

## Jesus before Pilate

24. Jewish leadership/rulers have decided Jesus fate. From this point on they can only cheer or jeer from the sidelines. BEFORE WE BEGIN: THIS NEEDS TO BE MADE VERY CLEAR.....the Jewish people should never be blamed for the condemnation and death of Jesus. NOT only is such accusation bad theology, it is bad history. Historically, Jesus is condemned by a very small number of influential Jewish men. He is NOT condemned by the whole people. There were many who believed in him. They would wind up being the early church. Theologically speaking: Jesus died for the sins of the whole human race.  
NOW FOR PILATE.
25. According to all four Gospels the focus for Pilate is that Jesus presented himself as the king of the Jews. (Mk. 15:2; Matt.27:11; Lk 23:3; Jn 18:33) This appears to be confirmed by Jesus' crucifixion as "King of the Jews" (Mk 15:18,26) with parallels in the other Gospels. This was NO Christian confession because they regarded Jesus as Messiah, Son of God, Lord, Savior, NOT King of the Jews, the title given Herod the Great by the Roman Senate. (Joseph us 1.282) By writing "King of the Jews" Pilate is in the face of Herod (King of the Jews). It was a way of saying "be careful ...this could happen to you!!!"
26. Under normal circumstances Pilate would have NOT much hesitation in executing troublemakers. BUT the occasion is the eve of Passover, the holiest of the Jewish holidays. Worse, Passover is celebrated WHY? (God's deliverance of his people from foreign bondage.) Pilate certainly made the connection. Did he really want to put O.T. death a popular prophet on the eve of Passover, just outside Jerusalem's walls. Maybe beating him or imprisonment would work? Let the people decide.
27. Also, according to Joseph us, Pilate had been quite cruel when he first came to Jerusalem. Many beating, murderers of citizens had taken place, including 1500 crucified Samaritans for worshipping in the wrong place at the wrong time. Letters of complaint were written by Caiaphus to Emperor. Pilate was warned by Emperor to take it easy on Jews (tax base). Don't crucify so many. Walk softly.
28. All Gospels mention Pilate's "Passover Pardon" (Mk 15:6-15;etc) Some have caste doubts on its historical probability. Once again there are other Roman accounts of other officials releasing prisoners on special days.
- Livy (25 B.C) speaks of special cases where prisoners are released.
  - Herod's son Archelaus, (4 B.C.) Acquiesced to popular demands and released many prisoners. This was soon after his father's death.
  - Albinus (procurator after Herod (62-64A.D.) Released many prisoners as he prepared to leave office – like a presidential pardon. "You were worthy of scourging...but I gave you to the crowds.
  - Pliny the Younger (under Trajan) pardons criminals...etc.
  - Best known in Jewish law MISNNA (collection of Jewish law) said ..." they may slaughter (the Passover lamb) for one...whom they have promised to bring out of prison" on the passover. (Pesahim 8:6)
29. People were released. Usually for political reasons, to satisfy demands of the crowds, to curry favor. Pilate had shrewd political instincts, NOT political weakness or

human kindness.

Intended to show Roman respect for Jewish holiday.

30. In keeping with your celebration of freedom I will release one prisoner whom you choose.  
ALSO if the Priests want this one dead so bad let them make the choice and take responsibility for passing judgment. PILATE is neither cowardly nor principled. He is **CLEVER**.
31. Another factor supports history: Pilate probably had done this before. If Pilate had not released prisoners before, his claim could be quickly shown to be false and would have been an embarrassment for early church. But all three agree (Synoptic) and John(written later) agrees.
32. Knowing that they had handed Jesus over because of envy, Pilate treads carefully. He wants a plebiscite, a decree from the people, before he would condemn Jesus to death. Did the people really want to execute Jesus, or was it only a few ruling priest. There is NO interest in justice here, only politics. Pilate knew Jesus was popular. He was not about to risk offending the populace, especially at Passover, for jealous Priests and risk a riot. The very thing he had been warned about!
33. But he wanted it for the record. They were to make the call and THEN he would wash his hands of it. Pilate knew that, for the Priest, Jesus of Nazareth was real threat. He was a popular teacher, healer, and led no army. At most, he was guilty of speaking about the Kingdom of God - no obvious threat to Rome. Jesus had dreams and visions...so did a lot of other people. So what???
34. TURN to (Mark 15:11-15): Write on board: Jesus bar Joseph means "Jesus son of Joseph. Look at this Bar Adda, Barabbas means son of Abba. In Hebrew bar Abba's first name would have been Jesus. The fact that only bar Abba is written indicated that BOTH were named Jesus and in Hebrew you did not have to repeat the name again. So Pilate makes a point of calling Jesus, "The King of the Jews" OR Jesus bar Abba? He lets the crowd make the decision and then washes his hands.
35. The "crowd" demand "Crucify him!" They do not want prison, ultimate penalty for him; crucifixion. This would effectively end his movement. Pilate asked feebly "Why want has he done?" He wants all this on the record. There will be NO letters to Rome about this. He wants to incur NO political risk.
36. According Cicero (Verr. 2.5.168) and Josephus (J.W. 7.203) crucifixion was the worst form of death. THE WORDS "cross" and "crucify" actually derive from the Latin *cruciare*, the word for TORTURE. In the Roman soldier's manuals (Ps. Quintilian, Declamations 274; Josephus, etc.)  
In is written: ***"Whenever we crucify the condemned, the most crowded roads are chosen, where the most people can see and be moved by this terror. For penalties relate not so much to retribution as to their exemplary effect."***

Next week: The death of Jesus on the Cross.

