

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

RLJ-1980

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PART 77: THE POLITICAL TRIAL OF JESUS

PONTIUS PILATE

Luke is the only gospel account that provides information about Herod the tetrarch or Herod Antipas as he was known. He was the ruler over Galilee and the son of Herod the Great, the man who tried to kill Jesus as a young boy some three decades earlier. Herod Antipas had come to Jerusalem with his soldiers to take part in the Passover.

Pontius Pilate was the governor of Judea. As such, the Jewish religious leadership brought Jesus to him after their kangaroo court convicted the God-man. They wanted Pilate to rubber stamp the conviction and officially put Jesus to death. The governor briefly questioned Jesus and quickly determined He was innocent. **Luke 23:4**

The ungodly Jewish leadership continued to press for Jesus' death, claiming the God-man was stirring up rebellion wherever Jews lived, especially in Galilee. When Pilate heard Jesus was from the region of Galilee, he happily passed the mess along to Herod because it was part of his jurisdiction. **verses 5-7**

HEROD ANTIPAS

John the Baptist had previously condemned Herod for taking his brother's wife and this is why John was executed. Herod was familiar with the ministry of Jesus and the miracles that surrounded Him. He hoped that that the God-man would do something supernatural in front of him. **verse 8**

But Jesus was clearly not in the mood to perform for the tetrarch and refused to answer any of Herod's questions. **verse 9**

The chief priests and scribes continued their incessant prating, shouting one accusation after another. **verse 10**

Herod's attitude changed at the continued silent treatment from the God-man. He was offended that Jesus refused to speak with him and his approach transitioned from curiosity to contempt. Herod's soldiers (bodyguard) put an expensive robe on the Son of God that was fit for a ruler to denote their scorn for Him as a king. They mercilessly ridiculed the seemingly weak man before sending Him back to Pontius Pilate. **verse 11**

This act of Pontius Pilate sending Jesus to Herod, and the tetrarch sending the God-man back to Pilate, had the effect of breaking down whatever wall existed between them. The irony is that two political leaders became friends at the expense of Jesus. **verse 12**

BACK TO PILATE

Once Jesus was brought back to the Praetorium, Pontius Pilate reiterated that he did not find any fault with Jesus, despite the accusations of the Jews. He wanted to return the accused so they could judge the God-man according to Jewish law. Yet the religious



leadership stubbornly refused Pilate's offer because they wanted to kill Jesus and needed Roman authorization. **John 18:31-32**

Once Pilate realized the end game, he took Jesus into the Praetorium and asked about His kingship. **verse 33**

Jesus inquired whether this was Pilate's question as a result of suspicion or was it prompted by accusation? **verse 34**

Pilate was a Roman governor and not a Jew by birth or conversion. He had no belief in a messiah and readily admitted that the question was prompted by the accusations of Jesus' own countrymen. He was curious as to what the God-man had done to warrant their call for death. **verse 35**

Jesus' response assured Pilate that He was no threat to the Romans. The God-man's kingdom was spiritual and it would derail the Godhead's plan if the holy angels assigned to protect Jesus decimated mankind. **verse 36**

The governor wanted to know if Jesus was a king and what territory He claimed. Jesus confirmed the charge for which he had been arraigned, but reiterated His kingdom was spiritual in nature and built upon truth. Anyone interested in truth would be drawn to the God-man. **verse 37**

What is truth? Pilate's philosophical question was not new and poignant given the fact that the Creator stood before him incarnated as the God-man.

*“I am the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)*

At any rate, Pilate was not interested in receiving an answer to his scornful and condescending question. He was the last in a string of people – the apostles, Martha, the rich young ruler, the lawyer, the Samaritan woman at the well, and even Nicodemus – to ask a question of Jesus. Had he been genuine, Pilate would not have immediately walked out of the Praetorium to speak with the Jews. Doing so showed that he did not care to hear anything further from the unimpressive man standing in front of him.

Pilate patronized the Jews outside, who did not want to make themselves ceremonially unclean for the upcoming high sabbath by entering a Roman building (John 19:31), and informed them that Jesus was innocent of all charges. **verse 38; Luke 23:13-15**

The Roman governor offered to scourge Jesus prior to releasing Him in an attempt to placate the angry mob. **Luke 23:16**

SETTING A PRISONER FREE

There was no provision in the Mosaic law to release a prisoner at the Passover and it falls to speculation as to what Pontius Pilate was referencing. The best guess is that it was a Roman custom of lenience designed to ingratiate the conquerors and keep the Jews from agitation and rebellion. It was completely absurd that Pilate was offering to

set an innocent man free under this provision. **Matthew 27:15; Mark 15:6; Luke 23:17; John 18:39**

It is interesting that Peter and John both record Pilate offering to release the “King of the Jews.” Clearly, this was a dig at the Jewish leadership because they hated the God-man and Pilate astutely recognized their envy.

The religious vermin worked the mob into a frenzy so that they immediately rejected Jesus and called for the release of Barabbas. **Matthew 27:16-18; Mark 15:7-10; Luke 23:18-19; John 18:40**

Jesus did not advocate rebellion against Rome. He taught peaceably, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, raised the dead, and cast out devils, all while promoting the Kingdom of God.

Barabbas was the leader of a robber gang who killed its victims and led a failed insurrection against the Roman occupiers. He was convicted of murder and sedition.

Pilate thought about the matter. His wife came to him and told of a disturbing dream she had about Jesus and wanted to warn her husband not to condemn an innocent man.

Matthew 27:19

The ungodly worked behind the scenes to ensure the crowd called for Barabbas to be freed. **Matthew 27:20-21; Mark 15:11**

Why would Pontius Pilate ask a mob for input in governance? Yet, that is exactly what took place. Lucifer and his minions fomented an overwhelming blood lust in the crowd and they began calling for the crucifixion of Jesus. **Matthew 27:22; Mark 15:12-13; Luke 23:20-21**

Pilate asked what Jesus had done wrong, but the murderous intent was like a runaway train as the clamor for the death of Jesus increased. **Matthew 27:23; Mark 15:14**

Luke recorded that the nothing short of death would satisfy the howling crowd, not even the infamous Roman scourging. The plotting of the chief priests had prevailed! **Luke 23:22-23**

As a judge, it was Pilate’s duty to see justice served, but he did not want a rebellion to result from the days’ proceedings. Realizing it was a futile endeavor to save Jesus’ life, he publicly washed his hands of the matter, but it did nothing to lessen the guilt he felt. **Matthew 27:24**

The crowd not realizing the enormity of their words told Pilate to let the guilt of putting the God-man to death be upon them and their children. They stupidly consented to bear a far-reaching curse! **Matthew 27:25**

In less than forty years Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed. More than a million Jews died in the Roman siege; thousands died from famine and an equal number from disease; thousands died by the sword and their blood ran so plentifully in the streets that it reportedly extinguished things burning in the city.

Still thousands more were crucified afterwards, suffering the same punishment they inflicted on Jesus. So great was the number of crucified that the Romans halted the crucifixions due to lack of wood.

The nation remained scattered for almost two thousand years until Lucifer resurrected it in 1948. Most of the people in Israel today reject Jesus as the Messiah and embrace practically every form of evil listed in the Bible. They exist as monuments to their ancestors who foolishly called down heavenly vengeance.

Pilate released Barabbas from prison and Jesus was taken into custody. **Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24-25**

The prophetic words of Jesus continued to be fulfilled.

“...the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.” (Matthew 20:18-19)

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?