

LESSONS ON PREDESTINATION #55
"The Battle of the Cross" (Part Nine)
(Scriptures from NKJV)

Luke 23:4-20:

So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no fault in this Man." But they were the more fierce, saying, "He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place."

When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked if the Man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other.

Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him" (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). And they all cried out at once, saying, "Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas"— who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder. Pilate, therefore, wishing to release Jesus, again called out to them.

INTRODUCTION: In our last lesson, we covered the first phase of the Roman civil trial before Pilate. The goal of the Jewish leaders was to prove that Jesus was guilty of insurrection against the Roman nation. The charges were three in number, but none of them could be proven. An extensive conversation occurred between Pilate and Jesus over the nature of His kingship. When Jesus made it clear that His kingdom was not a political kingdom, but a kingdom of moral truth, Pilate was satisfied that Jesus was no threat to the Roman government. Pilate then confronted the Jewish leaders with his verdict. **"I find no fault in this Man."** (Verse 4).

A. CHRIST'S CIVIL TRIALS BEFORE PILATE AND HEROD.

1. Jesus before Herod - Luke 23:4-17.

a. Verse 5 - The Jewish response to Pilate's verdict. The Jews violently objected to Pilate's verdict by taking another approach. They wanted Pilate to be aware of the extent to which Jesus' ministry had covered. It was not a localized thing residing only in Jerusalem. It covered all of Judea and Galilee. They particularly mentioned Galilee because there had been several insurrections occurring there, primarily from the groups known as the Zealots. They wanted Pilate to know that if he did not dispose of Jesus, he might lose control of those areas and lose his job.

b. Verses 6, 7. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he jumped at the chance of not having to settle the issue in his court. King Herod was the one who had jurisdiction over Galilee, so he sent Jesus over to Herod's court. Herod was in Jerusalem at the time, so it would be like going to a location close at hand. The chart you have shows the close proximity by following the footprints numbered 5.

c. Verses 8, 9 tell us that Herod was glad to meet Jesus, in that he had heard about Him, but had never met Him before.

(1) The life of Herod. Herod Antipas was one of the sons of Herod the Great. Herod the Great was made king of Judea by the Roman senate in B.C. 40 and died in B.C. 4. He was the king who attempted to kill Jesus in His infancy as recorded in Matthew, the second chapter. When he died, his kingdom was divided among his sons. Herod Antipas was given Galilee and Persia, over which he ruled from B.C. 4 to A.D. 39. With the exception of the accounts of Jesus' birth, Antipas is the Herod who appears in the Gospel records of Christ's life and ministry.

Antipas married the daughter of Aretas IV. This marriage was designed by Rome. But while visiting his half-brother, Herod Philip I, in Rome, Antipas had an affair with Philip's wife, whose name was Herodius. She was not only Philip's wife, she was Antipas' niece. Thus the affair was not only adulterous, but also incestuous. She agreed to leave her husband Philip and marry Antipas on the condition that he divorce the daughter of Aretas. It was for this unlawful divorce and marriage to his brother's wife that John the Baptist rebuked Antipas. This provoked the wrath of Herodius, who eventually, had John the Baptist beheaded (Matthew 14:3-11).

Three events occurred in the life of Jesus which were related to Antipas. They were:

First: The first came shortly after the death of John the Baptist. It is found in Luke 9:7-9 where we read, **"Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was**

done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, 'John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?' So he sought to see Him."

Second: The second time occurred in Luke 13:31-33 where we read, **"On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You.' And He said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.'"**

Third: The third time Antipas actually met Jesus in the event recorded here in Luke 23:8-12.

(2) This helps us to understand why there are two reasons why Herod Antipas was **"exceedingly glad for he had desired for a long time to see Him."** They were: One: **"he had heard many things about him."** And two: **"he hoped to see some miracle done by Him."**

d. Verses 9, 10 tell us that Antipas questioned Jesus extensively about matters of which we are not told. Jesus refused even to talk to him. Meanwhile, the Jewish leaders had followed Jesus to Herod's court and continued to make their accusations against Him. Jesus' refusal to talk to Antipas may have been because of Herod's interest in seeing a miracle rather than dealing with the main issue of insurrection. But in so doing, He was fulfilling the prophecy found in Isaiah 53:7 which states, **"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth."** This is but another example of the future being foreordained as certain to occur before it occurs.

e. Verse 11 - Herod concludes that he is dealing with a clown, not an insurrectionist, and begins to make fun of Jesus. He places a royal garment of a king upon Jesus and sends Him back to Pilate. In so doing, he is declaring that Jesus is innocent of the Jewish charges and presents no danger to Rome. NOTE: It is noteworthy that Jesus lived His life primarily under Herod Antipas' rule and yet had never been considered a threat to Rome, even though Antipas had dealt with many Jewish insurrections.

f. Verse 12 - Luke adds a footnote that Herod and Pilate **"became friends"**

with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other. Matthew Henry observes:

They had been at enmity between themselves, probably upon Pilate's killing the Galileans, who were Herod's subjects (Luke 13:1), or some other such matter of controversy as usually occurs among princes and great men. Observe how those that quarreled with one another, yet could unite against Christ. . . . Christ is the great peace-maker, both Pilate and Herod owned his innocency, and their agreeing in this cured their disagreeing in other things. (Henry, *Commentary on Luke*).

2. Jesus goes back before Pilate - Luke 23:13-24; John 18:39-40; 19:1-16.

a. NOTE: Luke 23:13 begins the phase of the three-phase civil trial. This combined with the three phases of the ecclesiastical trial means that Jesus has been through six trials in just a few hours. Combine this with the events in the Passover meal and those in the Garden, and one sees how long He has gone without sleep. This combined with the stress involved, and one can see how much energy is being drawn from the body of Jesus.

b. In verses 13-17, Pilate explains that neither he, nor Herod were able to find any evidence which would make Jesus guilty of engaging in insurrection against Rome. So he stated that while Jesus was not deserving of the death sentence, he would nevertheless punish Him and release Him to the Jews. However, a custom had been arranged to release a guilty Jewish prisoner each year at the time of the Passover Feast. This was to help calm relations with the Jews.

c. In verses 18, 19, we have the Jewish response. They did not want Jesus released, but a man named Barabbas, who had been found guilty of insurrection and murder under Roman law. The tension is mounting in Pilate's life as he is caught in a dilemma. How can he, as a judge, crucify an innocent man, set free a guilty man, and uphold the Roman system of justice at the same time. While Pilate is trying to decide what to do, he receives a note from his wife. This is recorded in Matthew 27:19 where we read, ***"While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him saying, 'Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him.'"*** Pilate is getting hit from all sides. His wife says, "let the Man alone and release him, but we read in Matthew 27:20 that something else was happening among the Jewish element. ***"But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus."*** A mob-mentality was developing. A riot could soon break out which could cost Pilate his job, if not his life, at the hands of his Roman superiors. He was responsible for maintaining order in his province.

d. In comparing the chronological order of this account as given in the four gospels, we must now go to John 19:1-16. In verses 1-8 we read, **"So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they struck Him with their hands. Pilate then went out again, and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.' Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, 'Behold the Man!' Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.' The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.' Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid."**

e. In John 19:1-3, Pilate scourged Jesus, the soldiers put a crown of thorns on His head and a purple robe on Him. They then mocked Him by ascribing royal honor to Him. This was followed by slapping Him. Mark says they also spit on Him. This occurred inside the courtroom, while the Jews remained outside.

f. Since Pilate could not appease the Jews by offering Barabbas in Christ's place, he decides to inflict punishment upon Jesus which would be short of death, thereby hoping to draw sympathy from the Jews when they saw Jesus' helpless condition. The Roman scourging was a most severe and degrading form of torture. The person was stripped to the waist and tied to a post in a stooping position. The back was lacerated by a whip made of leather throngs, into which were tied bits of stone and metal and weighted with lumps of lead at the tip of each throng. Some say it was called the "cat of nine tails." The lash tore the skin and muscles and exposed the bones of the back. Often times, the internal organs of the body were exposed as the throngs were buried in the flesh on the sides and undersides of the body. When the whip was dragged back, it tore the flesh wherever the whip was embedded. One soldier would whip until he was exhausted, then another would take his place until it was determined that the victim had suffered enough. Sometimes the victim would die during this process and never make it to the cross. The Psalmist describes the agony of Christ's suffering by saying in Psalm 129:3, **"The plowers plowed on my back; They made their furrows long."**

g. In verses 4-7, Pilate again goes outside to face the Jewish council and the mob that was forming. This time he brings Jesus out with him and announces that His verdict is the same. Jesus is innocent of all charges. Jesus appears wearing the crown and the robe. Instead of showing compassion for a wounded man, the Jewish leaders cry out

for Him to be crucified. In disgust and disdain for the Jews and their system, Pilate says, **"You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him."** The Jews state that according to God's law, He is guilty of blasphemy in claiming to be the Son of God. They are referring to Leviticus 24:16 which states, **"And whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall certainly stone him, the stranger as well as him who is born in the land. When he blasphemes the name of the Lord, he shall be put to death."** In making this charge, the Jews used the term, **"Son of God."** This was said to make Pilate more afraid than he was. This tells us that Pilate is about to crack up.

h. In verses 8-11 we are told that Pilate **"went again into the Praetorium and said to Jesus, 'where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer."** This is the third time that Pilate has entered and re-entered the courtroom. Many Roman officials were very superstitious. Pilate would not be familiar with the expression, "Son of God" in the Biblical sense, but he would apply it to the gods or "divine men" who were believed to be gifted with supernatural powers. Was Jesus a man or a god? That is Pilate's concern since he has just scourged a person who might be a god.

When Jesus refused to answer him, Pilate charged Him with contempt and disrespect toward the court. **"Are you not speaking to me? Do you not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release?"** Pilate's proud boast was not true. Jesus now speaks up and says, **"You have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."** Although Pilate was a responsible moral agent responsible for his actions, he did not have the ultimate control over the events related to the Son of God. **NOTE:** Nothing that happens is outside of the sovereignty of God. Let the advocates of free will emphasize that man is responsible to God for his actions and the evangelical Calvinist will agree, until the Arminian says, "God has done all He can do, the rest is up to you." In so doing, he is presenting a frustrated God who is limited by the will of man. Pilate was a sinful man, but his sins did not keep God from fulfilling His purpose. Indeed Pilate's actions put Jesus on the cross where He fulfilled God's purpose of saving His people from their sins. Though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the Ruler yet! Psalm 76:10 reigns true to this event in Pilate's life. **"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee; the remainder of wrath shall thou restrain."** (KJV). Also, Proverbs 21:1 says, **"The King's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He will."** (KJV). Just think, if Pilate had been successful in his desire to release Jesus, then Christ would not have been crucified and God's plan for the redemption of His people would have failed. Whose will is being done? The Devil was doing his will, men were doing their wills, and God was doing His will. Whose will was supreme? Whose

will is always supreme?

i. In verses 12-15, Pilate continues to persuade the Jews to drop their charges against Jesus, but they are now ready to play their trump card. In verse 12 we read, **"From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, 'If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.'"** The Jews had probably included this in their plot all along. If Pilate releases Jesus, the Council will go to Caesar and charge Pilate with being a traitor against Rome for releasing someone who said He was a rival king to Caesar. Pilate concluded his case by asking, **"Shall I crucify your King?"** The Jews replied, **"We have no king but Caesar!"** Pilate acknowledges his defeat and hands Jesus over to be crucified. This is the final step in the process of God destroying the Jewish nation and turning to the Gentiles. It was described in summary at the Prologue to John's Gospel in 1:11,12 which reads, **"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him, but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."**

There was no repentance when John the Baptist preached, nor when Jesus preached the Kingdom had come. When the Jews, as represented by their national leaders, rejected their King, the ax was laid to the roots of their national tree. Their covenant with God was doomed. God would be most righteous when a few years later, He would destroy the Jewish nation, the temple, and its priesthood. This would be at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D. Since that time, God has not imparted any spiritual blessings upon the unbelieving nation or any unbelieving Jewish individuals. He has now turned to a New Covenant made with believing Jews, which comprise a remnant of God's elect. These, along with believing Gentiles, make up the new "Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16).

j. Pilate's last act in closing the trial. - We now must return to the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 27:24-25 we have the account of Pilate washing his hands so as to display that he is not responsible for the death of Jesus. There we read, **"When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it.' And all the people answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children.'"** Only Matthew records this event. Pilate has become familiar with several of the Jewish laws and ceremonies. The handwashing ceremony was based on the Jewish law found in Deuteronomy 21:1-9 where we read, **"If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the Lord your God is**

giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him, then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities. And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked and which has not pulled with a yoke. The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the Lord your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the Lord; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled. And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley. Then they shall answer and say, 'Our hands have not shed this blood, nor have our eyes seen it. Provide atonement, O Lord, for Your people Israel, whom You have redeemed, and do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people Israel.' And atonement shall be provided on their behalf for the blood. So you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord."

In essence, if a dead body was found in a field, and the ruling elders of the nearest city were not able to determine who the murderer was, the Mosaic law required they could publicly wash their hands, pray to God, and thereby absolve themselves of any guilt regarding their inability to solve the crime and render justice. Pilate used the modified form of this Jewish ceremony to proclaim that he was "innocent" of this innocent man's blood. Pilate did not wish to see Jesus die, but he was not courageous enough to risk his job and reputation to protect Christ's life.

B. SUMMARY

1. How often we violate our own moral codes if our livelihood is threatened. Examples: Lying in order to get a job. A minister who says he believes what the Bible teaches, but cannot teach what is in the Bible for fear of losing his pastorate.

2. All of us at some time or another, have tried to rationalize our behavior in order to protect our own self-interests. There remains too much of Pilate and Herod in all of us. It is known as sin.