

Pilate and Jesus

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[0 : 00] Let's turn again for a little to the section of scripture we read. We see at the beginning of chapter 19, then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.

And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it in his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him saying, Hail, King of the Jews, and struck him with their hands and so on. Now we saw last week as Pilate was examining Jesus, that he asked the question, what is truth? And we saw that Pilate didn't wait for the answer.

It's a very strange thing that as Pilate was in the presence of the one person in this world who is real truth, truth personified, that he just asked the question and turned away and walked back out.

And we saw that Pilate, we mentioned that, Pilate was going back and forth, speaking to the people and coming back in to see Jesus. And Pilate, having examined Jesus, he went out again and he said to the people, look, he said, I find no guilt in this man.

[1 : 18] Not just not guilty, but no guilt. It was quite a remarkable statement that Pilate makes. It's one thing to say a person's not guilty. But he goes deeper than that, further than that, where he says, actually, I find no guilt in him.

And that's not something we could say really of anybody. Because one of the things that sin does, it leaves guilt. There's nobody in here today who doesn't know what guilt is, who hasn't experienced guilt.

Because sin always leaves guilt in its wake. That's the nature of sin. But Jesus never had any guilt. Because he never sinned.

But of course, the amazing thing that Jesus did on the cross was that he took our sin. And he took our guilt. And he took our shame. He took all the ugliness of sin.

All its consequences. All its pains. All its sorrows. Everything that sin is and everything that sin produces, Jesus took that upon himself on the cross for us.

[2 : 27] So Pilate is making this great statement where he says, I find no guilt in him. And immediately after this, you would expect that the next thing would be the release of Jesus.

You would say, well, that's imminent. Here's the Roman governor, the man who has the authority to release Jesus or to put him to death. He is saying, look, not only is he not guilty, I find no guilt in him.

And you would expect him to walk in and say to Jesus, right, Jesus, you're a free man. I cannot in any way hold you any longer. You're free to go.

But that isn't what happened. Because there was an outcry from all the Jewish leaders and all the religious authorities. No, you can't do that. Now, as we know, Pilate was ruling over a land that was like a really hot potato, if you could put any other, that kind of description.

It was a political minefield, the holy land at that time. And so Pilate is having to sort of balance the books and he's kind of walking eggshells.

[3 : 38] And he's going to have to try and be careful and put judgments in ways that is going to be politically correct. And so he goes back in and he realizes, well, I've got a problem here.

So then he has a brainwave. Or he thinks it's a brainwave. Because at this time of year, they always released a prisoner. So there's no doubt whatever in Pilate's mind, as he thinks through, he probably asks, right, who's in prison?

Or maybe he just knew about this guy Barabbas. Because although it says here he's a robber, Luke tells us that he was in prison for murder and for insurrection. So he was a rioter.

He was somebody who was at the, he was, I suppose if you were to put it into, he was a person, almost like a kind of, I suppose, a bin Laden type of character who was at the back of causing riot, disruption within the place, leading in the way of murder.

And he's a last person that people would naturally want to be free and walking free in the streets. So Pilate, it's very obvious that that's why Pilate chose this man Barabbas.

[4 : 47] And he said, okay, this time of year, a person is released from prison. So he holds up before them this man Barabbas, notorious character, or Jesus.

And I'm sure Pilate in his mind thinks, well, they're obviously, they're pumped for Jesus. They'll go for Jesus. They'll release Jesus. Nobody in their right mind would want Barabbas released. But straight away the cry is, release Barabbas.

That's who we want. We want Jesus crucified. We want Barabbas to go free. And I think it's here we see the utter madness of sin.

We see the fires of hell burning within the hearts of these men. We see the twistedness of hate.

That it is incapable of seeing the light.

They cannot see what they're doing. As we look back from, and we're able to go down the avenues of history, and to see what they did.

[5 : 48] We see, that is utterly mad. And yet, at one level, that's what people are doing all the time. Because every time people choose to reject Jesus and to say, we will not have this man rule over us.

We do not want Jesus as king of our heart, of king of our life. They're making the Barabbas choice. Because there are no other alternatives. It's one or other.

You might not think that that's what you're doing, but that's actually what you're doing. You're choosing the way of death. You're choosing the way that ends in death. And it's the same whether we do it individually or do it nationally.

When we see a nation trying to obliterate the Christian faith, and take everything of the great gospel of Jesus Christ to silence it, and to lift up secularism in its place, it's the very same decision that people are saying.

Give us Barabbas. Give us what ultimately leads to death and to ruin. And that's why it's so absurd, because that's what sin does. Sin blinds.

[7 : 00] Sin twists. Sin makes people become totally illogical in their being. And it's happening all the time. It's not just happening here, but here is where it's manifest most clearly.

And so, as a result of this, when Pilate realizes that what he thought was a loophole for him is becoming a noose around his neck, he then makes a very bizarre decision.

He orders that Jesus be flogged. Why? I don't know. It could be that maybe he thought, if they see Jesus being flogged, and they see innocent blood being spilled, that might satisfy them.

Because a Roman flogging was an awful thing. A person was stripped, put over this stump, or this kind of, there was a kind of a pole or a post, and their hands and their feet were chained, and then they were whipped with a whip that often had bone and metal in it in order to absolutely rip the flesh.

Many people died under a Roman whipping. There was no limit to the amount of strokes a person could get in it. So Pilate ordered that Jesus would be flogged.

[8 : 26] And maybe he thought that through that, that that might satisfy the people. I don't know why he ordered it, but that's what he did. And then after the flogging, we find that comes the place of mocking, where they took a purple robe and made a crown of thorns.

Now, one of the things, it's years ago I was in the Holy Land, but one of the things that, there's many things I found fascinating, but one of the things was the actual thorns there.

For those of you who've been there and seen, it's not the kind of, we might talk about our thistles and thorns here. The thorns there, there's huge spikes on them. And just the very idea of having a crown made of that and rammed into your head.

And the pictures that we see painted of Jesus with the crown of thorns, you always see blood running down. And that's how it would be. It's impossible to have that rammed into your head and not have blood flowing down.

So here is Jesus and he's taken out and he's being mocked. But it's very interesting that the crown that the world put on Jesus is thorns because the thorns is a picture of the curse.

[9 : 40] When God made this world, he made it perfect. Remember? And it was, remember how Adam and Eve, how they disobeyed God.

And God came to deal with Adam and Eve in mercy, but there was also the curse. And one of the things that the Lord said, curse it is the ground because of you.

Thorns and thistles, it shall bring forth for you. That's the fruit of the curse in the ground. Thorns. And that's what the world places. That's the only crown that the world will place upon Jesus. It's the fruit of the curse. That's what the world thinks of Jesus.

And so here we have Jesus paraded and they mocking him. And then after all this, Pilate takes Jesus out to the crowd again. And he says, I want you to know I find no guilt in him.

[10:44] And then we find that in verse 5, so Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, behold the man. Behold the man.

Now that is a very loaded statement that. Because in many ways, as people gazed upon Jesus, as people gazed upon Jesus, that's exactly who they saw, a man.

They didn't see anything divine. They didn't understand really who he was. He was just a man.

Same as Caesar. Caesar was a king.

Jesus was just a man. And that's how it is for so many people today. They look at Jesus. Nobody can dispute the existence of Jesus.

He's a historical character. But they see him just as a man. They recognize he was a great man.

And they look upon him as a religious man. A man who did many great things.

[11:46] A man who took on, and a lot of people think, Jesus was a great character. He took on the religious establishment. They see him as a non-conformist. They see him as a rebel. And they say, yes, he was a great man.

But Jesus didn't just take on the religious establishment for the sake of taking it on. He was trying to deal with the hypocrisy of the religious establishment of that day.

These people, their religious obedience, it was all legalistic. And so Jesus is, that's why he took them on.

But Pilate says, behold the man. And if you were to look at Jesus, if we are to look at him for a moment, he is the only perfect man who ever walked this world.

He never said anything that was ever wrong. Not one of us can say that. He never even thought anything that was wrong.

[12:48] Not one of us can say that. He never did anything that was wrong. Not one of us can say that. This was the only perfect man that has walked this world since the fall.

He did, as the Bible says, he did no sin, neither was deceit found within his mouth. And Jesus, remember, had actually asked that they bear testimony.

And he said, right, you're condemning me. Bring testimony against me. What is it that I have done? Now that's an amazing thought. None of us would ever have the audacity to say that.

Can you imagine saying publicly, bring forward against me what wrong I have done. If I said that, there would be cues of people.

Because we've all done wrong. And everybody can testify about wrongdoing. But nobody could testify, collaborate in any way to the wrongdoing that Jesus did because he did no wrong.

[14:04] And he was the most kindly man, the most gentle man, a man of great goodness, of great love. But you know, when you think about Jesus as a man, I think this is one of the wonderful things about him.

because Jesus as a man experienced so many things that people are called upon to experience.

For instance, you think of the fearful physical suffering that Jesus experienced.

Horrendous experiences. And just take one instance. Jodie Erickson, you know Jodie Erickson in her book, I can't remember what her, she was married.

And she, remember, was paralyzed completely. Just a complete paralysis through an accident. And she wrote this about Jesus.

And I think it's wonderful. I discovered that Jesus could empathize with my situation. On the cross for those terrible, agonizing hours, waiting for death, he was immobilized, helpless, paralyzed.

[15:19] Jesus knew what it was like not to be able to move, not to be able to scratch your nose, not to be able to shift your weight, not to be able to wipe your eyes.

Christ was paralyzed on the cross and therefore he understands exactly how I am. Isn't that wonderful? And sometimes we forget that in all the different situations that Jesus has been there.

He knows. That is why it tells us in the Bible that we have a high priest who has been touched with the feeling of our weaknesses. He knows he's been there in all their suffering.

In all the suffering he suffered. And again, when you think of how he suffered at the hands of people, he was abused in the most horrendous way.

We cannot, we read a bit about the abuse that Jesus suffered. You know, we only see, it only, as it were, gives us the briefest detail. The abuse he suffered was horrific.

[16:30] And again, to every victim of abuse, here is Jesus and he's able to say, I know, I understand. Again, he suffered horrendously emotionally.

They mocked him and ridiculed him in his pain and in his suffering. And to every person who was ridiculed and mocked and belittled in life, here is Jesus and he says, I know, I know what you're going through.

I've been there as well. And that's the amazing, the amazing thing because it always helps when somebody, somebody knows what you're experiencing.

And that is why it is so important for people to lay hold upon, yes, God, but also man. He knows, he understands in a way that nobody else can.

But you know, the other thing about Jesus here in his death, as we know, it was a substitutionary death. He was a man who stood in the place of men and women of all ages.

[17:45] But he was, as we know, man, yes, but he's God. God for us, God with us. And you know, what I find wonderful is that the two accusations that were really leveled against Jesus, what were these, what were the two main accusations that were brought against him?

One was blasphemy. They were saying, he's a blasphemer. Do you know what he's done? They're saying, he's made himself equal with God. That, oh, to the Jews was the worst possible sin.

The other accusation they brought against him was that he had made himself a king. And they were, again, in this political hotbed, they were saying, that's treason.

Because we are actually under Roman rule, there is no king really but Caesar. So this man is guilty of blasphemy and he's guilty of treason. And you know, my friends, these are the two charges that will be read out against every person outside Jesus Christ on the day of judgment.

These are the two charges that really underlie all that we are. Blasphemy. In the garden the tempter came to Eve and this was the temptation and this is where she succumbed.

[19:07] You will not just be made in the image of God. Take that and you will be like God. And she thought, yeah. So did Adam.

Not just to the image of God, I'll be like God. Blasphemy. That's exactly the charge here. That Jesus had made himself God.

What is the other sin of Eden? It's rebellion against the kingship and the authority of Jesus. It's treason. And that's how you and I are born into this world, as sinners.

That's the sin that underwrites who we are. Blasphemy and treason. And that's where we will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. Accused, these will be the two great accusations.

And these are the accusations that Jesus was brought into condemnation for. And isn't that wonderful that when Jesus dies on the cross and he takes our sin, that he takes our blasphemy and he takes our treason upon himself and he sets us free.

[20:28] But you know, that's exactly what happens on Calvary's cross. Because here's Jesus in the face of human judgment. But we're shortly going to take the human judgment away.

And Jesus is going to be there on the cross facing the judgment of the Father. So we find here when Pilate had said behold the man, take him and crucify him, I find no guilt in him.

And then the Jews had, when they cried out that he had made these claims that he was the Son of God, again this threw, this absolutely threw Pilate.

He takes Jesus back in. You see, Jesus won't go away from Pilate. Jesus is disturbing Pilate. Jesus is unnerving Pilate.

Pilate goes back into Jesus and Pilate wants to release him. Jesus doesn't sing anything else to Pilate.

[21:30] Pilate says to Jesus, listen, he said, I have all authority and power. I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you. And Jesus said to Pilate, no, you've got it the wrong way round.

You have no authority at all actually, unless it was given to you from above. The only authority that you actually have to do is an authority that will be given to you from my father.

That threw Pilate even more. Because here's this man, Pilate, and history will show us he isn't a very endearing character.

Not a great character at all, Pilate. But here's Pilate and he is in a real quandary. Because he knows if he ever saw an innocent, just, righteous man, he was staring right at him there.

Pilate knew within every fibre of his being what he ought to do. And it was to release Jesus. Pilate's wife even came to Pilate.

[22 : 39] We read about that in another of the Gospels. And she said, I've had a fearful dream. I've experienced terrible things in my sleep because of this man. He's innocent. Let him go.

So from every aspect of Pilate's inward thinking and within his family circle, within everything that he knew of the judicial system, he says, Jesus has to be released.

And yet, Pilate makes the most absurd decision ever. And he says, take him and crucify him. here is a man who knew exactly what was right.

And he does the very opposite. And you know, I see Pilate as a warning to so many people who know what is right. And they do the opposite, particularly with regard to the gospel of Jesus Christ. How many people are there who know that they should have Jesus as Savior? How many people has God spoken to under the word?

[23 : 44] And there's that like a still small voice saying, I know I need Jesus and yet walk away. They're like Pilate. They know what they should do and yet they choose to do the very opposite.

Pilate is a warning to us of what people can do with Jesus. I hope none of you here today will make that awful choice of knowing what is right and yet deciding to do what is wrong.

Jesus is speaking to you today. Ask him to become Lord and King in your life. Let's pray. Oh Lord our God, we pray that as we have come under your word and as it speaks to us that we will hear the voice of the living God.

Help us Lord not to turn away from the truth but that this truth will go down deep within our own hearts. Mold us and melt us under your word and that we will see Jesus.

Behold the man, behold the King, behold your God. Help us Lord to see Jesus in the fullness of who he is as prophet, priest and king.

[25 : 09] Help us to see Jesus as a great saviour. Wash away all our sins we pray. Pray to bless the cup of tea in the hall afterwards. Take us to our home safely and forgive us all our sin in Jesus name.

Amen. Our concluding psalm is Psalm 138 from the Scottish Psalter. Psalm 138 from the Scottish Psalter.

And from verse 5 to the end, and the tune is Weatherby. Yea, in the righteous ways of God, with gladness they shall sing, for great the glory of the Lord, who doth forever reign.

This is on page 431, Psalm 138, Scottish Psalter. Though God be high, yet he respects all those that lowly be, whereas the proud and lofty ones afar off knoweth he.

To the last verse, surely that which concerneth me, the Lord will perfect make. Lord, still thy mercy lasts, do not thine own hands works forsake.

[26 : 18] Psalm 138, 5 to the end, the tuner's weather be. Give the righteous ways of God with goodness they shall sing, for grace the glory of the Lord who doth forever reign.

O God be high, yet he respects all rules and glory be, where else the crown and lofty ones have high of glory.

O I in midst of trouble the Lord, thy life from thee shall have, in thy goals rock, thou stretch thine hand, thy right hand shall be saved.

Picken to Noah, thyMed own man's word for today.

Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.