

BIBLE STORY: JESUS' TRIAL BEFORE PONTIUS PILATE

Matthew 27:1-26

Central Thoughts

- Pontius Pilate acted in God's place by declaring Jesus to be innocent and sentencing Him to death.
- Jesus is our innocent substitute who shed His blood and died in the place of all mankind.
- Only the blood of Jesus can forgive sins and save us from death and condemnation.
- Through the blood of Jesus who died in our place we become "sons of the Father" through faith in Him.

Discussion Questions

What happened to Judas after he realized that Jesus was condemned to death?

He was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."

What did Judas do when the chief priests and elders didn't care for Judas but sent him away to deal with his sin himself?

He hanged himself.

What was Judas trying to do when he committed suicide?

He was trying to save himself from his sin, but only Jesus can save us from our sins.

Why did the chief priests and elders of the people bring Jesus to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate?

They wanted Pontius Pilate to sentence Jesus to death so that Pilate would be blamed and Jesus' blood would be on his hands rather than their own. They envied Jesus because so many people believed in Him as their Messiah.

What did Pilate mean when he asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews?

He was asking Jesus if He were claiming to be the Messiah—the promised Savior.

Why does Jesus not defend Himself before Pilate?

Because He is the sacrificial Lamb of God, who willingly went to the cross for us. "As a lamb is silent before its shearers, so He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

What custom did the Roman governor often observe at the time of the feast of the Passover?

He would give a Jewish prisoner his freedom.

Who did the chief priests and elders demand to be released instead of Jesus?

Barabbas

What does the name Barabbas mean and who does he represent?

Barabbas means, "Son of the father"— he represents all sinners who are set free because of what Jesus, the true "Son of the Father" had done in our place. We become "sons of the Father" on account of Jesus dying in our place.

What did Pilate's wife dream about?

That Jesus was a "just" or "righteous" man

What did Pilate ask the chief priests, elders of the people, and the multitudes who insisted upon Jesus' crucifixion?

"Why, what evil has He done?"

What happened when Pilate tried to release Jesus?

A tumult (uproar or riot) was about to take place. The people cried out and screamed to Pilate, "Let Him be crucified."

Who do all of these people represent who cried out for Jesus crucifixion?

All mankind

What did Pilate do and proclaim when he realized that he could not prevent Jesus' crucifixion?

He took water and washed his hands before the multitude and said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." (This is similar to what the high priests and elders said to Judas after he brought the money back to them.)

How did the people respond to Pilate and what do their words really mean, even if they didn't realize it?

They told Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children." Though they did not realize what they were saying, His blood must cover all of us or we cannot be forgiven and set free from our sins.

Meditation on the Bible Story

St. Matthew's account of Jesus' trial before Pontius Pilate emphasizes that it is the shedding of Jesus' blood alone that results in the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. Instead of directing Judas to God's mercy and forgiveness in the Savior, the chief priests and elders of the people turned Judas away from the true Savior and he fell into despair. Even though Judas was remorseful for having betrayed innocent blood, he could not save himself and take away his sins by committing suicide. As the civil authority, Pontius Pilate acted in God's place when he declared Jesus' innocence and then sentenced Him to death for us. We confess this in the Apostles' Creed when we say that Jesus "was crucified under Pontius Pilate." Pilate truly was "innocent of the blood of this just Person" because Jesus' suffering and death was the Father's will for our salvation and Jesus willingly laid down His life in death for the whole world. When the people cried out to Pilate, "His blood be on us and on our children," they unwittingly declared the great truth that it is only through Jesus' blood that we have forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation. He bore our sins and the sins of the whole world as the unblemished Lamb of God, and by His suffering and death in our place our sins are taken away and we are declared righteous for Jesus' sake.

Prayer on the Bible Story

Almighty God, everlasting Father, Your only Son, our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified under Pontius Pilate according to loving will to save the world. By the shedding of His blood in our place, we have the promise of the forgiveness of all our sins and the gift of everlasting life. We give thanks to You for Jesus' suffering and death on our behalf. Teach us always to believe in the blood of Jesus for our forgiveness and to take comfort only in what Jesus has done for us upon the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



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