

The Roman Trial of Jesus

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Date: 26 October 2025

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- [0 : 00] And Pastor John will be preaching again from the Gospel of Mark and today we'll be reading!
- The chief priests and with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.
- Are you the king of the Jews? asked Pilate. Yes, it is as you say, Jesus replied. The chief priest accused him of many things.
- So again, Pilate asked him, aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of. But Jesus still made no reply and Pilate was amazed.
- Now it was custom at the feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising.
- [1 : 20] The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? asked Pilate, knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.
- But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. What shall I do then with the one you call the king of the Jews? Pilate asked them.
- Crucify him! They shouted. Why? What crime has he committed? asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, crucify him!
- Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified. The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace, that is, the praetorium, and called together the whole company of soldiers.
- They put a purple robe on him and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. And they began to call out to him, Hail, King of the Jews!
- [2 : 28] Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him.
- Then they led him out to crucify him. Lord willing, this may be the last time I preach for a couple of months as I need to be preparing 24 lectures in pastoral theology to give at the Trinity Pastors College in Nairobi, Kenya in March and then again with the riffles in Columbia, South America later in the year.
- It's a difficult thing for me to step away from the Gospel of Mark and especially at this point. Just as we're coming to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that's what the whole book has been about, hasn't it?
- Leading us to this point. But that's how providence is led and so I will look forward to picking up where we leave off today on the road to Golgotha where the Lord Jesus would be tortured, would suffer and die under God's wrath that poor sinners like us could be made right with God through his blood and enjoy eternal life in his presence forever.

So we're told that before Jesus is nailed to the cross at nine o'clock in the morning, think about it, he's been up all night without sleep. He went from the last supper in the upper room to Gethsemane where he prayed with such intensity that he sweat, as it were, great drops of blood and needed an angel to come and strengthen him that he might go on praying.

[4 : 16] Then the betrayal by Judas, the arrest by the mob, the kangaroo trial by the Jewish religious leaders. Those two trials lasting throughout the night and the early morning hours so that now in Mark 15, he's taken before the Roman governor to be tried by Pilate.

So we come then to the Roman trial. We've seen the Jewish trials and we come now to the Roman trial. Verse one, very early in the morning, Luke says it was daybreak.

The chief priests, the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin reached a decision. They bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate. So the Jews, by their high court of the Sanhedrin, had reached a decision condemning Jesus to death for the sin of blasphemy, claiming God-like prerogatives for himself, making himself equal with God.

So they bind Jesus, lead him off to the Roman governor, Pilate. Pilate was a violent man. He hated the Jews. They were a troublesome people to him.

They had zealots, cloak and dagger men, who would go around and kill Romans and stir up revolts to overthrow the Roman government.

[5 : 43] But the Jewish charge of blasphemy against their God will mean nothing at all to Pilate. He won't give a care for their religious rules and what blasphemy is against their God.

So when these Jewish leaders come to Pilate, they change their charge against Jesus. No longer is it he's blaspheming God, but now they accuse him of high treason, inciting the people to rebel against Rome.

He claims to be the king of the Jews, as if he's in a political rivalry with Caesar. Now that would be of great concern then to Pilate.

And so in verse 2, he asked Jesus, are you the king of the Jews? And he answers, yes, it is as you say. But John records that Jesus went on to qualify his answer.

For though the Jews were looking for a political Messiah who would crush the Romans and free them from their yoke of bondage, Jesus was not that kind of Messiah king at all.

[6 : 52] And he refused to accept their kingship with that idea in mind. And he told Pilate, 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. Nevertheless, the Jewish leaders just pile it on all the more. Verse 3 says, the chief priest accused him of many things.

And the other gospels spell out what these many accusations were. Trumped up charges that were out and out lies against our Savior. Luke 23 records them saying, we found this man subverting our nation.

Inciting the people to rebellion. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar. Now that's a lie and they know it. We heard the question put to Jesus, shall we pay the tax?

And you remember he said, give to Caesar what is Caesar's. And now they're saying, he says he shouldn't give taxes to Caesar. And then they say, he claims to be Christ the king.

[8 : 01] Again, as if he's a political rival to Caesar. Pilate announces to the chief priest in the crowd, I find no basis for a charge against this man.

But they insisted, he stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started up in Galilee and he's come all the way here.

One after another, false accusations and lies. So verse 4 of our text says again, Paul asked him, aren't you going to answer? See how many things they're accusing you of.

But Jesus still made no reply. And Pilate was amazed. What happened every time in the book of Mark when Jesus did make a reply to their accusations?

Well, he totally humiliated them. He showed them they didn't understand the scriptures. He showed them they were not true at all. And that could have happened here.

[9 : 06] If Jesus wanted to defend himself against any one of their many charges. But saving himself from death was not his agenda anymore.

It was now his time to offer himself. And he does it willingly by not saying a word in his defense, though he could have. But then how would scripture be fulfilled?

And how would God's eternal purpose stand? And how would sinners like you and me be made right with God? Unless he goes to the cross and suffers there in our place.

And so as Isaiah 53, 7 spoke of the suffering servant 700 years earlier. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth.

He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And his sheep before her shears is silent, so he opened not his mouth. No reply at all to a single charge.

[10 : 09] To the great amazement of Pilate. Later we'll see as to the great frustration of Pilate. But at first he's totally amazed at this. He had heard many men who were charged with capital crimes that would mean their life.

And they had plenty to say in their defense when their lives were on the line. But this Jesus says nothing to defend himself of capital accusations.

J.C. Ryle comments, Great is the contrast between the second Adam and the first. Our first father Adam, when caught having eaten the forbidden fruit, was guilty and yet tried to excuse himself.

It was the woman you put here with me that gave me the fruit. The second Adam was guiltless and made no defense at all. What a contrast. He's holy, righteous, and pure.

And he says nothing in his defense. I wonder how you are with unjust suffering. How are you when people lie about you?

[11 : 18] And spread false accusations about you? Peter says if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

This is praiseworthy with God. And to this you were called. It's not just a happenstance. You're called to this because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps.

And when they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. There it is.

And even so, when you suffer quietly, under mistreatment, and commit yourself to God who judges justly, waiting for his day of judgment, to put all wrongs right, something of Jesus-likeness is seen in you too.

There ought to amaze the world, even as it amazed Pilate before Jesus. So Pilate knows that Jesus is innocent of their charges.

[12 : 27] He knows the Sanhedrin are no loyalists to Rome, as they're pretending, we found this troublemaker trying to overthrow the Romans. They're no loyalists to Caesar. They hate Caesar.

He knows they're lying. Pilate knows the real reason they handed Jesus over was because they were jealous of his popularity, and the crowds were following him instead of them. Pilate knows that.

He knows the Sanhedrin are just using him to get rid of Jesus, to do their dirty work for him, for them. Pilate doesn't like being their pawn to carry out their wishes.

So Pilate's wanting to release Jesus, but without carrying the responsibility for doing so. So he puts the decision to the crowd, thinking they'll surely want to spare Jesus, their king.

The king of the Jews. But he greatly misjudges the crowd, as we'll see. Verses 6 to 11. Now it was the custom at the feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested.

[13 : 35] A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. So here's a real insurrectionist. Here's a man inciting real violence, even murder in an uprising against Rome.

This man was guilty of the very thing they are falsely accusing Jesus of doing. So the crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

Pilate, thinking that they would want the king of the Jews spared, asked, Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? Knowing it was out of envy that the chief priest had handed Jesus over to him.

But the chief priest stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead. Well, so much for their pretended loyalty to Rome. Their true colors are now seen as they choose to have a guilty, murdering insurrectionist against Rome released instead of the innocent Jesus.

And so it becomes obvious to Pilate and to anyone who understood things that day that all they wanted was a dead Jesus. And they would say anything in lying about him to get Governor Pilate to crucify him.

[14 : 57] So he underestimates the crowd's antagonism against the Roman rule that's been over them for centuries. And it made Barabbas a Robin Hood type of hero striking out against the oppressive, powerful Roman government.

And so they call for Barabbas to be released. Verse 12, Pilate asks, What shall I do then with the one you call the king of the Jews? Crucify him, they shouted.

Why? What crime has he committed, asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder. Crucify him. Now this is mob behavior.

This is a crowd that's beyond being reasoned with. And when they have no reasoning, no facts to produce, they just shout louder.

Have you seen that? In the streets of our land? When there's not answers and substance, they just shout louder. Crucify him. And so the control of the situation quickly is shifting from Pilate, the governor, to this raucous crowd who is having their way with him, chanting for Jesus to be crucified.

[16 : 12] And by now the crowd clearly saw that this Jesus that just five days earlier, they were shouting Hosanna to the king of the Jews.

They now saw he wasn't the kind of king they wanted at all. They were looking for a Barabbas type hero that would set them free from the Romans. Here he is, a weak, beaten, gaunt, bound, man, looking powerless before the Roman government.

And it made them believe all the more that the chief priests when they convinced them that he's just a pretend Messiah. He's a false Messiah.

He's not a real thing. He's a phony pretender. Crucify him, they shout. They've had it with him. And they shout louder and louder. In John chapter 19, we're told Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews just kept shouting, if you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar because anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.

Pilate brings Jesus out before them saying, here is your king. And they say, take him away. Take him away. Crucify him.

[17 : 37] Shall I crucify your king? Pilate asks. We have no king but Caesar, the chief priest answered. Again, pretending to be so loyal to Rome.

So that finally, in verse 15 of our text, wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged and handed him over to be crucified so that a murderer they save and the prince of life they slay.

And we can read over so easily those words, he had Jesus flogged and then handed over to be crucified.

Flogging was the most brutal form of torture. The criminal was tied to a post. Back bare. And then there was the dreaded whip of braided leather strips with bits of glass and bone and lead embedded in the strips.

And the soldiers would take turns at filleting the back of the criminal with that whip. Tearing the flesh off of the back down to the bone.

[18 : 55] Many men never lived to get to the cross. It was often done before crucifixion. And sometimes men died before they got to the cross. Yes, he had Jesus flogged and then handed him over to be crucified.

That same back that was then forced to carry the cross beam on that back to the point of execution at Golgotha. No wonder he had to have help.

Well, that's the account of Mark on the trial of the Roman governor Pilate. So let's look at the people involved in this scene.

And what do we see? We start with Governor Pilate. And he is a complicated figure. He hates the Jews yet he wants to please them. Isn't that interesting? He knows Jesus is innocent of their charges as over and over he says I find no basis for a charge against him.

He wants to release Jesus and though he's the governor who has the authority to release Jesus he's a cringing slave to the favor of men.

[20 : 08] The praises of men. He wants to please the crowd of Jews that he hates. And so he caves to the crowd pressure. And he knowingly frees a guilty man condemned as an innocent one.

The greatest injustice ever on our planet. The greatest abuse of power ever. He's guilty of the blood of the Son of God and no amount of washing his hands of the responsibility can ever take that guilt off of him.

You know the only thing that would take that guilt away? Is to be washed in the very blood of Jesus. that he was guilty of charging him with. But he does not turn to Christ in faith.

He abandoned the truth of what he knew for the smile of the Jewish crowd. Powerful governor that he was. Poor puppet to men's praises. What will the praises of men mean to Pilate in just a few years when he dies and meets the resurrected Christ who is now standing in judgment upon him?

What will those praises of the people? Oh, Pilate's a good governor. What will that mean to him? Them in that day? It will mean nothing. The only thing that will count is what does Jesus have to say about me?

[21 : 27] Come you who are blessed by my Father inherit the kingdom or depart from me I never knew you. Oh, but in this life Pilate sells out for the praises of people and before we stand back blaming Pilate have you never caved to worldly pressure?

You knew what you should have said or done and yet you didn't say it or do it simply because you wanted people to think well at you. You were afraid if you did speak up what might they think of me?

Even Peter caved to crowd pressure earlier this very night to the depths of denying his Lord with curses. No, so we stand before the examination of Pilate giving thanks that the blood of Jesus cleanses from every sin.

Yes, the sins that we have committed of seeking the pleasures of men rather than the pleasures and the praise of God. But then there was the Jewish leaders in the crowd.

They too are guilty of the blood of Jesus. They chose Barabbas over Jesus. They chose a murderer over the giver of life. A convicted revolutionary over the meek and humble Jesus they know as a peaceable man but falsely accused as inciting revolt.

[22 : 46] Yes, the Jewish leaders in the crowd will have to stand before him in judgment and answer for their duplicity pretending to care about loyalty to Rome.

But again before we sit in judgment upon these Jews have not all of us chosen other things and other people instead of Christ? When the choice was Christ or me and my sin and my way of living every one of us chose my way not your way Christ.

Some of you are still choosing your way still saying no, it's got to be me not Christ my way not his way choosing lesser things over him we're as guilty as the Jews choosing Barabbas over Christ but even now the wonder of wonders is that he's willing to forgive Christ rejecters if you'll but turn from your way and turn and trust in Christ he will receive you he turns none away he's just that good Pilate the Jewish leaders the crowd they're all guilty of Jesus' blood and then there's Barabbas who we meet in this account and doesn't Barabbas give us a picture of salvation?

The innocent one Jesus is condemned the guilty one Barabbas goes free that's a theme in scripture isn't it?

that's that's one that deserves the wrath of God going free because of God's substitute that he provided taking the condemnation in their place now that's it's not an exact parallel because Barabbas doesn't put his trust in what Jesus did but the picture is there Barabbas goes free and the innocent Christ is condemned and this this shows us just how our salvation has nothing at all to do with how good we are it's all about how good Jesus is and what he the righteous one has done for the unrighteous for Christ died for sins the righteous for the unrighteous to bring us to God that's what gets us into heaven his work not ours the punishment that brought us peace with God was on him and by his wounds we are healed don't you love him for that don't you want to serve him because of that and sinner friend if you receive salvation from this gracious savior as a free gift he will forgive you quit all trust in what you do to save yourself don't even trust in your repentance and faith give up all nonsense of deserving mercy there's not one person in heaven no man in heaven no sinner in heaven that's there because of their works every single one who's in heaven is one who has said

[26 : 09] I don't deserve to be here but thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift through Jesus Christ I am here are you ready to give up your own deservingness ready to come and say I deserve to go to hell but have mercy on me father for Jesus sake that's the one he accepts that's the one that goes down to his house forgiven so trust in Christ's works and hold on to the claim of your own goodness and you'll perish forever abandon it come and own your sin and throw yourself on God's mercy and you will be forgiven and enjoy heaven forever come as Barabbas then condemned guilty and trust in the innocent one Jesus Christ who died instead of sinners under God's judgment and you go free well who else is there in this story well there's the soldiers isn't there the soldiers who mock and beat the Lord

Jesus Christ and here we see our nature at its worst yes our nature your nature my nature we can't say I that's something I would never do no this is our human nature fallen and yes different fallen natures do different things but this is how bad our nature is as we witness these soldiers verse 16 they led Jesus away into the palace and called together the whole company of soldiers everyone must get in on this opportunity for a little entertainment at the expense of their prisoner a bit of diversion from their boring job rather than having pity on their half dead prisoner they sadistically find joy in his pain they had heard about his claim to be a king and they mock him for it now they dress him up and treat him as a joker king well a king needs a robe a king needs a crown and so verse 17 they put a purple robe on him and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him and they began to call out to him hail king of the

Jews and again and again they struck him on the head with a staff yes that thorn crowned head striking him on the head with the staff and spit on him that's what we think of you king that's what we think of this Jewish king and then they let him out to crucify him but this is none other than the king of kings the lord of lords the eternal god the son and they're treating him like this the one they ridiculed has been raised from the dead exalted to the highest place and is coming in power and great glory and in those days the knees that bowed in mockery will bow before him in dread terror and the mouths and tongues that mocked him will confess that Jesus Christ is lord to the glory of God the father but it will be too late for them to find mercy because the door of mercy is only opened here in this life it will be too late for them to confess him as lord unto salvation but it's not too late for anyone here it's still the day of grace the door of mercy still open wide as are the arms of Jesus run to

Christ today and he will receive you but by far the most important person in this passage is our lord Jesus the king of the Jews the eternal son of God this king of kings suffering this beating and mockery and silence he who is worthy of the most glorious crown is now wearing a crown of thorns beaten into his skull and bleeding children where did thorns come from thorns can you think the first time the bible ever talks about thorns thorns came from sin and God's judgment upon people for their sin way back in Genesis chapter 2 chapter 3 God said to Adam after he sinned and ate of the forbidden tree cursed is the ground because of you through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life it will produce thorns and thistles for you thorns are part of

God's curse for man's sin could it be that this crown of thorns that is resting on Jesus is meant to be a picture that Jesus has borne God's curse for his people for Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us Galatians 3 13 the curse it is everyone who is hanged on a tree so again we're faced with the gospel aren't we even with the crown of thorns because we broke God's law we all deserve to suffer God's curse upon us forever but Jesus takes those sins of his people on himself and he bears them and he's cursed in our place that we might never be condemned or cursed that's the gospel Christ cursed for others so get into Christ where the curse has already fallen because that's the only safe place in the universe to be outside of Christ the curse is waiting for you the wrath of God is waiting and it will find you but in

[32 : 14] Christ the curse has already fallen so God will not punish twice in you what he already punished in his son what a gospel what a savior why stay under the curse when you could get into Christ this morning and he would receive you so we've seen our savior shining with amazing self-control to say nothing when he's falsely accused to not retaliate when he's tortured and flogged and mocked but we've also seen that Pilate's trial of Jesus is more so a trial of Pilate himself I mean Jesus was in the hot seat as it were but who's really trying who Pilate is being tried by Jesus

Christ he is being exposed his sin and guilt is being exposed even as he's trying the Lord Jesus and every time the apostles creed is recited his guilt is shouted into this world Jesus I believe in Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate it was the same with the trial of the Jewish leaders they were trying Jesus but they were the ones who were exposed his light exposed their darkness and it's the same way with you and me what you do with Jesus tells us far more about you than it ever tells us about Jesus you see he's the perfect one and if if you condemn the perfect one in condemning him you are condemning yourself aren't you what are you doing with

Jesus despising rejecting neglecting ignoring to do nothing is to continue rejecting him to come and embrace him as your Lord and Savior confessing your sin to him is to find him to be the friend of sinners so we leave Jesus on the road to Golgotha where he will suffer and die under God's wrath that we might in receiving him escape the coming wrath but before we leave Mark's gospel for a break there is one further lesson because we can leave this scene pointing the finger at Judas for betraying Jesus pointing the finger at the Jews who falsely accused and condemned him and cried crucify him pointing the finger at Pontius Pilate who caved into the crowd and knowingly condemned an innocent

Jesus pointing the finger at the soldiers for mocking and torturing him but brothers and sisters it was your sins and my sins that when placed upon Christ shouted crucify him crucify him it was your sins that drove him to the cross it was your sins and mine that made the cross necessary if we are ever to be saved it was your sins that nailed him to the cross that brought the torments of hell to Calvary that day that brought down God's wrath upon sin that made him cry my God my God why have you forsaken me that was not Pilate that was not Judas that was not the soldiers or the crowd that was your sins and mine that made him cry as he was being separated as he was feeling the wrath of God upon him for our sins it was that sin of us that held him to the cross until he could cry in victory it is finished what's finished the last payment for all of our sins the sins of all of his people the last payment has been made and he cries it's finished your sins past present future yesterday today and tomorrow those sins have been paid in full it's finished don't you want to love him for this don't you want to hate your sin for this well as we leave may that be the dual effect of this greatest of expressions of God's love and mercy toward us sinners that we will love our Savior more and that we will hate our sin more the sin that put him to such torture let's pray together our father our words seem so small and unfitting when we thank you for sending your son but what else can we say

Lord Jesus we're thankful for the way you gave your life for us willingly not defending yourself but taking our sins upon you to the tree and there bearing the infinite wrath of God in our place thank you and thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to apply that work of redemption to our hearts so that we would see our sin and our need of a Savior and be drawn and be brought to the Savior by faith we pray continue to work this work in our hearts of repentance and faith every day of our life till we see our Savior face to face and fall at his feet and personally thank him for what he's done we ask in Jesus name amen