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**Day 321 - November 17**

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## **Jesus the Christ (5 BCE-30 CE)**

### ***Trial before Pilate***

**Readings: *Matthew 27:2, 11-32; Mark 15:1-22; Luke 23:1-31; John 18:28-40, 19:1-17***

### ***Reflections:***

- Jesus taken to Pilate: Pilate was the Roman procurator and governor who ruled over Judea, Idumea, and Samaria. We see the note again that the Passover has not yet taken place. The accusations against Jesus are a mix of true and fabricated statements. They say what they believe will motivate Pilate to execute Jesus.
- Pilate questions Jesus: We see Jesus carefully respond to Pilate. Jesus' first question gently points out that Pilate is responding to hearsay. Pilate has received no direct information about Jesus, only what the religious leaders are saying. Jesus assures Pilate that his kingdom is from another place and for this reason his disciples do not fight to prevent his arrest. We see again that the kingdom of God is not a political kingdom where its citizens carry weapons to defend themselves. It is a spiritual kingdom that transcends and permeates all earthly kingdoms. It is a kingdom of peace, not war. Jesus concludes that his role was to teach truth and that everyone on the side of truth listens to him. Again Jesus is being respectful and yet direct. He is pointing out that Pilate really can't say he knows the truth yet because he is only listening to hearsay. Pilate's response reveals his own dilemma: "What is truth?" He can't tell what is true and what isn't true. This is a good reminder that the role of human leadership contains significant limitations. Truth is only discovered through knowing and living in relationship with God. Political office or high leadership positions do not guarantee that you will be able to perceive truth. Therefore we must be careful what loyalties we give to human leaders. As we learned through the story of Israel, only God can be trusted as the king of your life. All other leaders must simply be servant leaders of the one true ruler.
- Pilate sends to Herod: Pilate doesn't want to get involved in local religiously motivated issues. He sends Jesus to Herod hoping Herod will deal with it. This is a normal political move to avoid responsibility.
- Jesus before Herod Antipas: Herod loves to listen to the teachers of his day, like John the Baptist. He had heard of Jesus and wanted him to perform a miracle. For Herod, Jesus was

a magician and motivational speaker. Jesus doesn't play his game as he is silent before Herod's thousand and one questions. Herod is obviously annoyed that Jesus won't play his game, mocks him by putting an elegant robe on him and sends him back to Pilate. Jesus demonstrates that he is not into pleasing people but only his Father in heaven. This also reminds us that we do not have to answer every question. Some questions are not true questions seeking the truth but simply statements cloaked as questions.

- Pilate's wife sends warning: It is interesting that Matthew records this. Apparently he discovers this part of the story and records it to demonstrate that God was revealing to Pilate through his wife that Jesus was in fact innocent. Here we see again that women are affirmed. She is more perceptive to the truth than her husband or Herod.
- Pilate seeks release: Pilate does not want to execute Jesus as he finds no charge against him. Jesus' death was not politically motivated. It was driven by the religious leaders of his day.
- Jesus or Barabbas: Barabbas was a revolutionary and truly dangerous. Jesus was a religious revolutionary. Barabbas with his violent mindset is a friend of the religious institution where Jesus and his peaceful approach is an enemy of the religious institution. We see again how religion gets everything wrong, upside down, and backwards.
- Crowd demands Barabbas: This is not the same crowd that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem. That first crowd represented the poor and common people who welcomed Jesus. This crowd was most likely the temple workers and those loyal to the religious leaders.
- Jesus' crucifixion demanded: We can see even in this ancient account the power of an angry lobby group on politicians. Rulers ultimately love quiet over truth. Even if there is no true peace, they prefer to keep the crowds appeased rather than deal with the consequences of living for the truth.
- Crown of thorns: The soldiers now play to the crowd by stripping Jesus, dressing him in a scarlet robe and crown of thorns, mocking him and beating him. They do all they can to humiliate him and inflict pain.
- Pilate presents Jesus: Pilate continues to affirm his desire to release Jesus.
- Jesus questioned again: Pilate tells Jesus that he has the power to free him or kill him. Jesus makes it clear that Pilate only has delegated authority and not true authority. The guilt for his death will rest more squarely on the religious institutional leaders and not on Pilate.
- Play on Pilate's loyalty: The religious leaders and crowd start to push Pilate by calling on loyalty to Caesar. Here we see the religious leaders exposed. They are not loyal to God. In one breath they declare Caesar the enemy and in the next they declare they are his friends. The truth is they are loyal to their own self-centered desire to be in control and to decide for themselves what is right and wrong. Religion is the perfect place to hide if you want to be the one in control of your own life. You look like you are serving a higher truth when all the time you are in complete control of your own life as you manage your set of rules, rituals and routines. Only in relationship do we learn to submit to God's leadership in our lives.

- Pilate washes his hands: Pilate washes his hands and declares his innocence. The crowd accepts the guilt of Jesus' blood on their lives and on their children. It is not all Jewish people and their descendants who are making this declaration. This misunderstanding has led to a lot of hatred and abuse against Jews. This declaration is made by religious leaders. It is religion that is guilty, not ethnicity. Jesus and his disciples and first followers were all Jews.
- Barabbas is released: Religion wins and a murderer is released while the giver of life is put to death.
- Jesus is led out: Jesus carries his own cross. He models for us what life looks like when we follow him.
- Simon of Cyrene: Apparently Simon is well known to the early church as his sons Alexander and Rufus are noted in the text. See Romans 16:13 where Rufus is greeted by Paul.
- Women weep for Jesus: It was common for women to mourn and weep for those dying. Jesus in particular, who was such an advocate for women and had a long following of women, would have been mourned. Jesus warns them though that a calamity is coming on this city and they should mourn for themselves. Jesus warns that the judgment that is coming will be far worse. A green tree doesn't burn the same way a dry wood does. Jerusalem will burn in the fires of judgment at 70 CE.