

# Jesus Before Pilate

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Date: 04 February 2018

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[ 0 : 00 ] Maybe it was when you tried out for a sports team, or a musical group, or a theater troupe. Maybe it was when you were vying for a promotion at work. Maybe it was from a spouse, or from a family member, you were rejected.

We all know what rejection is. We've all experienced rejection in some measure. Maybe you felt rejection from even a church.

People who should be committed to you, but you felt like they rejected you. This morning, I want to let you know that Jesus thoroughly understands what it means to be rejected.

This morning, we're going to look at a passage in Matthew chapter 27, verses 11 through 26. And in this passage, we're going to see Jesus, the Messiah, the long-awaited King, the one in whom the whole Old Testament is anticipating to come and take up David's throne and bring in a forever kingdom.

[ 1 : 17 ] He's going to be rejected today. He was innocent, but he went willingly, and he was rejected.

This morning, we're going to look at the trial of Jesus, the Roman trial of Jesus before Pilate, and this trial is going to unfold in three scenes.

The first scene is Pilate asking Jesus some questions, and the second scene is Pilate asking a Jewish crowd some questions, and the last scene is the verdict.

Who makes the verdict? Scene one.

Jesus is questioned by Pilate. Matthew 27, this is verses 11 through 14. We read, Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, the governor is Pilate, Are you the king of the Jews?

[ 2 : 28 ] Jesus said, You have said so. But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate said to him, Do you not hear how many things they testify against you?

But Jesus gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor, Pilate, was greatly amazed. Now, you may be asking the question, What is Jesus doing there, standing before this Roman magistrate?

Verse 11, Now Jesus stood before the governor. How did that happen? Here's what this passage is going to tell us. How a Jewish Messiah ends up on a Roman cross.

As part of Roman occupation and control of Jerusalem in Israel, part of the authority structure in understanding of the time was this.

Only Romans had the authority to kill somebody. Only they could exercise capital punishment. And so there's a reason why Jesus is standing before Pilate, the Roman magistrate of that place and time.

[ 3 : 42 ] The chief priests and elders did not have the authority to legally kill Jesus, even if they found him guilty of death. Which brings us back to Matthew chapter 26, 63 through 66.

It's Caiaphas' house. He's the high priest, the Sanhedrin, this kind of Jewish at this moment. It's a little bit of a kangaroo court. They pronounce Jesus guilty of blasphemy in verse 65.

He's claiming to be someone he's not. And then in verse 66, they condemn him to death. But they don't have the authority to kill him.

So they need to get the Roman magistrate on board. It's Pontius Pilate that has to condemn Jesus to death in order for him to die.

And so what we see happening in chapter 27, verses 1 and 2, it's early morning now. It's been an all-nighter by the Sanhedrin.

[ 4 : 44 ] They've been up all night. And now they have brought a charge. Jesus is a blasphemer worthy of death. And in 27, 1 and 2, when morning came, early morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death.

How to put him to death? And they bound him and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate the governor. The whole Sanhedrin trial, the Jewish trial of Jesus took place in Caiaphas' house. And so what happens in 27, 1 and 2, they bind Jesus up and they bring him to Herod's castle, which was the praetorium. This is where the Roman magistrate would be when he was in Jerusalem. And so they parade him through Jerusalem early that morning. The first morning, the first Good Friday morning. And so what we see happening in 27, 1 and 2, these chief priests and elders taking counsel together against Jesus.

Do you realize what they're doing? They're trying to figure out how they can get Pilate to condemn this Jew. And they come up with a plan.

[ 6 : 02 ] Because they know that when they bring them before Pilate, if they say, Pilate, we bring this lawbreaker to you, this blasphemer to you, and this blasphemy is worthy of death.

Do you know what Pilate would say? Not in the eyes of Rome. It's not grounds for capital punishment. So they had to think of a different charge. And do you know what the charge they came up with?

Sedition. Treason. They're going to charge Jesus with being a king who's seeking to undermine the Roman rule and ultimately be opposed to Caesar.

Now that's something Pilate would have to take seriously. And so what we see happening in 27, 11. Now Jesus stood before the governor and Pilate asked him this question.

Are you the king of the Jews? Charges have already been brought. He's claiming to be the king of Israel. The Jews, Pilate. Do something about it.

[ 7 : 14 ] So Pilate asks him, Are you the king of the Jews? Are you a threat to Caesar? Are you a threat to Rome? Pilate's asking this question because these are the charges that the chief priests and elders have leveled against Jesus.

He's being charged with being a rival king. Jesus answers this and his answer is measured.

You have said so. It's an interesting answer. You have said so. You're saying it. It's coming out of your mouth.

If Jesus had just said yes, Pilate would have understood him as making a claim of being an earthly king.

And Jesus is saying, I'm beyond an earthly king. We see that played out in John 19, 33 through 38 where actually John records a conversation between Jesus and Pilate and Jesus makes it clear that his kingdom is not of this world.

[ 8 : 29 ] Now if Jesus said no, he would be denying his kingship. And so Jesus says, you've said so. And so he maintains his innocence and forces Pilate to have to make a really difficult decision.

And then we see the next question which comes in verse 13. Then Pilate said to him, do you not hear how many things they testify against you?

Look at verse 12. But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he gave no answer. So here's the situation. Throughout the praetorium, we learn from John that the chief priests and elders don't go into Herod's palace because that would defile them on the day before the Sabbath.

And so they're staying outside while Jesus is inside and Pilate's kind of going back and forth and Jesus can hear the whole thing. And these chief priests and elders are making accusations about Jesus in addition to him claiming to be an insurrectionist, to be treasonous.

They're loading it up. And so Pilate's hearing all this being accused of Jesus. And Jesus doesn't answer them a thing.

[ 9 : 42 ] And it gets Pilate's attention. And so in verse 13, he asks, do you not hear how many things they testify against you? Are you not hearing this? Jesus, are you not hearing this?

They want to kill you. Do you not get how serious this is? And in verse 14, Jesus doesn't answer Pilate.

But he gave Pilate no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed. So Jesus is silent to the charges of the chief priests and elders.

He's silent to Pilate's asking of a question for why aren't you responding? Here's what should be going through your mind. Isaiah 53, 7, he was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth like a lamb that is led to the slaughter.

Remember, this is Passover. And like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

[10:56] His silence was purposeful. He's intentionally being quiet. And it impressed Pilate.

He's greatly amazed. Jesus is not seeking to defend himself at all costs. I mean, how many of these trials has Pilate overseen? And when a charge like this, he's used to people freaking out and trying to defend themselves at all costs.

They don't want to die. Jesus is not saying a word. It leaves an impression. So here at the end of scene one, we have this accusation made against Jesus, but he's not saying anything.

He's standing before Pilate and he's not responding. He's silent. He's silent. Pilate. What we start to see here is that Pilate doesn't believe he's guilty.

Pilate's starting to see this man is no threat to Rome. He's amazed that he's not responding, but this guy, he's no threat to Caesar.

[12:15] and so what we're going to start seeing is that not only is Pilate unconvinced of the guilt of Jesus he says so much in John 19 I find no guilt in him what we're going to start seeing now is Pilate starts to seek a way to release Jesus so what's being established here by Matthew is that Jesus is under trial by Pilate, Pilate is finding him innocent Jesus is remaining silent and he's getting accused by his own scene 2, Pilate questions the crowd now remember this is all during the feast this is all during the Passover just hours before Jesus has practiced Passover observed it with his disciples and he completely renewed it to focus on him, his body breaking of the bread his blood this cup he's retooled Passover to be about his great sacrifice that he's going to make so in verse 15 we learn about a custom that took place in Jerusalem during the Passover and it's this now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted now we don't know how long this custom had been going on but apparently there's this practice with which the Roman governor of the time Pontius Pilate appointed by Rome to maintain Roman rule he would grant on Passover amnesty for one prisoner a prisoner of the crowd's choosing it was great political maneuvering it was great political maneuvering and so this custom is taking place the the chief priests and elders would have known about it and of course

Pilate would have known about it and of course the Jews living in Jerusalem would know about it that's why they're at the Roman Praetorium right now in verse 16 we read and they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas it's really important for you to understand who they is a reference to they is a reference most likely to the Jewish crowd they had already picked their prisoner Barabbas and what we read is that he was notorious the original language is more like notable to Romans he was notorious to the Jews living in Jerusalem he would have been more like a hero like a freedom fighter we learn from Luke 23 19 that Barabbas was actually an insurrectionist and a murderer what he would represent is for all those in Jerusalem who wanted to be free of Roman rule this guy this guy was the guy he was using violence to try to get Rome out of Jerusalem he would have been a freedom fighter so for many in Jerusalem he would have been thought of as a hero

Rome would have seen him as a threat what we know is that he was a political figure representing the will of many in Jerusalem and what I want you to understand is that they most likely refers to the Jews in Jerusalem and here comes question three the first question to the crowd so when they had gathered Pilate said to them whom do you want me to release for you Barabbas or Jesus who's called the Christ so what Pilate is essentially doing is I know you want me to release Barabbas already but but how about this Jesus you know the Christ Messiah your king Pilate doesn't think Jesus is guilty of the charges that have been made against him and so he's seeking to use this custom to release Jesus he's given this crowd an opportunity

Pilate at this point would have known that Jesus had gained a following in Jerusalem that he was well thought of by many in Jerusalem and so what he's putting to this Jewish crowd is who are you going to choose you're going to choose the insurrectionist Barabbas murderer or are you going to choose the Christ Jesus the king who are you going to pick in verse 17 we start learning of what is behind this decision to offer Jesus with Barabbas verse 17 it says Pilate knew that the chief priests and elders were envious of Jesus and it was out of envy that they had delivered him up excuse me that's verse 18 they were envious of Jesus fame and favor with the crowds and they resented his public rebukes so Pilate is giving this crowd an opportunity to circumvent the envy of the chief priests and elders he's giving them an opportunity to through this custom to choose Jesus despite the envy of the chief priests and elders he's saying who do you want to pick who do you want to

pick who do you want me to release to you the murderer or Jesus and in verse 19 there's still further reason why we see

Pilate doing this we learn about his wife besides while he was sitting on the judgment seat his wife sent word to him have nothing to do with that righteous man for I have suffered much because of him today I'm in a dream Pilate's wife sent him a message while he's on his judgment seat while he's exercising decisions now it must have been urgent so for my wife to send me a text or to call me while I'm in a staff meeting or an elder meeting something like that I know this is urgent and she says have nothing to do with that righteous man in reference to Jesus for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream we're not told the content of the dream we just know that she suffered because of it but what we know about Romans is they believed that dreams were omens from the gods and this would have been a bad omen but in Matthew this is not the first time we read about dreams in Matthew 1 and 2 alone there are five dreams that God uses to direct people to do his will so in light of that it makes sense that we have this kind of idea that behind this troubling dream is God

[ 20 : 19 ] God's at work and this dream of this dream of hers affects her and she contacts her husband and it affects him goes into why he wants to release Jesus by the way that word for righteous man you gotta hear what he's saying he's done no wrong now I need to clarify something there's nothing in the gospels that would make one conclude that Pilate or his wife was a follower of Jesus neither of them are pronouncing that he's lord of their life but what we are seeing here is that this gentile magistrate despite the accusations of the Jews he sees the innocence of Jesus he's not guilty and his maneuvering to try to release

Jesus is putting Pilate at odds with the Jews now between this question in verse 17 and then the question that we read in verse 21 it's essentially the same question but there's an interval of time in between it and so Pilate says hey who do you want me to release to you Barabbas or Jesus in verse 17 and he comes back to it in verse 21 so who have you decided so there's this period of time in between and in that period of time verse 20 now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus and so when we get to verse 21 which of the two do you want me to release to you without hesitation the crowds respond

Barabbas they've made their decision and yet Pilate isn't done seeking to release Jesus look at the next question he asks the crowd in verse 22 then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ it's almost like this God using this Gentile magistrate to speak a word to the Jewish people what do you want me to do with the Christ now that you have rejected him what do you want me to do with him if I'm not going to release him to you what do you want me to do with him again he's hoping that there are enough in this crowd to recognize that Jesus is not guilty but it totally backfires on him the crowd doesn't fight they all said let him be crucified they're doing what the chief priest and elders have persuaded them to do but they're doing it it's out of their mouth release

Barabbas destroy Jesus and in verse 23 we have Pilate's last question of this sequence they're all questions so far and again he asks the crowd why what evil has he done he doesn't get it he doesn't get why they're doing this but again his question goes to Jesus innocence what evil has he done he hasn't done anything he sees no guilt in Jesus that would require crucifixion capital punishment but the crowds insist and they shout all the more let him be crucified you remember what happened just days before when Jesus was coming into Jerusalem the crowds who were with him were coming from Galilee upon his entrance into

Jerusalem they had spread their cloaks on the road they had spread palm branches and they shouted Hosanna to the son of David blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna God saves in the highest and while they were praising and declaring this the people of Jerusalem the residents there they were asking who is this guy and now this crowd in verse 23 they're shouting let him be crucified days earlier the king has come and now crucify him so by the end of scene two we have the sense of Jesus innocence but he's being condemned to the cross by his own which leads us into scene three the decision some kind of decision who's making this decision verse 24 we read this so when

[ 26 : 12 ] Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing but rather a riot was beginning he took water and washed his hands and before the crowd saying washing his hands before the crowd and saying I am innocent of this man's blood see to it yourselves now remember this would have been a powder crag moment politically Passover Jerusalem is usually 30,000 in the city it's swelled up to 180,000 and so this kind of event man it's loaded politically charged a lot of lives are at stake here if Pilate

keeps on pushing then who knows what's going to erupt a riot is forming and so what we see here happening is Pilate is making a decision of expedience not of principle and he seeks to absolve himself of any responsibility he takes a play out of a Jewish handbook and washes his hands for all the Jewish crowds to see what's he going to eat that's not a

Roman practice that's a Jewish practice he washes his hands in front of them and he says I am innocent of this man's blood his blood is not on me see to it yourselves we bumped into that phrase see to it yourself just recently it's when Judas returns the 30 pieces of silver and the chief priests and elders say to him see to it yourself Judas what they're saying hey his blood that money is not our fault we're not responsible for it but they were responsible for it and even though Pilate is trying to absolve himself of responsibility oh he is not innocent here there's nobody innocent here no one is innocent there's one innocent person Jesus but everybody else they have a role in this Pilate has some responsibility in this

Jesus says as much in John 19 11 where he tells Pilate those who delivered me over to you or have greater sin than you but he's still saying you have a responsibility in this Pilate he's not nearly as guilty as the chief priests the elders and the Jewish crowd Pilate would have been between a rock and a hard place the chief priests and elders have played their hand out really well they're forcing Pilate to give into what they wanted to put Jesus to death and eventually we learn from John that they even played the Caesar card if you release this man you're not Caesar's friend everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar it's called political leverage hey Pilate if you don't condemn him we're going straight to

Caesar that you released a king that would have been the end of Caesar or Pilate's career upon hearing the words I am innocent of this man's blood see to it yourself you take the responsibility what we read in verse 25 is absolutely striking in verse 25 and all the people answered his blood be on us and on our children his blood be on us and on our children we hear you Pilate his blood on us and our children this is the Passover folks this is the Passover lamb his blood be on us they're not talking about his blood to deliver them they're not talking about his blood to forgive them they're talking about blood guilt we take responsibility for his death we're killing him his death is on us they're not thinking about

Jesus his blood shed for them to deliver them they want him dead there's something very subtle that happens in verse 25 and in order to help you see it we got to back up a little bit in verse 15 we read this now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted the crowd it was the Jews who are living in Jerusalem who had come to Herod's palace to make a case for Barabbas and then in verse 20 now the chief priest and the elders persuaded the crowd the same crowd this Jewish crowd in Jerusalem in verse 24 we read this Pilate washed his hands before the crowd saying I am innocent of this man's blood see to it yourself and then in verse 25 we read this and all the people answered

[ 31 : 53 ] Matthew's use of that word people the normal use is to talk about the Jewish nation this crowd is now a representative of the Jewish nation and they are rejecting Jesus as their messianic king and they're claiming responsibility for it by saying his blood is on our heads and on our children's in less than 40 years Jerusalem is sacked the temple is raised they are judged there his blood was on their head and they ceased to be the people of God they once were they rejected their king and they rejected their standing before God so in this last scene of this

Roman trial of Jesus we have essentially the Roman crowd or the Jewish crowd making the judgment they reject Jesus as the Christ the king and they force Pilate to crucify him and Pilate concedes but the greater guilt is on the people and in verse 26 Pilate releases Barabbas and he has Jesus scourged and delivered over to be crucified to be scourged was horrific if you were there to see it it would turn your stomach they would use a flagellum called a cat of nine tails and what it was a leather whip with nine separate whips and what it would entail is they would weave in bone and metal and what they would do is they would whip a person whose back is exposed and then they would drag it across their skin and it would open up their back it fillet them and they would do it in order to prepare them for crucifixion that they would die faster but here's what you need to notice Matthew doesn't go into the details of scourging do you know why the emphasis is on the rejection of Jesus by his people the emphasis on this passage is on Jesus innocence he was not guilty of sedition Barabbas was Jesus says as much as 27 4 when he says I've betrayed innocent blood he's talking about Jesus blood Pilate's wife was scared by the dream and he says don't have anything to do with this righteous man this innocent man Pilate himself tried to release Jesus multiple times and

finally asks what evil has he done the emphasis here is on Jesus innocence but I'm here to tell you there's a far more profound innocence of Jesus you must know about it he's not just innocent of the charge of treason against

Rome he is innocent of any charge of any sin against God he lived a life none of us ever could he pleased God every moment of every day his innocence is an innocence before Rome but it's an innocence before God he did what none of us could do further emphasis is on Jesus silence he's purposely silent remember in the garden when he was arrested Peter slices Malchus his ear off Jesus heals his ear and he says to Peter Peter I could call down 12 legions of angels if I wanted to and the point is he didn't want to he was doing the will of his father and he had to be arrested my point here Jesus is willingly going to be rejected he's purposefully not saying anything he's fulfilling Isaiah 53 7 in order to go to his death he's giving himself he's about the father's will he's the innocent one willingly going to his death last emphasis I want to draw your attention to is Jesus the Jewish Messiah is rejected by the Jews living in Jerusalem at that time they choose a murderous insurrectionist over the loving Messiah who is innocent the Jewish crowd has given a choice and they decide and so humanly speaking the crowd persuaded Pilate to have Jesus crucified but if you would flip over to your Bibles in your Bibles to Acts chapter 2 verse 23 Peter preaching on [ 37 : 43 ] Pentecost to Jews says to them this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God it was all God's plan it's all God's plan you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men they were responsible but God is reigning and in control this is carrying out his purpose so here's the point of all this here's why this is here the Jews rejection of the Jewish Messiah resulted in the rescue of countless Gentiles the Jewish nations rejection of their king opened up this Jewish king to make a whole new people a whole new nation for himself comprised of people men and women boys and girls from every tribe tongue and nation around the world

God ordained the Jewish Messiah to be rejected by the Jewish people people in order for Gentiles to be brought into his new people it's amazing so here's let me leave you with this there might be some people with Jewish ancestry in this room but the majority of us are Gentiles how do a bunch of Gentiles living nearly 2,000 years after Jesus was rejected by Jews in Jerusalem how do we respond to this well the first is this choose your king choose your king who are you going to live for you either reject

Jesus and you deny him or you receive Jesus in order to receive him as your king you got to deny yourself and follow after him so the first response is choose your king and don't reject him please the second is this for those of us who have chosen Jesus as our king this should sober us to see what he did in order to rescue us it should humble us Romans chapter 11 if you haven't read that read it it helped Paul talks about why God would harden some of these Jews in order to allow Gentiles to come into his kingdom one of the effects is to humble us we don't deserve any of this and the third way for those of us who've chosen Jesus is to rejoice his rejection resulted in our salvation he shed his blood and his blood is not on our heads his blood forgives us this is all God's plan his rejection resulted in our rescue and now what we say is not crucify him we say things like oh worship him live for him bow down to him today we've seen a rejection of Jesus by his people next Sunday next Sunday is a rejection that Jesus has been dreading let's pray oh God in heaven we do thank you so much for your word God would you do your work in our hearts through your word as Gentiles living 2000 years after these events we are sobered but we are grateful God we would ask that you would save save many many Jews save many Gentiles bring them into your kingdom through the blood of Jesus amen