

### The Political Trial of the Lord Jesus

#### Mark 15:1-20

Mark 15:1-20 – *“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. <sup>2</sup> Then Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?” He answered and said to him, “It is as you say.” <sup>3</sup> And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. <sup>4</sup> Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!” <sup>5</sup> But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.*

*<sup>6</sup> Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. <sup>7</sup> And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. <sup>8</sup> Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. <sup>9</sup> But Pilate answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” <sup>10</sup> For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. <sup>11</sup> But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. <sup>12</sup> Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” <sup>13</sup> So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!” <sup>14</sup> Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!” <sup>15</sup> So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.*

*<sup>16</sup> Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. <sup>17</sup> And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, <sup>18</sup> and began to salute Him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” <sup>19</sup> Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. <sup>20</sup> And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him.”*

#### Background Notes

In Mark 14 we had the religious trial of the Lord before the Sanhedrin, the governing body of the Jews. In Mark 15 we have the political trial of the Lord before Pilate, the Roman Governor, or Procurator. There were three phases in the political trial of our Lord: first, the appearance before Pilate; second, the appearance before Herod (only covered in the gospel of Luke); and finally, the second appearance before Pilate. The Jewish Sanhedrin did not have the authority to carry out the death penalty, so they had to bring Jesus to Pilate, the Roman authority.

The Sanhedrin had accused the Lord of blasphemy in their late night session. Now early in the morning they brought Jesus, bound, before Pilate and accused Him of treason. Notice that the charge had changed. The charge of blasphemy would get nowhere with the Roman authorities, and the Lord would have been released, so the Jewish leaders presented trumped up charges of treason to the Roman authorities.

In the parallel passage, Luke 23:2, we see that they invented three charges of treason: “*And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this fellow perverting the nation [1], and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar [2], and saying that He Himself is Christ, the King [3].”* Is it not ironic that they accused the Lord of plotting to do the very thing that they were hoping for! They were hoping for a leader to rise up and overthrow Rome - but they accused the Lord of treason. And isn't it ironic that they asked for the release of Barabbas, who was already convicted of treason! How blind sin is.

When Pilate asked the Lord, “*Are you the King of the Jews?*” (v2). Jesus answered, “*It is as you say*”—that is, yes, but it's a qualified yes. In the parallel passage in John 18, beginning with verse 34 we read that Jesus answered Pilate, “*Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?*” So what the Lord was saying in answer to Pilate was, “Yes, I am a King, but my kingdom is not a political kingdom. It's not a kingdom that's seeking to overthrow Rome.”

Pilate found no fault in Christ, but because he wanted to win the favor of the crowd, he delivered Jesus over to be crucified.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Jesus was the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

In that well-known chapter, Isaiah 53, we have a prophetic glimpse of the sufferings of the Messiah. Here in Mark 15 we see the fulfillment of some of that prophecy. In Isaiah 53:7 we read,

*“He was oppressed and He was afflicted,  
yet He opened not His mouth;  
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,  
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,  
So He opened not His mouth.”*

Now look at Mark 15:3-5: “*And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, “Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!” But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled.”*

Furthermore, the “Suffering Servant” of Isaiah 53 is brought out in some of the actual words that Mark used here. Verse 10 says that the chief priests handed him over because of envy - *delivered* Him up, handed Him over. Mark 15:15 says that Pilate *delivered* Jesus - he delivered Him up. It's interesting that it seems the Holy Spirit specifically chose that Mark should use this phrase, *handed over* or *delivered up*, because it was used three times in Isaiah 53.

When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into the Greek language in the 3rd century BC, the translators used this same Greek word - once in Isaiah 53:6 and twice in Isaiah 53:12. I'm reading Isaiah 53:6 from an English translation of

Isaiah 53 from the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. It's possible that Mark used this translation of the Old Testament.

Isaiah 53:6 - *"All we as sheep have gone astray. Every one has gone astray in his way. And the Lord gave Him up for our sins."* And that's the phrase that Mark used - delivered over or handed over or gave Him up for our sins. And Isaiah 53:12 from the Septuagint: *"Therefore He shall inherit many, and He shall divide the spoils of the mighty, because His soul was delivered to death [there's that same word again]; and He was numbered among the transgressors, and He bore the sins of many and was delivered because of their iniquities."* There's that word for the third time—*was delivered* because of their iniquities. Jesus was the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53. Notice further that it was **God** who delivered up the Lord Jesus to be crucified.

## 2. God delivered Jesus to be crucified for our sins.

Once again, Isaiah 53:6 - *"All we as sheep have gone astray. Every one has gone astray in his way. And **the Lord** gave Him up for our sins."* The Jewish leaders and Pilate definitely bear the responsibility for their sinful actions, yet God was in control. God had sovereignly decreed that the Lord Jesus would go to the cross for our sins. God delivered Jesus to be crucified for our sins. We were the lost sheep that had gone astray and turned, every one of us, to his own way. But the **Lord** delivered Him up for our sins.

Can you think of any love greater than this – that God should deliver up His beloved Son into wicked hands so that we could be saved? That He would allow our Lord to be scourged with Roman whips tipped with sharp metal or bone, tearing up His body? That He would allow our Lord to be shamefully treated by those Roman soldiers - having a purple robe put on Him, having a crown of thorns placed on His head, and being mocked as King? Can you think of any greater love than God allowing the Lord Jesus to be nailed to a Roman cross and crucified? Can you think of any love greater than this? Why did God do it? Isaiah 53 tells us: it was for us – it was for our sins. God delivered Jesus to be crucified for our sins.

## Practical Application

### What's our bottom line when making decisions?

When we make decisions, is our bottom line to please God, or is it to please ourselves? Ultimately, every decision that we make - big ones and small ones - all get down to those two options: Is it to please God, or is it to please self?

The bottom line for Pilate was to please himself. Pilate knew that the Lord was innocent. He knew that the Chief Priest had handed Jesus over "*because of envy*" (v10). Pilate was shrewd enough to see through all that. Pilate knew that he

could declare the Sanhedrin trial a mistrial, then have Jesus tried before a Roman court where He would certainly have been declared innocent of treason. But Pilate's bottom line was to please self. He wanted to win the favor of the people so his superiors in Rome would see he was a successful governor. So he made that terrible decision: he delivered the Lord over to be crucified.

What a contrast we see in the Lord Jesus. In making decisions, the Lord's "bottom line" was to please His heavenly Father. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord had prayed to the Father, *"If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but Your will be done."* There was the bottom line - to please His heavenly Father, and to do His will. No wonder the Lord was so calm throughout His trials. He didn't even try to defend Himself, because His bottom line was not to please Himself, but to please His heavenly Father.

What's our bottom line when we make decisions? A few days ago I was speaking with a young man who believes that God has called him to the mission field as a medical doctor. He's already a doctor, he's doing quite well in his career, but he believes that God is calling him to the serve Him in foreign missions. He's willing to sacrifice all that he has going for him now. In the eyes of the world he's very successful, but he is willing to give all that up. He's willing to sacrifice all his earthly success to obey God's call to be a missionary doctor. And his bottom line in this decision is not to please himself - but to please God!

What's our bottom line when we make decisions?