

Jesus Was Condemned by Pilate

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain why those who condemned Jesus to death received temporary pleasure for their sin but reaped consequences that will last for eternity. In our topic today, we will see that Jesus was condemned by Pilate, even though he declared Jesus innocent.

In the previous topic, we saw that the religious leaders had asked Pilate to release Barabbas. Matthew 27:22-24 says, “Pilate said to them, ‘What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?’ They all said to him, ‘Let Him be crucified!’ Then the governor said, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Let Him be crucified!’ When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*.’” Here, we see why the religious leaders had asked for Barabbas to be released. They had already secretly condemned Jesus to death and now they wanted Pilate to carry out their plan by crucifying Jesus.

Pilate asked the question, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” The word translated “Christ” means *the Messiah, the Son of God or the Anointed One*. By the use of this title, Pilate made it clear that he knew why the religious leaders wanted to put Jesus to death. He knew that Jesus was a threat to their power and control over the people. The multitude immediately answered, “Let Him be crucified!” Jesus had told Nicodemus, three years earlier, in John 3:14, ““And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.”” Just a few days earlier, Jesus had said, in John 12:32-33, ““And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself.’ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.” In their hatred, these religious leaders were now fulfilling what Jesus had said in advance.

Pilate then asked the question, “Why, what evil has He done?” The religious leaders did not answer the question of Pilate. Instead, they just cried out even more, “Let Him be crucified!” The word translated “tumult” means *an uproar of riotous persons or a breach of public order*. When Pilate saw that a riot was about to start, he quickly decided to give the crowd what they wanted even though he knew he would be killing an innocent person. Then, Pilate tried to clear himself of guilt in the crucifixion of Jesus. We read that he, “Took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, ‘I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*.’” Pilate was not innocent, even though he washed his hands. Every person in the world, including Pilate, was guilty that day because it was our sin for which Jesus died that day.

However, no one will be personally charged for the sins that were committed that day. Those sins have been forgiven. Luke 23:34a says, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’” Here, we see that as Jesus hung on the cross, He asked the Father to forgive the sins of Pilate, the religious leaders, the soldiers and everyone else involved that day for the sins

they committed that day. As a result, those specific sins will not be held against anyone involved that day. Even though no one will be charged with those specific sins, the people involved that day would never be able to get rid of their guilt. Pilate could not get rid of his guilt by washing his hands.

We go on to read how the religious leaders and the rest of the multitude responded to the words Pilate spoke. Matthew 27:25-26 says, “And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood *be* on us and on our children.’ Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered *Him* to be crucified.” Here, we see that the whole multitude there that morning, including the religious leaders, said that the blood of Jesus would be on them and their children. However, the religious leaders later tried to avoid taking the responsibility for the words they had spoken that day. Acts 5:27-28 says, “And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, saying, ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!’” Here, we see that the high priest tried to deny what he and the other religious leaders had told Pilate. Instead, we see that he tried to accuse the apostles of bringing the blood of Jesus on them. This is an indication that he was already trying to deny the guilt he felt.

Pilate tried one other way to satisfy the crowd. In Luke 23:22, we read, “Then he said to them the third time, ‘Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let *Him* go.’” Once the multitude said the blood of Jesus would be on them and their children, Pilate was ready to do exactly what the multitude requested because he thought he would be free from any guilt. Pilate immediately released Barabbas to the religious leaders. Pilate showed his own attitude toward Jesus by what he did next. We read that he told the soldiers to scourge Jesus before they crucified Him. The whip used for a scourge had several pieces of leather with a sharp piece of bone or metal on the end. As a result, a severe scourging could even kill a prisoner. Here, Pilate showed his own contempt for Jesus by giving the command to scourge Jesus before he crucified Him.

The soldiers also showed their contempt for Jesus by what they did. Matthew 27:27-32 says, “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified. Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.” The Praetorium was the Roman headquarters in the city of Jerusalem. When Herod the Great was the Roman ruler in the city of Jerusalem, he had built a very beautiful and expensive palace. This was the place the Roman governors used as their headquarters when they were in Jerusalem.

The Roman soldiers then gathered the whole Roman garrison around Jesus. This was a total of about six hundred Roman soldiers. They chose to show their contempt for Jesus by mocking Him. They took his clothes off of Him and put a bright red robe on Him. This was usually the color of

the robe of a ruler. Many times, a ruler would have a crown on his head during the time that he was seated on a throne. As a result, the soldiers made a crown to put on His head. However, they made a crown of thorns, not a crown of beauty. Many of the thorns in that area are long and sharp like needles. As a result, these thorns were able to cause serious injuries to the head and face of a person. This was followed by putting a reed in His hand. Here, we see they were making Jesus look like He was a ruler; however, they had no plans to recognize Him as a ruler.

Instead, the soldiers decided that was the best way for them to mock Jesus. We see that they got down on their knees and began to say, “Hail, King of the Jews!” The soldiers then began to spit on Jesus to show their contempt. After doing this for a short time, the soldiers took the reed from the hand of Jesus and used it to strike Jesus on the head. This probably drove some of the sharp thorns into the head of Jesus. Once they had finished mocking Jesus, they took off the scarlet robe and placed His clothes on Him again. Then, the soldiers led Jesus away to be crucified.

Normally, a prisoner was forced to carry his own cross to the place where he was going to be crucified. However, if the prisoner was in a weakened condition, the soldiers were allowed to make someone else carry the cross to the place of crucifixion. Jesus had been scourged by the Roman soldiers. This probably caused Him to lose a large amount of blood. As a result, Jesus was in a very weak physical condition. Isaiah 53:5 says, “But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.” This verse reminds us that Jesus experienced much physical suffering during the time He suffered in our place and for our sins. Although Jesus experienced all of this suffering and physical weakness, He did not sin. That is why Hebrews 4:15 says, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.” That is why He could pay for our sins.

We learn more about the man who was forced to carry the cross of Jesus. Mark 15:21 says, “Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross.” Cyrene was a city in North Africa. This was the city from which this man came. That city is several hundred miles from Jerusalem, which means this man was a visitor to the area of Jerusalem. We see that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus. The fact that the names of his two sons are mentioned would indicate that at least part of the people who originally received the book of Mark were familiar with these two sons. It may be that the Lord used this event in the life of Simon to draw his entire family to Christ for salvation. If so, this may be the Rufus that is mentioned in Romans 16:13.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain why the Jewish religious leaders, Pilate, and the Roman soldiers all showed their contempt for Jesus by the choices they made that day. At the same time, we also want to help them learn to explain that the Lord worked through every event that happened that day to change and transform the lives of those who became His followers. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain these things.