

## Lessons From Pontius Pilate

**QUESTION:** In Matthew 27, we learned how Jesus was brought to Pilate the governor and ultimately crucified. Why did Pilate cater to the demands of the people when he knew that the Chief Priests and elders were jealous **and** his wife warned him about passing judgment on Jesus?

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**BACKGROUND** – We need to review the major players including Caiaphas, the Chief Priests and the Sanhedrin Council, Pilate, Pilate's Wife and Jesus. Also, we must understand the dynamics between the Roman Empire (which Pilate was in charge of) and the Jewish population (which Caiaphas was in charge of). In addition, understanding that it was a very important time (Passover) which brought Jewish people into Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast so approximately 2.5 million people were estimated to have been present. [Listen to the audio for more details]

### PILATE

History recounts Pilate's rule of leadership of the Roman Empire to include "briberies, insults, robberies, outrages and wanton injuries, executions without trial, constantly repeated, ceaseless and supremely grievous cruelty. That sort of behavior wouldn't have been all that extraordinary for a Roman ruler, but Pilate apparently did it more ruthlessly than most."

- **Pilate had a history of being cruel and ruthless**, unkind to the Jews and concerned only about raw power.
- **He seems out of character in the way He treats Jesus.** Something about Jesus had affected Him
  - In Matthew 27 this is actually Jesus' second appearance before Pilate. He sent him to Herod, the sub-ruler of Galilee hoping to have him solve the problem but Jesus refused to defend himself and so he was sent back to Pilate
- **When Pilate asks if He's the King of the Jews, Jesus simply replies "It is as you say"**
  - Pilate is amazed because Jesus had to know he could be facing crucifixion (a horrible death) and most men in his position who stood before Pilate would either beg or demonstrate a great deal of zeal/emotion. But there stood Jesus quiet & unmoved—at peace
  - **LESSON:** Practice carrying the peace of God in ALL situations. And follow Jesus' example. It's rare that we should defend ourselves. It's better to keep silent and trust God to defend us!
- **Pilate is portrayed as indecisive in the Gospels:** According to the Gospels, the Sanhedrin, an elite council of priestly and lay elders, arrested Jesus during the Jewish festival of [Passover](#), deeply threatened by his teachings. They dragged him before Pilate to be tried for blasphemy—for claiming, they said, to be King of the Jews. And they pressured Pilate, the only one with power to impose a death sentence, to call for his crucifixion. All four Gospels portray him as a vacillating judge. According to the Gospel of Mark, Pilate came to the defense of Jesus before yielding to the desire of the crowd.

## Lessons From Pontius Pilate

- *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. James 1:8. **WHEN WE TRUST IN GOD AND LOOK TO HIM FOR DIRECTION IN ALL THINGS, WE CAN BE DECISIVE AND STABLE!***

### PILATE'S MOTIVATIONS & LESSONS FOR US

#### **FEAR** of a riot

Pilate was responsible for maintaining peace in Jerusalem, a city with a large Jewish population, especially during religious festivals (it's estimated nearly 2.5 million Jews would have been in Jerusalem for Passover). Releasing Jesus, particularly given the crowd's anger, could have easily escalated into a riot. Rome allowed Pilate to have full control of Jerusalem as long as he kept things under control.

- ***Psalm 118:6:** The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*
- ***Proverbs 29:25:** The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe*

**Pilate allowed his fear of man to lead him to make the choice to execute Jesus. In the end, Pilate was recalled to Rome to be tried for his brutal treatment of Jews. It is believed that he committed suicide in 37 AD—not long after the crucifixion.**

**LESSON:** Walking in the fear of man or what may seem to be 'scary' consequences leads to even greater trouble. God expects us to what is right regardless of the consequences that seem to face us.

#### **PRESSURE** from Jewish leaders

The Jewish religious authorities, who saw Jesus as a threat, actively sought his execution. They used accusations of blasphemy and sedition to influence Pilate. They also threatened to report Pilate to Caesar if he released Jesus, claiming that anyone who claimed themselves to be king was opposing Caesar. (Pilate was already on thin ice with the Emperor because of previous unrest & mismanagement in Judea so the threats from Jewish leaders to report him probably weighed on him heavily).

- ***Jeremiah 24:7:** Then I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord. They will be my people and I will be their God, for they will return to me with all their heart.*
- ***1 John 5:20:** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

**LESSON:** Pilate was not a Jew, but the Jewish people turned on Jesus quickly and went along with Caiaphas (the High Priest). This emphasizes the importance of us having our own personal relationship with Jesus. Many people are being led astray because they're following the wrong people even today!!

## Lessons From Pontius Pilate

### Pilate's own **SELF-PRESERVATION**

Pilate, a Roman governor, was primarily concerned with his career and maintaining his position. Releasing Jesus would have been seen as a sign of weakness and could have jeopardized his standing with Rome.

- **Mark 8:36:** *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*
- **Matthew 16:25:** *For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*
- **Colossians 3:2-4:** *Let heaven fill your thoughts. Do not think only about things down here on earth. For you died when Christ died, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory.*

**LESSON:** We often are short-sighted in our thinking. And we make decisions based only on what we can see and understand with our natural minds. Who knows what would have happened to Pilate if he had declared Jesus innocent & refused to sentence him to death. Could he have found his life in Christ? Would he have

### **Ignoring Advice/Counsel from Unlikely Sources**

First, take note that it was forbidden for wives to accompany their husbands to their posts. However, Claudia was with Pilate which would have meant she had special permission from the emperor (who was her step-father). This probably meant that Claudia had a special affection for her husband, Pilate.

During Jesus' trial, only one person dared to intervene on Jesus's behalf. "A woman. A Gentile woman. A pagan woman. The wife of the Roman governor. The wife of the man who answered to the Emperor."

**Pilate's wife demonstrated the faith to act upon her belief despite overwhelming opposition. God chose a woman---one with no authority or power to be an example of active faith and a voice to affirm the righteousness of His Son.**

- **Proverbs 1:5:** A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel
- **Proverbs 24:22, NASB:** Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed

**God chose 7 unlikely people who verbally proclaimed Jesus' innocence:** Judas (Matt 27:4), Pilate (Luke 23:4); Herod Antipas (Luke 23:15), Pilate's wife (Matt 27:19), The Dying Thief (Luke 23:41); The Roman Centurion (Luke 23:47) and the Roman Guards (Matt 27:54)

**LESSON:** Discernment is so key!! Try the spirit by the spirit! God doesn't move like we do. He has the answers we need. Don't overlook the help just because it's not packaged the way we expect it