

What Evil Has He Done?

Mark 15:1–15

Mark 15:1–15 — ¹ And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.” ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, “Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you.” ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” ¹³ And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

PRAY

Bound and Delivered — v 1

In the wee hours of Friday morning the chief priests and the whole religious council conclude their sham trials and bind Jesus, leading him to Pilate to execute him. Rome allowed them some degree of authority to prosecute their religious laws among themselves, but they were not allowed to put anyone to death. They had to go to Rome for that. So they walk him to shame him, and make him look guilty in the eyes of all who see him. You will recall that when they came to arrest him in the garden, he moved toward them to present himself willingly. The only reason for binding him was to increase the shame.

The word **delivered** has significant meaning. First, it was the fulfillment of the prophecy that he told his disciples three times between chapters 8 and 10: **The Son of Man is going to be delivered into**

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the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise.¹

Being delivered over to the Gentiles — which means being put out of the covenant community of God's people, is a severe punishment found in Deuteronomy 28:15–68. It was pronounced on those who disobey God and do not keep his commands.

It seems the cruelest of injustices that the only One who ever perfectly kept the Law of God is now coming under the penalty of those who refuse to keep the law. It is not that the penalty itself is unjust. Those who refuse to keep the law of God, who will not own him as King, are no longer keeping the covenant as God's people, and they should be put out. From a legal standpoint the penalty is completely just. What seems unjust is the One on whom the penalty is now being executed. The action of delivering Jesus over to the Gentiles is unjust — Unless he is a substitute for someone who is guilty. And that is exactly what he is. He has been delivered as a substitute for those who have not, and cannot keep the law of God perfectly. He is delivered over for me. I am the rebellious law breaker deserving of outer darkness; but he is righteous Law keeper being delivered out of the people of God so I can enter the Kingdom of God through his obedience.

The King of Kings — vv 2–5

Are you the King of the Jews? Where did Pilate get that charge? Think back to the end of Ch 14 – v 64, if you would want to read it. What is the charge that they have leveled against Jesus in their trial? **Blasphemy**. How is it Pilate understands their accusation to be that Jesus is “King of the Jews” in v 2? It is because the religious rulers are both calculating and pragmatic.

Luke tells us specifically that when they got to Pilate, they charged him as being an insurrectionist — he's setting up a kingdom opposing Caesar.² **Blasphemy** would have been of no interest to Rome. They were already poly-theists, rejecting the monotheistic religion of the Jews. So the chief priests and elders continue their deceit and further accuse him of many other things (v 3) in hopes something will garner Pilate's attention. Though they are conniving, Jesus, who has come to bear witness about the truth,³ turns it into another opportunity to declare truth. When Pilate asks if he is King of the Jews, our English translators indicate his response is, “You have said so.” That makes it sound almost like a dodge if you read it cynically. It is actually an affirmation of what Pilate said. “Are you the King of the Jews?” “It is as you have said,” is the thrust of Jesus answer.

¹ Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33–34

² Luke 23:1–2

³ John 18:37

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Mark's briefly notes Pilate's inflated pride and sense of power in vv 4 & 5. He simply records that Pilate said, ***Have you no answer to make?*** John writes that he added, ***Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?*** Jesus answered him, ***You would have no authority over me at all, unless it had been given you from above.***⁴ There is no authority above Christ.⁵ There is no authority at all except what is allotted by Christ for his purposes. The greatest authority of any creature is, at most, temporarily granted by the Lord of All.

The religious leaders were convinced that they had Jesus in submission. They bound him, shamed him, delivered him over. They are sure they are going to execute him. Pilate mistakenly thinks he has authority over both his own life and the life of others. All of them are convinced Jesus is subject to them. They think they have brought Jesus to bend his knee to their imagined authority. But at the name of Jesus, every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.

The Bible records the history of the creature demanding that Creator bend his knee to them. Our generation of rebels still insists that God submit to our demands. They attempt to form God into their image and make him their servant, rather than submitting to, and serving the King of kings. The heart of our problem is a rebellious heart. There's nothing new under the sun. Quickly note that, though they all thought God was their slave, they were actually serving his agenda and mission. He was going to lay down his life for the sheep. He was going to **suffer once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.**⁶ As they were means through which sovereign God accomplished his plan, it will be no less for anyone else. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father⁷.

They all failed to grasp that divine fiat limited their authority to time, space, and even the air in their lungs. But Jesus, whose kingdom reigns above earthly kingdoms, is King of kings. He rules even in the midst of false trials and godless governors and corrupt clerics. The will of God is the only will that matters, and it was the will of the Father to crush Christ⁸ rather than crush you. The Lamb of God was slain before the foundation of the world⁹ and the Passover sacrifice is on the way to be slain. Jesus is delivered up according to God's purpose, not the religious leaders' scheme. Pilate hasn't a

⁴ John 19:10–11

⁵ Colossians 1:15–17

⁶ 1 Peter 3:18

⁷ Philippians 2:11

⁸ Isaiah 53:10

⁹ Revelation 13:18

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clue that as Jesus remains silent, fulfilling prophecy he is fulfilling Isaiah 53:7, and completing the work the Father assigned. Mark simply observes Pilate was amazed. Indeed, the redemption of sinners through the sacrifice of Christ is amazing. So we sing with the hymn writer, Charles Gabriel, ***I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus, the Nazarene, and wonder how he could love me, a sinner condemned, unclean.***

Delivered by Evil Men for Evil Men — vv 6–15

Pilate, through this examination, is shrewd enough to know two things: Jesus is innocent, and the Jewish religious leaders are envious. We know from Matthew's account that Pilate's superstitious wife is terrified by Jesus and warns Pilate to have nothing to do with him.¹⁰ So from his observations, and likely through his wife's urging, he contrives a way out when the crowd comes demanding the annual prisoner release. It was customary to release one Jew from jail at the time of the Passover. It was a way of throwing a bone to them so they didn't outright riot. It seems like a brilliant opportunity to avoid a decision on Jesus, so he offers to set him free. With the crowd, stirred up by the religious leaders, demand a murderer, rather than Jesus. They demand the one who mercilessly takes life rather than the One who graciously gives it. This is a picture of spiritual blindness: apart the Holy Spirit opening our eyes to see, we choose death over life thinking we are getting something good.

Pilate asks them, ***What do you want me to do with the man, the King of the Jews? — Crucify him!*** They despised and rejected him, a fulfillment of Isaiah 53:3. When Pilate asks for a valid reason to crucify Jesus. Why? What evil has he done? They simply repeat the demand, "Crucify him!"

The crowd, in their demand that the rule and reign of Jesus be ended by killing him... they are a stand-in. A stand in for whom? A stand in for me and you. We are by nature, mutinous, treasonous rebels who want to act as our own bosses. We resent the demands of Christ and his lordship over our lives. "I am my own god," is the script we have been working from since Genesis 3 when our first parents defied the command and word of God. Every act of disobedience, every defiance of God's word is some variation on the theme, ***Crucify him!*** "God, I will do what I want. You can drop dead."

Crucify him! You can be righteously indicated at the crowd if you want. But it is not until you come to grips with the fact that their rebellion is the same as yours — apart from the saving power of Christ to put down your fist and bring you under his gracious rule and reign and give you eternal life. Any guilt

¹⁰ Matthew 27:19

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you assign to the crowd forms an indictment against your own soul, if you will not humbly bow before this King. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your heart. King Jesus has come that you might have life and have it to the full. Turn from rebellion to joyful life-giving submission and live!

Pilate has little to no character and simply wants the crowd pacified so he doesn't have to deal with them. Rather than act justly, he releases the guilty murderer, Barabbas, and sends the innocent Savior to be crucified. Pilate unwittingly paints a picture of the amazing grace of God.

Because the sinless Savior died, my guilty soul is be counted free,
for God the just was satisfied to look on him and pardon me.

It is possible for a guilty, imprisoned soul to be counted righteous and free. It is possible to have peace with God — not based on what you do, but what he has done — through the work of the righteous Savior. Indeed, God's command is that we come **to Christ**. In him we are cleansed from sin. In him we receive life and righteousness. Come, says the Lord, let us reason. Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though we have all sinned and deserve death, Christ came as the substitute for those who turn to him and faith in repentance.

Believer, this message is not just to those who are outside of Christ. It is that, certainly. But it is for you also. As you gaze upon Christ who goes as a substitute for your punishment, will your affection and love for Christ not be stirred to such degree that submission to King Jesus becomes your joy and delight? And if there are areas of your heart where disobedience, idolatry, and sinful actions leave a residue of shame, would you look at him on whom guilt and shame was placed and see him delivered up on your behalf. Sin's guilt and shame is laid on the scapegoat, borne away by the Lamb of God, who is cast out of the community so that you can stay. Confess your sin, turn from it, and believe that what Jesus has done here accomplished what he said. You are forgiven through his sacrifice. Now let us express our love and gratitude for what he has done.

For those outside of Christ, it is my prayer that you have seen the beauty of salvation offered in Christ. But all that Christ has done remains of no value to me as long as I remain outside of Christ. Today is the day of salvation. Turn from sin and self to Christ, who loves you, and live.

PRAY