

**St. Matthew AME Church
Bible Study
Wednesday, March 24, 2010**

St. Matthew 27:11-26

I. Who was Pilate?

The greatest puzzle of the Roman trial is the contrast between what we know of Pilate's character and his conduct at the trial of Jesus. Pilate was not a noble person.

- A. He came from Spain and rose to his position as governor of Judea through his marriage to Claudia Procula, a granddaughter of Augustus, Emperor of Rome. She was a moral disgrace.
- B. Pilate was the sixth governor of Judea. His predecessors were sensitive to Jewish religious practices and beliefs but Pilate had no such sensitivity and even tried to provoke them.
- C. Yet when it came to the trial of Jesus no one could have conducted it with greater care or integrity. He recognized that Jesus was innocent, and used every means he could to get him acquitted and discharged.
 - 1. Jewish religious leaders were not prepared for Jesus trial. When Pilate ask them what charges they have against Jesus all they could say is, "if He were not a criminal, we would not have handed Him over to you." (John 18:29-30)
 - 2. When they were forced to produce a charge, they dragged up everything they could think of hoping something would stick. They said, "we have found this man subverting our nation." (Luke 23:2)
 - 3. The first two of these charges were untrue but the third was true and important. It was the charge that Jesus claimed to be a king. Pilate asked Jesus, "are you the king of the Jews?" (Matt. 27:11)
 - 4. Jesus admitted that indeed He was a king, but Pilate knew that this was a religious matter and that Jesus was innocent of treason or rebellion. So he tried to acquit Him.

II. Why did Pilate try so hard to acquit Jesus?

- A. Perhaps it was because Pilate was impressed with Jesus. He marveled at His calm demeanor and that He did not try to defend Himself against His accusers. (Matt. 27:13-14)
- B. Another reason is because of Pilate's wife. She sent him a message while he was sitting on his seat, "don't have anything to do with that innocent man....." (Matt. 27:19)
- C. Pilate knew that the real reason behind the Jewish leader's hatred of Jesus was envy (Matt. 27:18) and spoke the verdict, "I find no fault in Him." He said this three times. (John 18:38, 19:4,6)
- D. Instead of doing what he should have done, releasing Jesus (as a later Roman commander did with Paul when his life was threatened by this same judicial body Acts 21:12-24). Instead Pilate launched a pattern of irregular proceedings that eventually led to Jesus execution.
 - 1. He sent Jesus to Herod when he learned that Jesus was from Galilee which was under Herod's jurisdiction (Luke 23:6-12)
 - 2. Offering to punish Him without an execution (Luke 23:16, 22)

3. Asking the people to choose between Jesus and Barabbas as one to be released during Passover(Matt. 27:20-26)
 4. Having Jesus beaten and bloodied to stir the people's pity(John 19:1-5)
All these measures failed.
- E. The people wanted a king they could understand, an earthly king offering earthly advantages, rather than a king from heaven who offered truth, righteousness, and eternal salvation.
- a. Pilate asked them, "do you want me to release the king of the Jews?" The people shot back, "no, not Him! Give us Barabbas." (John 18:40)
- III. Pilate was trapped by his own scheming. He had miscalculated. He was caught but he did not want to be defeated by the Jews who he obviously despised.
- A. He asked them, "what shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?"
Crucify Him" they demanded.
 - B. The situation was getting out of hand and an "uproar was starting." (Matt. 27:24) It was the thing that Pilate had wanted to avoid at all cost. But the Jews had threatened to report Pilate to Caesar saying, "if you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar", they said. (John 19:12)
 - C. Although Pilate feared the hatred of the religious leaders and the fickleness of the crowds, more than anything Pilate feared the Emperor and would not risk his disfavor.
 - D. Pilate washed his hands before the crowd and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood." (Matthew 27:24)
- IV. Innocent is what Pilate was not.
- A. All the water in the world could not wash the guilt of Jesus blood from Pilate's hands.
 - B. Pilate's guilt sends Jesus to the cross to shed His blood and save our souls.
 - C. It ask and answers the question at the same time. "What can wash away my sins?"
"Nothing but the blood of Jesus."