

His Last Days, Part 3: Standing Trial

Matthew 27:24 ESV (Pg. 487) So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.” **25** And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” **26** Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

- I. In our series, “His Last Days” so far, we have looked at the Last Supper and the time Jesus spent praying in the garden of Gethsemane. Today we will consider the trial of Jesus which led to his death by crucifixion.
 - A. To say that Jesus had “a” trial is misleading. After he was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ was dogged by an angry mob. Additionally...
 1. Jesus actually stood before 2 Jewish leaders Caiaphas¹, the High Priest, and Annas², his father-in-law; along with the Jewish ruling council, where he was convicted of blasphemy for his claim to be the Son of God.
 2. He was also sent to stand before Herod Antipas³, the ruler of Galilee, where Christ was from. Antipas wanted Christ to perform tricks for him, and mocked him, but found Christ innocent of the charges brought against him.
 - B. But what most people remember is that Christ stood before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea. This is the trial we will focus on today the most. In particular, we will take a close look at Pilate’s reactions to Jesus, and try to discover what they meant.
 - C. All 4 gospels record details about the trials of Jesus. The details are similar in all, although some add more for us to know. For example...
 1. All writers mention that Peter denies Jesus 3 times⁴ just as Jesus had predicted. All of them mention that when Pilate wanted to release Jesus, the mob demanded to have Barabbas⁵ (a murderer and insurrectionist) released instead. They all mention Jesus’ silence in the face of his accusers.
 2. But Luke is the only writer who mentions Jesus standing before Herod Antipas. Matthew is the only one who mentions the guilt-ridden Judas hanging himself⁶. John is the only one who mentions Annas and gives us much more detail about Pilate’s questioning of Jesus.
- II. John begins his account of Jesus’ meeting with Pilate by editorially noting that the mob came to his headquarters early in the morning, but they would not enter the building⁷. As good Jews, they could not enter a Gentile’s dwelling without being defiled. Being defiled, they would not have been able to celebrate the Passover.
 - A. Do you find it odd that people who were unwilling to break a tiny rule for what it would cost them religiously were willing to falsely condemn and murder their Messiah? You shouldn’t be surprised.
 1. **Matthew 23:24 ESV** You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! The nature of religion is to major on minors, and minor on majors.
 2. Jesus once told the Scribes and Pharisees to “Go learn what this means: I desire mercy not sacrifice”⁸. He was saying that he is not interested in another slaughtered bull or sheep. He wanted people to throw themselves on his mercy alone, and not their works, for their salvation.
 - B. Pilate therefore come out to meet them and, seeming a little annoyed by their intrusion, asks what Jesus has done to warrant this demand for justice.

1. When the mob responds that he is an evildoer, or else they would not have brought him, Pilate tells them to judge him by their own law.
 2. They remind him that under Roman rule, they are not authorized to sentence a man to death. Pilate realizes the seriousness of their intentions and calls Jesus to himself within his headquarters for a private interview.
- C. Pilate begins by asking Jesus point-blank, “Are you the King of the Jews?”
- John 18:34 ESV** Jesus answered, “Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?” Pilate, amazed and a little put off by the question, asks Jesus concerning the accusations, “What have you done?”
1. But instead of defending himself, or answering his accusers, Jesus begins to speak about the nature of his kingdom; that is is of another world. This is evidenced by the fact that his followers are not fighting for his release.
 2. This talk of kingdoms prompts Pilate to respond, “So you are a king, then?”
- D. **John 18:37b ESV** Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.” **38** Pilate said to him, “**What is truth?**”
1. What an incredible turn of events! The one in charge, the one tasked with determining the truth of right and wrong, just and unjust, looks a beat up Nazarene Carpenter square in the eye and asks, “What is truth?”
 - a) The night before, Christ had told his disciples that was the Truth. He is the answer to every question. The fulfillment of every longing. The secret behind every riddle about the meaning of life and the universe.
 - b) Pilate, with all of Rome’s power behind him, is stripped bare in the presence of one so great. The wise becomes a fool. The strong becomes weak. The rich becomes poor. All with one question. “What is truth?”
 2. Pilate and the High Priest, Annas, Herod and the mob are all exposed by Jesus comment that “**Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.**” They are deaf! Jesus had told the Pharisees earlier that they were of their father, the devil. When he lies he speaks out of his own character because he is a liar and the father of all lies⁹. this meant they had no part in the truth!
- E. What about you? Is there evidence that you are of the Truth, or are you of your father, the devil? You can know whose you are by which voice you listen to.
1. This doesn’t mean to just have good morals, or that you are sufficiently religiously proficient. The Pharisee were all those things!
 2. It means that you **live by** Jesus’ voice, finding it in his Word; that you submit to his voice and acknowledge him not only as Savior, but as Lord and King.
- III. The next page in this story is one that is both scandalous and beautiful, simultaneously. Pilate, convinced that Jesus has done nothing deserving capital punishment, reminds the crowd of a benevolent tradition of his. Every year at Passover time he would release a prisoner to them, so he asks, “Do you want me to release the King of the Jews?” “No!”, they cry, “Give us Barabbas!”
- A. Barabbas is described in the 4 gospels as a murderer, an insurrectionist, and a robber. He is an all around bad guy; a terrorist even. But the Jews are so intent on putting Christ to death, that they demand Barabbas be returned to society. Pilate tries to persuade them to take Christ, but they demand Barabbas.

1. Do you know what Barabbas' name means in Greek? It means "son of the father". The Jews were demanding that the Only Begotten of the Father be given as a ransom for this undeserving, filthy, condemned criminal.
 2. This is a picture of grace! The True Son lays down his life for the undeserving one; the innocent one dies and the guilty one goes free!
- B. Do you not see the gospel in that! We who were dead in our in our trespasses and sins, with a rap sheet ten miles long get off scot free because someone else, someone innocent takes our place.
- C. But even that's not the full beauty of it! Because the precious Son of God has taken our place now we have been given the right to be called the sons and daughters of God¹⁰! We are joint-heirs¹¹, sharing all the benefits of the True Son!
- D. **1 John 3:1 ESV** See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.
1. You were Barabbas in your sin. Guilty of many sins. Worthy of death. Despised. You were abandoned to your guilt for your many crimes.
 2. But now Barabbas has a different context. You truly are the son - the daughter - of the Father, through adoption by grace!
- IV. Trying once more to satiate the blood lust of the Jews, Pilate has Jesus brutally flogged, the cruel soldiers who fulfill the order mocking him the entire time. They twist a thorn branch into a crude crown and thrust down upon his brow. They array him in a purple robe (the color of royalty). They mockingly say to him, "Hail! The King of the Jews!" as they strike him with their fists.
- A. After all this, Pilate says says to the crowd, "I find no fault in him." then he brings Jesus out once more. They see the crown of thorns on his head, the purple robe sticking to his skin because of the quickly coagulating blood now covering the Lord. **John 19:5b ESV** Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"
1. "Behold the man!" The perfect man. The innocent Man. Yet this man, robed in the shrouds of mockery, looking like a pathetic excuse for a King, is the representative man, standing in the place of all of the others.
 2. **2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV** For our sake (God) made (Christ) to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- B. Yet, after all this, the crowd cries all the louder, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"
1. Finally, Pilate says, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."¹² But the people insist, telling Pilate of how Jesus made himself out to be the Son of God, the highest blasphemy according to their Law.
 2. After what he had seen and heard throughout the day, this sends a cold shiver down Pilate's spine. He re-enters his headquarters and asks Christ, "Where are you from?" But Jesus refuses to answer him.
- C. Pilate is astounded by this! He has seen many cowards beg for their lives. He has seen many rebels shout defiantly and spit at their would be executioners. But for a man to be completely silent? This makes no sense to him at all!
1. **John 19:10b ESV** "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" Surely Jesus would see the folly of making no defense to these accusations! Surely he would plead to be saved from death by all the sovereign authority of Rome!

2. But Jesus looks at him calmly and lets him know exactly who it is that is in charge on this terrible day. **John 19:11b ESV** “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.” God the Father was in charge, and everything would happen exactly as he had decreed.
- D. From this point forward, Pilate sought all the more to release him, but the Jews began to use his imperial loyalties and career aspirations against him. “No friend of Caesar’s would release this man! If you think he’s a king, you are a traitor to Caesar!” So Pilate brings Jesus out, sits down on the judgement seat and says to the crowd, **John 19:14 ESV** “Behold your King!”
1. At first, Pilate looked at him with pity and said, “Behold the man”. Now he says, “Behold your King!” What exactly was Pilate saying?
 - a) Maybe he was mocking the Jews. Maybe he was showing all the power of Rome that would come crashing down on any Judean that would make such ridiculous claims of authority and rulership.
 - b) Maybe he was struck by the irony. They had chosen Barabbas the terrorist over this haunting and gentle man who had stood silent before his accusers.
 2. But whatever the case, he spoke inadvertently, yet prophetically. For in just a few more moments, this King would begin his reign. Though no one in this realm would notice, unable to see beyond the blood and gore, the weeping and cruelty, the mockery, shame, and death, this was coronation day!
- E. Soon he would be lifted up, so that he might draw all people unto himself¹³. Soon he would cry out, “It is finished!”¹⁴, having defeated all his enemies -sin, death, hell and the devil¹⁵- and stripping them of all of their power¹⁶. Soon he would lay claim to all authority in both Heaven and earth¹⁷. What could be more kingly and royal than to have all authority vested in himself?
- F. All of this by way of a Roman cross, where he would die for love and forgive his enemies; where by dying he would destroy death and disarm his enemies. Now who could have seen that coming? Now who will pledge allegiance to this king? Who will live a life of obedience and worship; of faith and dependence? Who will cast themselves on the mercy of the True Son, purchased at so great a price?
1. **Psalm 2:4 ESV** He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. **5** Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, **6 “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”** **7** I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you. **8** Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. **9** You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” **10** Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. **11** Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. **12** Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. **Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**
 2. The King has been installed. He has been crowned and enthroned. will you, rejecting his way and seating yourself upon his rightful throne be among those who perish in the way when his wrath is kindled? Or will you look to

his mercy and his victory, wave the white flag of surrender and take refuge in him? You will be loved, and blessed, and saved, redeemed and forgiven if you do. The king now awaits your answer.

- G. One of the ways a King would indicate his acceptance of you is by making a place for you at his table. His enemies were not invited. Those who disregard his rule were thrown out¹⁸. But those upon whom his favor rests have a place at the table to sit, and they feast with the King forever.
 - 1. This is illustrated in the story of Zaccheus in Luke 19. He wanted to look at Jesus, this famous prophet from a distance as he went by his house in Jericho. So being a little man, he climbed up in a tree to get a better look.
 - 2. But he wouldn't dare try to approach Jesus! He had done things he wasn't proud of. He had lied. He had cheated. He had stolen.
- H. But wouldn't you know Jesus saw him up in that tree and looked eyes brimming with love on him. As Zaccheus' heart started beating faster, Jesus began to make his way over. Although it seemed like a dream, Jesus actually spoke to him! He said to this greedy sinner, "Zaccheus come down from there! I need to stay with you today! I need to eat with you! Let's go!"
 - 1. Joyfully Zaccheus scrambled down the tree and led Jesus to his home where they dined and laughed. But it was also where, in the presence of Jesus and his holiness, Zaccheus began to feel remorse about the life he had lived. He must do something to make it right.
 - 2. Looking at Jesus and the tender love flowing from his smile, he makes his decision. "If I have Jesus, I have everything! So I don't need this stuff anymore! I'll give half of my stuff to the poor. Wherever I've ripped someone off, I will pay them back 4 times!" He had found what he really wanted!
- I. Jesus response to all of this was to say **Luke 19:9 ESV** "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."
 - 1. You are welcome at the table if you have taken refuge in the King because he has placed his favor upon you! No matter what you've done, you don't have to hide from him. You CAN'T hide from him. He comes looking for you, and invites himself into your house to feast with you on the riches of his grace.
 - 2. This table represents that fellowship that all true believers have with the risen King. This bread, this juice reminds us that we have been ransomed by God's chosen King, and because he has chosen us we will always have a place at his table - not because of our righteous works, but because of his amazing grace!
 - a) In the bread and cup, we behold the Man. Broken and bleeding for us. Suffering a punishment we deserved, but that he endured.
 - b) In the bread and cup, we behold the King. We remember his promise that he will not partake of it again until we are seated with him in his eternal kingdom. We remember that wonderful day is coming soon.
- V. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper,

saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

¹ Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:66-71; John 18:19-24

² John 18:12-14

³ Luke 23:6-12

⁴ Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27

⁵ Matthew 27:15-23; Mark 15:6-15; Luke 23:18-25; John 18:39-40

⁶ Matthew 27:3-10

⁷ John 18:28

⁸ Matthew 9:13

⁹ John 8:44

¹⁰ John 1:12

¹¹ Romans 8:17

¹² John 19:6

¹³ John 12:32

¹⁴ John 19:30

¹⁵ 1 John 3:8

¹⁶ Colossians 2:13-15

¹⁷ Matthew 28:18

¹⁸ Matthew 22:11-14