

## Trials

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*<sup>1</sup> Then the whole assembly rose and led him off to Pilate. <sup>2</sup> And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king." <sup>3</sup> So Pilate asked Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" "You have said so," Jesus replied. <sup>4</sup> Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against this man." <sup>5</sup> But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here." (Luke 23:1-5-NIV)*

**Lord**, it is good to be in your house to worship and study your word. Jesus, thank you for your atoning death to set us free from sin.

The magnitude of your love is seen by your death on a cross. Impress upon our hearts the gravity and weightiness of these events as explained in God's Holy Word.

Make it blindingly clear today, what it means to live for Jesus Christ. And those outside of salvation in Christ, my prayer is that they come home to Jesus Christ, **today**. In Jesus Name, Amen!

Imagine you get up the nerve to go bungee jumping. You head to Colorado for a week of fun with your family, and you decide to impress your kids with your courage.

As you are standing on the bungee jumping bridge looking down you ask the small, framed petite college girl, "**tell me again, my part.**" You groan. You wonder why you allowed your pride to get you into such predicaments.

She is the bubbly, college-aged, baseball-capped person who is going to keep you from dying by holding onto the rope.

Some people love rappelling. Others can't get enough of a backward leap off a 50-foot cliff. They relish the stomach in the throat sensation. You are having second, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> second guesses.

She hands you a leather harness and tells you to step in. You think this not only looks like a diaper; in a couple of minutes, you are going to need a diaper. In order to find some reassurance that the miniature rope holder who weighs half as much as you, has done this before you quickly ask, **how long have you been doing this?** All summer she retorts.

It is simple she forcefully announces, as she clips you in with an interlocking carabineer, "**hold the rope, bounce off the wall and jump.**"

You suddenly think to yourself, "those are 3 words that should not be used in a sentence, bounce, wall and jump."

Then you ask the most important question, how do I keep from crashing?" **You don't, I do that!**

You mean, you with the small frame, big smile, ball cap turned backwards, you! **Yes, you trust me.**

And because of Jesus death on the cross and resurrection, when we jump into death one day, we can have confidence and courage that Christ will not let us crash.

*Everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. (John 3:15-NLT)*

Jesus trials, makes it possible for us not be trialed for our sin.

**Never forget, you trust power you cannot see, to do work you cannot accomplish.**

This happens every time you drive through stop lights. You trust power you cannot see, to do a work you cannot accomplish.

Jesus invites us to do the same with him. The only work that God wants you to do, **is to believe in the one God has sent.** And sent to earth God has, a sin bearer who will become a substitute for our sins.

Say it with me: **"God absorbed the cost of MY sin's damage through Jesus' trials, suffering and death on the cross."**

Let that sink in. Let that set you free. Let that encourage you.

We are continuing the trials of Jesus Christ who has been declared guilty of blasphemy by the Jews. The very people, he came to save, have turned on Jesus Christ.

What an unbelievable Savior we have who would endure such shame, abuse, and scorn to secure our salvation.

Got that? To die for each of us.

Who was really on trial that day? Not Jesus.

All of mankind played a part on that fateful day as wicked, wretched, and evil men crucified the Son of God. But how did we get to the execution of Jesus Christ? The Son of God. The second member of the trinity.

It is Jesus very presence and power that exposes those who stand on the side with Jesus, and those who stand on the side with Satan. Jesus said during his ministry years, to those listening,

*Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me. (Matthew 12:32-NLT)*

If you have never invited Jesus Christ to take control of your life, forgive your sins, you need to make this a front burner decision. If you are not a Christ follower, you can be one before you leave this service today.

One day you will stand before Almighty God, your Maker. On that day, you want to hear **well done, good and faithful servant**. Today is the day of salvation. Don't put it off for another minute.

Jesus died for your pile of sins and mine. He offers salvation to all who ask for forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Let me say it again:

**God absorbed the cost of MY sin's damage through Jesus' trials, suffering, and death on the cross.**

God's word shows us how this works. Not how we work, how God works for us. Two benefits of your faith in Christ, sins redeemed, and righteousness received. Tuck away that second point.

*<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21-NIV)*

As we study the trials of Jesus Christ, we do so to understand why Jesus died on a cross. **The cross is the worldwide emblem for Christianity.**

Drive by a church, there it is hanging suspended. Go into a church building, there it is placed strategically. People wear it. People kiss it. People use it for good luck.

The cross suspended on a chain, short or blinged, the cross makes a statement hanging around a neck. It states:

...this jewelry trumps all jewelry.

...this jewelry tells a story.

...this jewelry is about a man who died on a cross.

Jesus started his life with **no place to lay his head**; he ended his life with **no place to hide his shame**. Naked. Bleeding. Broken.

A man hanging on a cross only has one future. He can't look back. He is not coming down. His only outcome is death. And a painful death at that. A public death at that. A personal death at that.

How is it possible that such pain can bring such provision?

How is it possible that such torture can cause such terror?

How is it possible that such an act of love can still be utterly disliked? Despised. Discarded. Ignored. Rejected. Cursed.

**Don't spend eternity** with the kinds of souls that trialed Jesus Christ, who in the end will be condemned themselves to hell, forever!

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Jewish trial is just finishing up. It is Friday morning around 6am, and the Sanhedrin have just met, the meeting lasted less than a half hour. The Sanhedrin have formed their charges against Jesus Christ and are ready to hand Jesus over to the Romans for execution.

**Jesus faced three religious trials before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin, where He was found guilty of blasphemy.**

The Jews could not carry out capital punishment, so they had to ask the Romans to carry out the execution of Jesus based on treason. Based on declaring that Jesus was a king.

The city of Jerusalem is packed with 10's of thousands of pilgrims who have poured into town for a week of worship and service to God called the Passover.

Pilate who normally lived at the beach community of Caesarea...

had taken up residence in Jerusalem to keep the peace.

In trial #4 of Jesus Christ, we meet the Roman governor called Pontius Pilate.

In Latin it is Pontius Pilatus. Pilate is not only mentioned in the Bible he shows up in extracurricular literature by Josephus. So, Pilate is mentioned in the bible and outside of the Bible.

In 1961, archeological evidence was discovered to prove the existence of Pontius Pilate. You might say, archeology finally caught up with the Bible. In 1961, in Caesarea in Israel, a stone was discovered that is known as the Pilate stone. Or the Pilate steel.

**In 1961 a stone obelisk was discovered that had the name Pontius Pilate on it.** It is a 2 by 3-foot placard carved in stone from the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The inscription etched in stone is Latin. You can only read partial words. This is how it reads in Latin and then English.

TIBERIEUM	PONTIUS PILATUS	PRAEFECTUS IUDEAE
OF TIBERIUS	PONTIUS PILATE	PREFECT OF JUDEA

This is the first evidence of his existence, even though the Bible had been talking about Pilate for centuries. We know very little about Pilate.

**Who was Pontius Pilate? He was a brutal governor over Jerusalem.**

He became governor of Judea which is the middle province of Israel and included the city of Jerusalem. He was appointed governor in AD 26.

Pilate was a blood thirsty and cruel Roman leader who killed many Jews. He was appointed governor by Rome. Jesus even references how cruel and blood thirsty Pilate was. We can read about his reign in Luke 13.

*<sup>1</sup> Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. (Luke 13-NIV)*

This kind of brutal leadership made the Jews hate Pilate all the more. In Luke 13, we learn there were a group of Jews worshipping God at the Temple Mount and Pilate slaughtered them. He also desecrated their very blood by mixing it with sacrifices. How evil.

Because Pilate was so cruel and hated he had already been put on notice by Rome. Rome called him out! Caesar himself had said, “stop, being so cruel and killing Jews under your governorship.”

If you continue like this, you will be recalled to Rome and lose your command. This is the backdrop to the 4<sup>th</sup> trial where Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate.

In Luke 23, we see the charges that the Sanhedrin carry to Pilate. Jesus is accused of three crimes:

**1. We found this man to be subverting the nation** (he is a revolutionary).

Look at how his followers worship Jesus as he rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. They worship him like he is a king!

And just a few days ago, Jesus stormed into the temple and turned over the tables of the money changes, grabbed a whip, and started driving people out, announcing, this is my father’s house of worship, and you have turned into a den of thieves.

**2. We have found this man, forbidding people to give tribute to Caesar.** (He has excited the people, not to pay their taxes.)

**3. He has said that he himself is the Christ, a King.** He is the Messiah. (We don’t believe that he is a false Messiah.)

**When the religious trials were over, the Sanhedrin concentrated on three charges that portrayed Jesus of Nazareth as a threat to Rome and worthy of death.**

In a span of less than 24 hours, Jesus faced as many as 6 trials. (Human number, number of destructions for humanity-666.) Some of the trials were conducted by Jews and some by Romans.

In the end an exasperated governor pronounced the harshest verdict permitted under Roman law. If the Jews had executed Jesus, it would have been by stoning, the Jews lost the right to execute so they passed Jesus onto Rome, and their execution strategy was crucifixion.

**The Jews had been stripped of the right to practice capital punishment according to Jewish law.**

All of this was because God had foreordained that Jesus be executed for the sin of world by crucifixion.

In Psalm 22, the psalmist envisions many of the specific physiological effects medical doctors of today would associate with death by crucifixion—*asphyxiation and heart failure, along with extreme dehydration.*

The reference to each of these effects (in verses 14–15, 19) is clear in the gospel accounts, including his thirst:

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; . . . All my bones are on display.

**As I read once again,** the occasion of Jesus trials, one shocking outcome is seen over and over:

- (1) Jesus was defenseless,
- (2) Not a single witness stood and testified on Jesus' behalf,
- (3) No Pharisee, the leaders of God's people had the nerve to speak out against the injustice,
- (4) Jesus didn't defend himself; the Sanhedrin broke every procedural judicial law possible to trial Jesus.
- (5) And heaven was completely silent throughout the court proceedings.

The Jews wanted Jesus disposed of, but no one wanted to be responsible for his death. 10,000 pages of historical commentary can be read to this day about what share of the blame **falls on Rome**, the **Jews**, and even some put some responsibility on **God himself**.

In the end after much prodding Pilate was able to get a confession from Jesus while his hands were tied behind his back, eyes puffy from no sleep and after an all-night interrogation when Jesus simply responded to the question,

*“Are you the king of the Jews?”*

*So Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You have said it.” (Luke 23:3-NLT)*

The charges against Jesus, are designed to prove that Jesus is inciting his followers to rebel against Rome’s power. Against Rome’s rule. Against Rome’s authority.

Rebellion against Rome was just what the Sanhedrin wanted, they knew these charges would catch the attention of Pontius Pilate and he would be forced to respond.

The Jews wanted the Romans to see Jesus as a political threat leading a dangerous revolution and movement to overthrow Rome’s authority. In fact, this movement to overthrow Rome, was still present even after Jesus’ death. Look with me at a couple disciples on the road to Emmaus.

In the afternoon of that first Easter day, two traveling disciples walk with Jesus on the Road to Emmaus. They were given a two-hour sermon, and we can read in Luke, even after Jesus’ death they still were confused as to why Jesus came.

*<sup>20</sup> The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; <sup>21a</sup> but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. (Luke 24-NIV)*

The attempts to **control** Jesus, **shut him up** or **take him out**, had all failed.

His influence on the nation was at epic proportions, through the **healing of Lazarus**, this solidified his following declaring that as a miracle worker, nobody was like Jesus. **As a friend of sinners**, Jesus had that market cornered. He loved like nobody who had ever come along. Then he possessed **powers to defeat the power of darkness** through deliverance that was off the charts.

The only option left for the religious establishment was to convince Pilate that Jesus was a troublemaker, guilty of attempting to overthrow Rome and that he should be executed immediately.

The Jews had found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, which was punishable by death. According to history, the Jews had been stripped of the right to practice capital punishment, a few years earlier.

All a part of God's providence. Jesus said that in John's gospel, 12:32, At this moment the world is in crisis. Now Satan, the ruler of this world, will be thrown out.

*"And I, as I am lifted up from the earth, will attract everyone to me and gather them around me." (John 12:32-MSG)*

**He put it this way to show how he was going to be put to death.**

Jesus was speaking of his prophetic death where he would be lifted up on a cross. Jesus knew his death would be under Roman law and not Jewish law.

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

Neither one of these charges were 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 3<sup>rd</sup> ear, it is his wife. Who is also whispering to him. This part of the trial before Pilate and the Mrs. Pilate trying to stop the execution is found in Matt 27:19,

Now, this is the benefit of having 4 gospels, God inspired 4 different writers to record these critical trials of Jesus, from 4 different vantage points. And Matthew thought it essential to include Mrs. Pilate's concern for Jesus. So, let's read the text.

*19 While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that **innocent man**, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him." (Matthew 27-NIV)*

God gives Mrs. Pilate a dream about Jesus that he is just and righteous. She is tormented by this dream. Don't kill Jesus or else!

All the while, the crowd is being worked up by the Sanhedrin to drum up support to let a revolutionary go, whose name is Barabbas. Matthew provides a side bar to the story, and he zooms in on Pilate at the judge's seat, the seat of judgement, called the Bema seat and one of his legal assistant's hands Pilate a note from his wife.

In the note he reads some personal information. Mrs. Pilate tells her husband, stop the proceedings immediately, don't go another step, while I was sleeping last night God spoke to me and told me Jesus was innocent. The force of the dream was so strong, I understood that you are to have nothing to do with this righteous man.

**God is good at chess, and He was using Pontius Pilate as a pawn.**

Talk about a crossroads. Listen to your wife, or listen to a mob that is shouting, crucify Jesus and let Barabbas go free. In one ear Pilate is hearing a seething and satanic crowd who wants blood, and in the other ear his wife telling him let Jesus go free.

Pilate has no idea that God is at work using his corrupt conscience and his character flaw of wanting to please people. Let's say it this way:

**Pilate had a weakness for what other people thought; and that weakness caused him to shift the blame.**

What Pilate does not know, is he is falling right into the eternal plan of God. While he does not listen to his wife, that would have been a good move. The book of Acts tells us that what is happening at the trials and crucifixion of Jesus has been predetermined by God himself.

Jesus was crucified according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God. *This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. (Acts 2:23-NIV)*

As we will see, Pilate will not want to crucify Jesus. He will go to every length to not crucify Jesus. We will watch as Pilate on 3 separate occasions, during Jesus' trial before Pilate, will announce the innocence of Jesus.

**Three times during the trials before Pilate, he announced the innocence of Jesus (Luke 23:4, 13, 22)**

Let me read it right from my Bible. Look at Luke 23:4, 13, 22.

Please note that Jesus Christ was innocent. Jesus Christ was perfect. Jesus lived a sinless life in a hell like world.

### Altar Call

**Daniel: I will provide these comments as an altar call; I would give a call to receive Christ's righteousness after the video.**

Jesus is mocked. Jesus is ridiculed. Jesus is despised. Jesus is sentenced to death.

Yet it is Jesus' purity.

It is Jesus' innocence.

It is Jesus' holiness that dominates the scene of the trials.

In the midst of the cruel and evil activity of the Jewish and Roman trials it is the perfect lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world as John the Baptist describes him. Jewish sins and Roman and sins are forgiven beginning at the trials and continuing to the cross.

Against the ugly and satanic darkness of the Jewish and Roman trials it is the perfection of the Son of God. Luke records 3 other witnesses beside Pilate announcing Jesus' innocence.

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

Paul tells us Jesus knew no sin. The writer of Hebrews, Jesus was without sin. Peter tells us, Jesus committed no sin.

That is the testimony to Jesus holy perfection. This perfection started at the beginning of Jesus incarnate life, continuing to the very end on the cross.

You see Jesus' perfection on display all through his trials.

The harder the Jews and Romans work to make Jesus a blasphemer, insurrectionist and a rebel, the more accusations they trump up, and heap on Jesus, and even the more they beat, slap, spit, and abuse Jesus.... **The more majestic Jesus Christ is!**

**The glory of Christ is seen, in contrast to the ugly, sin of a darkened heart. My heart, your heart.**

**Please remember and take note: the righteousness of Jesus can be available to each of us.**

In Romans 6:4, we encounter a powerful declaration of our transformation in Christ:

*<sup>4</sup> We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:4-NIV)*

This scripture reveals the profound reality that through God's grace and mercy, we have been brought from death to life in Christ.

To be made alive in Christ means that we are no longer spiritually dead but have been given new life through His resurrection.

And with this resurrection comes new life in Christ- **we too may live a new life.** New thoughts. New habits. New motivations. New desires. New drives.

Anybody interested in that kind of life in Jesus?

Sins forgiven. Righteousness received.