

Zechariah & Luke: The Returning King

Lesson 19: The Sovereign King of the Sabbath

Key Verse: *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. ~Luke 23.46*

Cleaning up a crime scene is gross. It also requires attention to state and federal laws regarding disposal of bodily parts and body fluids. In addition, specialized industrial enzyme cleaners, cleaning supplies, and suiting are required for biohazard reasons. Respirators are necessary because of the voluminous stench of our bodies' inevitable stages of decomposition. There are companies who have the required authority and specialized ability to make harmless and/or properly rid a home or building of the gruesome consequences of our bodies' deadly decay ("[Crime Scene](#)"¹). Likewise, Jesus's gruesome wounds and gut-churning death have the required authority as the only Passover Lamb who could permanently remove our sins and defeat death's cruelty. In His death, He fulfills the law's sacrificial requirements, ushering in a permanent and eternal **Sabbath** between God and His people. Though the religious trial and Roman trial read like a chaotic kangaroo court, in truth, Jesus remained **Sovereign** in the midst of the chaos as He faithfully carried out His Father's will.

Oh Lord, My God! I crucified You, the Holy One. Thank You for eagerly awaiting this redeeming atonement to break sin's curse and conquer death. Forgive me for crying out, "Crucify Him!", even if I do so by remaining silent in the face of vehement hatred of You (V 23 & 51). May I live each day in absolute surrender to Your Sovereign will and its ways. May I rest completely and totally in the Sabbath You have provided me eternally.

Luke 23.1-56: 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." **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." **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

¹February 18, 2024, [This American Life: "Crime Scene"](#), WBEZ Chicago, copyright 1995-2024. The full episode includes a phenomenal short fiction story about loss, as well as a gorgeously captured reality of hope, despair, and humanity in addiction.

and murder, for whom they asked, but he delivered Jesus over to their will.

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."

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.

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. **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.

Diamonds: It is important to understand and appreciate the historical truth that there has only been one unjust execution in all of history – Jesus's. Often it is easier and safer to become wrapped up in the illegal and unjust nature of Jesus's trial and execution. However, we must shift our focus from anger to joy-filled mourning as a "prisoner of hope" (Zechariah 9.12). Focusing on the glaring errors and deplorable actions of humanity against Jesus can blind us to all the promises of hope found in Jesus's crucifixion.

After a late night "capture" and an illegal religious trial (Luke 22.47-71), Jesus experiences three Roman trials before two unique rulers: Pilate and Herod. Note that this is the same Herod who beheaded the prophesied forerunner to Christ, John the Baptist (Luke 1.13-17, 76-79; 3.3-4, 19-20; 7.18-28; 9.7-9). Herod was also in town for the religious festival, though for the carnival atmosphere rather than as a religious participant. Luke documents more about Pilate's interactions and decisions than Herod's. However, Luke succinctly set the stage for Herod's eager interaction with Jesus throughout his journalistic-style coverage of Herod leading into this

moment (3.19-20; 9.7-9).

1. What do you suppose was the interaction between Herod and Jesus (V 7-12)? How do you imagine Herod's eagerness to engage with Jesus influenced the atmosphere of Jesus's trial before Herod? (See also the Deity "Suffering Servant", in Lesson 18, "The Suffering King" if you are having difficulty imagining this interaction.)

How surprising to discover that both Pilate and Herod are advocating against Jesus's guilt and execution (V 4,13-16, 20-22)!

2. How do Pilate and Herod prove Jesus as the "Lamb of God" is able to remove sin's deadly reality?

Not wanting Jesus to die too early, Simon of Cyrene is called upon for a remarkable privilege: carrying Jesus's cross so that He may complete His Father's will for our salvation. More than an allegory pointing to Jesus's command that we all must daily "take up" our cross and follow Him (Luke 9.23), Luke focuses on the role of Simon to further provide evidence of Jesus's incarnation – Jesus as fully human and fully Divine. Recall Luke's purpose in this journalist-style account is to provide certainty about the truth of Jesus as Messiah and Savior (Luke 1.1-4).

3. Review the definition of the Deity "Incarnation" and your answers in this definition found in Lesson 2 ("The Omnipotent King"). How does Jesus's death prove His incarnation? Why is it important to study and ponder Jesus's incarnation all the way to His death? How does it help increase your knowledge of God, as well as increase your faith in God, especially under the same circumstances of loss and hardship?
4. How does studying Jesus's incarnation in light of His crucifixion illuminate the reality of Zechariah 9.11-12, which says we have been freed from the prison of "the waterless pit" to the stronghold of being a "prisoner of hope"?

Interestingly, Luke includes the collection of not only spectators, but also of the women "who had followed Him from Galilee" (V 49 & 55). While open to scholarly debate, it is likely that these women were also His disciples and were watching their Rabbi. Much like Joseph of Arimathea, it is difficult to believe that these women consented to their Rabbi's murder (V 50-51).

5. You, too, have journeyed with Jesus to this gut-wrenching moment in time. You, too, are a spectator alongside your fellow sister Jesus-followers. What are you saying to one another as you journey from verse 49 to verse 55?

Joseph of Arimathea provides a fuller picture of the hard choices and challenges Jesus's trials and death brought to His people. Clearly Joseph is an "conscientious objector" whose courage and extraordinary political power and wealth are revealed in his most costly and "audacious request" for Jesus's body. In addition, Joseph gave Jesus his own tomb². Not only was Joseph risking his reputation and religious standing before his colleagues in the Sanhedrin, he also was risking his ceremonial cleanliness in disposing of a dead body during Passover (See Questions 1 & 2 in Lesson 17, "The Sacrificial King").

6. What moment do you recall most remarkably as a fellow follower of Rabbi Jesus? In our study this year, you have been part of the crowd following, listening, observing, and being challenged by your Rabbi. Now that you are witnessing His death, which of His parables, interactions, and/or miracles comes to your mind? (Review your lessons from this year's study to help you!)

Deity: Sovereign³~ (Luke 23.38) "God's absolute rule and authority over all things." (Genesis 50.19-20; Psalm 115.3; Daniel 4.25) God's sovereign will is "a reference to the fact God's choices and decisions are in no way constrained by factors outside Himself (Psalm 33.9-11; Romans 9.6-28; Ephesians 1.3-6); also, God's right to choose without being answerable to anyone or anything outside Himself." (Matthew 11.25-27; Revelation 4.11)

Just as Jesus was experiencing the "cup of staggering" (Zechariah 12.2), God's wrath, the "sun's light failed" (V 45). When tied to the language used in God's creation of light alongside the exact time Luke provides as noon, this moves beyond an eclipse or remarkable meteorological event to an act of God alone⁴.

In addition, the tearing from top to bottom of the hundred plus pound, 30 x 30 x 1-inch thick (minimally) fabric veil separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, likewise dramatically symbolizes God's relationship to His people has forever changed with His Son's death (Matthew 27.51; Mark 15.38; Luke 23.45)⁵. The timing of the temple veil tearing is intriguing because of the "heightened expectancy" in the temple as they celebrated Passover, alongside the terrifying reality of the torn veil before the high priest. This veil separated the high priest from God's certain death by unauthorized access to His presence. Now, it was torn without the ability to repair it!

7. How does the inscription placed upon Jesus's cross also reveal God as sovereign (Luke 23.38)? Which additional verse(s) provided in this definition illuminate God as sovereign over *all* the details of Christ's trials, betrayals, beatings, and crucifixion?

Doctrine: The Sabbath⁶~ (Luke 23.47, 56) meaning "seventh", it is the day of the week where God rested from His work of creation (Genesis 2.1-3). "By hallowing [the seventh day], God set the seventh day apart. He consecrated it as holy. Proper observance of the Sabbath was one of the Ten Commandments given at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20.8-11). It is important to remember that its institution was an integral part of the creation

² Ryken, pgs. 626-627

³ MacArthur & Mayhue, pgs. 187, 937

⁴ Ryken, p.608, Sproul, p.563-565

⁵ Ryken p.610-612

⁶ Sproul, pgs.249-250

covenant. In the Old Testament, violation of the Sabbath was a capital offense.”

The early church moved the Sabbath to align with Christ’s resurrection: from Saturday to Sunday (the first day of the week). “The principle of Sabbath, one of seven, remains intact. The weekly Sabbath has been in perpetual effect since Creation and was observed by the apostles.” (Acts 20.7; 1 Corinthians 16.1-2)

The Sabbath is “a special time of rejoicing in Christ’s resurrection and in the hope of our Sabbath rest in heaven.” It requires “cessation from regular labor (except necessary labor) and the assembly of the saints in corporate worship.” Different sects of Christianity disagree over “the propriety of recreation and the necessity of works of mercy on the Sabbath”. (Isaiah 58.13-14)

Throughout our study of Luke, we have witnessed Jesus’s behaviors on the Sabbath, and the angst from the ruling religious leaders with which His actions were met.

8. Refresh your memory here, noting your Rabbi’s actions and teachings in Luke:

a. 2.41-42

b. 4.16-41

c. 6.1-11

d. 13.10-17

e. 14.1-24

9. What was your Rabbi doing on the Sabbath in Luke 23.54-56?

Under the new covenant established by Jesus, the Sabbath includes God’s mercy extended to us, communion with God, forgiveness, unfettered access to His throne of grace through prayer, the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence, and more. In Lesson 10, “The Shepherd King”, we learned about God’s purpose for the Sabbath through Jesus’s parable (Luke 14.16-24).

“More than a day of physical rest, it was meant as a day of offering His eternal rest through God-given service and acts of mercy to the marginalized and neglected.⁷ Rather than nap-taking and throwing fancy dinner parties to flaunt social status and religiosity, the Sabbath God desires is that all His people celebrate their eternal security and rest in His Son. His people were to show His mercy by providing for the lowly, “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind”, those in the “streets and lanes of the city”, those found on “the highways and hedges” (V 12, 21, 23).

10. How do you see these elements of the Sabbath in your Rabbi’s actions, attitude, and behaviors displayed specifically on the Sabbath day as recorded in Luke? How does this shape your understanding of how we are to experience the Sabbath?

⁷ Ryken, p.66-67

11. Why do you think Luke included the reactions and comments of others in verses 22, 32, and 40-41? How do they offer further proof of Jesus as the *only* substitute for our sins, the Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6.1-11) who could say, “This is my body, which is given for you”, and “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22.19-20)?

12. In whom or in what do you find your Sabbath rest?

Your Scripture-Soaked Prayer:

Lecture Outline:

Aim: The Cross magnifies the sovereignty of God.

- I. “Crucify!” (Luke 23.1-25) **T1:** God’s sovereignty is magnified as His plan of redemption was executed through the actions of evil men.
 - a. How does God’s sovereign control over everything that has ever happened comfort you in your present circumstances?
 - b. What is your reaction to the fact that Jesus’ suffering was sovereignly ordained by God?
- II. Calvary (Luke 23.26-43) **T2:** God’s sovereignty is magnified in Christ’s suffering to purchase our eternal Sabbath rest.
 - a. Which detail about Christ’s suffering on the Cross impacts you most?
 - b. How might His suffering draw you closer to Him in repentance, prayer, and worship?
 - c. What will you do differently to become a Cross dwelling Christ-follower?
- III. Completion (Luke 23.44-56) **T3:** God’s sovereignty is magnified as believers live with the glory of the Cross in view.
 - a. How does God’s sovereignty in the death of His Son change how you think about His judgment of your sin?
 - b. How might it move you to live with the glory of the Cross in view? Will you begin today to live as a Cross Dweller?

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Sproul, R.C., *Luke: An Expositional Commentary* (Sandford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2020 by R.C. Sproul Trust) pgs.547-572