

78. Jesus Was Condemned by Pilate

In our last topic, we saw that Jesus experienced trials before both Pilate and Herod. After Herod and his men of war finished mocking Jesus, we see that Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. We also saw in our last topic that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand why Pilate and Herod became friends based on their mutual rejection of Jesus that day. However, that friendship could never bring inner peace. In this topic, we see that Pilate formally condemned Jesus and ordered His crucifixion.

Pilate made one final attempt to release Jesus before he gave into the will of the chief priests and Sanhedrin. Luke 23:13-17 says, “Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, ‘You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined *Him* in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release *Him*’ (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast).” Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. Pilate then called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people who were there that morning.

Pilate summarized the charges that this crowd had made against Jesus. He summarized those charges by saying, “You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people.” The word translated “misleads” means *to turn away*. Pilate understood the real reason why the Jews had brought Jesus. Matthew 27:17-18 says, “Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, ‘Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?’ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.” Pilate knew that the religious leaders were controlled by envy and that Jesus had committed no crime.

Pilate said that he and Herod had both examined Jesus while the religious leaders had observed and that neither of them had found any fault with Jesus regarding any of the accusations that the religious leaders had brought against Jesus. Both Roman leaders said that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. John 18:38 says, “Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, ‘I find no fault in Him at all.’” Pilate recognized that Jesus was innocent of any crime and that he should have immediately released Jesus.

However, Pilate wanted to please the Jews. As a result, Pilate said, “I will therefore chastise Him and release *Him*.” Pilate wanted to please the Jews to try and maintain a good relationship with them. Here, we see that Pilate was willing to give a Roman beating to Jesus in order to please the Jews as he apparently thought that would satisfy their envy. John 19:1-3 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.” A Roman scourging was a beating by several Roman soldiers who used a wooden handle to which several leather thongs were attached. At the end of each leather thong was a piece of sharp metal, which would sometimes cut clear to the bones. Some people given a Roman scourging died during the beating. Pilate probably thought that the Jews would be satisfied

once Jesus had been severely beaten.

Instead of satisfying the Jews Luke 23:18-22 says, “And they all cried out at once, saying, ‘Away with this *Man*, and release to us Barabbas’— who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them. But they shouted, saying, ‘Crucify *Him*, crucify *Him*!’ 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.’” Here, we see that the Jews made it clear to Pilate that they would not be satisfied if he just gave Jesus a scourging. They wanted His death.

Pilate knew that it was necessary for him to release one prisoner to them at the time of the feast. One of the worst criminals in the prison at that time was a man by the name of Barabbas. This man had been involved in a rebellion so the Romans had a reason why they would like to kill him. We also see that Barabbas was guilty of murder. Normally, people do not want a murderer released because they fear that the murderer will kill additional people. As a result, Pilate gave the Jewish religious leaders a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. John 18:39-40 says, “‘But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’ Then they all cried again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but Barabbas!’ Now Barabbas was a robber.” These verses also tell us that Barabbas was a robber. Pilate probably thought that the Jews would much rather have Jesus freed than Barabbas.

However, the religious leaders continued to demand that Jesus be crucified. Pilate asked the Jews for a third time what Jesus had done because Pilate said that he had found no reason why Jesus should be put to death. As a result, he again offered his compromise of just giving Jesus a Roman scourging. It was at this point that the scourging was actually given and the Roman soldiers mocked Jesus and placed a crown of thorns on His head. John 19:4-6 says, “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.’ 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.’” Pilate did everything that he could do without crucifying Jesus to try and please the Jews.

Pilate told them again that he did not find any fault in Jesus. He even told the Jews that they could take Jesus and crucify Him. Here, we see that Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and did not want to be held responsible for the death of Jesus. In fact, Matthew 27:24 says, “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.’” Pilate had said three times that Jesus was innocent so he actually gave testimony that the Jewish religious leaders were guilty. They accepted that guilt that day because the Jews said in Matthew 27:25, “And all the people answered and said, ‘His blood be on us and on our children.’” Later, the high priest would try to deny their guilt. In Acts 5:28, the high priest said, “‘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!’” The religious leaders accepted blame at that moment

but later did not want to accept blame for their choice.

However, Pilate also had to make a choice that day. He had to decide whether he would condemn an innocent man to death in order to please the Jews or do what he knew was right and release Jesus. Luke 23:23-25 says, “But they were insistent, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And the voices of these men and of the chief priests prevailed. So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will.” The Jews were not ready to quit demanding the crucifixion of Jesus even though Pilate had already given Jesus a scourging.

The religious leaders were very insistent in their demands. That began to shout with loud voices that Jesus should be crucified. Pilate had condemned the chief priests, the rulers and the other people that were there that day when he had declared three times that Jesus was innocent. Now, Pilate was forced to make his own choice. He could do what he knew was right and release Jesus or he could make the choice to condemn himself by satisfying the Jewish religious leaders. We see that Pilate condemned himself and made the choice to satisfy the Jewish religious leaders by commanding what the religious leaders were demanding. Pilate may try to wash his hands throughout eternity because of the choice that he made that day.

Pilate then released Barabbas, even though he was guilty of rebellion, murder and robbery. Then he delivered Jesus to the will of the Jewish religious leaders. Here, we see that both the Jewish religious leaders and Pilate had made their choice to reject Jesus and condemn him to death. We do see the great love and mercy of Jesus shown that day. Later, as Jesus hung on the cross, Luke 23:34 says, “Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.’ And they divided His garments and cast lots.” Pilate, the Jewish religious leaders, the soldiers, and everyone else that was involved that day will not be judged at the final judgment for their evil deeds on that day; because Jesus, in His mercy, asked the Father to forgive them for their sins of that day.

Instead, each person who rejects Jesus will be judged according to all of their other works, excluding those that were committed that day. Revelation 20:12-13 says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.” The religious leaders, Pilate, and all of the others who reject Christ will be judged for their sinful works, excluding those committed that day. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus died for all our sins and so we helped to place Jesus on that cross. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the mercy that Jesus showed to all of us that day.