

## 72. Jesus Experienced the Fear of Pilate

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others the consequences when they make the choice to reject Jesus as the Lord and Savior of their lives. Today, we are going to see that Pilate acted out of fear when the chief priests told him that the real reason they wanted Jesus to die was due to the fact that Jesus said that He is the Son of God and the leaders were unwilling to believe Him.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent so he chose to give Jesus a beating in his attempts to satisfy the Jews. John 19:1-4 says, “So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged *Him*. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put *it* on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they struck Him with their hands. Pilate then went out again, and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.’” Here, we see that Pilate made his first statement that he found no fault in Jesus.

We see that Pilate was acting out of fear of the Jews because he was willing to do anything to try and please the Jews so that the Roman emperor would not take away his power. We see that the first thing that Pilate did was order the scourging of Jesus. A scourging was a beating given by several Roman soldiers taking turns. The whip usually had several leather thongs with pieces of metal or bones at the end of each leather thong. This beating actually fulfilled a prophecy made hundreds of years earlier by the prophet Isaiah. 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.” Here, we see that Jesus was given that beating for our sins.

The soldiers also worked together to mock and bring shame to Jesus. They made a crown of thorns to put on His head. The thorns of a date palm can be several inches long and very sharp. Mark 15:16-19 says, “Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His *head*, and began to salute Him, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him.” Here, we see that all of the soldiers gathered for this time to mock Jesus. We also see that they struck Him on the head which would drive the sharp thorns into His head. They put a purple robe on Jesus, which was the color normally worn by a king. Then they pretended to worship Jesus by bowing down to Him and saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!”

By the time the Romans had finished the beating and crowned Jesus with the thorns, His body would have had large wounds covering it, which even exposed the bones and muscles. Then, Pilate led Jesus out to the Jews to show them that Jesus had suffered greatly. Pilate probably thought that this would satisfy the Jews. However, Pilate also mocked Jesus in his own way by saying, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.” To make such a statement after Pilate had just allowed the soldiers to greatly mistreat Jesus was actually a form of mocking, which he had allowed because of his fear of the Jews and his desire to satisfy them.

John 19:5-7 says, “Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And *Pilate* said to them, ‘Behold the Man!’ Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, ‘Crucify *Him*, crucify *Him*!’ *Pilate* said to them, ‘You take Him and crucify *Him*, for I find no fault in Him.’ 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.’” Here, we see that *Pilate* brought Jesus out of the Praetorium so that the Jews could see how savagely the Roman soldiers had beaten Him. The Jews had called Jesus an evil man. Now, they could see that He had received a severe beating. So *Pilate* said, “Behold the Man!” *Pilate* hoped that the Jews would be satisfied.

Instead, the Jews immediately began to cry out, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” This was not what *Pilate* had expected. Here, we see that when people try to do evil to please others, those they are trying to please only want more evil to be done. Then, *Pilate* tried to shift the responsibility back to the Jews by saying, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.” The Jews would normally stone a person to death because crucifixion was a Roman form of death. Here, we see that *Pilate* told the Jews that they could crucify Jesus if they wanted to kill Him. Then, *Pilate* said for a second time that he did not find any fault in Jesus.

The Jews quickly changed the charges that they had made against Jesus and gave the real reason why they wanted Jesus put to death in their efforts to get *Pilate* to condemn Jesus to death. That was why the Jews said, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.” Leviticus 24:16 says, “““And whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of *the LORD*, he shall be put to death.””” They were accusing Jesus of blasphemy because He said that He was the Son of God.

Matthew 26:63-65 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!’” Here, we see that the Jews had earlier accused Jesus of blasphemy and condemned Him in the courtyard of the home of Caiaphas. That was why they now told *Pilate* that Jesus should be put to death for breaking their law.

We see that *Pilate* became more fearful when He heard that Jesus was from God. John 19:8-12 says, “Therefore, when *Pilate* heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer. Then *Pilate* said to Him, ‘Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?’ Jesus answered, ‘You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.’ From then on *Pilate* sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, ‘If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.’” These verses show us that *Pilate* had become controlled by fear and was no longer in control.

Pilate immediately went back into the Praetorium and asked Jesus where He was from. Jesus had already told Pilate that His kingdom was not from this world but that He was a king. Jesus had also said that He had come into the world to bear witness to the truth. Pilate was forced to recognize that Jesus' authority was not from this world. Now, Pilate had to face the fact that the Jews said that Jesus claimed that He came from God. Pilate had just had his soldiers scourge Jesus. The fact that the Jews said that Jesus claimed to be God caused Pilate to be filled with fear because Pilate realized that if that claim was true, Jesus had supernatural power. Pilate knew that meant that Jesus could kill and destroy him.

As a result, Pilate was anxious to hear if Jesus came from God or from the Evil One. Jesus chose not to answer the question of Pilate and kept silent. Then, Pilate began to threaten Jesus in order to try and get an answer from Him. Pilate asked Jesus why He was refusing to speak to him. Then, Pilate began to boast about his own power. He said that he had power to crucify Jesus. He also said that he had the power to release Jesus. Here, we see that in his fear, Pilate tried to convince Jesus that he also had power.

Then, Jesus revealed to Pilate the source of His supernatural power. Jesus told Pilate that He could have no power against Jesus unless that power had been given to him from above. 1 John 4:4 says, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." John pointed out in this verse that each of those who have placed their faith in Christ have already overcome the Evil One that is in the world. Jesus told the disciples after His resurrection in Matthew 28:18, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'" Pilate had a good reason to fear Jesus.

Then, Jesus told Pilate, "Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Caiaphas, the high priest, knew that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead and had done many other miracles that proved that He is God and he had delivered Jesus to Pilate. In contrast, Pilate had heard little about Jesus. In Luke 12:48, Jesus had said, "But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more." Jesus said Caiaphas would face a greater judgment than Pilate. From that time on,<sup>8</sup> Pilate began to try to release Jesus. As a result, the Jews then chose to cause even greater fear by using the threat of his greatest fear that Caesar would take away his power and position.

As we look at Pilate, we see that he provides an example of the power that fear has over a person. We can use his example to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be led by the love of Christ instead of becoming controlled by the fear of people. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the results of fear.