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Sermon Notes

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## **Christ on Trial Before Pontius Pilate**

### **Mark 15:1-15**

Things are not always what they appear. If we could go back in time to the trial of Jesus before Pilate, it would physically appear to be what the gospel writers presented. But the reality of the event was vastly different. Whereas Pilate thought he was weighing Christ in the balance, it was actually his own soul that was hanging in the balance. By condemning Jesus to death, a man he openly asserted was innocent, and a man he believed may well have been divine, he was destroying his conscience and condemning his own soul.

He did it to please the crowd and save his life and his job. But as Jesus put it so plainly,

***Mark 8:36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?"***

If Pilate never did repent of his sins and believe in Jesus, he will spend all eternity wishing he had this moment back

But the real question is, what about each of you?

You have the opportunity to sit in judgment on Jesus, to try him based on the evidence, and to render a verdict.

But like Pilate, all that's really happening is you are rendering a verdict on your own eternal soul.

The Gospel writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – all wrote their accounts to give us the full story of Jesus' life, death, and

resurrection... John speaks for all of them when he gives the plain reason for why he wrote what he wrote:

***John 20:31 these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.***

#### I. The Charge Against the Silent Jesus: “The King of the Jews”

##### A. Jesus Arraigned Before Pilate

1. The religious trial is over and the Jewish leaders had come to their clear decision

***Mark 15:1 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, 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.***

2. They had to have Pilate’s consent because the Romans had deprived them of the authority to put someone to death
3. And they DEEPLY wanted Jesus put to death
4. Notice the HYPOCRISY of these Jewish religious leaders

***John 18:28 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.***

5. They maintain an outward appearance of legality, but their whole purpose is to MURDER AN INNOCENT MAN... and more than that, the GLORIOUS SON OF GOD

##### B. The Charge: “Are You the King of the Jews?”

1. Pilate asked him this question

***Mark 15:2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate***

2. This was the charge the Jews had figured would “work” with the Roman governor

3. They had tried to get Jesus on tax evasion, but he had clearly taught the need to pay taxes to Caesar
4. The “King of the Jews” charge was weighty, because it implied a threat to the Roman interests in the area
5. In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus’ enemies took another approach:

***Luke 23:5 they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."***

6. But ironically, Barabbas, the very one they chose instead of Jesus was accused of leading an insurrection

***Luke 23:19 (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.)***

7. So Pilate asks him this question: ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS?

#### C. Jesus’ Enigmatic Answer

***Mark 15:2 "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.***

***Matthew 27:11 Jesus answered, "You have said it."***

1. Strange statement! Mysterious
2. Perhaps Jesus meant it like this...“Yes it is as you say; but not what you mean!!” Or... “You have said it, but you don’t understand it!”
3. John 18: “My Kingdom is not of this world...”

***John 18:36-38 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." <sup>37</sup> "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." <sup>38</sup> "What is truth?" Pilate asked.***

4. Jesus’ Kingdom is infinitely more powerful than Pilate can possibly imagine, but of an entirely different nature than he thought

D. Was Jesus “King of the Jews”?

1. Yes... that’s the point of the whole genealogy in Matthew 1: Jesus, the Son of David
2. Yes, but not the way the disciples thought... or the way the chief priests thought... nor the way Pilate thought
3. Actually, Jesus is king of more than just the Jews

***Zechariah 9:10 He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.***

E. Was Jesus a Threat? No... and Yes... A THOUSAND TIMES YES!!

1. Jesus was no threat to lead an immediate insurrection against Pilate
2. But Jesus threatened Pilate with eternal damnation
3. Jesus’ Kingdom has vastly more power than any earthly ruler could possibly imagine
4. When Christ returns, he will destroy all other kingdoms and set up his own

***Daniel 2:44-45 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. <sup>45</sup> This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands-- a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.***

***Revelation 19:15-16 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. <sup>16</sup> On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.***

F. Jesus’ Silence: In Direct Fulfillment of Prophecy

***Mark 15:3-5 The chief priests accused him of many things. <sup>4</sup> So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many***

*things they are accusing you of." <sup>5</sup> But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.*

*Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

Jesus' silence is reasonable because of the INJUSTICE of this trial:

*Luke 22:67-68 "If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us." Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, <sup>68</sup> and if I asked you, you would not answer.*

So, he will not grace their insulting questions with any answers at all

#### G. Pilate's Amazement

1. He had never seen any prisoner behave so strangely
2. As Procurator with the power of life or death, he was used to seeing prisoners in many different states
  - a. Some might beg and plead for their lives
  - b. Some might be terrified and unable to speak because of horror
  - c. Some might be sullen and defiant; or loud and defiant
3. But Jesus had a supernatural calm to himself... a reasonableness and peace and power... such as he had never seen in all his life as a government official

*Proverbs 16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.*

Jesus was in absolute control of himself, of his emotions and reactions, at every moment. He was immeasurably strong!

#### II. Pontius Pilate on Trial

*Mark 15:6-15 Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. <sup>7</sup> A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising.*

<sup>8</sup> *The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.* <sup>9</sup> *"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate,* <sup>10</sup> *knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.* <sup>11</sup> *But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.* <sup>12</sup> *"What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.* <sup>13</sup> *"Crucify him!" they shouted.* <sup>14</sup> *"Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"* <sup>15</sup> *Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.*

#### A. Pilate Really the One on Trial... Jesus "Fate" Was Sealed!

1. If you know what to look for, you see that it is really Pilate who's on trial here, not Jesus
2. This is especially clear in John's account of the trial... Pilate again and again declares to the Jews that Jesus is innocent and tries everything he can to set Jesus free
3. Let's look at the facts of this case concerning Pilate
  - a. On the one hand, Pilate knows Jesus is innocent... in our text it says he knew it was out of ENVY that they had handed Jesus over to him
  - b. Secondly, Pilate has undoubtedly heard about Jesus' miracles and the power that surrounded his ministry
  - c. Thirdly, Romans frequently believed that the gods came down to earth in human form and tested the humans... this was a common feature in pagan religions, the "god incognito" theme... we even see this in Acts 14, when Paul and Barnabas were ministering in Lystra and did a miracle:

***Acts 14:11-12*** *When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in human form!"* <sup>12</sup> *Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul they called Hermes*

And they tried to offer sacrifices to THEM!

So, this idea of gods in human form was well known

- d. Fourthly, we have Pilate's wife's statement and the dream which we'll get to in a moment
- e. John's Gospel makes it plain that Pilate was afraid of Jesus

***John 19:7-9 The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." <sup>8</sup> When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, <sup>9</sup> and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer.***

- f. BUT he was even more afraid of what the Jews would do if he refused them

## B. Lessons from Josephus: God Sovereignly Orchestrated Jewish Power Over Pilate

1. Josephus a Jewish historian who gives us valuable insights about the Jews' relationship with the Romans at that time
2. Pilate ruled the Roman province of Judea from AD 26-36.
3. Once he was established in his position, he quickly offended the Jews multiple times by his high-handed and arrogant treatment of the Jewish people
  - a. He set up his Roman eagles in the temple; they were looked on as idols by the Jews, who assembled to demand that he remove them; Pilate refused and threatened the Jewish mob with slaughter if they didn't disburse; undaunted, the Jews bared their necks and said "Go ahead and kill us, we're not leaving!" Pilate had to back down, because he didn't want to begin his rule with a slaughter
  - b. Soon after that, he offended the Jews again with his handling of a public aqueduct conflict; again, the Jews assembled to protest; Pilate had the crowd infiltrated with plainclothes Roman soldiers; when the Jews refused to disburse, Pilate gave the signal and the soldiers slaughtered many Jews that day; but

Tiberius was disgusted with Pilate and threatened him with dismissal and disgrace (and probably death) if he failed again

- c. Through these incidents, the Jews gained a powerful level of control over Pilate which they used directly in the trial of Jesus... the final word in the whole thing was this:

***John 19:12 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."***

C. Pilate's Conviction: Jesus Was Completely Innocent (vs. 18; John 18-19)

***Mark 15:10 knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.***

Three times in John's Gospel, he declared publicly that Jesus was innocent of any charge at all...

***John 18:38 With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no fault in him."***

***John 19:4 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 fault in him."***

***John 19:6 Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."***

D. Pilate's Deep Desire: To Release Jesus

E. The Desire Strengthened by His Wife's Dream and Testimony

***Matthew 27:19 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."***

1. See the amazing providence of God
2. He sends some kind of dream that terrified Pilate's wife
3. She sends a message to Pilate to set Jesus free



#### F. The Clever Attempt: Pass the Decision Over to the Crowd

***Mark 15:6-10*** Now it was the custom at the Feast to release a prisoner whom the people requested. <sup>7</sup> A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. <sup>8</sup> The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. <sup>9</sup> "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, <sup>10</sup> knowing it was out of envy that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him.

#### G. The Clever Attempt Thwarted by the Jewish Leaders

***Mark 15:11*** But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

Perhaps they called in IOUs, or offered money; but they were adept in manipulating the crowd

#### H. The Maniacal Frenzy of the Crowd

***Mark 15:12-14*** "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them. <sup>13</sup> "Crucify him!" they shouted. <sup>14</sup> "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate. But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

***Matthew 27:24*** ... Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting

#### I. Satan's Seething Hatred Behind All This

1. We must see Satan's invisible hand in all this murderous hatred!
2. Satan had inhabited Judas to betray Jesus into all this frenzy
3. Now he, the original murderer, wants to kill the author of life

### III. Jesus' Blood on the Jewish Nation (Matthew's Gospel)

#### A. The Sinlessness of Jesus Clearly Established

#### B. The Roots of the Chief Priests and Elders Wicked Hatred for Jesus

Envy... Greed... Power

C. The Vacillation of the Crowd... and the Jewish Nation as a Whole

1. A week earlier... they were chanting His name and honoring Him with Palm branches as the Son of David
2. Now, they were calling for His death by crucifixion

D. The Culmination of Jesus' Rejection

***John 1:11 He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.***

E. The Stunning Statement Made

***Matthew 27:24-25 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" 25 All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"***

F. The Stunning Statement Interpreted Throughout Redemptive History

1. Meaning #1: "Blood upon" = guilty for the death
  - a. The phrase means to be guilty for, to be responsible for

***Leviticus 20:9 "If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and his blood will be on his own head.***

- b. Jesus had warned this very thing: "And so upon this generation will come all the righteous blood..."

***Matthew 23:34-36 Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. 35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation.***

- c. Here... they are willing to take responsibility for the blood of Jesus... even throughout the future generations!!!

d. Later, they seem to shun that responsibility

The Sanhedrin to the Apostles:

***Acts 5:28 you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."***

2. BUT Meaning #2: Cleansed by his blood!!
  - a. At present, through unbelief, the blood of Jesus is upon them and their children for CONDEMNATION... for WRATH... for JUDGMENT, not for salvation
  - b. But if any individual Jewish man, woman, or child turns in faith to Jesus and believes, then His blood is upon them for SALVATION and CLEANSING
  - c. And at the end of Redemptive History, God will work a vast revival among the Jewish nation

***Zechariah 12:10 "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."***

***Romans 11:26-27 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. <sup>27</sup> And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins."***

IV. The Final Verdict: Jesus Condemned to Die

***Mark 15:15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.***

- A. Pilate Could Not Evade Responsibility: He renders a verdict... one that violates his conscience... GUILTY, DEATH ON A CROSS!
- B. But Who Really "HANDED JESUS OVER" to be crucified??
  1. He certainly did... the text says he did

2. But the real actor here was God the Father

***Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?***

C. Barabbas Set Free: A Type of All of Us

1. Isn't it amazing that substitution is acted out at that very time?
2. The guilty is set free and does not die
3. The innocent dies in his place

***1 Peter 3:18 For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.***

Barabbas represents a disgusting, vile sinner who is set free from death by Jesus

I am not at all saying Barabbas is in heaven... I'm saying he's a PICTURE of OUR SALVATION!

D. The Flogging

1. It happened earlier in the encounter in John's Gospel
2. It was one of the attempts Pilate made to avoid killing Jesus... it just underscored Pilate's cowardice and wickedness... and it did not work

***John 19:1-4 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup> The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe <sup>3</sup> and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. <sup>4</sup> 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."***

3. The flogging is BRUTAL... if it goes on long enough, it can be fatal
  - a. Straps of leather, embedded with pieces of bone or metal

- b. The straps wrap around the victim's body and rip deep gashes in his back... blood flows freely
- c. It is an almost inconceivable level of agony
- d. Part of our atonement:

***Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.***

Word sometimes means "stripes" ... can also mean bruises, welts, sores, something running freely with blood

Healed = healed from sin

***1 Peter 2:24 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.***

#### V. Applications

A. The Trial of Eternity Going on Right Now: Judge Jesus Properly by the Power of the Holy Spirit... and TRUST IN HIM!!

1. By faith see Jesus properly as the glorious Son of God
2. By faith see Jesus seated on his throne, judging all the earth, including YOU

***John 5:22-23 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son,<sup>23</sup> that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father.***

***Matthew 25:31-33 When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory.<sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.<sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.***

***Matthew 25:34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'***

***Matthew 25:41 "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.***

3. Understand that you will spend eternity in either heaven or hell... and it will all be based on the judgment of King Jesus
4. Salvation is based NOW on calling on the name of the Lord
5. Trust in Jesus... judge Him properly... understand who He is... see through all the Satanic deception and understand that Jesus is the Son of God and the Son of Man who died on the cross for sins

B. Understand the Power of His Blood

***Matthew 27:25 All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"***

1. The issue of Jesus' blood is forefront... amazingly, for Jesus' blood to be "upon us" spiritually is our only hope for salvation
2. The lesson of all the bloody animal sacrifices

***Hebrews 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.***

3. Through the blood of Jesus alone is forgiveness of sins available

***Romans 3:25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.***

4. The blood was shed once for all by Jesus Christ
5. Then, like the Passover Lamb's blood... it had to be APPLIED

***Exodus 12:22 Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it into the blood in the basin and put some of the blood on the top and on both sides of the doorframe.***

6. Let His blood be APPLIED to you by faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit
7. That is how His blood is UPON you for the cleansing of your guilt and your sins

***1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.***

8. Therefore...

- a. If you have trusted in Christ, know that his blood has been applied to you for your cleansing
- b. You are seen to be clean in God's sight!! Purified from all sin!!
- c. Let that cleanse you from a guilty, accusing conscience
- d. Many of you walked in here today with a guilty conscience... that's almost certainly because you have sinned in some way
- e. If you are a Christian, you are already clear POSITIONALLY in God's sight
- f. Now, concerning your recent sins, confess your sins to God and allow the blood of Christ to cleanse your guilty conscience
- g. Walk as free children of God!!

C. Be Appalled at the Fickleness of Human Praise

1. A week earlier... it was "Hosannah!" Now it was "Crucify him!"
2. How fickle is the human heart!! Ask the Lord to watch over your own ever-wandering heart

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it!

Prone to leave the God I love!

Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it

Seal it for thy courts above!

3. Therefore, don't live for the praise of the crowd!!
4. Pontius Pilate lived in terror of the crowd... that's why he didn't set Jesus free, though he knew Jesus was innocent.