

This is all historical, taking place with actual people in an actual time in an actual place, and Luke wants Theophilus (and us) to know that this happened and that this is how it happened. Yet, there is more. What does Luke *enunciate*? He is enunciating the rejection of Jesus by both Jews and Gentiles, and that God is providential over it all for the salvation from sin and death of both Jew and Gentile. It was necessary for Jesus to be rejected so that God could be both just and the justifier of sinners who repent and put their trust in Jesus.

1. Rejection #1: "Send him away" - "He has no claim on me."

- a. Pilate tries three times to release Jesus, but Jesus' own people reject Him.
 - i. Pilate thinks that Jesus is not an evil man, but neither is he worth taking seriously in what he actually teaches or says
 - ii. He tries to let Jesus go, to just go out and go away – even sending him off to Herod to deal with, but Jesus is returned for Pilate to deal with
- b. There is a danger to Pilate here, for the question sits before him, "What shall I do with this Jesus?"
 - i. His conscience is saying, "innocent" and his reason is saying, "justice sets him free"
 - ii. Yet, his desire is more for avoiding political trouble, personal trouble, and cost to his way of life
 - iii. The choice is his, and he sits on the precipice of history, facing into doing what is right or doing what is expedient...
- c. Though he sees that Jesus "has done nothing wrong" (vv14-16), he still judges to have him "punished" before he is released
 - i. This tells us that he does not believe that Jesus is whom he says that he is
 - 1) John 19:10-11 – Jesus tells Pilate that Pilate has no authority over him unless it is granted to him from above
 - 2) Thus, Pilate knows Jesus' claims to divine authority, but he doesn't consider Jesus true, he just wants to appease those that make his life more difficult so that he can get on with life
 - ii. This is the attitude that "respects" Jesus as a human teacher like other human teachers, but ignores His claims to divine authority and purpose.
 - 1) Therefore, it responds with wanting to treat him callously, by "sending him away"
 - 2) But this view of Jesus will not stand, for his words will not allow it.
 - a) If Jesus is merely a great and honorable human teacher, then his claims to deity and the authority of God and absolute allegiance are those of a cult leader and a crazy man.
 - i) "All who drink the water that I give will never thirst again." (John 4)
 - ii) "I am the bread of life." (John 6:48); "I am the door." (John 10:9)
 - iii) "...apart from Me, you can do nothing." (John 15:5)
 - iv) "I am the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)
 - b) Jesus claims to be the exclusive way to the Father, thus eliminating any equal footing with any other teacher, prophet, sage, or leader.
 - c) Thus, Jesus cannot be a good moral teacher if he is a deceptive megalomaniac claiming to be God's Son, an eternal expression of His nature, and the exclusive and only way to Him, can he?
 - i) He condemns all others as imposters
 - 3) "such were some of you..."
- d. What will you do with Jesus?
 - i. Will you send him away, claiming that he is a good man, a reasonable man, a just man, but merely a man among other men?
 - ii. Or, will you consider him divine, but a divine among other divines?
 - iii. Jesus doesn't leave these options open to you. (C.S. Lewis)

A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher... You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to. (C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity)

2. Rejection #2: "Give us anyone else, even if they are sinful."

- a. The Jews would rather a "murderer and insurrectionist" be released at great threat to the nation, then to allow Jesus to live.
 - i. When Pilate wanted to send Jesus away, the Jewish leadership would not accept that, but would rather have another person released and Jesus executed.
 - 1) It was Pilate's custom to release a prisoner to the Jewish leadership each year as a means of appeasing them and quelling any building pressure to rebel
 - ii. The Jews would rather a "man imprisoned for insurrection and murder" be released than submit to Jesus rightly
 - 1) Now, consider the charge that they brought against Jesus: insurrection.
 - 2) Now, consider the "wisdom" of Caiaphas as the reasoning for the Sanhedrin's working for Jesus' execution after Jesus raised Lazarus: [John 11:47-52](#)
 - a) They reasoned that people would entrust themselves to Jesus *and Rome would come and take our nation away.*
 - b) They wanted Jesus dead so that people wouldn't follow him and Rome would not destroy their power
 - 3) Now, who posed a greater threat to Israel by being a thorn in Rome's side: Jesus, or Barabbas the insurrectionist and murderer?
 - a) So, we see that the Jews are acting inconsistently, and Jesus is such a stumbling block to them that they are willing to release one who actively opposes Rome and endangers the entire nation.
- b. This rejection is the type of rejection that will take any other religion, any other leader, any other power than the Jesus of the Bible, even though that other one is probably not good!
 - i. "I would rather believe in _____ than a God who tells me to forgive my enemies."
 - ii. "I would rather believe in _____ than a God who tells me that my sexuality is sinful."
 - iii. "I would rather believe in _____ than a God who tells me that my sin has destroyed my ability to see and reason and choose wisely."
- c. This the religious response to Jesus: Give me something (idol) other than this Jesus whom the Scriptures reveal because His demands for allegiance and trust are too high.
 - i. And we choose something that we intrinsically know will enslave us and cannot deliver on its promises
 - ii. We remake Jesus into an image that fits our fancy, practically believing our wisdom to be greater than God's wisdom (see Adam and Eve's failure and apply to oneself)
 - iii. Idols of the heart – the Great Exchange – the Outcome of such an exchange (Rom 1:18-2:5)
 - iv. "such were some of you..."

3. Rejection #3: "I hate Jesus." - "I must publicly destroy his reputation and make sure others see how useless and powerless he is."

- a. The Jews want Jesus publicly and shamefully executed on a Roman cross.
 - i. Note that Pilate offers to have Jesus publicly flogged and set free
 - 1) Pilate is looking for a political compromise between justice and what the Jews want

- 2) "He's not guilty of death, so why don't I have him flogged and released to show him and other Jews his weakness and insufficiency"
 - ii. Yet, this was not enough for the Jewish leadership
 - 1) Perhaps they saw weakness in Pilate, his willingness to appease him, thus they do on the attack even stronger
 - 2) They want Jesus out of the equation, removed from existence itself, completely eliminated from the public sphere
 - b. These are like those people, when confronted with this biblical Jesus, strive and shout and work to humiliate and eliminate Jesus from the public sphere
 - i. They want Christianity silenced in politics, in academia, in public life
 - ii. They are not content with simply "sending him away" or "having him flogged", they want Him eliminated and they are vehemently, angrily, and violently opposed to him
 - 1) Fire Chief in Atlanta and Atlanta's mayoral office
 - 2) ISIS
 - 3) "such were some of you..."
 - c. This response isn't new - "If they hate me, they will hate you." "If they persecuted me, they will persecute you." (John 18:15-25)
 - i. What do you do when you keep stumbling over a rock?
 - ii. If you don't accept that the stone is the cornerstone of the building, you throw it out in a maelstrom of harsh language (think broken toe).
4. Rejection #4: "I don't care." - "Getting rid of him makes me able to live the way that I want."
- a. Pilate "handed him over to their desires" - same word as Judas, i.e. injustice clearly understood and expressed b/c of personal gain.
 - i. This is capitulation.
 - ii. In order avoid the cost, Pilate, knowing the innocence of Jesus of the charges brought against him, and knowing him unworthy of death, simply doesn't care about Him or about what is right, but simply is seeking his own security and protecting his own power
 - b. These are like those whom, when confronted by the biblical Jesus, simply don't care enough about his claims, nor about righteousness, to commit because the costs of doing so are too steep.
 - i. Like the rich young ruler, whose wealth was more valuable to him than eternal life through Jesus.
 - ii. Like the seed which springs up quickly, but is choked by the desires and worries of the world.
 - iii. Like Pilate, they may appear to care for a time, but in the end they love their own lives more than they love the Christ, and they "deliver him over" to destruction so that they may continue in living the life that they want, being subject only to their own foolish desires
 - c. Jesus may be the Son of God, but I like my stuff, my pleasure, my comfort, my toys, my views more than I love Him.
 - i. The crucified Jesus is simply inconsequential to them, i.e. foolishness to follow.
 - ii. "I can't accept a God who would command me to...."
5. In God's Providence, This Rejection of Jesus Was *Necessary*
- a. Luke, then, is expressing the utter and absolute rejection of Jesus by His own people who awaited the Messiah's appearance, and the utter and absolute contempt toward Jesus by the Gentiles who didn't feel Him to be a threat.
 - i. "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1Co 1:22-24 ESV)
 - ii. Pilate thought Jesus a harmless fool, a pawn of history

- iii. The Jews stumbled over him, believing him to be evil, despised, a blasphemer
- b. This rejection of Jesus by Jew and Gentile was necessary to redeem His people
 - i. 9:22,44; 17:25; 24:7,46
 - ii. 1 Peter 3:18 “For Christ also suffered once **for sins**, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...”
 - iii. Heb 10:10 “By this will **we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ** once for all. “
 - iv. For, “to those who are called”, the crucified Christ is “the power of God” to answer for our sins and for its consequence, death itself; and “the wisdom of God” for our glory – His death in our place and His Resurrection for our life is the glorious wisdom of God which He declared from the beginning.
 - 1) The gospel of Jesus is about substitution: His life for our death, His death for our life.
- c. Jesus took up the cross that belonged to Barabbas the murderous rebel– and he took yours, too
 - i. He was sent away to death, the grave, and to the wrath of the judgment of God – in your place
 - ii. He was exchanged for you
 - iii. He was violently opposed and publicly shamed, when it was your verdict which deserved such humiliation and condemnation
 - iv. He was uncared for, despised, belittled so that you and I might be honored, beloved, and brought home with an inheritance in God’s household
- d. By bearing our sins and being raised from the dead, He conquered sin and death that we might have hope of redemption from both!
 - i. When Peter proclaimed this gospel at Pentecost in Jerusalem, proclaiming that Jesus was risen from the dead to rule over all powers and authorities, the Lord of glory whom the people crucified, the people cried out, “Brothers, what shall we do?”
 - ii. “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Act 2:38)
 - iii. What will you do with this Jesus today?

“Amazing love! How can it be, that You, my God, should die for me?”