

Sermon Notes

Series: The Final Hours of Jesus' Life
"Before Pontius Pilate"

In this week's study guide we'll read each of the four Gospel accounts of the trial of Jesus before Pilate. Each account in the Gospels fills in more details. Study, not simply to know what happened, but to understand how this story might speak to you today.

Monday – This week as you begin your study guide readings, take out a sheet of paper, turn it sideways, and make four columns, one for each of the four Gospels. Each day use one of the columns to describe what new information you have learned about the trial of Jesus before Pilate as you read the Gospel for the day. *Read Matthew 27:11-26*. Notice the first name of Barabbas according to Matthew. The name, *Jesus*, means "Savior." We have a choice here between two very different men sharing the name Savior. How did Jesus and Barabbas differ? Notice verse 19 – none of the other Gospels tell us this. In several churches Pilate's wife was canonized as a saint. Matthew's Gospel alone records verses 24 and 25. Matthew's Gospel was likely written shortly after the Jews were defeated by the Romans and the city of Jerusalem destroyed after the Jewish Great Revolt against Rome. How would Roman Christians have read this passage in the light of these recent events? Look over Sunday's sermon notes. How does this passage speak to you?

Tuesday – Today we'll study the story of Jesus' trial before Pilate from Mark's Gospel. *Read Mark 15:1-15*. Note verse 15 in particular. How does Pilate's desire to please the crowd relate to your life today? Why did Jesus remain silent during most of his trial before Pilate?

Wednesday – *Read Luke 23:1-25*. Notice how Luke's account differs from Matthew and Mark. Notice the charges the Sanhedrin makes against Jesus. Recall that Jesus, when asked about taxes, had said, "*render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's*", yet the truth seemed to matter little here. Pilate saw through these charges. Luke and the other Gospels portray Pilate, the Roman governor, as sympathetic with Jesus. With the Gospels having been written at a time when the Jews in the Holy Land had revolted against Rome, emphasizing Pilate's desire to set Jesus free and the Jewish leaders' antipathy toward Jesus would have helped Romans to accept Jesus more readily. Notice Pilate sends Jesus for trial by Herod Antipas who ruled over the Galilee region where Jesus was from. Herod had put John the Baptist to death. Notice Jesus' silence before Herod, who himself was a scoundrel. Try to picture this scene in your mind's eye. Note that twice Luke mentions what Barabbas was in prison for – showing the contrast between Barabbas, who was a would-be messiah who murdered with the sword, and Jesus, who as Messiah would lay down his own life for the rest of humankind. Note how in each successive Gospel Pilate's attempt to free Jesus becomes more pronounced.

Thursday – *Read John 18:28-19:16*. Notice that John has Jesus being tried and crucified on the day of the Passover Feast – Matthew, Mark and Luke have this taking place on the day after the Passover Feast. John wishes us to connect the death of Jesus with the actual

time when the Passover lambs were slaughtered. Notice verse 36 where Jesus makes it clear that, while he is a king, his kingdom is not a direct challenge to Rome. In John's account Pilate has Jesus flogged, in the hope that this would be sufficient punishment for the Sanhedrin and the crowd, and then presents the bloodied, beaten and humiliated Jesus to the crowd, noting he found no basis for putting him to death. Notice verse 7 and Pilate's reaction to this. This account, written latter than any of the others, makes it even more clear that Pilate wished to set Jesus free. Notice that though the religious leaders hated Caesar, they preferred Caesar to Jesus who threatened their religious world.

Friday – Just weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection, following his ascension to heaven, Peter and John, now emboldened by the power of the Holy Spirit and having been with the resurrected Jesus, were arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin. Notice that Peter, who had been afraid to admit knowing Jesus when Jesus was before the Sanhedrin, now speaks with power and boldness. *Read Acts 4:1-31*. Notice this passage points to all who played a part in Jesus' condemnation and death. Contrast the courage of Peter with the actions of Pilate.