

## JESUS BEFORE PILATE

### Matthew 27:11-26

Jesus Christ makes a claim on every human heart...and every heart must decide how to respond to Him. The most *important* and *inescapable question* every person faces is the same one that **Pilate** asked in this passage...“**What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?**”

**Josh McDowell** faced this same question and came to the conclusion that Jesus was either *a liar...a lunatic...or He was Lord*.

Scripture clearly proclaims that Jesus is *fully God*...while being *fully man*...who came for the express purpose of *dying on a cross to pay the penalty for man’s sin* (**John 1:29; Philippians 2:6-11**).

#### He is fully God:

- He is called *Immanuel...God with us* (**Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14**).
- He is called by *divine names...the Holy and Righteous One* (**Acts 3:14**).
- Scripture declares that to *know Jesus* is to *know God the Father* (**John 8:19; John 14:7**).
- It declares that to *hate Him* is to *hate the Father* (**John 15:23**).
- It declares that to *believe in Him* is to *believe in the Father* (**Matthew 10:40; John 12:44; John 14:1**).
- It affirms that to *see Him* is to *see the Father* (**John 14:9**).
- To *honor Jesus* is to *honor the Father* (**John 5:23**).
- To *receive Him* is to *receive the Father* (**Mark 9:37**).
- Scripture proclaims that Jesus is *omnipotent* (**Matthew 28:18**)...*omnipresent* (**Matthew 28:20**)...*changeless* (**Hebrews 13:8**)...*creator of the world* (**John 1:3, 10; Colossians 1:16**)...*able to forgive sin* (**Mark 2:5-10**)...and is to be *worshipped as God* (**Philippians 2:9-11; Matthew 28:9; Hebrews 1:6**).

#### He is fully man:

The Old Testament gave *precise details* about the *coming Savior/King*:

- He would be *supernaturally conceived* (**Isaiah 7:14**).
- He would be *born in Bethlehem* (**Micah 5:2**).
- He would be *a Jew in the line of Abraham* and *of David* (**Genesis 9:26; Genesis 22:18; II Samuel 7:13**).
- He would be of the *tribe of Judah* (**Genesis 49:10**).
- He would *perform miracles* (**Isaiah 35:5-6**).

#### In His death He would be:

- *Executed by rulers* (**Psalm 2:1-2**).
- *Betrayed by a friend for thirty pieces of silver* (**Psalm 41:9; Zechariah 11:12**).
- *Forsaken by God* (**Psalm 22:1**).
- Have His *beard plucked out* and be *spit upon* (**Isaiah 50:6**).

#### In His resurrection:

- He would *rise in three days* (**Hosea 6:2**).
- His body would *not experience decay* (**Psalm 16:10**).
- He would *conquer death* (**Isaiah 25:8**).

Whether people recognize it or not...Jesus is the *dominant figure in all human history*...and the *determiner of the eternal destiny of every human being*.

#### I. THE ACCUSATION FROM THE JEWS: (vs. 11-12a)

Compared with the other Gospels, **Matthew’s** record of Jesus’ trial before **Pilate** is rather brief. **Matthew** mentions *only one trial* before **Pilate** and the one *accusation* that Jesus is the **King of the Jews**. This is because the **Kingship of Jesus** was **Matthew’s** main theme throughout his gospel...that Jesus is **Messiah/King**.

**Luke** (writing to the *Gentiles*) mentioned *three trials*. The initial trial before **Pilate**. And that **Pilate** then sent Jesus to **Herod** when he learned that Jesus was a **Galilean** (**Luke 23:6-7**). It was that gesture that brought about a friendship between **Pilate** and **Herod** that had not existed before (**Luke 23:12**). And finally, another trial before **Pilate**.

Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.” (vs. 11)...When **Pilate** asked Jesus, “Are You the King of the Jews?” the answer by Jesus was in the affirmative. But as **John** recorded, Jesus stated that His kingdom wasn’t a *political kingdom* to rival **Rome**.

*“Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’ Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered*

*You to me; what have You done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’ Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice’.*”

~John 18:33-37

And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders (vs. 12a)...Having failed to *find a legitimate charge* against Jesus, the Sanhedrin *falsely accused* Him of *blasphemy*. Knowing that they *didn’t have the authority to put Him to death*...and knowing that a *charge of blasphemy* wouldn’t influence Pilate to issue a death sentence...they accused Jesus of being an *insurrectionist*, *undermining Roman taxation*, and of being a *competing political ruler* to Rome.

*“And they began to accuse Him, saying, We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King’.*”

~Luke 23:2

But it was obvious that Jesus was *no threat to Roman rule*...and when Pilate realized that, he *sought to release* Jesus.

## II. THE ABSTAINING OF THE LORD: (vs. 12-14)

And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders He did not answer (vs. 12)...While other accusations were presented by the chief priest and elders...Jesus didn’t answer them. The language describes an *intensity* with the chief priests and elders. Even with the *intensified accusations*, Jesus remained *silent*.

Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” (vs. 13)...Jesus didn’t need to answer those charges because He *wasn’t being tried* for those *additional accusations*. He was on trial because they said that He claimed to be the *King of the Jews*...the *Messiah* (Matthew 26:63-64).

Since Pilate had already declared Jesus *innocent of all charges* (John 18:38), there wasn’t any reason for Him to *answer the accusations*.

And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed (vs. 14)...The original charges against Jesus were *religious*...rather than *political*. These *additional charges* were all *political* in nature to solely give a basis for judgment against Jesus...allowing them to put Him to the death.

Amazed...Gk. *thaumazein*, means to be *in awe*...to be *surprised*...to be *in a quandary*. Pilate wasn’t accustomed to *someone not defending* themselves.

Isaiah predicted this response some *seven centuries* earlier...

*“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.”*

~Isaiah 53:7

We learn from Luke that when Pilate learned that Jesus was *from Galilee*...he felt that he had *found a solution to his dilemma*. He immediately sent Jesus to Herod Antipas, who ruled Galilee but was *visiting Jerusalem* at the time (Luke 23:5-7).

Herod was excited when he saw Jesus. He had desired to meet Jesus for some time *purely out of curiosity*...having heard of the *miracles* that He had performed. Because Herod had beheaded John the Baptist, Jesus had never visited the city in Galilee where Herod lived. So this was the *first time* for Herod to see Jesus.

Although Herod questioned Jesus at some length (Luke 23:9)...Jesus still *didn’t answer any of his questions...nor respond* to any of the *accusations* that the chief priests and elders continued to make.

*“And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.”*

~Luke 23:11

Gorgeous...literally means *bright* and *resplendent*...suggesting *royal apparel* that was often worn by Jewish kings at their *coronations*.

Although Herod didn’t declare Jesus *not guilty* as Pilate had done...*he acknowledged that there were no valid charges against Him*. He could find *no fault in Him*. In essence...Christ’s *innocence* was again *manifested*.

### III. THE ANIMOSITY OF THE CROWD: (vs. 15-23)

Christ once again stood before the **governor** who at this time...

*“...summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people, and said to them, ‘You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him. No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him’.”*

~Luke 23:13-15

Had **Pilate** had the *courage*, he *could*...and *should*...*have ended the trial* right then. But with his own career and perhaps his life in jeopardy, he would not *defy the Jewish religious leaders*...*risking a riot* during **Passover** week in **Jerusalem**.

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted (vs. 15)...It was a custom of the governor to release a prisoner each year at **Pass-over** in order to gain acceptance with the Jews. And since **Pilate** believed that Jesus was *innocent*...he would try and use this custom to have Him *released*. His plan was to bring about the release of Jesus by involving a notorious prisoner named **Barabbas**.

At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called **Barabbas** (vs. 16)...**Barabbas** was an *insurrectionist* (**John 18:40**) and a *murderer* (**Mark 15:7**). In order to fulfill his desire to release Jesus...**Pilate** would offer to the people the *worst-of-the-worst*.

So when the people gathered together, **Pilate** said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you? **Barabbas**, or Jesus who is called Christ?” For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over (vs. 17-18)...**Pilate** thought surely the *people* of the nation *loved* Jesus...and that it was only the *religious leaders* who were *envious* of Him and of the *people’s acclaim* of Him. He reasoned that if the people *had a choice* that they would surely want Jesus *released*...not the notorious **Barabbas**. However, **Pilate** failed to grasp *the determination* of the *religious leaders* to *do away* with Jesus...and their *influence* over the people.

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous Man;

for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.” (vs. 19)...It would have been *very unusual* for **Pilate’s** wife to *interrupt* him when he was in the *midst of a trial*...especially one as *volatile* as this one. But **Pilate** was now being *warned by his wife* to be careful how he dealt with this prisoner...for He was an *innocent man*. She had *suffered* a great deal through a **dream** concerning Jesus and she shared her experience with her husband.

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for **Barabbas** and to put Jesus to death (vs. 20)...**Pilate** realized that he had *underestimated* the *persuasiveness of the religious leaders* and *overestimated* the *convictions of the people*.

But the governor said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “**Barabbas**.” (vs. 21)...When **Pilate** asked *who they wanted released*...*without hesitation*, and *seemingly with one voice*, they said, **Barabbas**!

Because Jesus had been declared *not guilty* under *Roman law*, **Pilate** could have *legally released* Him as well as **Barabbas**.

**Pilate** said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Crucify Him!” (vs. 22)...When **Pilate** asked the crowd what he should do with Jesus who is called Christ...*in unison*, they all *cried out*...**Crucify Him!**

**Crucify Him**...Gk. *staurotheto*, is actually one word...**Crucify**. It would be somewhat like being in a football stadium and hearing the crowd cry out...*Defense, Defense*. Only, their cheer was...**Crucify, Crucify!**

And he said, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they kept shouting all the more, saying, “Crucify Him!” (vs. 23)...When **Pilate** sought *further information* from the crowd as to Jesus’ *crimes*, the crowd simply *shouted*...*louder*...**Crucify Him!**

It didn’t matter to the crowd that *not a single accusation* against Jesus *had stood*...whether it was before **Annas**...before **Caiaphas**...before the entire **Sanhedrin**...before **Herod**...or before **Pilate**.

### IV. THE ACQUIESCENCE OF PILATE: (vs. 24-26)

When **Pilate** saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this Man’s blood; see to that yourselves.” (vs. 24)...

**Pilate** realized that he was *getting nowhere with the crowd*, and their threats to report him to **Caesar** concerned him. His *record with Caesar wasn't good*, and he didn't want *word of a rival king* to reach **Caesar's** ears...especially if he *had released that king*.

*“As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, ‘If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar’.”*

~John 19:12

**He took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd...** **Pilate** was symbolizing his desire *to absolve himself* from being involved in *putting an innocent man to death*. But his words...**I am innocent of this Man's blood...didn't make him innocent** (**Acts 4:27**). Such an act *didn't remove Pilate's guilt* from this *travesty of justice*.

**See to that yourselves...** When **Pilate** turned the *responsibility over to the Jews*...they *readily accepted* it.

**And all the people said, “His blood shall be on us and on our children!”** (**vs. 25**)...Their words sadly came to pass as the *judgment of God* came on many of them and their children when the *branch of unbelieving Israel* was *broken off the tree* of God's *redemptive blessing*. It's no wonder that since that fearful day...as a *nation* and as *individuals...unredeemed Jews* have been under the *chastening hand of God*.

In spite of **Pilate's four declarations** of Jesus' *innocence* (**Luke 23:14, 20, 22; John 19:4**)...he *fulfilled his comment* to the Jews by *releasing Barabbas*.

**Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified** (**vs. 26**)...And the plan of God's *redemption* and *atonement for sin* was *fulfilled*.

### **THE QUESTION WE MUST ANSWER:**

- We will all stand before God's Judgment seat one day...and how we have answered the question that Pilate proposed will determine our eternal destiny. **“What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?”** *Have you already answered the question? And what is your answer to the question?*