humanity is represented. Adam's race now lashes out against God's Son with unbelievable malice. But the irony of this mocking is that it speaks the true words of the Gospel. Jesus is mocked for being “the Christ,” the one who “saved others,” and the King of the Jews—and *that is exactly who he is!* (CC pp. 935-936)

saved others...save himself – ἄλλους ἔσωσεν—Earlier references in the gospel to Jesus “saving” others are 7:50; 8:36, 48, 50; 17:19; 18:42. Apparently the rulers had heard reports of Jesus' saving activity but refused to believe this evidence that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. See comments on 22:67, 70. σώζω occurs four times in the section on Jesus' mocking (23:35 [twice], 37, 39). On σώζω and its derivatives, see comments at 1:47. (On salvation in Luke, see A. A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast*, 191–93.) (CC p. 925)

They admit He saved and raised others, but reason that if He will not rescue Himself, He is clearly not the Messiah. (TLSB)

The denial that He really ever saved anybody is based on His inability to save Himself. For this is a sneer. It is plainer in Matthew where they go on: “King of Israel is He!” and mean that He is anything but that. All His miracles are derided – they must be spurious or He would help Himself. (Lenski)

Repeated phrases within this mocking scene reinforce another important Lukan theme: salvation. The mocking begins with the rulers saying, “He *saved* others [ἄλλους ἔσωσεν]; let him *save* himself [σωσάτω ἑαυτὸν]” (23:35b). It then proceeds to the soldiers, who mock him with the words “*save* yourself [σῶσον σεαυτὸν]” (23:37), and ends with the evildoer who blasphemes Jesus by saying, “*Save* yourself and us [σῶσον σεαυτὸν καὶ ἡμᾶς]” (23:39). Ironically, *those who mock Jesus proclaim that he is the Savior*. (CC p. 936)

Christ of God – ὁ χριστὸς τοῦ θεοῦ—This is the same phrase used of Jesus by Peter in his Galilean confession (9:20). See also the comments on 22:67, where the Sanhedrin demanded that Jesus tell them whether he was “the Christ.” (CC p. 925)

the Chosen One. Related to a Palestinian Jewish title found in Dead Sea Scrolls literature, and possibly echoing Is 42:1. (CSB)

Isaiah 42:1, ““Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.”

ὁ ἐκλεκτός—This title stands in apposition to “the Christ of God.” The perfect participle of the related verb (ἐκλελεγμένος, from ἐκλέγομαι) is used at the transfiguration at the end of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (9:35). Similar too is the Father’s affirmation at Jesus’ baptism (3:22). The combination “Christ of God” and “the chosen/elect one” may recall the language of the evangelist in Jesus’ first journey to the temple where he is referred to as “Lord’s Christ” (2:26), i.e., he is the Father’s Christ. What is therefore combined here in “Christ of God” and “chosen/elect one” is the voice of Father at Jesus’ transfiguration, which anticipates Jesus’ entrance into glory through his “exodus” (9:31) on the cross to fulfill the Father’s plan. (CC p. 925)

Peter in his Pentecost sermon uses the word “accredited” (Acts 2:22). This is language with which we are familiar because it is used in schools and other settings. It tells us that a certain standard of acceptance has been reached. In Acts it means “to demonstrate or exhibit” (Strong’s). To be approved by a higher power. The fact that the Father accepted the price that Jesus paid for our sins, means that we owe nothing and are debt free.

23:36 *soldiers* – First explicit mention of the Roman soldiers in Lk. (TLSB)

sour *wine*. A sour drink carried by the soldiers for the day. Jesus refused a sedative drink (Mt 27:34; Mk 15:23) but later was given the vinegar drink when he cried out in thirst (Jn 19:28–30). Luke shows that it was offered in mockery. (CSB)

Cheap wine drunk by soldiers. This offer was mockery and a joke. (TLSB)

The soldiers do not confine their mockery to words. This was the common cheap sour wine that was provided for the soldiers, with which they refreshed themselves during their long wait. It was their ordinary drink, and no other was available here. Coming up to the cross of Jesus, the soldiers offer Him a drink, hold out their wine to Him, and tell Him just to step down and to reach out and to take it. It was a cruel way to mock the sufferer who had had nothing touch his lips since the night before. (Lanski)

This mockery on the part of the soldiers is recorded by Luke alone. It took place before the darkness fell at noon. It has nothing to do with Matt 27:46-49; Mark 15:34-36; John 19:28-30, which occurred after the darkness, just before Jesus died. (Lanski)

23:37-38 The taunt refers to the title above the cross and presumes that kings save themselves, not their people. (TLSB)

23:38 *inscription over him*. Indicated the crime for which a person was dying. This was Pilate's way of mocking the Jewish leaders as well as announcing what Jesus had been accused of. (CSB)

The victim's crime was usually posted, but Pilate stated Jesus' title as a fact to mock the Jews. (TLSB)

It is quite certain that the inscription was placed on the cross over the head of Jesus at the time of His crucifixion, and there is only a bare possibility that the inscription was an afterthought on the part of Pilate. Inscriptions that stated why a man was crucified were common. These were also carried and displayed on the way out to the place of execution. We read nothing about inscriptions in the case of the malefactors – the mind of Pilate seems to have been taken up chiefly with Jesus. (Lanski)

It was written in three languages, which fact explains the slight variation of the wording as this is recorded by the four evangelists. (Lanski)

KING OF THE JEWS. The wording of the charge differs slightly in the Gospels, but all agree that Jesus was crucified for claiming to be the king of the Jews. (CSB)

ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος—The Greek word order in Luke emphasizes Jesus' title as King. Mark (15:26) has the same title but without οὗτος at the end. Matthew (27:37) has οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. John (19:19) has the fullest record of the title: Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. Ironically, it was intended as the charge against Jesus, but opened eyes of faith recognize it as a description of who he really is. (CC p. 925)

Forced to crucify Jesus by these vicious Jews, Pilate will do so, but only as “the King of the Jew” as they have charged. This is Pilate's revenge. He writes their own charge over the head of Jesus. (Lanski)

23:39 *hurled insults* – The third taunt. (TLSB)

τῶν κρεμασθέντων—κρεμάννυμι is a synonym of σταυρόω, the more common verb for “crucify,” which is used in 23:21, 33. κρεμάννυμι refers to impalement or display of the dead body in LXX Deut 21:22. (CC p. 925)

In Luke's narrative, after the impenitent evildoer participates in the mocking, the penitent one is isolated and highlighted. Just as Luke followed Jesus' prayer for forgiveness with descriptions of the reactions of the soldiers and the people (23:34b–35a), so now he describes a response to the mocking of Jesus. The sharp demarcation between the two evildoers—one a mocker, the other a confessor—is yet another fulfillment of the prophecy that Jesus will divide Israel: he will cause “the fall and resurrection of many in Israel” (2:34). The divided evildoers also contrast with the rulers and soldiers, who mock Jesus in unison. This penitent evildoer represents all those within Israel who will turn to Jesus in repentance and faith. By rebuking the unbelieving evildoer, the penitent one rebukes all those who have rejected and will reject Jesus. (CC p. 937)

23:40 *the other* – ὁ ἕτερος—In the apocryphal Acts of Pilate 10:2, this faithful evildoer is called Dysmas. (CC p. 925)

fear God – Have the proper attitude toward God (1:50; 12:4–5; 18:4). (TLSB)

His confession of sin and of faith shows the proper response to Jesus' absolution in 23:34. He is the first to enter the fullness of the kingdom that Jesus is now preparing and inheriting. The process of initiation begins with instruction about Jesus—catechesis—and ends with participation in Christ (see comments at the annunciation [1:26–38]). This man's catechesis came through watching the passion of Jesus, the simple words of absolution that Jesus spoke over his enemies, and the cruel mocking of the suffering, righteous Messiah. This evildoer on the brink of death and hell is the first to be converted by Jesus' announcement that sin is forgiven by virtue of the cross. *He is the first to embrace Jesus as the one who saves others, the Christ, and the King of the Jews.* (CC p. 937)

same sentence – Facing death, this is the time to seek mercy. (TLSB)

23:41 *we getting* – The criminal also bears witness to Jesus' innocence, recognizing His majesty and grace. (TLSB)

ἄξια γὰρ ὧν ἐπράξαμεν ἀπολαμβάνομεν—This repentant evildoer recognizes the justice of his own punishment, and, in contrast, Jesus' complete innocence. (CC p. 925)

ἄτοπον—Literally “out of place,” this word “improper, wrong, evil.” In light of Jesus' quote of Is 53:12 in Lk 22:37, Is 53:9b may well be in the background here. (CC p. 925)

This evildoer first expresses his repentance by confessing his sin. He fears God (unlike the other evildoer), and he recognizes that his tortuous death is just punishment for the sins he has committed. He stands under the judgment of God's wrath, and he confesses that his guilt merits such punishment. (CC p. 938)

done nothing wrong – But combined with his confession of sin is his confession of faith: he announces that Jesus is the suffering, innocent Messiah. His protest that “this man did nothing out of place” is the fifth pronouncement of Jesus' innocence since the trials began (the earlier four are in 23:4, 14, 15, 22). Jesus' innocence has been a primary theme throughout Luke's passion narrative, *but this is the first time Jesus' innocence has been announced by a believer.*

R. Stein, *Luke*, 593, notes that the evildoer's entrance into paradise is part of Luke's reversal motif: “Once again the last had become first. The ‘first’ mocked and sought Jesus' death; this condemned criminal, surely the ‘last,’ sought the Lord's mercy and amazingly found salvation.” He goes on to say (p. 594): “The supreme irony is that the criminal rightfully being executed for his crime(s) was infinitely better off” than those who continued to reject Jesus and were eternally damned. (CC p. 938)

As in 23:47, to declare Jesus innocent or righteous is tantamount to declaring that God's plan of salvation in his righteous Son is just—and that righteousness—justification—comes through that plan (see comments on 7:29, 35). Such a confession glorifies God (23:47) and recognizes his righteousness (7:29, 35). (CC p. 938)

23:42 *remember me* – An appeal to act on his behalf. (TLSB)

μνήσθητί μου—See comments on “remember” in the Magnificat (1:54) and the Benedictus (1:72). This word is a critical part of Luke's hermeneutic in the final chapter (24:6, 8; cf. 24:44).

See also the comments on ἀνάμνησις, “remembrance,” in 22:19 regarding the Lord’s Supper. (CC p. 925)

come into your kingdom – Statement of true faith. He alone sees Jesus’ messianic *kingship*, which welcomes sinners. (TLSB)

ἔλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν σου—On the coming of the kingdom, see comments at 11:2 and textual note and commentary on 22:16, 18. Some manuscripts have ἐν instead of εἰς (e.g., ⱼ A W f^{1,13} Koine text tradition). ἐν, “in,” implies that Jesus is already in his kingdom but has yet to come (back). εἰς, “into,” implies that Jesus has not yet entered *into* his kingdom. There is strong manuscript evidence in support of εἰς (e.g., P⁷⁵ B L). B. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary*, 181, notes that this seems to be consistent with other statements in Luke, e.g., Jesus’ words to the Emmaus disciples: “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and *enter into* [εἰσελθεῖν εἰς] his glory?” (24:26). Jesus enters his kingdom through his “exodus” (9:31) or his “being taken up” (9:51). Both terms encompass his entire movement from death to resurrection to ascension. (CC pp. 925-926)

For the penitent evildoer, 23:40–41 constitutes a confession of faith in the suffering, innocent Messiah. But he goes on to voice an even stronger confession: “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (23:42). Perhaps the inscription on the cross and the taunts of the soldiers, both of which designate Jesus as *King*, informed this man’s request regarding Jesus’ entrance into his *kingdom*. In any event, the king/kingdom motif and the theme of remembrance reverberate throughout Luke’s gospel and come together in a strikingly similar way in the Lord’s Supper dialog (22:16, 18–19), where Jesus speaks of the future advent of the kingdom. The man’s request reveals a remarkable understanding of the now/not yet tension in the eschatology of God’s kingdom. *Now*, on the cross, Jesus is King, and *now* his word (23:34) bestows forgiveness. *Not yet* has Jesus entered into his kingdom—of glory—yet Jesus’ word of forgiveness *now* opens the door for this dying evildoer to enter the *not yet* kingdom too when it comes. And it will come that same day! (CC p. 938)

23:43 *truly* – ἀμὴν σοὶ λέγω—See comments at 4:24 and 21:32. Lk 23:43 is the only place this expression is used to address someone in the singular (σοὶ instead of ὑμῖν). (CC p. 926)

The catechesis of the penitent evildoer was brief, and his initiation into the life of Christ came quickly. The dying “King of the Jews” (23:37–38) who “saved others” (23:35) says, “Truly to you I say, today with me you will be in paradise” (23:43). This is Jesus’ second word from the cross in Luke, and it continues the theme of his first word: Jesus, crucified, is the source of forgiveness for all—even the worst, the least, and the last. With these words, Jesus invites the man to participate in this forgiveness forever. *Jesus’ words serve to incorporate the man into the body of believers in Christ and to invite him to the ongoing feast of heaven.* The penitent catechumen is grafted into Jesus’ passion, which Jesus is experiencing at that very moment. Here the Pauline language of *Baptism* is most powerfully illustrated: this sinner is truly united with Jesus in a death like his, and according to Jesus’ promise, he shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his when he with him will be in paradise (Rom 6:5). This penitent evildoer is the first to receive the baptism of fire that John promised would come with Jesus (Lk 3:16). That baptism of fire has to do with judgment, and the evildoer admits the justice of his own condemnation to death with Jesus. (CC pp. 938-939)

today – Recalls Eden’s garden and God’s presence with Adam and Eve. Christ restores to their descendants what they had lost, and more. Whereas the criminal had spoken an indefinite “when,” Jesus responds with a definite “today.” Bern: “If God justifies, who is he that condemns?”

... He was content to pass by the cross as by a short bridge from the religion of death unto the land of the living, and from this foul mire into the paradise of joy” (SLSB, p 29. (TLSB)

σήμερον—This is a significant word throughout Luke’s gospel. (I.e., Lk 4:21; 5:26; 12:28; 13:32, 33; 19:5, 9; 22:34, 61) (See A. A. Just Jr., *The Ongoing Feast*, 189–90, on σήμερον in Luke’s gospel.) (CC p. 926)

By prefacing his pronouncement with “Truly ... I say,” Jesus alerts the hearer that what he is about to say has great significance. The announcement that “today” paradise belongs to the penitent thief sums up Luke’s use of σήμερον, “today,” emphasizing the present reality of future eschatological blessings. This inheritance of paradise comes through the crucified flesh of Jesus. That is why Jesus uses incarnational, *real presence* language with the penitent evildoer: “*With me* [μετ’ ἐμοῶ] you will be in paradise.” This is the same language of divine presence first spoken by the angel to Mary. The angel announced to the woman receiving abundant grace, “the Lord is with you” (1:28). The Lord who was with her became incarnate in her womb. That same Lord is now with the penitent evildoer and will remain with him forever in paradise. (CC p. 939)

with me – μετ’ ἐμοῶ—In 23:32, the two evildoers were led “with [σύν] him” to be executed. Now, one of them will be “with” (μετά) Jesus in paradise. (CC p. 926)

paradise. In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) the word designated a garden (Ge 2:8–10) or forest (Ne 2:8), but in the NT (used only here and in 2Co 12:4; Rev 2:7) it refers to the place of bliss and rest between death and resurrection (cf. Lk 16:22; 2Co 12:2). (CSB)

παραδείσω—R. Karris, *Luke: Artist and Theologian*, 102, comments on 23:43: The key to an analysis of 23:43 lies in the word “paradise,” for in that word the themes of food, New Adam, and righteous ones are contained. J. Jeremias summarizes the food aspect of the image of paradise in this way: “Its (the reopened paradise) most important gifts are the fruits of the tree of life, the water and bread of life, the banquet of [the time of] salvation, and fellowship with God” [TDNT 5:767]. What had been lost by Adam and Eve has now been restored to men and women. The symbols ... all come together via the symbol of paradise. Through his death Jesus gives repentant men and women life, represented by “the fruits of the tree of life.” They live by the fruits which come from the new tree of life, the cross of Jesus. The bread, which Jesus shared so often with others as he nurtured them, now comes from his cross. The messianic banquet, imaged by Jesus in his joyful table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners, is reality through his death. (CC p. 926)

Comment on Matthew 9:11 – I can offer four suggestions. The first is that there were those flagrant sinners (such as Matthew) who, from the moment of Jesus’ authoritative call to faith and discipleship, had begun to be transformed. To such people Jesus offered an instantaneous and full acceptance and fellowship. There was no trial period, no probationary activities during which Matthew or another like him would prove himself worthy of full and free acceptance by Jesus. (We cannot know for certain whether the traditions of Pharisaic theology and piety required a probationary period during which a person would have to prove himself before being regarded as a full-fledged participant. Our sources do not reveal that much about the organization of the Pharisees. One possible indication that such a period existed is Josephus’ own brief description of how, as a teenager, he set out to examine each of the major sects in Judaism. By his own account, this process took three years, and when it was over, at age nineteen he began to live in accordance with the rules of the Pharisees (*Life*, 9–12). Reicke, *New Testament Era*, 159, suggests that in this era the school of Hillel required a month-long trial period, while the Shammaites expected up to a

year. We do know that the Essenes practiced a kind of “novitiate” that a candidate had to go through before being a full member of the community. According to Charlesworth, “The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historical Jesus,” 28, one of the distinct differences between the Essenes and Jesus was that he required no trial period:

For Jesus “initiation” was not prolonged; rapidly one could leave all behind and “follow him,” by repenting and perhaps by being baptized. To join the *haberim* [here referring to members of the Pharisaic community] required at least one month (t.Dem [Tosefta, *Demai*] 2.10–12); but to join the Essene group took at least two years of preparation and examination, after which all personal items were irretrievably given to the community (1QS 6.13–23).

Even as Jesus’ miracles of healing were instantaneous and effective, so is his call to those who are “sick” in spirit (9:12) and in need of a spiritual physician. Only those who refuse to see themselves as needing such a physician will have no place at Jesus’ table fellowship, for, he says, “I did not come to call righteous people, but sinners” (9:13).

Much has been written about what “paradise” might mean, particularly in light of its OT background. But the key to its significance is the divine presence: “with me,” where Jesus dwells. *To be with him is to be in paradise*. Certainly, this idea includes the return to the righteous condition of Adam and Eve before the fall, as in Eden, where they could fully dwell in the presence of God without sin. And for those who confess Jesus as the innocent King such life in paradise begins *now*: (CC p. 939)

Hades continues to embody all the dark and unpleasant features associated with the Hebrew Sheol, while Paradise sparkles with the brilliance of the Garden planted by God (Gen. 2 and 3; 13:10; Ezek. 28:13; 31:8; 36:35; cf. Is. 51:3; Joel 2:3). It contains the tree of life and enjoys the living water and is the place where the righteous will feast at the banquet of salvation on living bread in fellowship with God. (CC pp. 939-940)

In response to the penitent, giving more than he asked, Jesus solemnly declared, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.” The evildoer did not have to wait any more than the tax collector had to wait to go down to his house justified ([Lk] 18:14) or any more than Zacchaeus had to wait for salvation; it came to his house in his fellowship with Jesus “today” (19:9). By means of the repeated utterance of “today” in his gospel (2:11; 3:22 [variant reading]; 4:21; 13:31–33; 19:5, 9; Acts 13:32–33) Luke does not intend to describe the words so qualified as belonging to past history. Luke is rather addressing his readers and saying to them that they “today” stand confronted with the same affirmations and offers by means of the word of his testimony. (CC p. 940)

23:26–43 Jesus was crucified that we may be spared the coming judgment, hear His word of absolution, and enter into paradise with Him. He not only saved others, but is also the messianic King who saves us. We all justly deserve God’s judgment because of our sinful deeds. Yet, because Jesus sacrificed Himself for us all, we have His word of absolution and the promise of being with Him in paradise. • Grant, dear Jesus, that we may see the day when we will be with You in paradise. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus’ Death

44 It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 while the sun's light failed. And the curtain of the temple was torn in

two. 46 Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last. 47 Now when the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent!” 48 And all the crowds that had assembled for this spectacle, when they saw what had taken place, returned home beating their breasts. 49 And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.

23:44-45 Luke has meticulously recorded *events* of the three days of passion and resurrection: Friday, the Day of Preparation; the Sabbath rest in the tomb; and resurrection on the first/eighth day. However, within the chronology of the Passover festival (22:1, 7), after the initial reference to the *hour* of the Passover meal (22:14, after sundown), the only other *time* references are to the cock crowing in the denial of Peter (22:60) and the day dawning at the trial before the Sanhedrin (22:66). Once the trials begin, there are no more time references until this point, when Luke reports the eschatological darkness that comes over the whole earth from the sixth to the ninth hours (noon to 3:00 p.m.). Up until this moment, the hearer of the gospel has not needed to be oriented to time. After the Passover celebration at the divinely appointed time, the events have not followed a normal schedule; the arrest, trials, and crucifixion were irregular, anomalous. But even those events that lead up to this moment will be measured by what happens to the creation and the temple when Jesus dies. *God, the Creator of all things, dwelt in the temple and became incarnate in Jesus, and in Jesus, God now dies* (CC pp. 940-941).

Luke reports an extraordinary, cosmic sign that the creation is becoming unglued: darkness. The “power of darkness” (22:53), which God allowed to usurp authority over the world at Jesus’ arrest, wrought death and chaos. As when Satan entered Judas (22:3), so now an unearthly darkness enters creation. Matthew reports an earthquake and the resurrection of saints who, after Jesus’ resurrection, walked around the holy city, as if the entire church age had transpired in an instant and the eschaton had come prematurely (Mt 27:51–53). But for Luke, reporting the darkness is enough, since it would signal to both Jew and Gentile that something was happening that threatened the very existence of creation. Luke reports that the sun “failed” (23:45).

There is no natural explanation for this. It is not an eclipse, for at Passover the moon is full and a solar eclipse would be impossible. This is an ominous, miraculous act of God signifying that the incarnate Creator of all things is dying. (CC p. 941)

The darkness is a sign that evil is threatening to destroy God’s creation and revert it to chaos. (CC p. 941)

In the first creation, before God set the primordial elements in order, “darkness was over the face of the deep” (Gen 1:2). God then created light, which was “good,” and separated the light from the darkness (Gen 1:3–5). But as Satan, who had seized control of Judas (Lk 22:3), completes his scheme to kill Jesus, darkness reasserts itself over the light. As Jesus, the source of life and light, dies, the sun, the source of natural light, fails to carry out its divine mandate to distinguish between night and day, darkness and light, and to rule over the day (Gen 1:14–18). Instead, day and night are confused, confounded, and darkness usurps the rule of the sun as evil reigns over good—temporarily. Creation’s bondage to sin and the curse of death, which Jesus had been absorbing into his flesh since his conception and bearing with him publicly since his baptism, is now completely laid upon him to do its destructive work. All demon possession, all sickness, all sin, all death is now placed upon him. (CC p. 941)

Yet the Creator, who took on flesh and was born into his creation, is, *at this moment of death, bringing in new and eternal life, a new creation*. The darkness is an eschatological sign that

already now the end of the old world has come in a preliminary way in the death of Jesus (cf. Lk 21:25–26; Acts 2:20). A new and eternal day, a dawn from on high, is about to break forth and shine forever on those who dwell in “darkness and the shadow of death” (Lk 1:78–79). (CC p. 941)

In the record of the first creation, each of the first six days closed with the notice that “there was evening and there was morning” (Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). The sequence of darkness and light signified the completion of each day. But on the seventh day, the day of Sabbath rest, there is no concluding notice of evening and morning (Gen 2:1–3). That lack of closure leaves the first creation open ended. God had finished his work, but God did not forever cease all activity. The rest of Genesis, and indeed the entire canon, witnesses to God’s continuing involvement in earthly history and human affairs. In a Sabbath controversy over Jesus’ “work” of healing on a Sabbath, Jesus himself affirms that God keeps working, even on the Sabbath: “My Father until now is working, and I am working” (Jn 5:17). The work that the Father and the Son continue to do—even on the Sabbath—is the work of re-creation, restoration, and redemption. (CC p. 942)

Here during Jesus’ crucifixion, the darkness signals the imminent conclusion of God’s work of redemption. In the cosmic history of the first creation, the three hours of darkness provide the closure to the Sabbath of Gen 2:1–3. The history of the first creation draws to a close. With Jesus’ death the old order succumbs to the curse of death brought on by Adam’s sin. At the same time, Jesus’ work of atonement is completed, and he is about to enter into his own Sabbath rest (Lk 23:54, 56). God’s provision for his new creation is completed; the new order is ready to shine forth, and it will do so with the first morning light of Easter. Together, darkness and light—the three hours of darkness while Jesus is on the cross and the brilliant light of Easter morning—inaugurate the new creation, the eternal Sabbath rest (σαββατισμός) for the people of God (Heb 4:9–10). The new day of Sabbath rest has that beginning, but it will have no end; in the eschaton there will be no darkness, only light (Rev 21:23–25). (CC p. 942)

While there is darkness, another sign occurs that no one at the cross could witness. Some fifteen hundred feet away in the temple, the curtain between the Holy Place (which housed the incense altar before which Zechariah ministered [Lk 1:8–11]) and the Holy of Holies (which the high priest would enter once a year to make atonement for the sins of the people) was torn from top to bottom. The shift of the presence of God from heaven, down to the temple in Jerusalem, to the exiles in Babylon, to the rebuilt temple, and then to the body of the one now crucified comes full circle as Jesus’ spirit is about to ascend back to the Father in heaven. The shift in God’s presence from the temple to Jesus was first announced to Mary by the angel at the beginning of the gospel (see comments at 1:26–38). The presence of God with and in Jesus was publicly declared when the heavens were opened at Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him, and the Father declared him to be his beloved Son (3:21–22). The gospel itself has been a record of words and events that demonstrate that Jesus is the new locale for God’s presence because he is the very Son of God. The ultimate demonstration of his Sonship is his innocent suffering and obedient death, which opens the way for all people to approach God (Rom 5:2). This open access to God is represented by the temple curtain torn asunder. God’s presence no longer resides in the temple; now God’s presence is wherever Jesus is. *Jesus is the new temple!* (CC pp. 942–943)

When Jesus dies, his state of humiliation is ended. Now he will fully exercise his glorious divine powers, including his omnipresence. Even though the apostles will linger around the temple at the end of the gospel and the beginning of Acts (Lk 24:53; Acts 2:46), after the martyrdom of Stephen persecution will scatter most of the disciples (Acts 8:1). But Jesus is present wherever the church devotes itself to the apostles’ teaching and the communion in the breaking of the bread (cf. Acts 2:42, 46). The house church increasingly becomes the center of Christian activity (cf.

Acts 2:1–2, 46). Access to the heavenly gifts is no longer to be found in the temple’s sacrificial cultus, but in Jesus, who is the *once-and-for-all* sacrifice for the world’s sin. (CC p. 943)

Now the real meaning of his words [at the Last Supper] emerges: what he meant by “suffering” (22:15), by his “body, which is given *for you*” (22:19), and by “the new covenant with *my* blood, which is poured out *for you*” (22:20). With these elements of an earlier part of the passion narrative in mind, the reader of the Lucan Gospel can understand the implication that Jesus’ death has been a sacrifice. (CC p. 943)

The Holy of Holies was the place where the blood of the atonement sacrifice was sprinkled once a year, on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Only the high priest could enter, and only on that one day each year when atonement was made for the sin of all people. Now, with the sacrifice of Jesus, no other sacrifice needs to be made. The epistle to the Hebrews expresses this eloquently:

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. (CC p. 943-944)

For Luke, the *darkness in creation* and the *torn curtain in the temple* parallel each other and together declare the same reality: the old order dies and the eschaton is inaugurated with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The darkness signifies that the death of Jesus Christ marks the end of the old world doomed by sin. The torn curtain signifies the end of the old way of approaching God. Now there is a new way to approach God and to participate in a new creation through Christ’s resurrection. That new creation is open to all humanity through Jesus’ crucified and risen flesh. Jesus’ flesh is not limited to the temple or to any single location; his human nature, inseparably united to his divine nature, shares the divine attribute of omnipresence. Jesus’ crucified and risen flesh will be present with his church throughout the whole world. (CC p. 944)

23:44 *about the sixth hour ... the ninth hour.* From noon to three in the afternoon, by the Jewish method of designating time. Jesus had been put on the cross at the third hour (9:00 A.M., Mk 15:25). The “sixth hour” of John (Jn 19:14) may be Roman time (6:00 A.M.), when Pilate gave his decision (but see note on Jn 19:14). (CSB)

From noon to 3 p.m. *darkness.* Shows the significance of Jesus’ death: judgment is present and Satan’s attack comes to its conclusion (22:53). (TLSB)

ὥρα ἕκτη ... ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης—The sixth hour (from sunrise) would be noon. The failing of the sun occurred when it was at its highest point in the sky. The ninth hour, when Jesus died, would be 3:00 p.m. (CC p. 926)

23:45 *sun stopped shining* – Not an eclipse. The Passover occurs during a full moon, which prevents an eclipse. What blocked the sun, whether a dust-laden wind, a dark cloud, or something else, is less important than God’s timing and the event’s significance. (TLSB)

ἐκλιπόντος—“Fail, run out, be gone” is the meaning of this word also in its other two Lukan occurrences (16:9 and 22:32). (It is tempting to translate it by the English derivative “eclipsed,” but that would go beyond the text in specifying a cause for the darkness.) In his eschatological discourse Jesus spoke of signs in the heavens (21:11) involving the sun (21:25). (CC p. 926)

curtain of the temple. The curtain between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. Its tearing symbolized Christ's opening the way directly to God (Heb 9:3, 8; 10:19–22). (CSB)

The curtain of the Most Holy Place, where the high priest entered annually on the Day of Atonement to sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice. The old system of sacrifice, priesthood, and temple worship ended; Jesus' sacrifice opened the way for every repentant sinner to enter into God's presence (Heb 9:11–12; 10:20). (TLSB)

τὸ καταπέτασμα—In the LXX this word is used for the curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in both the tabernacle (Ex 26:31–33; Lev 21:23; 24:3) and the temple. (2 Chr 3:14; 1 Macc 1:22) It is also used for other curtains in the tabernacle and temple, (Ex 26:37; 38:18; Num 3:26; 1 Ki 6:36; cf. 1 Macc 4:51; Sirach 50:5) even though the Hebrew is different in these verses. The cosmic dimension of the other signs mentioned by Luke suggests that this probably was the inner curtain in front of the Holy of Holies. See the commentary below. (CC p. 926)

in two – τοῦ ναοῦ—The only other place where Luke uses ναός for the temple is in the first scene in the gospel, where Zechariah is in the temple (1:9, 21, 22). See comments at 1:9 on the “Holy Place.” (CC p. 926)

23:46 *loud voice* – Jesus did not die of exhaustion, but remained in control to the end. (TLSB) (Finish strong – Lombardi GBP)

into your hands – Jesus, completing His mission, entrusted Himself to His Father by quoting Ps. 31:5. (TLSB)

The words are from Psalm 31:5, used by Jewish people as a bedtime prayer. The Son entrusts himself into the hands of his Father whose will he has done. (PBC)

He now dies with Scripture, even as He is dead according to Scripture (Besser). With His word, He summons death. The power of death did not deprive Him of life who had life in Himself. Of His own free will He entered into death, even as He willingly suffered Himself to be made a prisoner and to be bound. He came to death, as the church fathers have put it, and death not come to Him. He cries out with a loud voice, because He would proclaim the truth to all. John says that “he bowed his head and gave up the ghost.” This word emphasizes His willingness and consciousness of His final act. As the Father's beloved Son, He now gives His life into His hands as a priceless trust in order to receive it again from Him on the morning of the resurrection (read Peter's discourse, Acts 2:25 ff.). Jesus has thus taught us also how to die and gives us strength through His death to die like Him. (Ylvisaker)

The actual moment of death occurs after Jesus calls out in a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.” This is Jesus' third and final word from the cross in Luke, a citation from Ps 31:6. As with the earlier citations from Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 in Lk 23:34–36, so also here the OT context of the verse cited has rich significance. While Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 are individual laments, Psalm 31 is a psalm of trust. This type of psalm is characterized by a more serene tone, with frequent and strong expressions of confident trust in God as the one who redeems, rescues, and delivers the individual believer. These characteristics can be seen in several phrases surrounding the verse Jesus quotes: “In you, Yahweh, I trust. ... quickly deliver me! ... For you are my rock and my fortress. ... You will bring me out of the net they hid for me, for you are my stronghold. Into your hands I entrust my spirit; you redeemed me, Yahweh, God of truth. ... I will rejoice and be glad in your faithfulness” (Ps 31:2–8). The point is that *Jesus is quoting a verse in*

context in order to express the message of the whole psalm—even the message of all the psalms. Jesus' quote is an expression of confident faith and rejoicing in God's salvation. (CC p. 944)

my spirit – τὸ πνεῦμά μου—Some earlier passages emphasized the Holy Spirit in relation to Jesus. (E.g., Lk 1:35; 3:22; 4:1, 18) However, it is best to understand this as a reference to Jesus' human spirit, which now departs from his body at his physical death. (CC p. 927)

As the second person of the Trinity, fully man with a complete (and sinless) human nature as well as fully divine, Jesus has a spirit, as did David, the psalmist Jesus quotes. It is this spirit that Jesus now entrusts to the Father. He is now prepared to give up his life, to breathe his last breath. The three words of Jesus (Lk 23:34, 43, 46) show that Jesus' sole concern, even in the midst of his deepest suffering, is the salvation of humankind. His words are words of forgiveness (23:34), comfort (23:43), and confident trust in God (23:46). He is completely in control and to the end he is the Savior. (CC pp. 944-945)

breathed his last – ἐξέπνευσεν—The verb literally means “to ex-spirit,” that is, “to breath out, exhale,” or “to expire.” But the Greek verb obviously alludes to the giving over of Jesus' *spirit* (πνεῦμα) in the previous clause. (CC p. 927)

The moment of death is narrated with the same simplicity as Jesus' birth (2:7) and his crucifixion (23:33). Luke simply reports that Jesus “expired” (23:46). He now breathes out his last breath and dies as did all the other sons of Adam in his genealogy (3:23–38, with the exception of Enoch in 3:37; see Gen 5:24). (CC p. 945)

23:47 *the centurion – ὁ ἑκατοντάρχης*—In the apocryphal Letter of Pilate to Herod, this centurion is called Longinus. (CC p. 927)

saw what had taken place – Jesus forgave His enemies (v 34), promised paradise to the repentant criminal (v 43), prayed to His Father, and gave up His life (v 46). (TLSB)

τὸ γινόμενον—“What had happened” (singular) includes the events from the beginning of the crucifixion (23:33) until now (with the possible exception of the rending of the curtain, which the centurion may not have know about at this point). Probably most significant would have been Jesus' prayer in 23:34; his silent endurance of the mocking; the title “King of the Jews”; Jesus' words in 23:43; the darkness; and the words at and manner of his death in 23:46. (CC p. 927)

praised God. Either for having publicly vindicated Jesus by mighty signs from heaven, or out of fear (see Mt 27:54) to appease the heavenly Judge and thus ward off a divine penalty for having carried out an unjust judgment. (CSB)

In view of events, the Roman officer summed up Jesus' life as righteous and His divine claims as true. (TLSB)

surely – ὄντως—This is an adverb from the participle of εἶμι; “in reality” accents the truth and reality of what the centurion says. This same word occurs in 24:34, where it affirms the reality of the Lord's appearance to Peter. (CC p. 927)

this man was innocent. Or “this man was the Righteous One.” Matthew and Mark report the centurion's words as “this man was the Son (or son) of God.” “The Righteous One” and “the Son of God” would have been essentially equivalent terms. Similarly, “the son of God” and “a righteous man” would have been virtual equivalents. Which one the centurion intended is difficult

to determine. It seems clear, however, that the Gospel writers saw in his declaration a vindication of Jesus, and since the centurion was the Roman official in charge of the crucifixion, his testimony was viewed as significant (see also the declarations of Pilate: vv. 4, 14–15, 22; Mt 27:23–24). (CSB)

δίκαιος—In the context of Luke’s passion narrative, which emphasizes Jesus’ innocence, (E.g., Lk 23:4, 14, 15, 22, 41) “righteous” carries the connotation of legal innocence as well as holiness and right-standing before God. Peter will accent Jesus’ holiness and righteousness in his sermon at Solomon’s Portico (Acts 3:14). (CC p. 926)

At the moment of death, all three synoptic gospels record that a Gentile centurion testifies to who Jesus is.

The language of Luke’s report differs from that of Matthew and Mark. Luke reports the words of the centurion as this: “In reality, this man was righteous” (ὄντως ὁ ἄνθρωπος οὗτος δίκαιος ἦν; 23:47). Matthew (27:54) reports: “Truly, this was the Son of God” (ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος), and Mk 15:39 is similar. It is possible that the centurion affirmed that Jesus was both righteous and the Son of God. Jesus’ divine Sonship certainly implies that he is righteous as well. The wording presented by Luke is consistent with the Lukan theme of innocence in his passion narrative and with the way in which he has portrayed Jesus as the suffering, righteous, and innocent one throughout this narrative. (CC p. 945)

First, a hardened criminal is brought to believe that Jesus is without sin and will reign as King (23:40–42). Now even a Gentile officer is convinced by what has happened at the cross that Jesus is indeed righteous (23:47). This centurion’s affirmation is the sixth and final declaration of Jesus’ innocence since his trials began and the second one in this immediate scene of crucifixion and death. Luke includes the penitent evildoer (23:41) and this centurion as two more witnesses to Jesus’ innocence. The centurion’s confession of faith also foreshadows the mission to the Gentiles and their conversion in Acts (cf. Acts 8 and 10). Sermons in Acts will continue to stress that Jesus is the *righteous* one, echoing the centurion’s affirmation here (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14). (CC p. 945)

23:48 *saw* – Used only here in the NT, suggesting entertainment of the crowd. (TLSB)

ἐπὶ τὴν θεωρίαν—The referent is the same as that of “what had happened” in Lk 23:47 and “the things that happened” in 23:48. Visible signs are indicated by the related verb θεωρέω, “watch, observe,” in 23:35, 48 and ὁράω, “to see,” in 23:49. As with the darkened sun, this may invite comparison to the visible signs of the end times in 21:5–36. (CC p. 927)

The crowd is described as having witnessed a “sight” (θεωρίαν [23:48]). The events they saw at the place called Skull cause them to turn homeward, beating their chests. Their action suggests deep remorse. These “crowds” likely come from the larger group described earlier (most recently in 23:35) as “the people” (see comments on 23:13). They generally supported Jesus throughout the gospel up until the trials, when they turned against him by demanding his crucifixion (23:13, 21, 23). But after calling for Jesus’ death, they become passive observers. As Jesus journeyed to the cross, “a great multitude of the people and of women” followed him (23:27) and when Jesus was crucified, “the people” stood by passively watching (23:35). However, after Jesus dies, their passivity ends and they are deeply sorrowful over what has happened. Perhaps they, like the penitent evildoer and the centurion, were moved by Jesus’ words and demeanor on the cross. As Peter wept after he denied Jesus three times, so also these people beat their chests in repentance

because they have rejected God’s Messiah and condemned him to the most shameful death of crucifixion. (CC p. 947)

While the other evangelists name some of the onlookers, only Luke reports that “all who were known to him” witnessed the events at the cross. “All who were known to him” would be Jesus’ followers, including those who have been with him “from the beginning” (1:2), especially the Twelve, the seventy (-two), and his family. Mt 26:56 and Mk 14:50–52 record that all Jesus’ disciples fled at his arrest, though Peter followed “at a distance” (Mt 26:58; Mk 14:54; Lk 22:54, even as “all who were known to him” stood “at a distance,” watching the crucifixion [23:49]). Apparently those who fled gradually regathered. One of the Lukan themes is that no human being confesses that Jesus is the crucified and risen Messiah until after the resurrection (the Emmaus disciples are the first). Everyone is involved in the scandal, and the rejection of Jesus is total. Luke wants us to know that Jesus’ followers witness the crucifixion “*at a distance*.” They are not yet ready to embrace the cross and participate in the mission of proclaiming the scandal of Christ crucified. They are like all those who confess Jesus as a great teacher and miracle worker (the first phase in Luke’s prophet Christology) but who are scandalized by his crucifixion (the second phase: rejection). The Emmaus disciples fall into that same category (24:19–21) until Jesus explains the OT and opens their eyes in the breaking of the bread. (CC pp. 947-948)

what took place – τὰ γινόμενα—The referent here is the same as τὸ γινόμενον in 23:47, but here the phrase is plural. (CC p. 927)

beating their breasts. A sign of anguish, grief or contrition (cf. 18:13). (CSB)

A sign of remorse and sorrow; after Jesus died, they ceased to be spectators and became penitents. (TLSB)

τύπτοντες τὰ στήθη—The circumstance of this participle suggests simultaneous action: as they were returning home (imperfect), they were beating their chests. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, this action showing repentance was performed by the tax collector, who went home justified (18:13–14). (CC p. 927)

returned home – ὑπέστρεφον—The imperfect suggests a slow, reluctant or mournful movement away from the cross. L. T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke*, 382, notes that it might be translated literally as “return to the city” but also suggests that “it echoes the consistent LXX translation of the Hebrew term *shub*, which is used for repentance (*teshubah*).” (CC p. 927)

23:49 Friends, relatives, and disciples watching from a distance. (TLSB)

the women ... from Galilee. See Mt 27:55–56; Mk 15:40–41; Jn 19:25; cf. Lk 24:10. (CSB)

These women are crucial in the following accounts (23:55–56; 24:1–12). (TLSB)

ὁρῶσαι—This feminine plural participle refers to the women. (CC p. 927)

The synoptic gospels all note that among Jesus’ acquaintances who witnessed his crucifixion were women who had followed him from Galilee. (Mt 27:55–56; Mk 15:40–41; Lk 23:49) Luke mentioned these women in his account of Jesus’ Galilean ministry (8:2–3), and Luke will name some of them again in the resurrection narrative (24:10). Luke explicitly says that *the women* “were seeing these things” (23:49). They are *eyewitnesses* of the crucifixion (as are those described in 1:2). These women were with Jesus during his ministry, witness his death, and will

be the first witnesses of his resurrection. They will be key participants in the next two scenes: Jesus' burial (23:50–56a) and the empty tomb (23:56b–24:12). (CC p. 948)

Like the converted evildoer and the Gentile centurion, these women intimately involved in the pivotal events of Jesus' ministry are part of the Great Reversal. "The rulers" (23:35), Herod, Pilate, and the soldiers (23:36) who are authorized to inflict violence—all those powerful people find themselves on the outside of God's kingdom. But the powerless and humble—those who serve and give of themselves (8:3)—are privileged to be among the front ranks of those in God's kingdom. As with Elizabeth and Mary at the start of the gospel, God has "exalted those of low position" (1:52). (CC p. 948)

at a distance – εἰσπήκεισαν—See the textual note on this verb in 23:35. The subject here includes those "who were known to him" and the "women." (CC p. 927)

23:44–49 In the darkness, when the temple curtain is torn, Jesus commits His spirit into His Father's hands. The centurion praises God, the crowds become remorseful, and Jesus' followers observe from a distance. Jesus dies bearing the darkness of God's judgment on the world's sins. Out of the darkness of judgment, Jesus ushers in the bright day of grace. • Grant, Lord, that on the Last Day, I, too, may entrust my spirit into the hands of the Father. Amen. (TLSB)

Jesus' Burial

50 Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, 51 who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. 54 It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning.[g] 55 The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

23:50 *Joseph... a member of the Council.* Either Joseph was not present at the meeting of the Sanhedrin (22:66), or he did not support the vote to have Jesus killed (see v. 51). Mk 14:64 suggests he was not present, for the decision was supported by "all." (CSB)

Arimathea. βουλευτής υπάρχων ... ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος ... ἀπὸ Ἀριμαθαίας πόλεως τῶν Ἰουδαίων—These three phrases describe Joseph's position among men (a member of the Sanhedrin), his character before God (good and righteous), and his origin (Arimathea, a city of the Jews). J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1526, suggests: "The identification of the town echoes the title of Jesus as 'the King of the Jews' (23:38)." This is reinforced by the reference to "the kingdom" in the next phrase. (CC p. 949)

Unknown, except for this event. Arimathea was either his birthplace or a former residence. Location of his tomb indicates he had moved to Jerusalem (Mt 27:60). (TLSB)

ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι Ἰωσήφ—Joseph of Arimathea is the subject of all that is said through 23:53. (CC p. 949)

βουλευτής—This noun identifies him as a member of the Sanhedrin. (CC p. 949)

righteous man. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5–6) and Simeon (2:25), Joseph was a member of God’s faithful people and a secret disciple of Jesus (Jn 19:38). (TLSB)

Once again Luke carefully describes time, persons, and place. An important new character—a man by the name of Joseph—is introduced into the narrative by one complex compound sentence prefaced by καὶ ἰδοῦ, “and behold.” A series of phrases define who he is: a member of the Sanhedrin; a good and righteous man, who was not in agreement with the Sanhedrin’s plan (22:2–5) and action (23:1); from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, a man who was waiting for the kingdom of God. Immediately, the hearer of the gospel is struck by some surprising aspects of this description: Joseph is a Jew and a council member, part of the Sanhedrin, which rejected Jesus. But he is also described as a good and righteous man. Luke takes pains to tell us that Joseph did not agree with the rest of the council, showing that what appeared to be a unanimous decision by the Sanhedrin earlier in the narrative was not necessarily so (23:18). (CC p. 951)

23:51 *had not consented.* Joseph may not have been notified, or he may have cast a dissenting vote at the Council’s hasty trial of Jesus (22:66–71). (TLSB)

waiting for the kingdom of God. See 2:25. (CSB)

A pious Israelite with messianic expectations, similar to many at Jesus’ birth (1:5–6; 2:25, 36–38). (TLSB)

οὗτος οὐκ ἦν συγκαταθεμῆνος τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῇ πράξει αὐτῶν—This parenthetical phrase describes why Luke calls Joseph “good and righteous”; he refused to go along with the plans of the Sanhedrin to put Jesus to death. He was a member of the faithful remnant of Israel, as were Zechariah and Elizabeth (1:5–6), Simeon (2:25), and Anna (2:36–37). (CC p. 949)

As another example of an OT saint who is part of Israel’s faithful remnant, Joseph calls to the hearers’ remembrance the OT saints from the infancy narrative. In fact, there is a parallel between 23:50–51 and 2:25, where Simeon is introduced in the same way as Joseph of Arimathea. Both sections begin with καὶ ἰδοῦ, “and behold”; both men are identified by name (2:25: ὃ ὄνομα, “by the name of”; 23:50: ὄνόματι, “by the name of”); both are termed “righteous,” paired with another adjective (2:25: δίκαιος καὶ εὐλαβής, “righteous and devout”; 23:50: ἀγαθὸς καὶ δίκαιος, “good and righteous”); and both are “waiting” (2:25: προσδεχόμενος παράκλησιν τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, “waiting for the consolation of Israel”; 23:51: προσεδέχετο τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, “was waiting for the kingdom of God”). Cf. also 2:38, where Anna was speaking about Jesus to all those who were “waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem” (προσδεχομένοις λύτρωσιν Ἱερουσαλήμ). Simeon and Joseph of Arimathea, along with Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, and Anna, are representatives of faithful Israelites with messianic expectations. What was foreshadowed and hoped for in the infancy narrative is now coming to completion. There is a gradual unfolding of the full dimension of God’s eschatological salvation from the beginning to the end of Luke’s gospel. (CC pp. 951-952)

At the Last Supper Jesus spoke twice of the imminent coming of “the kingdom of God” (22:16, 18). The rejection of Jesus by Pilate and the soldiers testified that Jesus was rightly hailed “King of the Jews” (see comments on 23:3, 37–38). Jesus’ response to the penitent evildoer affirmed that the time when Jesus would come into his kingdom was “today,” Good Friday (23:42–43). Jesus’ crucifixion with the crown of thorns was his coronation. By describing Joseph as “waiting for the kingdom,” Luke suggests to the hearer that already now a major stage in the kingdom’s coming has taken place with the death of Jesus. Next, Jesus will take his Sabbath rest in the tomb, and then on the third day he shall bring his kingdom’s reign to all creation when he rises from the

dead. Probably none of the faithful, including Joseph, had envisioned the kingdom's imminent coming in quite these terms. The kingdom for which this devout son of Abraham was waiting would break forth much sooner and more dramatically than he expected, and the fullness of divine grace to be poured out in that kingdom would surpass his most hopeful yearnings. (CC p. 952)

23:52 The remains of an executed criminal often were left unburied or at best put in a dishonored place in a pauper's field. A near relative, such as a mother, might ask for the body, but it was a courageous gesture for Joseph, a member of the Sanhedrin, to ask for Jesus' body.

This man – οὗτος—The antecedent is Joseph, described in the preceding two verses. After the long description in 23:50–51, he is reintroduced as the subject for the three main verbs. (CC p. 949)

22:52-53 *asked...wrapped...laid* – To keep Jesus' body from a criminal's common grave. Joseph's important position gave easier access to Pilate. (TLSB)

Anointing the dead involved wrapping them in a spiced linen cloth. (TLSB)

ἤτήσατο ... ἐνετύλιξεν ... ἔθηκεν—These are the three main verbs that describe the burial. The first two are complemented by participles: coming (προσελθών) to Pilate, Joseph asked for Jesus' body; taking it down (καθελών), he wrapped it; and he placed him in a tomb. Note that the first clause in 23:53 refers to Jesus' body using αὐτό (neuter accusative), "it," while the second clause refers to Jesus as "him" using αὐτόν (masculine accusative). (CC p. 949)

There is, however, more to this scene than Joseph's messianic expectation. There are his actions of faith as he prepares Jesus' body for burial. Although the verbs of 23:52–53 describe what Joseph does, the focus is on the body of Jesus, the object of those actions. Unlike other members of the Sanhedrin, who mocked and abused Jesus, Joseph treats him with the honor due a great prophet. He asks Pilate for "the body of Jesus" (τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ; 23:52), the corpse hanging on the cross. Next, Joseph takes down Jesus' body from the cross and wraps it (αὐτό; 23:53) in linen. Once again, the evangelist provides a frame for his gospel that links together Jesus' birth and his death, since at his birth Jesus was wrapped in cloth bands (2:7, 12). Finally, Joseph places Jesus (αὐτόν, "him" [23:53]) in a rock-hewn tomb where no one else had lain. This procedure would have been accomplished in approximately three hours, between 3:00 p.m. and sundown.

According to the Law, it was necessary to complete this by sundown. Deut 21:22–23: "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God. You shall not defile your land that Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance." (CC p. 953)

Throughout these actions, the hearer focuses on Jesus' dead body and its movement from the cross to the wrapping to the tomb. *Jesus is indeed dead, and he must be dead if there is going to be a resurrection!* Although humiliated during his journey to the cross and shamed by the crucifixion, Jesus' body is given the high honor of being laid in a new tomb. Usually those who died from crucifixion were buried in a common grave. But the Creator who had become creature has accomplished his work of re-creation, and so the body of the one who brought about this wondrous transformation is of the one who treated with honor. Already with Jesus' burial, we see a foretaste of his exaltation at the resurrection. (CC pp. 952-953)

23:53 *cut* – λαξευτῶ—This is the only time this word is used in the NT. Rock-hewn tombs were not unusual in Jerusalem. The location is most likely the place where the Church of the Holy Sepulchre now stands. See J. Wilkinson, *Egeria’s Travels to the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House and Warminster, England: Aris and Phillips) 36–46 for a description of the Jerusalem buildings that covered the cross and the tomb. (CC p. 950)

Rock-hewn tombs were common in Jerusalem. (TLSB)

where no one had ever yet been laid. Rock-hewn tombs were usually made to accommodate several bodies. This one, though finished, had not yet been used. (CSB)

An unused tomb was fitting for the King of the Jews in the same way the never-ridden colt of Palm Sunday (19:30) had been. Joseph’s action fulfills the law of Dt 21:22–23. (TLSB)

οὐ οὐκ ἦν οὐδεὶς οὐπὼ κείμενος—The double negative (οὐδεὶς οὐπὼ) emphasizes that *no one* had ever been placed in this tomb. This comment here counterbalances the report of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem on a colt upon which no one had ever sat (19:30). (CC p. 950)

23:54 *Preparation Day.* Friday, the day before the Sabbath, when preparation was made for keeping the Sabbath. It could be used for Passover preparation, but since in this instance it is followed by the Sabbath, it indicates Friday. (CSB)

Friday, when preparations were made for the next day’s Sabbath. (TLSB)

ἐπέφωσκεν—Usually this verb means that a new day “shines forth” or “dawns,” but in the Jewish reckoning the new day begins at sundown, when it grows dark, hence “about to *begin*” (as NEB) Perhaps Luke intends to hint that the dawn from on high (1:78) has begun. (CC p. 950)

The Day of Preparation is appropriately named. For Israel, it was the day before the Sabbath. On it preparations were made for the day of worship. But in the passion narrative of Jesus, the name takes on new meaning. The three days encompassing Jesus’ suffering, death, Sabbath rest, and resurrection transform OT time and make it Christological. *At the beginning of this Day of Preparation* God prepared Jesus’ body for death by providing Passover food to sustain him during his “exodus” (9:31). *At the close of this day*, God ensures that Jesus’ same body, now dead, is prepared for burial and Sabbath rest. From now on, this *Day of Preparation* will be called Good Friday, because here God prepared the greatest good for his creation: renewal, restoration, and re-creation. (CC p. 953)

The dripping blood our only drink,
the bloody flesh our only food:
In spite of which we like to think
that we are sound, substantial flesh and blood—
Again, in spite of that,
we call this Friday good.

T. S. Eliot, “East Coker,” part 4, *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943) 16.

By telling us that this was the conclusion of the Day of Preparation and that the Sabbath was about to begin, Luke implies that all the events that occurred since Jesus’ Passover began (22:14) have now come to an end. This time notice is not incidental; it stands in the center of this section, for Jesus’ burial marks the end of this climactic day in salvation history. The hearer must go back

and see how much has happened in these twenty-four hours: the Last Supper (22:14–20); Jesus’ teaching of the disciples after the Supper (22:21–38); his struggles in Gethsemane (22:39–46); his betrayal and arrest (22:47–53); Peter’s denial (22:54–62); Jesus’ trials before the Sanhedrin (22:63–71), Pilate (23:1–5), Herod (23:6–12), and Pilate again (23:13–25); his journey to the cross (23:26–32); his crucifixion and death (23:33–49); and finally, his burial (23:50–56a). The journey of Jesus to Jerusalem is over, the Father’s will is fulfilled, and all the preparations for humanity’s redemption have been completed. With Jesus in the grave, his Sabbath rest is about to begin. (CC pp. 953-954)

Sabbath was beginning. Late afternoon, with the sun setting. (TLSB)

23:55 *The women.* See v. 49; 24:10; cf. 8:2–3. They saw where Jesus was buried and would not mistake the location when they returned. (CSB)

followed – κατακολουθήσασαι—The women followed after Joseph, not Jesus. Jesus will be referred to in the next phrase. (CC p. 950)

from Galilee – συνεληλυθυῖαι ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας αὐτῶ—This is the same group of women as in 23:49. They were the ones who also supported Jesus’ ministry (8:1–3). They are identified in 24:10 as “the Magdalene Mary and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the rest of the women with them.” J. Fitzmyer, *Luke X–XXIV*, 1525, observes: “A certain irony runs through the Lucan account with its contrast of the town of the Jews [Arimathea; 23:51], and ‘the women ... from Galilee’; it plays on the geographical perspective in the Lucan Gospel in its own way.” (CC p. 950)

how His body was laid. The women prepare for a proper burial after the Sabbath. Jesus’ burial ends that climactic day that began with the Last Supper after sundown Thursday and ended at sundown Friday. (TLSB)

The final preparations are by women who have been with Jesus since his ministry in Galilee (8:1–3), who watched the crucifixion from a distance (23:49), and who now see in which tomb Joseph has laid Jesus so that they might return after the Sabbath to finish anointing Jesus’ body. They will be the first eyewitnesses of the resurrection. These women who were with Jesus since early in his ministry and through the three days of his passion and resurrection, will be key members of the emerging church in Acts (see Acts 1:14). They will be essential links in the “ ‘chain of evidence’ for the Christian claims about Jesus,” helping to transform the Eleven and others who were “eyewitnesses from the beginning” into “ministers of the Word” (Lk 1:2). (CC p. 954)

23:56 *spices and ointments.* Yards of cloth and large quantities of spices were used in preparing a body for burial. Seventy-five pounds of myrrh and aloes were already used on that first evening (Jn 19:39). More was purchased for the return of the women after the Sabbath. (CSB)

Used in preparing Jesus’ body for His permanent burial. (TLSB)

τὸ μὲν σάββατον ... τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων—The μὲν ... δέ construction links these two days together and prompts consideration of a literary and theological link. (In Nestle- Aland²⁵ 23:56b begins a new paragraph that continues with 24:1–11; 23:56b is separated from 24:1 only by a comma. In Nestle-Aland²⁶ and Nestle-Aland²⁷ 23:56b has been separated from Luke 24 and ends with a period.) The close relationship between 23:56b and 24:1 forms the transition from Luke 23 to Luke 24. The double use of σάββατον and the way Luke has phrased the sentence suggest

theological implications as the narrative moves from one day to the next. This is why 23:56b is best considered part of Luke 24 and the resurrection narrative. (CC [. 963)

But for now, like Joseph, they are among God's pre-resurrection saints, and so they approach Jesus' burial from the perspective of the old order of things. They return to their homes for their own Sabbath rest to observe the OT stipulations and to prepare spices and myrrh for a dead body that they plan to anoint when the Sabbath has ended. They keep the Sabbath according to Moses. But Jesus, whose Sabbath rest marks the transition from old to new, is about to present them on the first day of the new creation with a body that is living! (CC p. 954)

rested. The Sabbath rest anticipated the rest that will come through Jesus' resurrection. Cf Heb 4:9. (TLSB)

23:50–56 Joseph of Arimathea secures the body of Jesus and places it in a newly hewn tomb. Women make preparations for a final burial after the Sabbath. Our sin has led to this, the death and burial of God's only Son. The work of redeeming the world is done. • "What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered Was all for sinners' gain; Mine, mine was the transgression, But Thine the deadly pain. Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place; Look on me with Thy favor, And grant to me Thy grace." Amen. (LSB 450:3) (TLSB)