

#1 Matthew 27:11-25 “The Sad Case of Pontius Pilate”

#2 Luke 23:1–25 (NLT) John 18:28–19:16 (NLT)

#3 ²⁸ Jesus’ trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn’t go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn’t be allowed to celebrate the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, “What is your charge against this man?” #4 ³⁰ “We wouldn’t have handed him over to you if he weren’t a criminal!” they retorted. ³¹ “Then take him away and judge him by your own law,” Pilate told them. “Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone,” the Jewish leaders replied.

#5 ² They began to state their case: “This man has been leading our people astray (insurrection), telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.”

#6 11 Now Jesus stood before **the governor**. And the governor asked Him, saying, "**Are You the King of the Jews?**" **So Jesus said to him, "It is as you say."** 12 And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing.

“the governor” #7 Pontius Pilate was the fifth governor (or procurator) of the southern half of “Palestine”, an imperial province (26-36 AD), and was, directly responsible to the emperor. [Barclay: He must have been a man of considerable experience, for there was a ladder of offices, including military command, up which a man must climb until he qualified to become a governor (min. age 27). Pilate must have been a tried and tested soldier and administrator.] #8 From the Gospels (and history) we gather that he was *proud*; and *cruel* (& *brutal*). He was probably just as *superstitious* as his wife. Above all, he was constantly worried about his own position. Hendriksen Pilate’s pride and cruelty

had already gotten him in trouble with the Jews, and subsequently with Caesar, by the time of this trial.

"Are You the King of the Jews?..." **It is** (just) **as you say.**" Jesus gave him the exact same response as to Judas and to Caiaphas – affirming their statements as truth!

"Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" The charge of blasphemy would mean nothing to the Roman governor, so they accused Jesus of three other crimes: **#9** (1) encouraging the people not to pay their taxes to Rome; (2) claiming he was a king—"the King of the Jews"; and (3) causing riots all over the countryside. **Tax evasion, treason, and terrorism—all these would cause Pilate to be concerned.** Bruce Barton

"He answered him not one word" At this point Pilate sent Jesus away, hoping to avoid the problem: **#10** ⁴ Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, "I find nothing wrong with this man!" ⁵ Then they became insistent. "But he is causing riots by his teaching wherever he goes—all over Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem!" ⁶ "Oh, is he a Galilean?" Pilate asked. ⁷ When they said that he was, Pilate sent him to Herod Antipas, because Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction, and Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. **#11** ⁸ Herod was delighted at the opportunity to see Jesus, because he had heard about him and had been hoping for a long time to see him perform a miracle. ⁹ He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer. ¹⁰ Meanwhile, the leading priests and the teachers of religious law stood there shouting their accusations. ¹¹ Then Herod and his soldiers began mocking and ridiculing Jesus. Finally, they put a royal robe on him and **sent him back to Pilate.** But the problem quickly came back.

#12 ¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, **"Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?"** ¹⁴ But **He**

answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

Though Matthew doesn't record some things that passed between these two men - John recorded those conversations for us and they help us understand Pilate's words and actions:

#13 ³⁴ Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?" ³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?" ³⁶ Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." **#14** ³⁷ Pilate said, "So you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true." ³⁸ "What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime.]

"What is truth?" Here is the cause of the downfall of Pontius Pilate. He was not a man of integrity with a standard of truth outside himself (like God's Law). Truth was a situational thing for him; and whatever was right at the moment to protect himself was right (I believe we are teaching the Pontius Pilate method of situational ethics in our schools!).

#15 ¹³ Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, ¹⁴ and he announced his verdict. "You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent. ¹⁵ Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. **Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty.** ¹⁶ **So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him."**

#16 ¹ Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. ² The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a (the robe from Herod) purple robe on him. ³ "Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face. ⁴ Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, **but understand clearly that I find him not guilty.**" **#17** ⁵ Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Look, here is the man!" ⁶ When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

#18 ¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed **to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished.** ¹⁶ And at that time they had **a notorious prisoner called Barabbas.** ¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" **18 For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.**

"releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished" Pilate had Jesus flogged in order to offer one more proof to the crowd that He was innocent. The purpose of flogging was to get a confession, and Jesus didn't "confess". But it didn't work, he couldn't get out of the trap Caiaphas had set for him.

"a notorious prisoner called Barabbas" *Barabbas* was mentioned because he was probably a popular nationalist leader, who would have a greater following in Jerusalem than the Galilean prophet. D. A. Carson **#19**
Mark 15:7 (NKJV) And there was one named Barabbas, *who was* chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion.

#20 19 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." 20 But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

"the judgment seat" **#21** To render judgments in the name of Rome and special chair was used. The mandate of all Roman governors was **"Let justice be done, though the heavens fall"**.

"his wife..." "Have nothing to do with that just Man..." At this moment of deliberation, the Lord sends another witness to him from his wife. Greeks and Romans regularly viewed dreams as an important way in which the gods spoke to people. The contents of the dream are not disclosed, but apparently it was a nightmare. It at least convinced Pilate's wife of Jesus' innocence. Craig Blomberg

#22 "God has many ways of giving checks to sinners in their sinful pursuits, and it is a great mercy to have such checks from Providence, from faithful friends, and from our own consciences; it is also our great duty to hearken to them." Matthew Henry

#23 21 The governor answered and said to them, **"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"** They said, "Barabbas!"

"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?"

#24 'By asking the question, "Jesus or Barabbas?" he had already rejected the claims of Jesus. By placing the two on the same level, two criminals who could be taken or left, he had already aligned himself with Christ's enemies.'
Iain D. Campbell, *Opening Up Matthew* **#25 Acts 4:27–28 (NKJV)** "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered

together ²⁸ to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

While Pilate was distracted with the note from his wife, the chief priests and the elders were busy inciting the crowd to ask for Barabbas. **#26** ¹⁸ Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, "Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹ (Barabbas was in prison for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government, and for murder.) ²⁰ Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus.

#27 ²² Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with **Jesus who is called Christ?**" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" ²³ Then the governor said, "**Why, what evil has He done?**" But they cried out all the more, saying, "**Let Him be crucified!**"

"Let Him be crucified!" #28 "Take him yourselves and crucify him," Pilate said. "I find him not guilty." ⁷ The Jewish leaders replied, "**By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God.**" ⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. ⁹ He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. ¹⁰ "Why don't you talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?"

#29 ¹¹ Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin." ¹² Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar.' Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar."

#30 ¹³ When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the

Stone Pavement. ¹⁴ It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, "Look, here is your king!" ¹⁵ "Away with him," they yelled. "Away with him! Crucify him!" "What? Crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the leading priests shouted back. **#31**

#32 24 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." 25 And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

"Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all" Now he realizes that he has a riot on his hands – which is a bigger problem for him with Caesar than condemning an innocent man. **#33** He was, as Dr. Weber says, **"A weak man, bowing at the altar of "political correctness," and he denied the truth."**

He had lost control of the situation. He had been manipulated and coerced into passing judgment against a man he knew to be innocent. In desperation he now seeks to save himself! **"he took water and washed his hands..." "I am innocent"**

Now Pilate performed a Jewish custom – not a Roman one in the washing of his hands in this manner! **#34 Deuteronomy 21:1–9 (NLT) ¹ "When you are in the land the LORD your God is giving you, someone may be found murdered in a field, and you don't know who committed the murder. ² In such a case, your elders and judges must measure the distance from the site of the crime to the nearby towns. ³ When the nearest town has been determined...⁶ "The elders of the town must wash their hands over the young cow whose neck was broken. ⁷ Then

they must say, ‘Our hands did not shed this person’s blood, nor did we see it happen.

“I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You

see to it.” *Don’t make excuses, take responsibility for the decisions***

you make! LIFE App. Bible #35 There is one thing of which a man can never rid himself—and that is personal responsibility for his own actions. **It is never possible for Pilate or anyone else to say, “I wash my hands of all responsibility,” for that is something that no one and nothing can take away.** Barclay

- **#36** Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and stated so multiple times! **“I find no fault in this Man.”, “He is not guilty of any crime.”, “I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; ¹⁵ no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him.” “I find him not guilty.” “I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty.”**
- **#37** Herod bore witness to that conclusion and found no guilt in Him. **“neither did Herod”**
- **#38** His action of trying to release Jesus proves he believed he was innocent. **Pilate tried to release him.” “Why, what evil has He done?”, “What? Crucify your king?”, I will therefore chastise Him and release *Him*”, Then he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has He done? I have found no reason for death in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and let *Him* go.” “This Just Person”**
- **#39** Pilate’s wife had a supernatural dream that Jesus was innocent. **"Have nothing to do with that just Man**
- **#40** Barabbas was a guilty condemned man and setting him free was unjust.

Pilate was forced into making a decision that he knew was wrong, pressured by a mob, because he had previously, in many little decisions, compromised his ethical standards and integrity for what was expedient. And he will be held accountable for that decision by the Lord. **#41 James 4:17 (NLT)** Remember, it is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it.”

It is reported that he was later removed from his position by Caesar, returned to Rome in shame and there some say he took his own life. **#42 Proverbs 11:3 (NASB95)** The integrity of the upright will guide them, But the crookedness (“hypocritical cunning or deception”) of the treacherous will destroy them.

If you had been Pilate, what would you have done? Would you have condemned a man whom you knew to be innocent to die? Would you have risked your job, your power and authority, your very livelihood, and perhaps even your life to set this innocent man free?

We’d all like to think that we would, but the truth is that in order to be able to make the right decision under pressure – your life has to be lived with integrity and truthfulness every day.

It’s the “little foxes that wreck the vineyard!” Little compromises, little disobediences, small acts of unfaithfulness – all are evidences of dishonest self-preservation! Setting a pattern of compromise of what is right to get something we want, giving into the flesh, so that when the important moment for truth comes, we are not willing or able to make the right decision.

Integrity is doing what God says is right in private as well as in public. It is resisting the temptation to compromise my

standards. It is doing what I believe I should do no matter the reaction of others. It means living my life to glorify the Lord and please Him in all my personal decisions, no matter what the cost or what I may appear to lose by being honest!

It is integrity that stands out like a bright star in this dark, dark world – and draws others to the One who empowers us to live such an upright life.

Let's pray and ask God to make us men and women of integrity, faithful even in the smallest things, so that when the big tests of life come we will not crumble under the stress and strain, but will be faithful in them as well. **#43 Proverbs 10:9** (NIV84) The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.