

## The Mistrial of Jesus Christ (Part 2)

**Text:** Mark 15:1-15

### Introduction:

1. The trial of Christ prior to His crucifixion divides into two phases:
  - The Ecclesiastical Trial before the religious leaders.
  - The Civil Trial before the Roman leaders.
2. Each of these two phases had three episodes:
  - The Ecclesiastical Trial
    - The trial before Annas (John 18:12-14).
    - The trial before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:19-24).
    - The Final trial before Sanhedrin in a brief meeting after dawn for formal sentencing (Matt. 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71). Matthew and Mark mention it only very briefly but Luke records the encounter in greater detail.
  - The Civil Trial
    - The first trial before Pilate (Luke 23:1-5).
    - The trial before Herod (Luke 23:6-12).
    - The final trial before Pilate (Matt. 27:11-26; Mark 15:1-15; Luke 23:13-25, John 18:28-40).
3. In this lesson we will study Christ's trial before Pilate as recorded in Mark's Gospel. We will divide the text into three sections for our study:

### I. THE SILENCE OF CHRIST (VS.1-5)

#### A. Silent in the face of Condemnation (Vs. 1)

1. "straightway in the morning" = immediately after daybreak, "as soon as it was day" (Lk. 22:66). This would be between 5 and 6 A.M. (Hiebert)
2. This 3<sup>rd</sup> and final religious trial. This brief morning assembly of the Sanhedrin was to attempt to give the appearance of legality to the sentence they had pronounced against Christ. In Jewish law, a formal, legal sentence could only be pronounced in the day time. It too was totally unjust as Jewish law also required "that a full day pass between sentencing and execution to allow for new evidence or testimony to surface" (Macarthur).
3. "delivered him to Pilate" = a literal fulfillment of Christ's prediction in Mark 10:33-34 – "Saying, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him,

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and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.”

4. ‘Pilate’ was the procurator appointed by Emperor Tiberias. “He was the fifth in order of these procurators and held office from A.D. 26-36. His usual place of residence was in Caesarea by the sea but he found it necessary to be in Jerusalem during the Passover season.” (Hiebert)

### B. Silent in the Face of Accusation (Vs. 2-5)

1. The presenting charge (Luke 23:1-3; John 18:28-32).
  - a. The charge of blasphemy, which was the conclusion of the Sanhedrin, was not presented to Pilate as they knew Christ’s claim to be the Messiah was not a capital crime under Roman law. A new charge of subverting Rome is manufactured. This was totally false! Christ has previously taught that Rome’s taxes were to be paid (Matt. 22:21). The reality is that the chief priests and the crowds were the ones who were trying every scheme to get around paying taxes to Rome. Luke 23:1-2 “And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, **We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.**”
  - b. They wanted Pilate to simply take their word for it without examining any evidence. They wanted him to simply act as executioner and treat Christ as a ‘malefactor’ rather than acting in his capacity as judge. John 18:28-30 “Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, **If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.**”
  - c. Pilate questions Christ directly, “Art thou the King of the Jews?” All four Gospels have the identical question (Matt. 27:11; Mk. 15:2; Lk. 23:3; John 19:33). The pronoun ‘thou’ “is emphatic and carries an obvious tone of disdain or surprise. It seemed ridiculous to Pilate that the dishevelled prisoner before him should claim to be the king of the Jews”.
  - d. Christ responds with the words “Thou sayest it” which was a “regular way of affirming the contents of a question. In Greek it may well be taken as a qualified assent. It may be intended to mean “Yes, but not with your exact meaning.” It implied that His answer was open for further discussion. He was “the king of the Jews” but not in the political sense as Pilate thought.” (Hiebert)

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- e. John 18:33-37 gives a fuller account of this exchange and reveals that Christ did explain to Pilate the true nature of His kingdom.
2. The follow up charges (Vs. 3)
  - a. Mark simply states that they accused Christ of “many things”.
  - b. Luke gives some of the detail – “And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.” (Lk. 23:5)
3. The response of Christ to the charges
  - a. This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah 53:7 “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he **opened not his mouth**: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he **openeth not his mouth.**”
  - b. Pilate, expecting the usual protests from a prisoner, marvelled at the silence of Christ. Christ’s silence was the most powerful testament against their lies. So utterly false were the accusations that Christ did not lower Himself to even answer them. “Jesus calmly refused to dignify these false charges by replying to them.” (Hiebert)
  - c. Maclaren: “Contradictions and confutations (rebuttals, arguments) keep slanders and heresies above water, which the law of gravitation would dispose of if they were left alone.”

## II. THE SUBSTITUTION OF CHRIST (VS. 6-13)

### A. The Custom Explained (Vs. 6, 8)

1. It was a custom of Pilate to release a prisoner of the people’s choice at Passover time.
2. The multitude begin to request that Pilate observe the custom (Vs. 8). Pilate seizes the opportunity, hoping to have Christ released. It is likely he anticipated that this move would pit the common people against the intentions of the religious leaders.

### B. The Choice Executed (Vs. 7-13)

The choice was between:

1. A Sinful Criminal (Vs. 7)

Barabbas was:

  - a. An insurrectionist (Vs. 7a). Evidently, he had led a revolt against Rome and was now bound with those who had participated with him in the attempted overthrow.
  - b. A murderer (Vs. 7b). He had committed murder in the process of the uprising.
  - c. A robber (John 18:40).
  - d. Maclaren: “His character and actions present in gross form the sort of Messiah the nation really wanted. He had headed some

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one of the many small riots against Rome which were perpetually sputtering up and being trampled out by an armed heel. There had been bloodshed, in which he had himself taken part ('a murderer,' Acts 3:14). And this coarse, red-handed desperado is the people's favourite, because he embodied their notions and aspirations, and had been bold enough to do what every man of them would have done if he had dared... The popular hero is as a mirror which reflects the popular mind."

2. The Sinless Christ (Vs. 9-13)
  - a. Pilate knew the real motive behind the chief priest's desire to crucify Christ was that of 'envy' (Vs. 10). Prov. 27:4 "Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?" As John Phillips puts it, "It must have been a novel experience for Pilate to have the Sanhedrin so eager to accuse a Jew of treason against Rome, the nation that they hated."
  - b. The exchange of Christ for Barabbas pictures the doctrine of substitution. By 'substitution' we mean that Christ took the sinner's place – the lawgiver is bound, the lawbreaker released; the innocent is punished, the guilty goes free; the Sinless One is condemned; the sinful one is acquitted.
  - c. Samuel Crossman (1664): "They rise, and needs will have my dear Lord sent away; a murderer they save, the Prince of Life they slay. Yet willing he to suffering goes, that he his foes from thence might free."

### III. THE SENTENCING OF CHRIST (Vs. 14-15)

#### A. Pilate's Declarations of Christ's Innocence (Luke 23:13-25; John 19:4, 6)

1. There were multiple occasions where Pilate declares Christ to be innocent.
2. Luke 23:4 – "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, **I find no fault in this man.**"
3. Luke 23:14 "Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, **have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him:**"
4. Luke 23:15 "No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, **nothing worthy of death is done unto him.**"
5. Luke 23:22 "And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil hath he done? **I have found no cause of death in him:** I will therefore chastise him, and let *him* go."

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6. John 19:4 “Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that **I find no fault in him.**” This was after Christ was scourged.
7. John 19:6 “When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify *him*, crucify *him*. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify *him*: **for I find no fault in him.**”

### B. The People’s Demand for Christ’s Death (Vs. 13-14)

1. Pilate asked a question of the crowd that day is one that every individual must answer at some point in his/her life. Matt. 27:22 “Pilate saith unto them, **What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?** *They* all say unto him, Let him be crucified.”
2. What will you do with Jesus? Will you reject him like the multitude did that day or will you fall at His feet as Lord, Christ and Saviour?

### C. Pilates Decision to Crucify Christ (Vs. 15)

1. Pilate was motivated by popular opinion in his decision, not the truth. What was the deciding factor in Pilate’s decision? We find the answer in John’s account
2. John 19:12 “And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, **If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.**”
3. Pilate knew that he was having an innocent man crucified but he would rather do that than lose his own position.

**Conclusion:** Are you saved? Christ took your sin upon Himself and died in your place, bearing the punishment and wrath of God for you. Will you receive His free offer of salvation?