

LUKE I Pilate and Christ **Text: Luke 23:1–25** –Bill Turner

The Man Who Sentenced Jesus to Death

1. **Over a million people are crammed into the streets of Jerusalem**
 - a. Pontius Pilate and Herod Agrippa are both in the city w/ Roman soldiers as a show of force
 - b. But this is no ordinary Passover—the whole city is on edge—something terrible is happening
 2. **Events are now in motion that can't be stopped—Jesus has less than 12 hours to live**
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I. JESUS ON TRIAL

(1) PILATE'S POSITION (v.1-2)

1. **The Jewish leaders do not have authority from Rome to execute a criminal.**
They will blackmail Pilate—to force him to crucify Jesus.

a) You might wonder—How would they have the leverage to blackmail Pilate?

2. **Pilate is the Roman prefect of Judea—but he is in a precarious position...**

- a) He does not answer to the Roman Senate—he must answer to the Emperor himself
- b) But He is already on a short leash from Caesar—who has already reprimanded him!
- c) Philo was a Jewish scholar and statesman who wrote that the Jews, had threatened to report Pilate to the emperor for his misdeeds.

This threat “exasperated Pilate to the greatest possible degree, as he feared lest they might go... to the emperor, and might impeach him with respect to other particulars of his government—his corruption, his acts of insolence, his violence, his habit of insulting people, his cruelty, his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never-ending gratuitous and most grievous inhumanity.”¹

d) He is in Jerusalem for Passover with a show of force to maintain order

3. **The Jewish Leaders Have Arrested Jesus under cover of darkness**
—and deliberately convicted Him of Blasphemy...

4. **But Pilate doesn't care about Jewish religious disputes—**

So They Alter the Charges to Pressure Pilate to act (v.2)

- That Jesus was an insurrectionist — inciting the people.
- That Jesus incited the people not to pay their taxes to Caesar
- That Jesus claimed to be a king in opposition to Caesar.

(2) PILATE'S QUESTION (v.3)

1. **But Pilate knows he is being used for an agenda...**

- a) If Pilate actually believed these charges—he would not hesitate to execute Jesus
- b) But Pilate is shrewd—he knows these people—he knows how power works

2. **Then Pilate asks Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”**

a) It was a direct question—and Jesus gave a direct answer

3. **Jesus gave no majestic defense or performed a miracle to prove Himself...**

a) But He would not deny the Truth of who He is (**John 18:37–38**)

¹ Philo of Alexandria, cited by William Barclay, Daily Bible Study Series, Luke

(3) PILATE'S ADMISSION (v.4)

1. Even Pilate could see it! — “I find no fault in this Man.”

Even Pilate could admit it — Jesus was innocent!

- a) Pilate knew they hated Jesus... He Knew They Wanted to Eliminate their Enemy
- b) “For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up.” (Mt 27:18)

2. Even the charges brought against Jesus were fabricated!

—to convict Him as a criminal when He had done nothing wrong!

(4) PILATE'S EVASION (v.5–12)

1. But Pilate was also a politician—he wants the easy way out (v.5–7)

- a) They mention Galilee because everyone knew it was the political hotbed of Israel
—They mention Galilee to say—He's Dangerous!

[>Think of Galilee like Texas—we have a Bible Belt / then Texas / Bible belt w/ an Attitude!]

- b) If there was going to be a rebellion—it would come from Galilee like many had before

2. Galilee was the jurisdiction of Herod and he is in Jerusalem at this time

- a) So When Pilate heard Jesus was from Galilee—he saw an opportunity...
- b) To evade this problem and hoping he could pass it off to Herod.

3. Herod Antipas doesn't care about Jesus—he cares about himself. (v.8–12)

- a) He is a vain self-absorbed man — who has already killed Jesus' cousin John—
- b) and thought at one time that Jesus might be John the baptist back from the dead.

4. But Herod doesn't want the blood of another holy man on his hands— —or to find himself between Rome and these Jewish leaders...

- a) So by mocking Jesus with a robe of purple—and deferring Him back to Pilate...
- b) he is siding with Pilate and they became friends from that point on.

(5) PILATE'S PROPOSITION (v.13–19)

1. Pilate Knows They Want to Kill Jesus out of Envy...

- a) He knows Jesus is innocent... He knows he is being used.

2. So He is trying to find a compromise... (v.13–19)

- a) They had a custom that a condemned criminal could be released as an act of mercy
- b) So Pilate offers to release either Jesus of Nazareth or Barabbas
- c) But the Crowd has been incited by instigators shouting to kill Jesus

3. They want a murderer released — so they can murder Jesus

(6) PILATE'S WIFE (Matt. 27:19)

1. But while this is happening—Pilate receives a cryptic message...

- a) His wife Claudia had a disturbing dream that upset her so much she sends a message to her husband that Jesus is innocent
- b) The Dream was Disturbing—The Message is a Warning—
having nothing to do with this just man

2. How many hints does Pilate need? Even unbelievers know this is a set up

- a) She's trying to protect her husband from making a terrible mistake...
- b) But no one can stop This Dark Storm Descending on Jerusalem

(7) PILATE'S PROBLEM (v.20–23)

1. **Pilate knows an insurrectionist when he sees one—Jesus is no insurrectionist—but Pilate is losing control of this crowd (v.20-23)**
 - a) He has Jesus beaten, whipped, scourged & mocked to appease this mob,
 - b) but it only makes their blood lust more extreme & Irrational
2. **4 different attempts Pilate makes to avoid giving a sentence of execution:**
 - a) He told the Jews to settle the matter themselves...
 - b) He tried to refer the whole case to Herod...
 - c) He tried to persuade them to receive Jesus as an act of mercy for the passover...
 - d) He tried a compromise—to scourge Jesus and then release him.
3. **But John was there—and describes the moment Pilate hardened his heart—
The moment Pilate knew he had to choose between Truth & Power
(John 19:1–15)**

(8) PILATE'S DECISION (v.24-25)

1. **Pilate Knew Jesus Was Innocent—But he also knew what he would loose.**
2. **Pilate sensed the power of Jesus—but was afraid to submit to it.**
3. **Standing Face to Face with Jesus—our Lord's dignified silence made
Pilate feel that it was not Jesus—but he himself who was on trial.**
4. **But when he knew it was Jesus or Himself—He chose himself (Mt 27:24-25)**

**A poet wrote: “I too have strength—strength to behold Him and not worship Him,
strength to fall from Him and not cry to Him.”²**

**Some are strong enough to strangle their own conscience /
Strong enough to keep their eyes shut to the truth /
Strong enough to condemn God in order to justify themselves**

CONCLUSION:

1. **What is your decision?**
2. **Some try to define right and wrong...
right as what meets their needs
and wrong as what doesn't meet their needs.**
3. **They're not interested in truth—only power**

1 Timothy 6:12–13 NIV

² Elizabeth Barrett Browning, cited by William Barclay, Luke, The Daily Bible Study Series, p.274