

STORY

Jesus Before Pilate - Matthew 27:1-2, 11-31; Mark 15:1-20; Luke 23:1-25; John 18:28-19:16

TEACHER PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, when I hear again just how much Your Son suffered for me, I am ashamed of how little love I return to You and to my neighbor. Though I can never offer anything to You as payment for what You have done to save me, I desire now to show my love to You and to my neighbor by teaching Your little lambs the truths of this Bible lesson. Guide me, I pray, by Your Holy Spirit that the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart might be acceptable in Your sight, and that these precious souls might be led aright through me. I ask this in Jesus' saving name. Amen.

VOCABULARY

Governor - the Roman administrator in a conquered country, also called a praetor. The Roman government, in an attempt to pacify the people in a conquered land, most often allowed the original government structure to stand, but only as a relatively powerless figurehead. Thus Israel was allowed its own kings, councils and judges. The real power, however, rested with the Roman government, represented by the consuls and regional governors or praetors. The governor's function was most judicial.

Sedition - inciting others to resist or overthrow established authority. This was one of the crimes of which Barabbas was accused.

Praetorium - the official residence of the Roman Governor or Praetor.

OUTER AIM

Jesus was tried by the Roman governor and, though found to be innocent, was condemned.

INNER AIM

Jesus willingly suffered under Pontius Pilate on His way to the cross.

BACKGROUND

(*Rupprecht Bible History References Vol. 2, pp.376-384*)

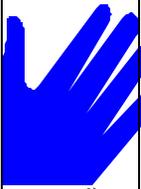
Jesus had been condemned to death by the Jewish Sanhedrin (Supreme Court) and was sent to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to carry out the sentence. The Jewish courts could sentence someone to death, but under Roman law they could not carry out such a sentence. Thus the Jews had to do business with the hated Roman government. Their hatred of Jesus was so great they would stoop to any level to see Him executed.

v. 1-2, 11-14

- ▶ Jesus appeared before Pilate from 6-9 a.m. on Friday morning.
- ▶ Jesus respectfully answered Pilate's questions when it was necessary, but he refused to defend himself against the charges of the Jews.
- ▶ This demonstrates again that Jesus went to his death willingly to save mankind.
- ▶ Pilate was obviously not used to such calm silence on the part of an accused man.
- ▶ He marveled that Jesus did not defend himself. How differently the believer and the unbeliever view physical death.

v. 15-18

- ▶ In what was no doubt another attempt at keeping a conquered people pacified, the Roman governor in Jerusalem released a prisoner at the request of the people during the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- ▶ Seeking to release Jesus, whom he believed to be innocent, Pilate probably chose the worst criminal in his prison as the only alternative to Jesus. The people picked him anyway.



v. 19-23

- ▶ Pilate's wife sent word to him that she had been warned in a dream about Jesus. Note the opposing forces at work here. Pilate's wife and his own conscience were opposed by the people and his own desire to appease them. God gave Pilate every opportunity to do the right thing. He chose expediency.
- ▶ Pilate probably asked his questions to the people so many times in the hope that they might change their minds, or at least to attempt some sort of compromise. So also Pilate offered to whip Jesus and then release Him. What strange justice Pilate sought to impose on the man he had declared to be righteous!
- ▶ The gospel of Luke records another feeble attempt by Pilate to avoid making the right decision. When he heard that Jesus might fall under Herod's jurisdiction (since He was a Galilean), he sent Jesus to Herod, the governor of Galilee who was also in Jerusalem at that time. This was the same Herod who had ordered John the Baptist beheaded.
- ▶ Herod was pleased to see Jesus, he wanted to see some miracle done by Jesus, but he was also pleased because he saw this as a statement by Pilate affirming Herod's rulership over all things pertaining to Galilee. Remember that Jesus, though born in Judea, had moved with His parents to Nazareth in Galilee shortly after Jesus was born.
- ▶ Herod returned Jesus to Pilate when Jesus refused to perform for him, but not before he had treated Jesus shamefully. From this point on Pilate and Herod, who had been enemies, became friends. No matter how bitterly unbelievers disagree, they unite in their opposition to Jesus.

v. 24-25

- ▶ Pilate knew that condemning an innocent man is wrong, yet he refused to render the correct verdict. Though he did what he knew to be wrong, like all unbelievers he did not want to feel guilt over his actions, or to suffer the consequences.
- ▶ Yet how foolish is Pilate's notion that by washing his hands before the people he would somehow absolve himself of this great evil.
- ▶ What ominous words the Jews utter here when they shouted: "His blood be on us and on our children!" Jesus knew the horrible consequences of such words, so also in great love He later prayed, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do."
- ▶ John records how the Jews were even ready to claim the hated Caesar as their king rather than Jesus: "The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar!'"(John 19:15) How desperate were these men and how great their hatred of Jesus to so prostrate themselves before the pagan Romans.

v. 26-31

- ▶ The true nature of Pilate and his men is revealed in these verses. These were barbaric men who enjoyed inflicting pain upon others.
- ▶ Though Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent, he did not simply condemn Him; he also gave his permission to his men to torture and mock Jesus before the actual crucifixion. Roman scourging was a supremely inhumane form of punishment. They did not use simple cords of leather in their whip. They imbedded sharp pieces of bone and metal into the cords to lay open the flesh of the one who was whipped. Backs were frequently laid open to the bone. Even strong men often died from this cruelty.
- ▶ The robe and the crown of thorns served as a mockery of Jesus' claim that He was a king. The thorns of the crown were likely pushed into Jesus' flesh when they put it on His head. They were certainly driven into His flesh when the soldiers struck him with the reed. This is how they treated the Son of God and Savior of the world.

STUDENT PRAYER

Dear Jesus, I'm sorry that my sins caused You so much pain. Thank You for willingly suffering all that You did to pay for those sins, especially Your crucifixion on the cross. Please help me now to tell everyone I know what You have done for all of us. Amen.

PRESENTATION

Once again it is recommended that the teacher use the combined account prepared for you in presenting this lesson. No single gospel account includes every important point.

PASSION WEEK BOX (p. 3)

Use these pictures to review what happens to Jesus during Passion Week. Have students color these pictures. Cut out along dark outer lines and fold on dotted lines to make a box. Glue tabs behind pictures. These may be hung up with fish line.

APPLICATIONS

1. Why did Pilate condemn Jesus to death? (Answer: He wanted to please the crowd) Think of some ways we might be tempted to deny Jesus and go along with the crowd.
2. Jesus was falsely accused even though He was perfect. We are sinners and deserve punishment. We are to learn from Jesus to accept persecution and lies from the unbelieving world patiently, without trying to retaliate or take vengeance.
3. Impress on your students the need to do the right thing in God's eyes, without looking first to the possible consequences of doing that right thing. Pilate got himself into trouble because he knew the right thing but failed to carry it out because he feared the consequences.

PASSAGES

These passages can be assigned as memory work or simply discussed in class as to how they fit the lesson.

Lower

Acts 5:29 - We ought to obey God rather than men.

1 John 4:19 - We love Him because He first loved us.

1 John 4:11 - Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Middle any of the above and...

Matthew 6:24 - No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Acts 8:33 - In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.

1 Peter 2:21 - For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.

Upper any of the above and...

Isaiah 53:5 - But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

1 Peter 2:23 - (Jesus), when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.

Hebrews 5:8-9 - Though (Jesus) was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him.

HYMN CHOICES

"Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (TLH #360:1,4 & 6)

"Chief of Sinners Though I Be" (TLH #342:1-2, 5)

"Jesus, Refuge of the Weary" (TLH #145:1,3)