

Jesus had been arrested at Gethsemane. He was taken to Annas, the powerbroker of the Jewish elite. Annas interrogated Jesus but all Annas got out of it was a rebuke for exercising his power in disregard to the Law. Caiaphas gathered a quorum of the Sanhedrin and condemned Jesus to death for blasphemy. The other Gospel writers tell us that Jesus warned them that they would see Jesus seated at the right hand of God. (Luke 22:69) We have seen through this entire night that Jesus was in command, regally walking through what was foreordained.

Commented [notes1]: 69 But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."
Luke 22:69 (NIV)

The Sanhedrin had broken a number of their own rules to condemn Jesus before dawn, but obeying their own Law was hardly a priority for them that night. They brought Jesus to Pilate because they did not have the authority to execute someone they condemned to death. Because of the execution of Stephen and several others, the ability to put someone to death has been in question, but Roman historical documents verify that this was the case. Those executions were a violation of their authority under Rome. A later high priest was removed from office because he did have someone stoned. Rome carefully guarded this authority to execute. The right to execute was made solely that of Rome just several years before Jesus execution. Think of that. If the rules had changed a few years later, Jesus would have been stoned, the punishment for blaspheming, and Psalm 22, about the piercing of the Messiah's hands and feet, would not have been fulfilled. (Psalm 22:16) It is amazing how the details of prophecy come to pass.

Commented [notes2]: 16 Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.
Psalms 22:16 (NIV)

28 Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. This has always been such a revealing verse to me. Here they are trying to kill their own Messiah to preserve their power and financial income, and they are worried about not getting to participate in the Passover Feast. Let's see. The Passover is about God delivering them from the death of the firstborn through the blood of a lamb (Exodus 12:13-14), and they are trying to kill God's only begotten Son, the Lamb of God, who is trying to deliver them. The irony is unmatched. "Quick, lets kill the Lamb of God in time to celebrate when God used the blood of a lamb to save us!"

Commented [notes3]: 16 Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.
Psalms 22:16 (NIV)

Scholars, and I use that term loosely, once doubted the existence of Pilate because they couldn't find records placing such a man in Judea. There are mentions of him in several historical works and the early church fathers, but these were brushed off as the additions of zealous Christian scribes. Amazing how much they can explain away to try to deny the Scriptures. It's pathetic that they can't see their own desperate bias.

In 1961, the Pilate Stone was excavated in Caesarea. It was a stone that dedicated a structure to an emperor and the one dedicating it was Pontius Pilate the prefect of Judea. Once it was found in stone and dated to the same time period, there was no denying it. The overzealous scribe theory disappeared back into the imaginations of the so-called scholars who don't want to bend their knee to Jesus.

Just where they met with Pilate is disputed. It was either the palace that Herod the Great built for himself in Jerusalem or the Fortress of Antonia. Because an area of the fortress was discovered to be paved and the judgment was handed down at a place called the Pavement (John 19:13) some lean toward the fortress. Historians of the time mention that the Roman prefect would stay at Herod's Palace while in Jerusalem during Passover. Whichever place Pilate was at, it was a Gentile home and the Jews would have to go through a lengthy cleansing ritual that would not be completed in time to participate in Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Roman guards escorted Jesus into the palace.

The prefect's normal work day was from early morning till noon. The last night's watch ended at 6 A.M. so this was taking place around that time. Pilate asked what the charges were. He probably understood exactly what was going on, as he had authorized a large portion of his troops to assist in the arrest the night before.

The response from the Jewish leadership mentioned nothing of blasphemy, for that was not of any concern to Rome. ³⁰ *"If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."* That isn't really any kind of charge. It's more of an insistence that Pilate just do their dirty work. Shortly before this, Pilate's sponsor in Rome, Sejanus, was executed for treason. Again we see the sovereign timing of God. This put Pilate in a precarious position. If he upset Rome or his overseer in Syria for any reason, he could be removed. Up until this time, he had been a brutal prefect and generally without regard for Jewish customs. Now he was suddenly forced to try to be a politician, pleasing everyone. The Jewish leaders are just ordering him to carry out their will, but he needs an indictment or he could be in trouble with Rome.

³¹ *Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected.* Pilate didn't want to be dragged into this, but the need to have him order the execution necessitated his cooperation.

³² *This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.* "This", all this: the sole authority of Rome to execute, the upper hand of the Jews over Pilate after the execution of Sejanus, the insistence of the Jews in having Jesus put to death. It all fell into place because of prophecy both of King David (Psalm 22:16-18) and Jesus (Matthew 20:19).

³³ *Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"* Pilate knew the charges and the leverage that the Jews had over him. He got straight to the real issue. Was Jesus a threat to Rome? Was He a militant Messiah? Was he fomenting a Hasmonean type revolt?

Jesus takes a direct question and answers with a question. Jesus is turning an interrogation into a chance to witness to Pilate. ³⁴ *"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"* When we are confronting people with spiritual truth, we should be inquiring about what they think of Jesus. Do they believe in him because of their parents, pastor, friends or do they personally believe in Him?

Commented [notes4]: 13 When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).
John 19:13 (NIV)

Commented [notes5]: 16 Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.
17 I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me.
18 They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.
Psalms 22:16-18 (NIV)

Commented [notes6]: 19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"
Matt 20:19 (NIV)

Here was Jesus, face bruised, swollen, bleeding in His sweaty clothes from Galilee before the fresh commander of 3000 soldiers, and Jesus puts him on trial. Pilate's answer will determine his own eternal destiny! This is another amazing reversal of roles. Jesus remains in control of this whole process.

Pilate knew where Jesus was going. The Romans tended to look down on the Jews as being religious elitists. He wasn't going to tell Jesus what was going on in his heart. ³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" In other words, "Why are you trying to talk with me like this! I'm not one of you. Here's a reality check. Your fellow Jews turned you in. Why?"

The Jewish leadership did not like the zealots. They saw the militant Jews as a threat to the detente that they had worked out with Rome in order to stay in power. Pilate is trying to determine if Jesus is really a typical zealot trying to raise an army, or a prophet that is a thorn in the side of the Jewish leadership. (John 11:48)

³⁶ Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." Jesus put Pilate's fears to rest but raised some new ones we'll see in a moment. Perhaps the Crusaders and conquistadors and others forgot to read this verse. Jesus was never about subjugating people. This world's order is not what Jesus is after. He's after hearts that enter a spiritual kingdom. Christians that get wrapped up in politics need to constantly remind themselves of this verse. We are recruiting people for a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly one. We are building a spiritual army that fights with spiritual weapons, not physical ones. Jesus could have made His disciples supermen, Samsons, or Davids but that is not what Jesus is after. He wants them to be spiritually victorious. (Ephesians 6:12)

Notice that Jesus said "now my kingdom is from another place." The word "now" is very interesting. Should we read, "Now that the Jewish nation has rejected their Messiah..." or "now the kingdom of God is shifting to a totally spiritual nature..." or it could be translated "presently it is the case that... but the day will come when it will be earthly also." It's something for us to think about. The point is that Jesus is not after what Pilate and Rome are concerned about. What are you after?

³⁷ "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." Jesus declares that He was not merely born but that He came into the world for a purpose. He has come to declare truth. Those who listen to Jesus enter the truth, the kingdom of God. Whoever is on the side of truth listens to Jesus.

Sometimes someone will tell me that they are a follower of Christ but then contradict something Christ taught. We have a community full of people who respect Jesus but don't think the Bible accurately relays His teaching. They are not on the side of truth, for they do not listen to Jesus. Truth sets us free. (John 8:32) Truth opens our eyes. Truth exposes our selfish desires. The King speaks truth and we bow our knee and receive it or we turn our heads and declare we are lord.

Commented [notes7]: 48 If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." John 11:48 (NIV)

Commented [notes8]: 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Eph 6:12 (NIV)

Commented [notes9]: 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:32 (NIV)

³⁸ "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. Pilate had discerned that Jesus was not a revolutionary. He was no threat to Rome, but He was a threat to the leadership of the Jews, the ones presently trying to manipulate Pilate. To release Jesus would be to strengthen Pilate's position and weaken theirs. There was no basis for a charge and any Roman that abused the power of the sword could have to answer to the emperor.

Thinking to turn the tables on the religious leaders, Pilate reminded the people that he would release one prisoner granting them amnesty. He may have thought that the people would side with Jesus against their own leadership. Either he underestimated the council's influence or the early morning crowd was tricked by the similarity of the names. You see, Barabbas full name was Jesus, son of a father. So there may have been some confusion as to whom they were shouting for. I think that ultimately the people trusted their leaders as to whom they should choose. By choosing Barabbas, a zealot the religious leaders would just as soon see executed, it shows how threatened they felt by Jesus.

Pilate then had Jesus flogged. (1Peter 2:24) The Romans had three forms of flogging. This was probably the less severe *fustigatio*, a kind of beating to warn those who were out of line but had not yet committed a serious crime. Many of you saw the different beatings portrayed graphically in the movie *The Passion*. He'll be flogged again in the severe form *verberatio* when He is sentenced.

² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. This was a common Roman game they often played with prisoners, The King Says. It was a game of humiliation. With Jesus it was doubly significant because He is the King of kings. (Revelation 17:14) Soldiers usually detested an assignment in Jerusalem because of zealot assassins and the strict Jewish culture. They took out their animosity toward the Jews on those condemned to death. They unwittingly place a crown of thorns on His head, intending to symbolize a crown of royalty, but in reality a picture of the curse on sin from Genesis 3 being place on our Savior. (Genesis 3:17-18) Even in this humiliation and mutilation, Christ is controlling the details. By this time Jesus' face would have become unrecognizable. (Isaiah 52:14)

⁴ Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." ⁵ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" Pilate tries for the second time to release Jesus. He'd rather see Him as a thorn in the side of the religious leaders. Perhaps he thought the battering and scourging would satisfy the leaders or provoke sympathy in the people. Maybe the humiliation would be enough for them? "Look at Him!" Pilate said. And we should see Him there, surrendered to the will of the Father, taking the abuse of man, ready to take up our sins. Go ahead, look at Him.

⁶ As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no

Commented [notes10]: 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)

Commented [notes11]: 14 They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings--and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

Rev 17:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes12]: 17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,'

"Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

Gen 3:17-18 (NIV)

Commented [notes13]: 14 Just as there were many who were appalled at him -- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness--

Isaiah 52:14 (NIV)

basis for a charge against him." This is Pilate's second declaration of Jesus' innocence.

Then it leaked out. *"We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."* Now Pilate knows the real charge against Jesus. This man isn't a mere insurrectionist; He is claiming to be a god! Romans had myths about gods who came to earth and judged men by how they were treated. Now Pilate's discernment about Jesus' calm assurance and lack of fear is combined with a big red flag of the claim that He is a god. (Matthew 27:14)

Pilate ushered Jesus back into the palace and asked, *"Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer.* Jesus already said He came into the world for a reason. Now Pilate is fearful of what that reason is.

¹⁰ *"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"* ¹¹ *Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."* In essence, Jesus said it was all predetermined. Pilate is playing the role laid out for him. He can't release Jesus even if he wants to. But it was Caiaphas that was accountable to God. He was the one that knew better. (James 4:17) He is the one that is about to blackmail Pilate into having Jesus crucified.

¹² *From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."* Pilate had a nickname, "the Friend of Caesar", but Caesar was a paranoid recluse on the island of Capri. He could dump Pilate in a heartbeat. But what if Jesus is a god? On top of that dilemma, Pilate's wife warned him of a dream to not get involved in Jesus' sentence. (Matthew 27:19) What could he do? Sejanus was dead. The priests would cause a riot if he didn't cooperate. He didn't believe the charges, but that didn't really matter. To free a person claiming to be a king would probably end his career and get him exiled. He'll end up exiled in a few years anyway.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. It was Pilate's last appeal to the crowd. Could they see what their leaders were doing? Would they get him off the hook? ¹⁵ *But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered. ^{16a} Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.* Caiaphas made his choice to extinguish this threat to his power and wealth. The people decided to side with their leaders. Pilate made his choice to stay in power. The chief priests chose their king, the current Caesar, over the King of kings. (Joshua 24:15)

Jesus will now receive the severe scourging and then carry His cross to the destination that was determined before the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8) Now we must make our choice. Which king will we choose? For whom will we raise our voice? (Matthew 25:34) What will motivate our life's decisions today? Here is the man, beaten, horribly scourged, deserted by His followers, but free and in command. (John 10:18) The real prisoners were Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate, prisoners of lust and pride. Jesus is the only One that could do whatever He chose, and He chose to take up the cross for you and me. Here is our King!

Commented [notes14]: 14 But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge--to the great amazement of the governor.
Matt 27:14 (NIV)

Commented [notes15]: 17 Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.
James 4:17 (NIV)

Commented [notes16]: 19 While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."
Matt 27:19 (NIV)

Commented [notes17]: 15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."
Josh 24:15 (NIV)

Commented [notes18]: 8 All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast--all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.[
Rev 13:8 (NIV)

Commented [notes19]: 34 You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.
Matt 12:34 (NIV)

Commented [notes20]: 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."
John 10:18 (NIV)