

Lectionary Gospel Commentaries

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Based on the Lectionary Pericope Covering:

Luke 22:1-23:56

SOLA-LSB (Lutheran Service Book): Year C - Palm Sunday, Text: Lk. 22:1-23:56 (or Lk. 23:1-56)
RCL (Revised Common Lectionary): Year C - Palm Sunday, Text: Lk. 22:14-23:56 (or Lk. 23:1-49)

Each of the four passion narratives is unique and profound. Although they share many common details, each contains unique elements. Luke includes the following specific details in his passion narrative:

Satan enters Judas (Luke 22:3), who confers with the chief priests and captains about how he might betray Jesus “in the absence of the multitude” (Luke 22:4, 6). They agree to give him money for his services (v. 22:5). Jesus exposes Judas’ betrayal of the Son of Man (v. 22:48).

The Jewish leaders themselves go out to capture Jesus (Luke 22:52). Jesus heals the servant whose ear Peter has cut off (v. 22:51) and is led away to the High Priest’s house (v. 22:54).

In Luke, no night trial or discussion is mentioned, but Jesus is subjected to abuse (v. 22:63–65). The Sanhedrin meets in daylight and charges Jesus with claiming to be the Messiah (v. 22:66–71). The only ruling body in Palestine that can determine whether or not a person is the Messiah is the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, which meet in the Royal Porch of the Jerusalem Temple. Little wonder, then, that the disciples are keen to have Jesus go to Jerusalem. They are sure that the Sanhedrin will proclaim Jesus to be the Messiah and that they will benefit as a result.

The authorities take Jesus to Pilate and level charges of political insurrection (Luke 23:1–5). When Pilate hears that Jesus is from Galilee, he sends Jesus to his political enemy, Herod Antipas, (v. 3:6–12). This is unique to Luke’s account. Herod Antipas, is a son of Herod the Great, who is ruling Galilee and Perea.

When Jesus appears before Herod, the scene represents the climax of earlier accounts of Herod’s reaction to Jesus, which shifts from fascination to opposition (Luke 9:9; 13:31–33). Herod wants to see a miracle, but all that he sees is a silent prisoner who is the object of violent accusations and mockery. Ironically, the incident creates a friendship between Herod and Pilate (v. 23:12).

Pilate feels convinced that Jesus is innocent and declares that he will chastise and release Him (v. 23:13–17). However, when the Jews demand the release of Barabbas, Pilate yields (v. 23:18–25).

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus speaks three Words from the cross: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (v. 23:34); “Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (v. 23:43); “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” (v. 23:46). In Luke’s narrative, Jesus’ words from the cross are profound beyond definition; see 23:34, 43, 46. How different is the Kingdom he established than those the earthly powers continue to establish today!

Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, buries Jesus as an act of piety. Joseph represents the righteous of Israel, who were seeking the kingdom of God (v. 23:50–53). In doing this, Joseph renders himself ritually unclean and endangers his own life; the Jewish leaders would have been angry with him for providing Jesus with a decent burial.

Some women prepare to anoint Jesus’ body, but they are interrupted by the Sabbath. Jesus is buried, not like a criminal, but with honor, and His followers know the place. When the women return to the tomb to complete the anointing, there is no possibility that they have mistaken the place of burial (v. 23:55–24:3).

Commonalities in the Accounts

None of the Gospels suggests that the disciples or anyone else expected the events that were to follow the crucifixion. Even though Jesus pointed to His coming resurrection in the passion predictions (Luke 9:18–24; 9:43b–48; 18:31–34; see also Mark 8:31; 9:30–31; 10:32–34), none of the disciples understood what Jesus was saying.

When on one occasion they heard Jesus predict His resurrection, they were too afraid to ask what He meant by it (Luke 9:45; see also Mark 9:9–10). In all four Gospels, the resurrection event explodes upon the

lives of the disciples in a most unexpected manner.

It is important for God's people to understand that Jesus' crucifixion was His coronation. When humanity did its worst to Him, He did His best for them.

Although at the cross Jesus got crucified, Satan got nailed; here note John 12:31; 14:30–31; 16:4b–11 (especially v. 11); 16:33.