

70. Jesus Was Accused Before Pilate by the Jewish Religious Leaders

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain how the religious leaders who condemned Jesus gave a real example of the rebellion of sinful mankind against God. In this topic, we are going to see that the Jewish religious leaders condemned Jesus and then sent Him to Pilate.

Jesus endured several trials during the night. Jesus had rebuked Annas for breaking the Old Testament law. As a result, we see that Annas stopped his questioning. John 18:24-27 says, “Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Now Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. Therefore they said to him, ‘You are not also *one* of His disciples, are you?’ He denied it and said, ‘I am not!’ One of the servants of the high priest, a relative *of him* whose ear Peter cut off, said, ‘Did I not see you in the garden with Him?’ Peter then denied again; and immediately a rooster crowed.” Here, we see that Annas now sent Jesus to Caiaphas who was the official high priest recognized by the Roman government. This was necessary in order to bring Jesus to Pilate.

John does not tell us anything about the trial before Caiaphas since John wrote the book of John many years after Matthew, Mark and Luke were written. The trial before Caiaphas is recorded in Matthew 26:57-75, Mark 14:53-72 and Luke 22:53-71. This includes the part of the trial where Jesus was mocked, beaten and condemned to death. We read about Him being condemned to death in Matthew 26:63-67 says, “But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, ‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘*It is as* you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’ They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death.’ Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck *Him* with the palms of their hands.”

It was after Jesus was sent to Caiaphas that the final two denials of Peter happened. Peter stood and warmed himself by the fire that the men had started in the courtyard by the palace of the high priest. It was while Peter was warming himself by this fire that he made one of the denials. Luke 22:56-57 says, “And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, ‘This man was also with Him.’ But he denied Him, saying, ‘Woman, I do not know Him.’” Here, we see that this was also a servant girl, so two of the three that questioned Peter that night were servant girls.

The third time Peter denied Jesus was to one of the servants of the high priest. John says that this servant was a relative of the man whose ear Peter cut off. This servant asked the question, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” We read that this time when Peter denied the rooster immediately crowed. Luke 22:60-62 says, “But Peter said, ‘Man, I do not know what you are saying!’ Immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So Peter went out and wept bitterly.” Although

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Jesus was on trial for His life, He still had time to look at Peter. It was probably both a look of love and a look of sadness because the only thing that Peter could do was go out and cry bitterly. After the resurrection in John 21, we will see that Jesus personally took time to restore Peter.

We see that the next trial of Jesus happened before Pilate, the Roman governor. John 18:28-29 says, “Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover. Pilate then went out to them and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this Man?’” The Praetorium was the fortress or military headquarters of the Romans in the city of Jerusalem and was located next to the courtyard of the temple. Pilate normally lived in Caesarea. However, during the time of the Jewish feasts, Pilate usually came to Jerusalem so that he could give direct orders to the Roman centurions in case there were any riots or other problems from the Jews during the time of those feasts. When in Jerusalem, Pilate used the Praetorium as his headquarters.

The Jews led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium. We see that the Jewish religious leaders refused to go into the Praetorium because they wanted to eat the Passover later that day and did not want to make themselves unclean by going into the Praetorium. Jesus had said just a few days earlier in Matthew 23:23-24, “‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!’” The religious leaders were concerned about remaining clean for the Passover at the very time that they were trying to murder Jesus. Pilate went out and asked the Jews, “What accusation do you bring against this Man?”

The Jewish religious leaders wanted Jesus condemned and placed on a cross before most of the Jews even realized what was happening. The Jewish religious leaders accused Jesus of various crimes that they thought would cause Pilate to agree to crucify Jesus. Luke 23:2 says, “And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this *fellow* perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.’” Here, we see that they tried to use charges that they thought might cause Pilate to put Jesus to death. The religious leaders first accused Jesus of perverting the nation. The word translated “perverting” means *to turn aside from the right path*.

The second charge was designed even more to try and convince Pilate that Jesus should be crucified as they accused Jesus of refusing to pay taxes. This was to suggest that Jesus was trying to lead a rebellion against the Roman government. The religious leaders knew that this accusation was a direct lie because Jesus had said just a few days earlier in Luke 20:25-26 as the Herodians tried to trap Jesus, “And He said to them, ‘Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ But they could not catch Him in His words in the presence of the people. And they marveled at His answer and kept silent.” This was one of the last questions that the Jews had asked Jesus as they tried to trap Him in His words. The religious leaders knew that they were lying and so they tried to cover up the guilt in their hearts.

That is why they went on to say to Pilate in John 18:30-32, “They answered and said to him, ‘If

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He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.’ Then Pilate said to them, ‘You take Him and judge Him according to your law.’ Therefore the Jews said to him, ‘It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,’ that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.” The word translated “evildoer” is only used five times in the New Testament and the other four are all found in 1 Peter. In 1 Peter 2:12, we read, “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Peter and John had both carefully observed Jesus and knew that His behavior was honorable. Many of the religious leaders also had seen that the behavior of Jesus was honorable but they wanted Jesus killed because they saw Him as a threat to their power.

The religious leaders were the real evildoers but they were trying to cover their own sins by accusing Jesus of the very sin that they were committing. Pilate also knew the truth about why the religious leaders had brought Jesus to him. Mark 15:9-10 says, “But Pilate answered them, saying, ‘Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.” During the course of the trial before Pilate, we see that Pilate said several times to the religious leaders, “I find no fault in Him.” Finally, the Jews had to give the real reason that they wanted Jesus killed. In John 19:7-8, we read, “The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.’ Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid.” Here, we see that his fear was the real reason why Pilate finally agreed to crucify Jesus.

Pilate tried at first to avoid making any judgment about Jesus. We see that Pilate told the religious leaders, “You take Him and judge Him according to your law.” The Romans had direct rule over the land of Judea and that meant that the Jews did not have the right to condemn prisoners to death because that was one of the responsibilities that had been taken away from the Jews and given to the Roman governor. As a result, they knew that they could not carry out the death penalty, especially after bringing Jesus to Pilate. That was why the religious leaders said that it was not lawful for them to put anyone to death.

However, of much more importance was the fact that Jesus was going to die in a way that fulfilled the statement that Jesus had made to Nicodemus about three years earlier. John 3:14-15 says, “‘And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.’” The Jewish form of death would have been stoning. However, Jesus had said that He would be lifted up on a cross. As a result, to fulfill that statement of Jesus meant that He had to be crucified by the Romans instead of being stoned by the Jews. We want to help our physical and spiritual children see that Jesus fulfilled every prophecy that had been spoken about Him including both those by the prophets and those that He had made Himself. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that Jesus fulfilled every prophecy that was written about Him in the Scriptures.