

Trials

Pastor Ken

March 29, 2026

The offerings we bring to God are an expression of our thanks for sins forgiven, and lives that have been changed by God himself. Jesus has transformed you by his resurrection power. Your gifts are given to the Lord through Bethel Life Center, supervised carefully by the leadership, managed with the utmost integrity and Holy Spirit led prayer.

So, when you give to God, you are acknowledging **that all you have comes from God.**

BUT, when you are **unwilling** to give to God, let's be honest you are not willing to say, "God all I have comes from you." You would rather it be known that you were the one that provided those dollars for your needs and family.

The Bible does not teach that; the Bible teaches God is our source. And during a famine, a widow discovered this truth, and it is spelled out in 1 Kings 17.

¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

So, let me make this as simple and as accessible as possible? Let me make this truth low hanging fruit. Today I want you to start behaving with a single scriptural insight in mind. God is MY source!

And you declare that truth every time you give your tithe and offering. Thank you for giving your finances as an act of worship to God.

In a minute after we read our text, I will also prayer over your giving to God who will provide for your every need and bless in abundance your sacrifice and obedience.

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Let's pray. We thank you, Our Father for your Holy Spirit infilled presence and the word of God that indwells and abides forever. Thank you for the word of God's power to come and cut into our lives, into places no surgeons scalpel could reach.

Thank you that your word is living and active, so I can expect you to speak to me in the next few minutes. I believe your word will accomplish its purpose in my life.

And thank you for your blessing on my financial gifts. I give as an act of worship to you Father, with a heart filled with joy. I declare that all I have comes from you. In Jesus Name, Amen.

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They had been studying Jesus Christ in the gospels and learning about Jesus and his 3 years of ministry in the Galilee region around the Sea of Galilee and then his many travels, including those to Jerusalem.

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The little girl had it all laid out, but in the background was this massive 747 jet with a fellow walking up to enter the plane. As the teacher was looking at the drawing, she was very inspired by the drawing because it all made sense about the life of Jesus as she had been teaching.

But it was the jet that confused her. It threw her for a loop as they say. So, the teacher asked the little girl about the plane, the little girl said, "oh, it is the getaway plane." The teacher asked, "well who is this guy getting into the plane?"

The girl stared at her teacher and said forcefully, don't you know, "Pontius the Pilot."

In the trials of Jesus, Pontius Pilate is a significant person. For many of you, you are hearing for the first time, about how Jesus died that includes 6 hours of six trials. **Six trials. Six hours. Six occasions when Jesus was declared, "not guilty."**

We are finishing the trials of Jesus Christ today. We come to the final painful hour of his suffering and his final time standing in front of Pontius Pilate. If you look at your notes you will notice it is about 7:30am. How important is Pilate?

How lasting is his name? Well, I told you last week about a Pilate stone, dated 1st century proving that a person named Pontius Pilate existed. The church also acknowledges this same Pontius Pilate, in many of the early church creeds we will quote today. 1000's of churches quote his name as they say the Apostles Creed,

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;**
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Three times during Pilate's trials he declared Jesus, **"not guilty."** (Luke 23:4, 13, 22) I am going to open my bible and read about each "not guilty," statement made by the 747-plane captain, Pontius the Pilot.

Look at verse 4, ⁴ *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Next, look down the page to verse 13, ¹³ *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.*

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Pilate was in precarious place; a political drama was unfolding where Pilate was seeking some way to free Jesus from the trumped-up charges by the Sanhedrin without breaking either Jewish laws or Roman laws.

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Pilate had heard them all. He knew there was a god somewhere attempting to influence every human drama. Now, as you read the full account of the trials and Jesus' crucifixion and execution you will notice, several others found Jesus' innocent also. And all of them are described by Luke himself.

Luke recorded three other witnesses who declared Jesus as "not guilty." Herod (*Luke 23:15*), the thief on the cross (*Luke 23:41*), and a Roman Centurion (*Luke 23:47*).

As we will see, Pilate passes Jesus on to Herod, thinking he can be washed of this political and judicial problem. Herod came to the same conclusion as Pilate concerning Jesus' guilt. Jesus is "not guilty."

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Again, there is that note connected to verse 17a. What does it mean? Oh, you make a pastor's heart glad, you are listening and learning.

As Jesus dies on the cross, a thief who is crucified next to Jesus, notices something special about Jesus, and he too makes a declaration that Jesus is "not guilty."

Again, let's look closely at those who were close enough to Jesus, and knew enough about Jesus to declare him innocent of the charges.

⁴¹ "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23-NIV)

When Jesus dies on the cross, the first one to speak is a Roman soldier, he does so as one who declares Jesus Christ as a righteous man. An innocent man. He did not deserve this death. This soldier makes a statement of faith and is brought into the family of God. On this confession, he would see Jesus again.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate's familiarity with the Jews told him he could not just brush this person Jesus aside. Jewish rulers were stubborn and these ones, Annas and Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin would not be satisfied by simply dismissing the charges against Jesus.

If Pilate made that mistake it would get back to Rome that Pilate was soft on crime and providing a haven for treasonous would-be kings, who want to ascend the throne in Jerusalem.

We see those charges forming against Pilate in the account of Jesus before Pilate as told by John, ¹² *From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."* (John 19-NIV)

Now, before we go into the Roman supreme court building, called the Praetorium, and observe Pilate and Jesus face to face, for those who are just joining us or those who missed a week, let me do a quick 30,000 fly-by of the 6 trials and a few of the details. Again, the whole list of trials and some details are located on the back of your study notes.

Jesus was betrayed by Judas and seized by a mob of over 1000 soldiers and religious elite, called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme.

These judicial juggernauts, the academic superstars, had been plotting the arrest and death of Jesus for well over a year. It was Caiaphas himself just a week earlier, that made it clear, Jesus had to die. Shortly, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Caiaphas's calls for a Sanhedrin meeting and makes this declaration.

The high priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Jewish ruling body. "What do we do now?" they asked. *"This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs. If we let him go on, pretty soon everyone will be believing in him and the Romans will come and remove what little power and privilege we still have."*

⁴⁹ *Then one of them—it was Caiaphas, the designated Chief Priest that year—spoke up, "Don't you know anything?"*

⁵⁰⁻⁵² *"Can't you see that it's to our advantage that one man dies for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed?" He didn't say this of his own accord, but as Chief Priest that year he unwittingly prophesied that Jesus was about to die sacrificially for the nation, and not only for the nation but so that all God's exile-scattered children might be gathered together into one people. ^{53-54a} From that day on, they plotted to kill him. So Jesus no longer went out in public among the Jews. (John 11-NIV)*

Trial #1: Annas Residence at 2am Unauthorized Interrogation

The first trial of Jesus Christ happened at 2am, in front of the former high priest Annas. Jesus represented a threat to the Roman economic and judicial life. Annas is the wealthiest and most influential man in the city. He owned and operated the money-changing system.

Jesus made a declaration that he had come to lead his followers into a **new kingdom**, which had nothing to do with overthrowing a Roman government or casting out Jewish religious system. Jesus **was now on trial**.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. ²² *When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face,*

Jesus first interrogation happened at the personal home of the mob boss Annas. Annas only cared about one thing-keeping his economic empire churning out wealth for himself and his family.

He personally set the lending rates, interest rates, and extortion rates on all financial transactions that took place in Jerusalem and beyond. He lined his pockets with stolen shekels and standing before him was the one person that had on two occasions caused a financial recession. Jesus disrupted the banking going on in the temple and called out the money changers. He turned over money changers tables. Doves flew away free. Kids scrambled for coins rolling on the temple grounds.

Now, Annas wanted to do nothing more than get even. He had one little problem; he could not find any witnesses to bring charges against Jesus. So, after all he could stomach of this Johnny-do-gooder, he remembered that his son-in-law the acting high priest had hatched a plan to rid Israel of Jesus just a week early. Jesus must be put to death. So, Annas has some of his soldiers take Jesus across the courtyard to the personal residence of Caiaphas.

Trial #2: Caiaphas Residence at 3am Illegal Trial and Abuse

This illegal inquisition was now over. It was legally improper. This trial could be compared to an inquisition, a grand jury proceeding where an inquisitor attempts to discover facts for use in a subsequent trial.

Having learned nothing in his questioning, Jesus is sent to the Caiaphas. ²⁴ *Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to the Chief Priest Caiaphas. (John 18-MSG)*

The next trial will move to Caiaphas residence at 3am. Caiaphas was equally evil and corrupt as Annas his father-in-law. Caiaphas was ruthless, power hungry and deviant.

The high priest immediately convicted Jesus of blasphemy. There was no dismissal for deliberation. As quick as the court had found Jesus guilty and sentenced him to death, they began humiliating Jesus. The trial before Caiaphas was a travesty of justice from beginning to end.

Jesus knew what he was doing. The cry of blasphemy went up. Garments were torn. The legal proceedings were thrown out the window and hostility toward Jesus gave way to spitting, slapping, mocking. All appearances of a civil trial disintegrated into a frenzied circus.

Trial #3: Sanhedrin Charges at 6am Jesus Guilty of Blasphemy

The shortest of the trials, maybe lasting a half hour, to announce the charges of blasphemy leading to Jesus' execution.

Trial #4: Pontus Pilate at 6:30am Three Competing Voices in Pilate's Head

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. Under Roman law, Jesus would be guilty of treason.

Neither one of these charges was valid. So, the Jews come to Pilate to say, "you have to crucify Jesus because we can't. More important, he is threat to Roman peace."

And again, Pilate is thinking about the charges of subversion, failure to pay tribute to Caesar and Jesus is declaring that he is king. This is the background to Pilate investigating these charges and deciding if he agrees with the Sanhedrin.

Now, while Pilate is doing the judicial judge part, he also has some competing voices going on in his head. Let me describe the voices and then break them down.

Pilate was influenced by several competing voices in his head. (1) Rome was saying, "stop killing so many Jews." (2) The Jews were calling for the death of Jesus. (3) Mrs. Pilate had a bad dream.

If Pilate had a 3rd ear, it would be his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Trial #5: Herod at 7am Jesus Silent Before Herod

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. (Luke 23-NIV)

Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

Jesus did not answer Herod with so much a word. Even though Jesus knew Herod has been out to kill him for some time, Jesus stood motionless. Voiceless. And completely unimpressed with Herod.

Jesus did not respond to Herod because words are wasted on people who have no interest in truth. When Herod gets nowhere with Jesus, he shows his real colors and grabs one of his personal kingly robes and puts it on Jesus and sends him back to Pilate. Herod Antipas became bored with Jesus and returned him to Pilate wearing one of Herod's royal robes.

Trial #6: Pilate from 7:30-8am Release Barabbas and Scourging

Pilate was engaged in the approval of Jesus death. While everything we read indicates he was trying to fight against sending Jesus to his death. Pilate was not an afterthought in this last trial, for Jesus to wind up on a cross. They lived in a divided world the Jews did. They were conquered by the Romans, but they were still called a nation. The nation of Jews.

It had been a tough conquering and the Jews lived under Roman laws. The Jews lived under the Roman boot. When you lived in Israel under Roman rule there was a clear distinction between that which was Roman and that which was Jewish.

One, there were Roman buildings and there were Jewish buildings. There were Roman laws and Jewish laws. The Supreme Court of the Jewish nation was where the Sanhedrin resided. This was a body of 72 men who unfairly trialed Jesus and then sent charges that went from Blasphemy to Treason, to the Roman Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court of the Romans met at the Praetorium. The Jews are stuck after the 3rd, trial. The question the Sanhedrin raises, is how do we execute Jesus? How do we kill him?

Capital punishment had been removed from their rights, so they had to go from a Jewish building to a Roman building and convince Pilate to execute Jesus for them. Now, remember he did not want to find Jesus guilty.

This was Passover time and Pilate was living in the Praetorium, having moved from the coast to the hill country. Pilate is watching these trials unfold and he is aware that he is sitting on a stick of dynamite.

Pilate waffles under the load of responsibility as he trials Jesus Christ. Pilate was Caesars representative. What Tiberius Ceasar was in Rome, Pilate was that in Jerusalem. Pilate was assigned to govern the very difficult jurisdiction of Judea; the capital was Jerusalem. Pilate better get it right or he would be removed.

As the Jews had been the hardest to conquer by Rome, they were also the hardest to govern. The rage that the Jews had toward Pilate was deep, personal and was a fuse that was always lit.

Pilate is no friend of the Jews, but they needed his approval to nail Jesus to a cross. To put Jesus on a cross, the Jews had to go through Pilate. **In John 18:28-40 and the John 19:1-16** we have the most extensive account of Jesus time before Pilate. **Read it this week.**

Let me make a couple summary comments.

(1) **Pilate goes back and forth** between Jesus and the Jews many times.

Vs 29, Pilate came out, vs 33, then Pilate went back inside, 19:4, once more Pilate came out, 19:8, Pilate heard this and was even more afraid, and went back inside the palace, 19:12, from then on Pilate tried to set Jesus free, 19:13, when Pilate hear this, he brought Jesus out and sat on the Judges seat...

(2) Next, **Pilate pulls a rabbit out of his hat**, by offering a notorious criminal-Barabas or Jesus to the Jews. The Jews select Barabas and Jesus is led off to be crucified.

³⁹“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” ⁴⁰They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. (John 18-NIV)

(3) Finally, **Pilate gets frustrated** because the Jews won’t give up on the request to have Jesus crucified, so he has Jesus flogged and beaten hoping the Jews will back off-they don’t.

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face. (John 19-NIV)

(4) **In the end, Pilate washes** his hands of Jesus, literally.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:24-NIV)

Post-Trial Walk to Golgotha and Nailing to the Cross at 9am.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull(which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). (John 19-NIV)

Jesus' Seven Sayings on the Cross – from 9am-3pm

God placed our sin on His Son Jesus and punished it there.

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)

Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak.

Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you

the right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love

Him with all your heart.

Come, because when you were a sinner, Christ died for you.

Lift up your hearts and heartaches above your cares and fears,

and receive today a fresh provision from the bread and cup. A provision that *includes* healing.

A provision that *initiates* faith

A provision that *invites* restoration.

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Jesus was betrayed by Judas and seized by a mob of over 1000 soldiers and religious elite, called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme.

These judicial juggernauts, the academic superstars, had been plotting the arrest and death of Jesus for well over a year. It was Caiaphas himself just a week earlier, that made it clear, Jesus had to die. Shortly, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Caiaphas's calls for a Sanhedrin meeting and makes this declaration.

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Jesus made a declaration that he had come to lead his followers into a **new kingdom**, which had nothing to do with overthrowing a Roman government or casting out Jewish religious system. Jesus **was now on trial**.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. ²² *When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face,*

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The shortest of the trials, maybe lasting a half hour, to announce the charges of blasphemy leading to Jesus' execution.

Trial #4: Pontus Pilate at 6:30am Three Competing Voices in Pilate's Head

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. Under Roman law, Jesus would be guilty of treason.

Neither one of these charges was valid. So, the Jews come to Pilate to say, "you have to crucify Jesus because we can't. More important, he is threat to Roman peace."

And again, Pilate is thinking about the charges of subversion, failure to pay tribute to Caesar and Jesus is declaring that he is king. This is the background to Pilate investigating these charges and deciding if he agrees with the Sanhedrin.

Now, while Pilate is doing the judicial judge part, he also has some competing voices going on in his head. Let me describe the voices and then break them down.

Pilate was influenced by several competing voices in his head. (1) Rome was saying, "stop killing so many Jews." (2) The Jews were calling for the death of Jesus. (3) Mrs. Pilate had a bad dream.

If Pilate had a 3rd ear, it would be his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Trial #5: Herod at 7am Jesus Silent Before Herod

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

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Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

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Pilate was engaged in the approval of Jesus death. While everything we read indicates he was trying to fight against sending Jesus to his death. Pilate was not an afterthought in this last trial, for Jesus to wind up on a cross. They lived in a divided world the Jews did. They were conquered by the Romans, but they were still called a nation. The nation of Jews.

It had been a tough conquering and the Jews lived under Roman laws. The Jews lived under the Roman boot. When you lived in Israel under Roman rule there was a clear distinction between that which was Roman and that which was Jewish.

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The Supreme Court of the Romans met at the Praetorium. The Jews are stuck after the 3rd, trial. The question the Sanhedrin raises, is how do we execute Jesus? How do we kill him?

Capital punishment had been removed from their rights, so they had to go from a Jewish building to a Roman building and convince Pilate to execute Jesus for them. Now, remember he did not want to find Jesus guilty.

This was Passover time and Pilate was living in the Praetorium, having moved from the coast to the hill country. Pilate is watching these trials unfold and he is aware that he is sitting on a stick of dynamite.

Pilate waffles under the load of responsibility as he trials Jesus Christ. Pilate was Caesars representative. What Tiberius Ceasar was in Rome, Pilate was that in Jerusalem. Pilate was assigned to govern the very difficult jurisdiction of Judea; the capital was Jerusalem. Pilate better get it right or he would be removed.

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Pilate is no friend of the Jews, but they needed his approval to nail Jesus to a cross. To put Jesus on a cross, the Jews had to go through Pilate. **In John 18:28-40 and the John 19:1-16** we have the most extensive account of Jesus time before Pilate. **Read it this week.**

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(2) Next, **Pilate pulls a rabbit out of his hat**, by offering a notorious criminal-Barabas or Jesus to the Jews. The Jews select Barabas and Jesus is led off to be crucified.

³⁹ *“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’”* ⁴⁰ *They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. (John 18-NIV)*

(3) Finally, **Pilate gets frustrated** because the Jews won't give up on the request to have Jesus crucified, so he has Jesus flogged and beaten hoping the Jews will back off-they don't.

¹ *Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face. (John 19-NIV)*

(4) **In the end, Pilate washes** his hands of Jesus, literally.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:24-NIV)

Post-Trial Walk to Golgotha and Nailing to the Cross at 9am.

¹⁶ *Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull(which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). (John 19-NIV)*

Jesus' Seven Sayings on the Cross – from 9am-3pm

God placed our sin on His Son Jesus and punished it there.

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)

Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak.

Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you

the right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love

Him with all your heart.

Come, because when you were a sinner, Christ died for you.

Lift up your hearts and heartaches above your cares and fears,

and receive today a fresh provision from the bread and cup. A provision that *includes* healing.

A provision that *initiates* faith

A provision that *invites* restoration.

Trials

Pastor Ken

March 29, 2026

The offerings we bring to God are an expression of our thanks for sins forgiven, and lives that have been changed by God himself. Jesus has transformed you by his resurrection power. Your gifts are given to the Lord through Bethel Life Center, supervised carefully by the leadership, managed with the utmost integrity and Holy Spirit led prayer.

So, when you give to God, you are acknowledging **that all you have comes from God.**

BUT, when you are **unwilling** to give to God, let's be honest you are not willing to say, "God all I have comes from you." You would rather it be known that you were the one that provided those dollars for your needs and family.

The Bible does not teach that; the Bible teaches God is our source. And during a famine, a widow discovered this truth, and it is spelled out in 1 Kings 17.

¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

So, let me make this as simple and as accessible as possible? Let me make this truth low hanging fruit. Today I want you to start behaving with a single scriptural insight in mind. God is MY source!

And you declare that truth every time you give your tithe and offering. Thank you for giving your finances as an act of worship to God.

In a minute after we read our text, I will also prayer over your giving to God who will provide for your every need and bless in abundance your sacrifice and obedience.

¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." ¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. (Luke 23-NIV)

Let's pray. We thank you, Our Father for your Holy Spirit infilled presence and the word of God that indwells and abides forever. Thank you for the word of God's power to come and cut into our lives, into places no surgeons scalpel could reach.

Thank you that your word is living and active, so I can expect you to speak to me in the next few minutes. I believe your word will accomplish its purpose in my life.

And thank you for your blessing on my financial gifts. I give as an act of worship to you Father, with a heart filled with joy. I declare that all I have comes from you. In Jesus Name, Amen.

The teacher instructed the children to draw some of the key events from the life of Jesus Christ.

They had been studying Jesus Christ in the gospels and learning about Jesus and his 3 years of ministry in the Galilee region around the Sea of Galilee and then his many travels, including those to Jerusalem.

Children began drawing feverishly. **One student** drew the baptism of Jesus as he came out of the River Jordan.

Another student drew the large crowds that Jesus fed with a boy's lunch. And the startled disciples who each returned a basket full of bread to Jesus when it was done.

Finally, one child drew the story of the death of Jesus. It was full of the events that happened in those last hours as Jesus faced some trials, was spit upon and beaten by the Jewish Sanhedrin, even Jesus hanging on a cross. The drawing looked life like and it included an empty tomb with the stone rolled away.

The little girl had it all laid out, but in the background was this massive 747 jet with a fellow walking up to enter the plane. As the teacher was looking at the drawing, she was very inspired by the drawing because it all made sense about the life of Jesus as she had been teaching.

But it was the jet that confused her. It threw her for a loop as they say. So, the teacher asked the little girl about the plane, the little girl said, "oh, it is the getaway plane." The teacher asked, "well who is this guy getting into the plane?"

The girl stared at her teacher and said forcefully, don't you know, "Pontius the Pilot."

In the trials of Jesus, Pontius Pilate is a significant person. For many of you, you are hearing for the first time, about how Jesus died that includes 6 hours of six trials. **Six trials. Six hours. Six occasions when Jesus was declared, "not guilty."**

We are finishing the trials of Jesus Christ today. We come to the final painful hour of his suffering and his final time standing in front of Pontius Pilate. If you look at your notes you will notice it is about 7:30am. How important is Pilate?

How lasting is his name? Well, I told you last week about a Pilate stone, dated 1 st century proving that a person named Pontius Pilate existed. The church also acknowledges this same Pontius Pilate, in many of the early church creeds we will quote today. 1000's of churches quote his name as they say the Apostles Creed,

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;**
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Three times during Pilates' trials he declared Jesus, **"not guilty."** (Luke 23:4, 13, 22) I am going to open my bible and read about each "not guilty," statement made by the 747-plane captain, Pontius the Pilot.

Look at verse 4, ⁴ *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Next, look down the page to verse 13, ¹³ *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.*

¹⁵ *Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Please note this little (a) in the text, is a 17a. Now, there is not a verse that follows. Thinking people would ask, where is the verse? This is an occasion where the team of Bible scholars want you to know that not all manuscripts used to make the Bible, include that verse. Ok, don't let me chase that biblical rabbit. Ok, read on.

Finally, look at verse 22, ²² *For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate was in precarious place; a political drama was unfolding where Pilate was seeking some way to free Jesus from the trumped-up charges by the Sanhedrin without breaking either Jewish laws or Roman laws.

Pilate had seen over the years, many who were guilty of treason, and this man was obviously, not. If he was guilty of anything, perhaps it was a kind of **religious lunacy**, he thought. As a Roman who was familiar with 1000's of gods, Pilate was not surprised by any accusation where someone called themselves a god, like Jesus.

Pilate had heard them all. He knew there was a god somewhere attempting to influence every human drama. Now, as you read the full account of the trials and Jesus' crucifixion and execution you will notice, several others found Jesus' innocent also. And all of them are described by Luke himself.

Luke recorded three other witnesses who declared Jesus as "not guilty." Herod (*Luke 23:15*), the thief on the cross (*Luke 23:41*), and a Roman Centurion (*Luke 23:47*).

As we will see, Pilate passes Jesus on to Herod, thinking he can be washed of this political and judicial problem. Herod came to the same conclusion as Pilate concerning Jesus' guilt. Jesus is "not guilty."

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Again, there is that note connected to verse 17a. What does it mean? Oh, you make a pastor's heart glad, you are listening and learning.

As Jesus dies on the cross, a thief who is crucified next to Jesus, notices something special about Jesus, and he too makes a declaration that Jesus is "not guilty."

Again, let's look closely at those who were close enough to Jesus, and knew enough about Jesus to declare him innocent of the charges.

⁴¹ "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23-NIV)

When Jesus dies on the cross, the first one to speak is a Roman soldier, he does so as one who declares Jesus Christ as a righteous man. An innocent man. He did not deserve this death. This soldier makes a statement of faith and is brought into the family of God. On this confession, he would see Jesus again.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate's familiarity with the Jews told him he could not just brush this person Jesus aside. Jewish rulers were stubborn and these ones, Annas and Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin would not be satisfied by simply dismissing the charges against Jesus.

If Pilate made that mistake it would get back to Rome that Pilate was soft on crime and providing a haven for treasonous would-be kings, who want to ascend the throne in Jerusalem.

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³⁹“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” ⁴⁰They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. (John 18-NIV)

(3) Finally, **Pilate gets frustrated** because the Jews won’t give up on the request to have Jesus crucified, so he has Jesus flogged and beaten hoping the Jews will back off-they don’t.

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face. (John 19-NIV)

(4) **In the end, Pilate washes** his hands of Jesus, literally.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:24-NIV)

Post-Trial Walk to Golgotha and Nailing to the Cross at 9am.

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Jesus' Seven Sayings on the Cross – from 9am-3pm

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“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)

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Trials

Pastor Ken

March 29, 2026

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The girl stared at her teacher and said forcefully, don't you know, "Pontius the Pilot."

In the trials of Jesus, Pontius Pilate is a significant person. For many of you, you are hearing for the first time, about how Jesus died that includes 6 hours of six trials. **Six trials. Six hours. Six occasions when Jesus was declared, "not guilty."**

We are finishing the trials of Jesus Christ today. We come to the final painful hour of his suffering and his final time standing in front of Pontius Pilate. If you look at your notes you will notice it is about 7:30am. How important is Pilate?

How lasting is his name? Well, I told you last week about a Pilate stone, dated 1st century proving that a person named Pontius Pilate existed. The church also acknowledges this same Pontius Pilate, in many of the early church creeds we will quote today. 1000's of churches quote his name as they say the Apostles Creed,

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Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;**
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Three times during Pilate's trials he declared Jesus, **"not guilty."** (Luke 23:4, 13, 22) I am going to open my bible and read about each "not guilty," statement made by the 747-plane captain, Pontius the Pilot.

Look at verse 4, ⁴ *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Next, look down the page to verse 13, ¹³ *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.*

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Pilate had seen over the years, many who were guilty of treason, and this man was obviously, not. If he was guilty of anything, perhaps it was a kind of **religious lunacy**, he thought. As a Roman who was familiar with 1000's of gods, Pilate was not surprised by any accusation where someone called themselves a god, like Jesus.

Pilate had heard them all. He knew there was a god somewhere attempting to influence every human drama. Now, as you read the full account of the trials and Jesus' crucifixion and execution you will notice, several others found Jesus' innocent also. And all of them are described by Luke himself.

Luke recorded three other witnesses who declared Jesus as "not guilty." Herod (*Luke 23:15*), the thief on the cross (*Luke 23:41*), and a Roman Centurion (*Luke 23:47*).

As we will see, Pilate passes Jesus on to Herod, thinking he can be washed of this political and judicial problem. Herod came to the same conclusion as Pilate concerning Jesus' guilt. Jesus is "not guilty."

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Again, there is that note connected to verse 17a. What does it mean? Oh, you make a pastor's heart glad, you are listening and learning.

As Jesus dies on the cross, a thief who is crucified next to Jesus, notices something special about Jesus, and he too makes a declaration that Jesus is "not guilty."

Again, let's look closely at those who were close enough to Jesus, and knew enough about Jesus to declare him innocent of the charges.

⁴¹ "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23-NIV)

When Jesus dies on the cross, the first one to speak is a Roman soldier, he does so as one who declares Jesus Christ as a righteous man. An innocent man. He did not deserve this death. This soldier makes a statement of faith and is brought into the family of God. On this confession, he would see Jesus again.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate's familiarity with the Jews told him he could not just brush this person Jesus aside. Jewish rulers were stubborn and these ones, Annas and Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin would not be satisfied by simply dismissing the charges against Jesus.

If Pilate made that mistake it would get back to Rome that Pilate was soft on crime and providing a haven for treasonous would-be kings, who want to ascend the throne in Jerusalem.

We see those charges forming against Pilate in the account of Jesus before Pilate as told by John, ¹² *From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."* (John 19-NIV)

Now, before we go into the Roman supreme court building, called the Praetorium, and observe Pilate and Jesus face to face, for those who are just joining us or those who missed a week, let me do a quick 30,000 fly-by of the 6 trials and a few of the details. Again, the whole list of trials and some details are located on the back of your study notes.

Jesus was betrayed by Judas and seized by a mob of over 1000 soldiers and religious elite, called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme.

These judicial juggernauts, the academic superstars, had been plotting the arrest and death of Jesus for well over a year. It was Caiaphas himself just a week earlier, that made it clear, Jesus had to die. Shortly, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Caiaphas's calls for a Sanhedrin meeting and makes this declaration.

The high priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Jewish ruling body. "What do we do now?" they asked. *"This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs. If we let him go on, pretty soon everyone will be believing in him and the Romans will come and remove what little power and privilege we still have."*

⁴⁹ *Then one of them—it was Caiaphas, the designated Chief Priest that year—spoke up, "Don't you know anything?"*

⁵⁰⁻⁵² *"Can't you see that it's to our advantage that one man dies for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed?" He didn't say this of his own accord, but as Chief Priest that year he unwittingly prophesied that Jesus was about to die sacrificially for the nation, and not only for the nation but so that all God's exile-scattered children might be gathered together into one people. ^{53-54a} From that day on, they plotted to kill him. So Jesus no longer went out in public among the Jews. (John 11-NIV)*

Trial #1: Annas Residence at 2am Unauthorized Interrogation

The first trial of Jesus Christ happened at 2am, in front of the former high priest Annas. Jesus represented a threat to the Roman economic and judicial life. Annas is the wealthiest and most influential man in the city. He owned and operated the money-changing system.

Jesus made a declaration that he had come to lead his followers into a **new kingdom**, which had nothing to do with overthrowing a Roman government or casting out Jewish religious system. Jesus **was now on trial**.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. ²² *When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face,*

Jesus first interrogation happened at the personal home of the mob boss Annas. Annas only cared about one thing-keeping his economic empire churning out wealth for himself and his family.

He personally set the lending rates, interest rates, and extortion rates on all financial transactions that took place in Jerusalem and beyond. He lined his pockets with stolen shekels and standing before him was the one person that had on two occasions caused a financial recession. Jesus disrupted the banking going on in the temple and called out the money changers. He turned over money changers tables. Doves flew away free. Kids scrambled for coins rolling on the temple grounds.

Now, Annas wanted to do nothing more than get even. He had one little problem; he could not find any witnesses to bring charges against Jesus. So, after all he could stomach of this Johnny-do-gooder, he remembered that his son-in-law the acting high priest had hatched a plan to rid Israel of Jesus just a week early. Jesus must be put to death. So, Annas has some of his soldiers take Jesus across the courtyard to the personal residence of Caiaphas.

Trial #2: Caiaphas Residence at 3am Illegal Trial and Abuse

This illegal inquisition was now over. It was legally improper. This trial could be compared to an inquisition, a grand jury proceeding where an inquisitor attempts to discover facts for use in a subsequent trial.

Having learned nothing in his questioning, Jesus is sent to the Caiaphas. ²⁴ *Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to the Chief Priest Caiaphas. (John 18-MSG)*

The next trial will move to Caiaphas residence at 3am. Caiaphas was equally evil and corrupt as Annas his father-in-law. Caiaphas was ruthless, power hungry and deviant.

The high priest immediately convicted Jesus of blasphemy. There was no dismissal for deliberation. As quick as the court had found Jesus guilty and sentenced him to death, they began humiliating Jesus. The trial before Caiaphas was a travesty of justice from beginning to end.

Jesus knew what he was doing. The cry of blasphemy went up. Garments were torn. The legal proceedings were thrown out the window and hostility toward Jesus gave way to spitting, slapping, mocking. All appearances of a civil trial disintegrated into a frenzied circus.

Trial #3: Sanhedrin Charges at 6am Jesus Guilty of Blasphemy

The shortest of the trials, maybe lasting a half hour, to announce the charges of blasphemy leading to Jesus' execution.

Trial #4: Pontus Pilate at 6:30am Three Competing Voices in Pilate's Head

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. Under Roman law, Jesus would be guilty of treason.

Neither one of these charges was valid. So, the Jews come to Pilate to say, "you have to crucify Jesus because we can't. More important, he is threat to Roman peace."

And again, Pilate is thinking about the charges of subversion, failure to pay tribute to Caesar and Jesus is declaring that he is king. This is the background to Pilate investigating these charges and deciding if he agrees with the Sanhedrin.

Now, while Pilate is doing the judicial judge part, he also has some competing voices going on in his head. Let me describe the voices and then break them down.

Pilate was influenced by several competing voices in his head. (1) Rome was saying, "stop killing so many Jews." (2) The Jews were calling for the death of Jesus. (3) Mrs. Pilate had a bad dream.

If Pilate had a 3rd ear, it would be his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Trial #5: Herod at 7am Jesus Silent Before Herod

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. (Luke 23-NIV)

Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

Jesus did not answer Herod with so much a word. Even though Jesus knew Herod has been out to kill him for some time, Jesus stood motionless. Voiceless. And completely unimpressed with Herod.

Jesus did not respond to Herod because words are wasted on people who have no interest in truth. When Herod gets nowhere with Jesus, he shows his real colors and grabs one of his personal kingly robes and puts it on Jesus and sends him back to Pilate. Herod Antipas became bored with Jesus and returned him to Pilate wearing one of Herod's royal robes.

Trial #6: Pilate from 7:30-8am Release Barabbas and Scourging

Pilate was engaged in the approval of Jesus death. While everything we read indicates he was trying to fight against sending Jesus to his death. Pilate was not an afterthought in this last trial, for Jesus to wind up on a cross. They lived in a divided world the Jews did. They were conquered by the Romans, but they were still called a nation. The nation of Jews.

It had been a tough conquering and the Jews lived under Roman laws. The Jews lived under the Roman boot. When you lived in Israel under Roman rule there was a clear distinction between that which was Roman and that which was Jewish.

One, there were Roman buildings and there were Jewish buildings. There were Roman laws and Jewish laws. The Supreme Court of the Jewish nation was where the Sanhedrin resided. This was a body of 72 men who unfairly trialed Jesus and then sent charges that went from Blasphemy to Treason, to the Roman Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court of the Romans met at the Praetorium. The Jews are stuck after the 3rd, trial. The question the Sanhedrin raises, is how do we execute Jesus? How do we kill him?

Capital punishment had been removed from their rights, so they had to go from a Jewish building to a Roman building and convince Pilate to execute Jesus for them. Now, remember he did not want to find Jesus guilty.

This was Passover time and Pilate was living in the Praetorium, having moved from the coast to the hill country. Pilate is watching these trials unfold and he is aware that he is sitting on a stick of dynamite.

Pilate waffles under the load of responsibility as he trials Jesus Christ. Pilate was Caesars representative. What Tiberius Ceasar was in Rome, Pilate was that in Jerusalem. Pilate was assigned to govern the very difficult jurisdiction of Judea; the capital was Jerusalem. Pilate better get it right or he would be removed.

As the Jews had been the hardest to conquer by Rome, they were also the hardest to govern. The rage that the Jews had toward Pilate was deep, personal and was a fuse that was always lit.

Pilate is no friend of the Jews, but they needed his approval to nail Jesus to a cross. To put Jesus on a cross, the Jews had to go through Pilate. **In John 18:28-40 and the John 19:1-16** we have the most extensive account of Jesus time before Pilate. **Read it this week.**

Let me make a couple summary comments.

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Pilate had heard them all. He knew there was a god somewhere attempting to influence every human drama. Now, as you read the full account of the trials and Jesus' crucifixion and execution you will notice, several others found Jesus' innocent also. And all of them are described by Luke himself.

Luke recorded three other witnesses who declared Jesus as "not guilty." Herod (*Luke 23:15*), the thief on the cross (*Luke 23:41*), and a Roman Centurion (*Luke 23:47*).

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Again, there is that note connected to verse 17a. What does it mean? Oh, you make a pastor's heart glad, you are listening and learning.

As Jesus dies on the cross, a thief who is crucified next to Jesus, notices something special about Jesus, and he too makes a declaration that Jesus is "not guilty."

Again, let's look closely at those who were close enough to Jesus, and knew enough about Jesus to declare him innocent of the charges.

⁴¹ "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23-NIV)

When Jesus dies on the cross, the first one to speak is a Roman soldier, he does so as one who declares Jesus Christ as a righteous man. An innocent man. He did not deserve this death. This soldier makes a statement of faith and is brought into the family of God. On this confession, he would see Jesus again.

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If Pilate made that mistake it would get back to Rome that Pilate was soft on crime and providing a haven for treasonous would-be kings, who want to ascend the throne in Jerusalem.

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Now, before we go into the Roman supreme court building, called the Praetorium, and observe Pilate and Jesus face to face, for those who are just joining us or those who missed a week, let me do a quick 30,000 fly-by of the 6 trials and a few of the details. Again, the whole list of trials and some details are located on the back of your study notes.

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These judicial juggernauts, the academic superstars, had been plotting the arrest and death of Jesus for well over a year. It was Caiaphas himself just a week earlier, that made it clear, Jesus had to die. Shortly, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Caiaphas's calls for a Sanhedrin meeting and makes this declaration.

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The first trial of Jesus Christ happened at 2am, in front of the former high priest Annas. Jesus represented a threat to the Roman economic and judicial life. Annas is the wealthiest and most influential man in the city. He owned and operated the money-changing system.

Jesus made a declaration that he had come to lead his followers into a **new kingdom**, which had nothing to do with overthrowing a Roman government or casting out Jewish religious system. Jesus **was now on trial**.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. ²² *When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face,*

Jesus first interrogation happened at the personal home of the mob boss Annas. Annas only cared about one thing-keeping his economic empire churning out wealth for himself and his family.

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This illegal inquisition was now over. It was legally improper. This trial could be compared to an inquisition, a grand jury proceeding where an inquisitor attempts to discover facts for use in a subsequent trial.

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The next trial will move to Caiaphas residence at 3am. Caiaphas was equally evil and corrupt as Annas his father-in-law. Caiaphas was ruthless, power hungry and deviant.

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Jesus knew what he was doing. The cry of blasphemy went up. Garments were torn. The legal proceedings were thrown out the window and hostility toward Jesus gave way to spitting, slapping, mocking. All appearances of a civil trial disintegrated into a frenzied circus.

Trial #3: Sanhedrin Charges at 6am Jesus Guilty of Blasphemy

The shortest of the trials, maybe lasting a half hour, to announce the charges of blasphemy leading to Jesus' execution.

Trial #4: Pontus Pilate at 6:30am Three Competing Voices in Pilate's Head

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. Under Roman law, Jesus would be guilty of treason.

Neither one of these charges was valid. So, the Jews come to Pilate to say, "you have to crucify Jesus because we can't. More important, he is threat to Roman peace."

And again, Pilate is thinking about the charges of subversion, failure to pay tribute to Caesar and Jesus is declaring that he is king. This is the background to Pilate investigating these charges and deciding if he agrees with the Sanhedrin.

Now, while Pilate is doing the judicial judge part, he also has some competing voices going on in his head. Let me describe the voices and then break them down.

Pilate was influenced by several competing voices in his head. (1) Rome was saying, "stop killing so many Jews." (2) The Jews were calling for the death of Jesus. (3) Mrs. Pilate had a bad dream.

If Pilate had a 3rd ear, it would be his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Trial #5: Herod at 7am Jesus Silent Before Herod

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. (Luke 23-NIV)

Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

Jesus did not answer Herod with so much a word. Even though Jesus knew Herod has been out to kill him for some time, Jesus stood motionless. Voiceless. And completely unimpressed with Herod.

Jesus did not respond to Herod because words are wasted on people who have no interest in truth. When Herod gets nowhere with Jesus, he shows his real colors and grabs one of his personal kingly robes and puts it on Jesus and sends him back to Pilate. Herod Antipas became bored with Jesus and returned him to Pilate wearing one of Herod's royal robes.

Trial #6: Pilate from 7:30-8am Release Barabbas and Scourging

Pilate was engaged in the approval of Jesus death. While everything we read indicates he was trying to fight against sending Jesus to his death. Pilate was not an afterthought in this last trial, for Jesus to wind up on a cross. They lived in a divided world the Jews did. They were conquered by the Romans, but they were still called a nation. The nation of Jews.

It had been a tough conquering and the Jews lived under Roman laws. The Jews lived under the Roman boot. When you lived in Israel under Roman rule there was a clear distinction between that which was Roman and that which was Jewish.

One, there were Roman buildings and there were Jewish buildings. There were Roman laws and Jewish laws. The Supreme Court of the Jewish nation was where the Sanhedrin resided. This was a body of 72 men who unfairly trialed Jesus and then sent charges that went from Blasphemy to Treason, to the Roman Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court of the Romans met at the Praetorium. The Jews are stuck after the 3rd, trial. The question the Sanhedrin raises, is how do we execute Jesus? How do we kill him?

Capital punishment had been removed from their rights, so they had to go from a Jewish building to a Roman building and convince Pilate to execute Jesus for them. Now, remember he did not want to find Jesus guilty.

This was Passover time and Pilate was living in the Praetorium, having moved from the coast to the hill country. Pilate is watching these trials unfold and he is aware that he is sitting on a stick of dynamite.

Pilate waffles under the load of responsibility as he trials Jesus Christ. Pilate was Caesars representative. What Tiberius Ceasar was in Rome, Pilate was that in Jerusalem. Pilate was assigned to govern the very difficult jurisdiction of Judea; the capital was Jerusalem. Pilate better get it right or he would be removed.

As the Jews had been the hardest to conquer by Rome, they were also the hardest to govern. The rage that the Jews had toward Pilate was deep, personal and was a fuse that was always lit.

Pilate is no friend of the Jews, but they needed his approval to nail Jesus to a cross. To put Jesus on a cross, the Jews had to go through Pilate. **In John 18:28-40 and the John 19:1-16** we have the most extensive account of Jesus time before Pilate. **Read it this week.**

Let me make a couple summary comments.

(1) **Pilate goes back and forth** between Jesus and the Jews many times.

Vs 29, Pilate came out, vs 33, then Pilate went back inside, 19:4, once more Pilate came out, 19:8, Pilate heard this and was even more afraid, and went back inside the palace, 19:12, from then on Pilate tried to set Jesus free, 19:13, when Pilate hear this, he brought Jesus out and sat on the Judges seat...

(2) Next, **Pilate pulls a rabbit out of his hat**, by offering a notorious criminal-Barabas or Jesus to the Jews. The Jews select Barabas and Jesus is led off to be crucified.

³⁹“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” ⁴⁰They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. (John 18-NIV)

(3) Finally, **Pilate gets frustrated** because the Jews won’t give up on the request to have Jesus crucified, so he has Jesus flogged and beaten hoping the Jews will back off-they don’t.

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face. (John 19-NIV)

(4) **In the end, Pilate washes** his hands of Jesus, literally.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:24-NIV)

Post-Trial Walk to Golgotha and Nailing to the Cross at 9am.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull(which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). (John 19-NIV)

Jesus' Seven Sayings on the Cross – from 9am-3pm

God placed our sin on His Son Jesus and punished it there.

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)

Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak.

Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you

the right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love

Him with all your heart.

Come, because when you were a sinner, Christ died for you.

Lift up your hearts and heartaches above your cares and fears,

and receive today a fresh provision from the bread and cup. A provision that *includes* healing.

A provision that *initiates* faith

A provision that *invites* restoration.

Trials

Pastor Ken

March 29, 2026

The offerings we bring to God are an expression of our thanks for sins forgiven, and lives that have been changed by God himself. Jesus has transformed you by his resurrection power. Your gifts are given to the Lord through Bethel Life Center, supervised carefully by the leadership, managed with the utmost integrity and Holy Spirit led prayer.

So, when you give to God, you are acknowledging **that all you have comes from God.**

BUT, when you are **unwilling** to give to God, let's be honest you are not willing to say, "God all I have comes from you." You would rather it be known that you were the one that provided those dollars for your needs and family.

The Bible does not teach that; the Bible teaches God is our source. And during a famine, a widow discovered this truth, and it is spelled out in 1 Kings 17.

¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

So, let me make this as simple and as accessible as possible? Let me make this truth low hanging fruit. Today I want you to start behaving with a single scriptural insight in mind. God is MY source!

And you declare that truth every time you give your tithe and offering. Thank you for giving your finances as an act of worship to God.

In a minute after we read our text, I will also prayer over your giving to God who will provide for your every need and bless in abundance your sacrifice and obedience.

¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." ¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. (Luke 23-NIV)

Let's pray. We thank you, Our Father for your Holy Spirit infilled presence and the word of God that indwells and abides forever. Thank you for the word of God's power to come and cut into our lives, into places no surgeons scalpel could reach.

Thank you that your word is living and active, so I can expect you to speak to me in the next few minutes. I believe your word will accomplish its purpose in my life.

And thank you for your blessing on my financial gifts. I give as an act of worship to you Father, with a heart filled with joy. I declare that all I have comes from you. In Jesus Name, Amen.

The teacher instructed the children to draw some of the key events from the life of Jesus Christ.

They had been studying Jesus Christ in the gospels and learning about Jesus and his 3 years of ministry in the Galilee region around the Sea of Galilee and then his many travels, including those to Jerusalem.

Children began drawing feverishly. **One student** drew the baptism of Jesus as he came out of the River Jordan.

Another student drew the large crowds that Jesus fed with a boy's lunch. And the startled disciples who each returned a basket full of bread to Jesus when it was done.

Finally, one child drew the story of the death of Jesus. It was full of the events that happened in those last hours as Jesus faced some trials, was spit upon and beaten by the Jewish Sanhedrin, even Jesus hanging on a cross. The drawing looked life like and it included an empty tomb with the stone rolled away.

The little girl had it all laid out, but in the background was this massive 747 jet with a fellow walking up to enter the plane. As the teacher was looking at the drawing, she was very inspired by the drawing because it all made sense about the life of Jesus as she had been teaching.

But it was the jet that confused her. It threw her for a loop as they say. So, the teacher asked the little girl about the plane, the little girl said, "oh, it is the getaway plane." The teacher asked, "well who is this guy getting into the plane?"

The girl stared at her teacher and said forcefully, don't you know, "Pontius the Pilot."

In the trials of Jesus, Pontius Pilate is a significant person. For many of you, you are hearing for the first time, about how Jesus died that includes 6 hours of six trials. **Six trials. Six hours. Six occasions when Jesus was declared, "not guilty."**

We are finishing the trials of Jesus Christ today. We come to the final painful hour of his suffering and his final time standing in front of Pontius Pilate. If you look at your notes you will notice it is about 7:30am. How important is Pilate?

How lasting is his name? Well, I told you last week about a Pilate stone, dated 1st century proving that a person named Pontius Pilate existed. The church also acknowledges this same Pontius Pilate, in many of the early church creeds we will quote today. 1000's of churches quote his name as they say the Apostles Creed,

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;**
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Three times during Pilate's trials he declared Jesus, **"not guilty."** (Luke 23:4, 13, 22) I am going to open my bible and read about each "not guilty," statement made by the 747-plane captain, Pontius the Pilot.

Look at verse 4, ⁴ *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Next, look down the page to verse 13, ¹³ *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.*

¹⁵ *Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Please note this little (a) in the text, is a 17a. Now, there is not a verse that follows. Thinking people would ask, where is the verse? This is an occasion where the team of Bible scholars want you to know that not all manuscripts used to make the Bible, include that verse. Ok, don't let me chase that biblical rabbit. Ok, read on.

Finally, look at verse 22, ²² *For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

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Pilate was engaged in the approval of Jesus death. While everything we read indicates he was trying to fight against sending Jesus to his death. Pilate was not an afterthought in this last trial, for Jesus to wind up on a cross. They lived in a divided world the Jews did. They were conquered by the Romans, but they were still called a nation. The nation of Jews.

It had been a tough conquering and the Jews lived under Roman laws. The Jews lived under the Roman boot. When you lived in Israel under Roman rule there was a clear distinction between that which was Roman and that which was Jewish.

One, there were Roman buildings and there were Jewish buildings. There were Roman laws and Jewish laws. The Supreme Court of the Jewish nation was where the Sanhedrin resided. This was a body of 72 men who unfairly trialed Jesus and then sent charges that went from Blasphemy to Treason, to the Roman Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court of the Romans met at the Praetorium. The Jews are stuck after the 3rd, trial. The question the Sanhedrin raises, is how do we execute Jesus? How do we kill him?

Capital punishment had been removed from their rights, so they had to go from a Jewish building to a Roman building and convince Pilate to execute Jesus for them. Now, remember he did not want to find Jesus guilty.

This was Passover time and Pilate was living in the Praetorium, having moved from the coast to the hill country. Pilate is watching these trials unfold and he is aware that he is sitting on a stick of dynamite.

Pilate waffles under the load of responsibility as he trials Jesus Christ. Pilate was Caesars representative. What Tiberius Ceasar was in Rome, Pilate was that in Jerusalem. Pilate was assigned to govern the very difficult jurisdiction of Judea; the capital was Jerusalem. Pilate better get it right or he would be removed.

As the Jews had been the hardest to conquer by Rome, they were also the hardest to govern. The rage that the Jews had toward Pilate was deep, personal and was a fuse that was always lit.

Pilate is no friend of the Jews, but they needed his approval to nail Jesus to a cross. To put Jesus on a cross, the Jews had to go through Pilate. **In John 18:28-40 and the John 19:1-16** we have the most extensive account of Jesus time before Pilate. **Read it this week.**

Let me make a couple summary comments.

(1) **Pilate goes back and forth** between Jesus and the Jews many times.

Vs 29, Pilate came out, vs 33, then Pilate went back inside, 19:4, once more Pilate came out, 19:8, Pilate heard this and was even more afraid, and went back inside the palace, 19:12, from then on Pilate tried to set Jesus free, 19:13, when Pilate hear this, he brought Jesus out and sat on the Judges seat...

(2) Next, **Pilate pulls a rabbit out of his hat**, by offering a notorious criminal-Barabas or Jesus to the Jews. The Jews select Barabas and Jesus is led off to be crucified.

³⁹“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” ⁴⁰They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. (John 18-NIV)

(3) Finally, **Pilate gets frustrated** because the Jews won’t give up on the request to have Jesus crucified, so he has Jesus flogged and beaten hoping the Jews will back off-they don’t.

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face. (John 19-NIV)

(4) **In the end, Pilate washes** his hands of Jesus, literally.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:24-NIV)

Post-Trial Walk to Golgotha and Nailing to the Cross at 9am.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull(which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). (John 19-NIV)

Jesus' Seven Sayings on the Cross – from 9am-3pm

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“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)

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Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you

the right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

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Him with all your heart.

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Lift up your hearts and heartaches above your cares and fears,

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Trials

Pastor Ken

March 29, 2026

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The Bible does not teach that; the Bible teaches God is our source. And during a famine, a widow discovered this truth, and it is spelled out in 1 Kings 17.

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The little girl had it all laid out, but in the background was this massive 747 jet with a fellow walking up to enter the plane. As the teacher was looking at the drawing, she was very inspired by the drawing because it all made sense about the life of Jesus as she had been teaching.

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The girl stared at her teacher and said forcefully, don't you know, "Pontius the Pilot."

In the trials of Jesus, Pontius Pilate is a significant person. For many of you, you are hearing for the first time, about how Jesus died that includes 6 hours of six trials. **Six trials. Six hours. Six occasions when Jesus was declared, "not guilty."**

We are finishing the trials of Jesus Christ today. We come to the final painful hour of his suffering and his final time standing in front of Pontius Pilate. If you look at your notes you will notice it is about 7:30am. How important is Pilate?

How lasting is his name? Well, I told you last week about a Pilate stone, dated 1st century proving that a person named Pontius Pilate existed. The church also acknowledges this same Pontius Pilate, in many of the early church creeds we will quote today. 1000's of churches quote his name as they say the Apostles Creed,

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;**
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Three times during Pilate's trials he declared Jesus, **"not guilty."** (Luke 23:4, 13, 22) I am going to open my bible and read about each "not guilty," statement made by the 747-plane captain, Pontius the Pilot.

Look at verse 4, ⁴ *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Next, look down the page to verse 13, ¹³ *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.*

¹⁵ *Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Please note this little (a) in the text, is a 17a. Now, there is not a verse that follows. Thinking people would ask, where is the verse? This is an occasion where the team of Bible scholars want you to know that not all manuscripts used to make the Bible, include that verse. Ok, don't let me chase that biblical rabbit. Ok, read on.

Finally, look at verse 22, ²² *For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate was in precarious place; a political drama was unfolding where Pilate was seeking some way to free Jesus from the trumped-up charges by the Sanhedrin without breaking either Jewish laws or Roman laws.

Pilate had seen over the years, many who were guilty of treason, and this man was obviously, not. If he was guilty of anything, perhaps it was a kind of **religious lunacy**, he thought. As a Roman who was familiar with 1000's of gods, Pilate was not surprised by any accusation where someone called themselves a god, like Jesus.

Pilate had heard them all. He knew there was a god somewhere attempting to influence every human drama. Now, as you read the full account of the trials and Jesus' crucifixion and execution you will notice, several others found Jesus' innocent also. And all of them are described by Luke himself.

Luke recorded three other witnesses who declared Jesus as "not guilty." Herod (*Luke 23:15*), the thief on the cross (*Luke 23:41*), and a Roman Centurion (*Luke 23:47*).

As we will see, Pilate passes Jesus on to Herod, thinking he can be washed of this political and judicial problem. Herod came to the same conclusion as Pilate concerning Jesus' guilt. Jesus is "not guilty."

¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." (Luke 23-NIV)

Again, there is that note connected to verse 17a. What does it mean? Oh, you make a pastor's heart glad, you are listening and learning.

As Jesus dies on the cross, a thief who is crucified next to Jesus, notices something special about Jesus, and he too makes a declaration that Jesus is "not guilty."

Again, let's look closely at those who were close enough to Jesus, and knew enough about Jesus to declare him innocent of the charges.

⁴¹ "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23-NIV)

When Jesus dies on the cross, the first one to speak is a Roman soldier, he does so as one who declares Jesus Christ as a righteous man. An innocent man. He did not deserve this death. This soldier makes a statement of faith and is brought into the family of God. On this confession, he would see Jesus again.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate's familiarity with the Jews told him he could not just brush this person Jesus aside. Jewish rulers were stubborn and these ones, Annas and Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin would not be satisfied by simply dismissing the charges against Jesus.

If Pilate made that mistake it would get back to Rome that Pilate was soft on crime and providing a haven for treasonous would-be kings, who want to ascend the throne in Jerusalem.

We see those charges forming against Pilate in the account of Jesus before Pilate as told by John, ¹² *From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."* (John 19-NIV)

Now, before we go into the Roman supreme court building, called the Praetorium, and observe Pilate and Jesus face to face, for those who are just joining us or those who missed a week, let me do a quick 30,000 fly-by of the 6 trials and a few of the details. Again, the whole list of trials and some details are located on the back of your study notes.

Jesus was betrayed by Judas and seized by a mob of over 1000 soldiers and religious elite, called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme.

These judicial juggernauts, the academic superstars, had been plotting the arrest and death of Jesus for well over a year. It was Caiaphas himself just a week earlier, that made it clear, Jesus had to die. Shortly, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Caiaphas's calls for a Sanhedrin meeting and makes this declaration.

The high priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Jewish ruling body. "What do we do now?" they asked. *"This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs. If we let him go on, pretty soon everyone will be believing in him and the Romans will come and remove what little power and privilege we still have."*

⁴⁹ *Then one of them—it was Caiaphas, the designated Chief Priest that year—spoke up, "Don't you know anything?"*

⁵⁰⁻⁵² *"Can't you see that it's to our advantage that one man dies for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed?" He didn't say this of his own accord, but as Chief Priest that year he unwittingly prophesied that Jesus was about to die sacrificially for the nation, and not only for the nation but so that all God's exile-scattered children might be gathered together into one people. ^{53-54a} From that day on, they plotted to kill him. So Jesus no longer went out in public among the Jews. (John 11-NIV)*

Trial #1: Annas Residence at 2am Unauthorized Interrogation

The first trial of Jesus Christ happened at 2am, in front of the former high priest Annas. Jesus represented a threat to the Roman economic and judicial life. Annas is the wealthiest and most influential man in the city. He owned and operated the money-changing system.

Jesus made a declaration that he had come to lead his followers into a **new kingdom**, which had nothing to do with overthrowing a Roman government or casting out Jewish religious system. Jesus **was now on trial**.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. ²² *When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face,*

Jesus first interrogation happened at the personal home of the mob boss Annas. Annas only cared about one thing-keeping his economic empire churning out wealth for himself and his family.

He personally set the lending rates, interest rates, and extortion rates on all financial transactions that took place in Jerusalem and beyond. He lined his pockets with stolen shekels and standing before him was the one person that had on two occasions caused a financial recession. Jesus disrupted the banking going on in the temple and called out the money changers. He turned over money changers tables. Doves flew away free. Kids scrambled for coins rolling on the temple grounds.

Now, Annas wanted to do nothing more than get even. He had one little problem; he could not find any witnesses to bring charges against Jesus. So, after all he could stomach of this Johnny-do-gooder, he remembered that his son-in-law the acting high priest had hatched a plan to rid Israel of Jesus just a week early. Jesus must be put to death. So, Annas has some of his soldiers take Jesus across the courtyard to the personal residence of Caiaphas.

Trial #2: Caiaphas Residence at 3am Illegal Trial and Abuse

This illegal inquisition was now over. It was legally improper. This trial could be compared to an inquisition, a grand jury proceeding where an inquisitor attempts to discover facts for use in a subsequent trial.

Having learned nothing in his questioning, Jesus is sent to the Caiaphas. ²⁴ *Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to the Chief Priest Caiaphas. (John 18-MSG)*

The next trial will move to Caiaphas residence at 3am. Caiaphas was equally evil and corrupt as Annas his father-in-law. Caiaphas was ruthless, power hungry and deviant.

The high priest immediately convicted Jesus of blasphemy. There was no dismissal for deliberation. As quick as the court had found Jesus guilty and sentenced him to death, they began humiliating Jesus. The trial before Caiaphas was a travesty of justice from beginning to end.

Jesus knew what he was doing. The cry of blasphemy went up. Garments were torn. The legal proceedings were thrown out the window and hostility toward Jesus gave way to spitting, slapping, mocking. All appearances of a civil trial disintegrated into a frenzied circus.

Trial #3: Sanhedrin Charges at 6am Jesus Guilty of Blasphemy

The shortest of the trials, maybe lasting a half hour, to announce the charges of blasphemy leading to Jesus' execution.

Trial #4: Pontus Pilate at 6:30am Three Competing Voices in Pilate's Head

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. Under Roman law, Jesus would be guilty of treason.

Neither one of these charges was valid. So, the Jews come to Pilate to say, "you have to crucify Jesus because we can't. More important, he is threat to Roman peace."

And again, Pilate is thinking about the charges of subversion, failure to pay tribute to Caesar and Jesus is declaring that he is king. This is the background to Pilate investigating these charges and deciding if he agrees with the Sanhedrin.

Now, while Pilate is doing the judicial judge part, he also has some competing voices going on in his head. Let me describe the voices and then break them down.

Pilate was influenced by several competing voices in his head. (1) Rome was saying, "stop killing so many Jews." (2) The Jews were calling for the death of Jesus. (3) Mrs. Pilate had a bad dream.

If Pilate had a 3rd ear, it would be his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Trial #5: Herod at 7am Jesus Silent Before Herod

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. (Luke 23-NIV)

Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

Jesus did not answer Herod with so much a word. Even though Jesus knew Herod has been out to kill him for some time, Jesus stood motionless. Voiceless. And completely unimpressed with Herod.

Jesus did not respond to Herod because words are wasted on people who have no interest in truth. When Herod gets nowhere with Jesus, he shows his real colors and grabs one of his personal kingly robes and puts it on Jesus and sends him back to Pilate. Herod Antipas became bored with Jesus and returned him to Pilate wearing one of Herod's royal robes.

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How lasting is his name? Well, I told you last week about a Pilate stone, dated 1st century proving that a person named Pontius Pilate existed. The church also acknowledges this same Pontius Pilate, in many of the early church creeds we will quote today. 1000's of churches quote his name as they say the Apostles Creed,

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;**
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Three times during Pilate's trials he declared Jesus, **"not guilty."** (Luke 23:4, 13, 22) I am going to open my bible and read about each "not guilty," statement made by the 747-plane captain, Pontius the Pilot.

Look at verse 4, ⁴ *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Next, look down the page to verse 13, ¹³ *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.*

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Pilate had heard them all. He knew there was a god somewhere attempting to influence every human drama. Now, as you read the full account of the trials and Jesus' crucifixion and execution you will notice, several others found Jesus' innocent also. And all of them are described by Luke himself.

Luke recorded three other witnesses who declared Jesus as "not guilty." Herod (*Luke 23:15*), the thief on the cross (*Luke 23:41*), and a Roman Centurion (*Luke 23:47*).

As we will see, Pilate passes Jesus on to Herod, thinking he can be washed of this political and judicial problem. Herod came to the same conclusion as Pilate concerning Jesus' guilt. Jesus is "not guilty."

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As Jesus dies on the cross, a thief who is crucified next to Jesus, notices something special about Jesus, and he too makes a declaration that Jesus is "not guilty."

Again, let's look closely at those who were close enough to Jesus, and knew enough about Jesus to declare him innocent of the charges.

⁴¹ "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23-NIV)

When Jesus dies on the cross, the first one to speak is a Roman soldier, he does so as one who declares Jesus Christ as a righteous man. An innocent man. He did not deserve this death. This soldier makes a statement of faith and is brought into the family of God. On this confession, he would see Jesus again.

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Now, before we go into the Roman supreme court building, called the Praetorium, and observe Pilate and Jesus face to face, for those who are just joining us or those who missed a week, let me do a quick 30,000 fly-by of the 6 trials and a few of the details. Again, the whole list of trials and some details are located on the back of your study notes.

Jesus was betrayed by Judas and seized by a mob of over 1000 soldiers and religious elite, called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme.

These judicial juggernauts, the academic superstars, had been plotting the arrest and death of Jesus for well over a year. It was Caiaphas himself just a week earlier, that made it clear, Jesus had to die. Shortly, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Caiaphas's calls for a Sanhedrin meeting and makes this declaration.

The high priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Jewish ruling body. "What do we do now?" they asked. *"This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs. If we let him go on, pretty soon everyone will be believing in him and the Romans will come and remove what little power and privilege we still have."*

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Trial #1: Annas Residence at 2am Unauthorized Interrogation

The first trial of Jesus Christ happened at 2am, in front of the former high priest Annas. Jesus represented a threat to the Roman economic and judicial life. Annas is the wealthiest and most influential man in the city. He owned and operated the money-changing system.

Jesus made a declaration that he had come to lead his followers into a **new kingdom**, which had nothing to do with overthrowing a Roman government or casting out Jewish religious system. Jesus **was now on trial**.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. ²² *When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face,*

Jesus first interrogation happened at the personal home of the mob boss Annas. Annas only cared about one thing-keeping his economic empire churning out wealth for himself and his family.

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Trial #2: Caiaphas Residence at 3am Illegal Trial and Abuse

This illegal inquisition was now over. It was legally improper. This trial could be compared to an inquisition, a grand jury proceeding where an inquisitor attempts to discover facts for use in a subsequent trial.

Having learned nothing in his questioning, Jesus is sent to the Caiaphas. ²⁴ *Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to the Chief Priest Caiaphas. (John 18-MSG)*

The next trial will move to Caiaphas residence at 3am. Caiaphas was equally evil and corrupt as Annas his father-in-law. Caiaphas was ruthless, power hungry and deviant.

The high priest immediately convicted Jesus of blasphemy. There was no dismissal for deliberation. As quick as the court had found Jesus guilty and sentenced him to death, they began humiliating Jesus. The trial before Caiaphas was a travesty of justice from beginning to end.

Jesus knew what he was doing. The cry of blasphemy went up. Garments were torn. The legal proceedings were thrown out the window and hostility toward Jesus gave way to spitting, slapping, mocking. All appearances of a civil trial disintegrated into a frenzied circus.

Trial #3: Sanhedrin Charges at 6am Jesus Guilty of Blasphemy

The shortest of the trials, maybe lasting a half hour, to announce the charges of blasphemy leading to Jesus' execution.

Trial #4: Pontus Pilate at 6:30am Three Competing Voices in Pilate's Head

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. Under Roman law, Jesus would be guilty of treason.

Neither one of these charges was valid. So, the Jews come to Pilate to say, "you have to crucify Jesus because we can't. More important, he is threat to Roman peace."

And again, Pilate is thinking about the charges of subversion, failure to pay tribute to Caesar and Jesus is declaring that he is king. This is the background to Pilate investigating these charges and deciding if he agrees with the Sanhedrin.

Now, while Pilate is doing the judicial judge part, he also has some competing voices going on in his head. Let me describe the voices and then break them down.

Pilate was influenced by several competing voices in his head. (1) Rome was saying, "stop killing so many Jews." (2) The Jews were calling for the death of Jesus. (3) Mrs. Pilate had a bad dream.

If Pilate had a 3rd ear, it would be his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Trial #5: Herod at 7am Jesus Silent Before Herod

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. (Luke 23-NIV)

Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

Jesus did not answer Herod with so much a word. Even though Jesus knew Herod has been out to kill him for some time, Jesus stood motionless. Voiceless. And completely unimpressed with Herod.

Jesus did not respond to Herod because words are wasted on people who have no interest in truth. When Herod gets nowhere with Jesus, he shows his real colors and grabs one of his personal kingly robes and puts it on Jesus and sends him back to Pilate. Herod Antipas became bored with Jesus and returned him to Pilate wearing one of Herod's royal robes.

Trial #6: Pilate from 7:30-8am Release Barabbas and Scourging

Pilate was engaged in the approval of Jesus death. While everything we read indicates he was trying to fight against sending Jesus to his death. Pilate was not an afterthought in this last trial, for Jesus to wind up on a cross. They lived in a divided world the Jews did. They were conquered by the Romans, but they were still called a nation. The nation of Jews.

It had been a tough conquering and the Jews lived under Roman laws. The Jews lived under the Roman boot. When you lived in Israel under Roman rule there was a clear distinction between that which was Roman and that which was Jewish.

One, there were Roman buildings and there were Jewish buildings. There were Roman laws and Jewish laws. The Supreme Court of the Jewish nation was where the Sanhedrin resided. This was a body of 72 men who unfairly trialed Jesus and then sent charges that went from Blasphemy to Treason, to the Roman Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court of the Romans met at the Praetorium. The Jews are stuck after the 3rd, trial. The question the Sanhedrin raises, is how do we execute Jesus? How do we kill him?

Capital punishment had been removed from their rights, so they had to go from a Jewish building to a Roman building and convince Pilate to execute Jesus for them. Now, remember he did not want to find Jesus guilty.

This was Passover time and Pilate was living in the Praetorium, having moved from the coast to the hill country. Pilate is watching these trials unfold and he is aware that he is sitting on a stick of dynamite.

Pilate waffles under the load of responsibility as he trials Jesus Christ. Pilate was Caesars representative. What Tiberius Ceasar was in Rome, Pilate was that in Jerusalem. Pilate was assigned to govern the very difficult jurisdiction of Judea; the capital was Jerusalem. Pilate better get it right or he would be removed.

As the Jews had been the hardest to conquer by Rome, they were also the hardest to govern. The rage that the Jews had toward Pilate was deep, personal and was a fuse that was always lit.

Pilate is no friend of the Jews, but they needed his approval to nail Jesus to a cross. To put Jesus on a cross, the Jews had to go through Pilate. **In John 18:28-40 and the John 19:1-16** we have the most extensive account of Jesus time before Pilate. **Read it this week.**

Let me make a couple summary comments.

(1) **Pilate goes back and forth** between Jesus and the Jews many times.

Vs 29, Pilate came out, vs 33, then Pilate went back inside, 19:4, once more Pilate came out, 19:8, Pilate heard this and was even more afraid, and went back inside the palace, 19:12, from then on Pilate tried to set Jesus free, 19:13, when Pilate hear this, he brought Jesus out and sat on the Judges seat...

(2) Next, **Pilate pulls a rabbit out of his hat**, by offering a notorious criminal-Barabas or Jesus to the Jews. The Jews select Barabas and Jesus is led off to be crucified.

³⁹“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” ⁴⁰They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. (John 18-NIV)

(3) Finally, **Pilate gets frustrated** because the Jews won’t give up on the request to have Jesus crucified, so he has Jesus flogged and beaten hoping the Jews will back off-they don’t.

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face. (John 19-NIV)

(4) **In the end, Pilate washes** his hands of Jesus, literally.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:24-NIV)

Post-Trial Walk to Golgotha and Nailing to the Cross at 9am.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull(which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). (John 19-NIV)

Jesus' Seven Sayings on the Cross – from 9am-3pm

God placed our sin on His Son Jesus and punished it there.

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)

Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak.

Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you

the right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love

Him with all your heart.

Come, because when you were a sinner, Christ died for you.

Lift up your hearts and heartaches above your cares and fears,

and receive today a fresh provision from the bread and cup. A provision that *includes* healing.

A provision that *initiates* faith

A provision that *invites* restoration.

Trials

Pastor Ken

March 29, 2026

The offerings we bring to God are an expression of our thanks for sins forgiven, and lives that have been changed by God himself. Jesus has transformed you by his resurrection power. Your gifts are given to the Lord through Bethel Life Center, supervised carefully by the leadership, managed with the utmost integrity and Holy Spirit led prayer.

So, when you give to God, you are acknowledging **that all you have comes from God.**

BUT, when you are **unwilling** to give to God, let's be honest you are not willing to say, "God all I have comes from you." You would rather it be known that you were the one that provided those dollars for your needs and family.

The Bible does not teach that; the Bible teaches God is our source. And during a famine, a widow discovered this truth, and it is spelled out in 1 Kings 17.

¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

So, let me make this as simple and as accessible as possible? Let me make this truth low hanging fruit. Today I want you to start behaving with a single scriptural insight in mind. God is MY source!

And you declare that truth every time you give your tithe and offering. Thank you for giving your finances as an act of worship to God.

In a minute after we read our text, I will also prayer over your giving to God who will provide for your every need and bless in abundance your sacrifice and obedience.

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Let's pray. We thank you, Our Father for your Holy Spirit infilled presence and the word of God that indwells and abides forever. Thank you for the word of God's power to come and cut into our lives, into places no surgeons scalpel could reach.

Thank you that your word is living and active, so I can expect you to speak to me in the next few minutes. I believe your word will accomplish its purpose in my life.

And thank you for your blessing on my financial gifts. I give as an act of worship to you Father, with a heart filled with joy. I declare that all I have comes from you. In Jesus Name, Amen.

The teacher instructed the children to draw some of the key events from the life of Jesus Christ.

They had been studying Jesus Christ in the gospels and learning about Jesus and his 3 years of ministry in the Galilee region around the Sea of Galilee and then his many travels, including those to Jerusalem.

Children began drawing feverishly. **One student** drew the baptism of Jesus as he came out of the River Jordan.

Another student drew the large crowds that Jesus fed with a boy's lunch. And the startled disciples who each returned a basket full of bread to Jesus when it was done.

Finally, one child drew the story of the death of Jesus. It was full of the events that happened in those last hours as Jesus faced some trials, was spit upon and beaten by the Jewish Sanhedrin, even Jesus hanging on a cross. The drawing looked life like and it included an empty tomb with the stone rolled away.

The little girl had it all laid out, but in the background was this massive 747 jet with a fellow walking up to enter the plane. As the teacher was looking at the drawing, she was very inspired by the drawing because it all made sense about the life of Jesus as she had been teaching.

But it was the jet that confused her. It threw her for a loop as they say. So, the teacher asked the little girl about the plane, the little girl said, "oh, it is the getaway plane." The teacher asked, "well who is this guy getting into the plane?"

The girl stared at her teacher and said forcefully, don't you know, "Pontius the Pilot."

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The shortest of the trials, maybe lasting a half hour, to announce the charges of blasphemy leading to Jesus' execution.

Trial #4: Pontus Pilate at 6:30am Three Competing Voices in Pilate's Head

Under Jewish law, Jesus was guilty of blasphemy. Under Roman law, Jesus would be guilty of treason.

Neither one of these charges was valid. So, the Jews come to Pilate to say, "you have to crucify Jesus because we can't. More important, he is threat to Roman peace."

And again, Pilate is thinking about the charges of subversion, failure to pay tribute to Caesar and Jesus is declaring that he is king. This is the background to Pilate investigating these charges and deciding if he agrees with the Sanhedrin.

Now, while Pilate is doing the judicial judge part, he also has some competing voices going on in his head. Let me describe the voices and then break them down.

Pilate was influenced by several competing voices in his head. (1) Rome was saying, "stop killing so many Jews." (2) The Jews were calling for the death of Jesus. (3) Mrs. Pilate had a bad dream.

If Pilate had a 3rd ear, it would be his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Trial #5: Herod at 7am Jesus Silent Before Herod

Herod had heard many things about Jesus' life and ministry and had hoped to see Jesus pull a rabbit out his hat. He had hoped to see a miracle. Herod thought Jesus was a magician who could conjure up some miracles to authenticate his ministry.

⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform a sign of some sort. (Luke 23-NIV)

Because of Herod's inability to focus and his eagerness to meet Jesus, he began to flood Jesus with a series of rambling questions and remarks without letting Jesus respond. Not that he would have anyway.

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Trial #6: Pilate from 7:30-8am Release Barabbas and Scourging

Pilate was engaged in the approval of Jesus death. While everything we read indicates he was trying to fight against sending Jesus to his death. Pilate was not an afterthought in this last trial, for Jesus to wind up on a cross. They lived in a divided world the Jews did. They were conquered by the Romans, but they were still called a nation. The nation of Jews.

It had been a tough conquering and the Jews lived under Roman laws. The Jews lived under the Roman boot. When you lived in Israel under Roman rule there was a clear distinction between that which was Roman and that which was Jewish.

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The Supreme Court of the Romans met at the Praetorium. The Jews are stuck after the 3rd, trial. The question the Sanhedrin raises, is how do we execute Jesus? How do we kill him?

Capital punishment had been removed from their rights, so they had to go from a Jewish building to a Roman building and convince Pilate to execute Jesus for them. Now, remember he did not want to find Jesus guilty.

This was Passover time and Pilate was living in the Praetorium, having moved from the coast to the hill country. Pilate is watching these trials unfold and he is aware that he is sitting on a stick of dynamite.

Pilate waffles under the load of responsibility as he trials Jesus Christ. Pilate was Caesars representative. What Tiberius Ceasar was in Rome, Pilate was that in Jerusalem. Pilate was assigned to govern the very difficult jurisdiction of Judea; the capital was Jerusalem. Pilate better get it right or he would be removed.

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Pilate is no friend of the Jews, but they needed his approval to nail Jesus to a cross. To put Jesus on a cross, the Jews had to go through Pilate. **In John 18:28-40 and the John 19:1-16** we have the most extensive account of Jesus time before Pilate. **Read it this week.**

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³⁹“But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” ⁴⁰They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising. (John 18-NIV)

(3) Finally, **Pilate gets frustrated** because the Jews won’t give up on the request to have Jesus crucified, so he has Jesus flogged and beaten hoping the Jews will back off-they don’t.

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. ² The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, “Hail, king of the Jews!” And they slapped him in the face. (John 19-NIV)

(4) **In the end, Pilate washes** his hands of Jesus, literally.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. “I am innocent of this man’s blood,” he said. “It is your responsibility!” (Matthew 27:24-NIV)

Post-Trial Walk to Golgotha and Nailing to the Cross at 9am.

¹⁶ Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ Carrying his own cross, he went out to the place of the Skull(which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). (John 19-NIV)

Jesus' Seven Sayings on the Cross – from 9am-3pm

God placed our sin on His Son Jesus and punished it there.

“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)

Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak.

Come, not because any goodness of your own gives you

the right to come, but because you need mercy and help.

Come, because you love the Lord a little and would like to love

Him with all your heart.

Come, because when you were a sinner, Christ died for you.

Lift up your hearts and heartaches above your cares and fears,

and receive today a fresh provision from the bread and cup. A provision that *includes* healing.

A provision that *initiates* faith

A provision that *invites* restoration.

Trials

Pastor Ken

March 29, 2026

The offerings we bring to God are an expression of our thanks for sins forgiven, and lives that have been changed by God himself. Jesus has transformed you by his resurrection power. Your gifts are given to the Lord through Bethel Life Center, supervised carefully by the leadership, managed with the utmost integrity and Holy Spirit led prayer.

So, when you give to God, you are acknowledging **that all you have comes from God.**

BUT, when you are **unwilling** to give to God, let's be honest you are not willing to say, "God all I have comes from you." You would rather it be known that you were the one that provided those dollars for your needs and family.

The Bible does not teach that; the Bible teaches God is our source. And during a famine, a widow discovered this truth, and it is spelled out in 1 Kings 17.

¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah. (1 Kings 17-NIV)

So, let me make this as simple and as accessible as possible? Let me make this truth low hanging fruit. Today I want you to start behaving with a single scriptural insight in mind. God is MY source!

And you declare that truth every time you give your tithe and offering. Thank you for giving your finances as an act of worship to God.

In a minute after we read our text, I will also prayer over your giving to God who will provide for your every need and bless in abundance your sacrifice and obedience.

¹³ Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. ¹⁵ Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him." ¹⁸ But the whole crowd shouted, "Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹ (Barabbas had been thrown into prison for an insurrection in the city, and for murder.) ²⁰ Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. (Luke 23-NIV)

Let's pray. We thank you, Our Father for your Holy Spirit infilled presence and the word of God that indwells and abides forever. Thank you for the word of God's power to come and cut into our lives, into places no surgeons scalpel could reach.

Thank you that your word is living and active, so I can expect you to speak to me in the next few minutes. I believe your word will accomplish its purpose in my life.

And thank you for your blessing on my financial gifts. I give as an act of worship to you Father, with a heart filled with joy. I declare that all I have comes from you. In Jesus Name, Amen.

The teacher instructed the children to draw some of the key events from the life of Jesus Christ.

They had been studying Jesus Christ in the gospels and learning about Jesus and his 3 years of ministry in the Galilee region around the Sea of Galilee and then his many travels, including those to Jerusalem.

Children began drawing feverishly. **One student** drew the baptism of Jesus as he came out of the River Jordan.

Another student drew the large crowds that Jesus fed with a boy's lunch. And the startled disciples who each returned a basket full of bread to Jesus when it was done.

Finally, one child drew the story of the death of Jesus. It was full of the events that happened in those last hours as Jesus faced some trials, was spit upon and beaten by the Jewish Sanhedrin, even Jesus hanging on a cross. The drawing looked life like and it included an empty tomb with the stone rolled away.

The little girl had it all laid out, but in the background was this massive 747 jet with a fellow walking up to enter the plane. As the teacher was looking at the drawing, she was very inspired by the drawing because it all made sense about the life of Jesus as she had been teaching.

But it was the jet that confused her. It threw her for a loop as they say. So, the teacher asked the little girl about the plane, the little girl said, "oh, it is the getaway plane." The teacher asked, "well who is this guy getting into the plane?"

The girl stared at her teacher and said forcefully, don't you know, "Pontius the Pilot."

In the trials of Jesus, Pontius Pilate is a significant person. For many of you, you are hearing for the first time, about how Jesus died that includes 6 hours of six trials. **Six trials. Six hours. Six occasions when Jesus was declared, "not guilty."**

We are finishing the trials of Jesus Christ today. We come to the final painful hour of his suffering and his final time standing in front of Pontius Pilate. If you look at your notes you will notice it is about 7:30am. How important is Pilate?

How lasting is his name? Well, I told you last week about a Pilate stone, dated 1st century proving that a person named Pontius Pilate existed. The church also acknowledges this same Pontius Pilate, in many of the early church creeds we will quote today. 1000's of churches quote his name as they say the Apostles Creed,

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;**
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;

Three times during Pilate's trials he declared Jesus, **"not guilty."** (Luke 23:4, 13, 22) I am going to open my bible and read about each "not guilty," statement made by the 747-plane captain, Pontius the Pilot.

Look at verse 4, ⁴ *Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Next, look down the page to verse 13, ¹³ *Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, ¹⁴ and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him.*

¹⁵ *Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. ¹⁶ Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Please note this little (a) in the text, is a 17a. Now, there is not a verse that follows. Thinking people would ask, where is the verse? This is an occasion where the team of Bible scholars want you to know that not all manuscripts used to make the Bible, include that verse. Ok, don't let me chase that biblical rabbit. Ok, read on.

Finally, look at verse 22, ²² *For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished and then release him."* (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate was in precarious place; a political drama was unfolding where Pilate was seeking some way to free Jesus from the trumped-up charges by the Sanhedrin without breaking either Jewish laws or Roman laws.

Pilate had seen over the years, many who were guilty of treason, and this man was obviously, not. If he was guilty of anything, perhaps it was a kind of **religious lunacy**, he thought. As a Roman who was familiar with 1000's of gods, Pilate was not surprised by any accusation where someone called themselves a god, like Jesus.

Pilate had heard them all. He knew there was a god somewhere attempting to influence every human drama. Now, as you read the full account of the trials and Jesus' crucifixion and execution you will notice, several others found Jesus' innocent also. And all of them are described by Luke himself.

Luke recorded three other witnesses who declared Jesus as "not guilty." Herod (*Luke 23:15*), the thief on the cross (*Luke 23:41*), and a Roman Centurion (*Luke 23:47*).

As we will see, Pilate passes Jesus on to Herod, thinking he can be washed of this political and judicial problem. Herod came to the same conclusion as Pilate concerning Jesus' guilt. Jesus is "not guilty."

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Again, there is that note connected to verse 17a. What does it mean? Oh, you make a pastor's heart glad, you are listening and learning.

As Jesus dies on the cross, a thief who is crucified next to Jesus, notices something special about Jesus, and he too makes a declaration that Jesus is "not guilty."

Again, let's look closely at those who were close enough to Jesus, and knew enough about Jesus to declare him innocent of the charges.

⁴¹ "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." ⁴² Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." (Luke 23-NIV)

When Jesus dies on the cross, the first one to speak is a Roman soldier, he does so as one who declares Jesus Christ as a righteous man. An innocent man. He did not deserve this death. This soldier makes a statement of faith and is brought into the family of God. On this confession, he would see Jesus again.

⁴⁷ The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man." (Luke 23-NIV)

Pilate's familiarity with the Jews told him he could not just brush this person Jesus aside. Jewish rulers were stubborn and these ones, Annas and Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin would not be satisfied by simply dismissing the charges against Jesus.

If Pilate made that mistake it would get back to Rome that Pilate was soft on crime and providing a haven for treasonous would-be kings, who want to ascend the throne in Jerusalem.

We see those charges forming against Pilate in the account of Jesus before Pilate as told by John, ¹² *From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."* (John 19-NIV)

Now, before we go into the Roman supreme court building, called the Praetorium, and observe Pilate and Jesus face to face, for those who are just joining us or those who missed a week, let me do a quick 30,000 fly-by of the 6 trials and a few of the details. Again, the whole list of trials and some details are located on the back of your study notes.

Jesus was betrayed by Judas and seized by a mob of over 1000 soldiers and religious elite, called the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme.

These judicial juggernauts, the academic superstars, had been plotting the arrest and death of Jesus for well over a year. It was Caiaphas himself just a week earlier, that made it clear, Jesus had to die. Shortly, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, Caiaphas's calls for a Sanhedrin meeting and makes this declaration.

The high priests and Pharisees called a meeting of the Jewish ruling body. "What do we do now?" they asked. *"This man keeps on doing things, creating God-signs. If we let him go on, pretty soon everyone will be believing in him and the Romans will come and remove what little power and privilege we still have."*

⁴⁹ *Then one of them—it was Caiaphas, the designated Chief Priest that year—spoke up, "Don't you know anything?"*

⁵⁰⁻⁵² *"Can't you see that it's to our advantage that one man dies for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed?" He didn't say this of his own accord, but as Chief Priest that year he unwittingly prophesied that Jesus was about to die sacrificially for the nation, and not only for the nation but so that all God's exile-scattered children might be gathered together into one people. ^{53-54a} From that day on, they plotted to kill him. So Jesus no longer went out in public among the Jews. (John 11-NIV)*

Trial #1: Annas Residence at 2am Unauthorized Interrogation

The first trial of Jesus Christ happened at 2am, in front of the former high priest Annas. Jesus represented a threat to the Roman economic and judicial life. Annas is the wealthiest and most influential man in the city. He owned and operated the money-changing system.

Jesus made a declaration that he had come to lead his followers into a **new kingdom**, which had nothing to do with overthrowing a Roman government or casting out Jewish religious system. Jesus **was now on trial**.

Annas interrogated Jesus regarding his disciples and his teaching. ²² *When he said this, one of the policemen standing there slapped Jesus across the face,*

Jesus first interrogation happened at the personal home of the mob boss Annas. Annas only cared about one thing-keeping his economic empire churning out wealth for himself and his family.

He personally set the lending rates, interest rates, and extortion rates on all financial transactions that took place in Jerusalem and beyond. He lined his pockets with stolen shekels and standing before him was the one person that had on two occasions caused a financial recession. Jesus disrupted the banking going on in the temple and called out the money changers. He turned over money changers tables. Doves flew away free. Kids scrambled for coins rolling on the temple grounds.

Now, Annas wanted to do nothing more than get even. He had one little problem; he could not find any witnesses to bring charges against Jesus. So, after all he could stomach of this Johnny-do-gooder, he remembered that his son-in-law the acting high priest had hatched a plan to rid Israel of Jesus just a week early. Jesus must be put to death. So, Annas has some of his soldiers take Jesus across the courtyard to the personal residence of Caiaphas.

Trial #2: Caiaphas Residence at 3am Illegal Trial and Abuse

This illegal inquisition was now over. It was legally improper. This trial could be compared to an inquisition, a grand jury proceeding where an inquisitor attempts to discover facts for use in a subsequent trial.

Having learned nothing in his questioning, Jesus is sent to the Caiaphas. ²⁴ *Then Annas sent him, still tied up, to the Chief Priest Caiaphas. (John 18-MSG)*

The next trial will move to Caiaphas residence at 3am. Caiaphas was equally evil and corrupt as Annas his father-in-law. Caiaphas was ruthless, power hungry and deviant.

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