

Valley Bible Church
Sermon Notes for March 4, 2018

Mark 15:1-15
Jesus Before Pilate

I. Pilate interrogates Christ (15:1-5)

A. Approval (15:1)

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.

- “And as soon as it was morning”
 - This must be a reference to the sunrise, which would be when the day began
 - “The Roman workday began at dawn”¹
- “The chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council.”
 - These must have been the same people who tried Jesus overnight
 - This appears to be a reference to the Sanhedrin (14:53, 55)
 - What does “consultation” mean?
 - They simply reiterated the charges that were made overnight, but now in a legal fashion since it was daytime
 - This was a quick formal trial to justify their next decision to take Jesus to Pilate
 - Also, they doctored the title, “King of the Jews” since it paralleled Jewish Messiah while presenting Rome with a rebel threat
- “And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.”
 - After the “consultation” they moved Jesus to Pilate
 - This appears to verify their decision to have Jesus killed for His “blasphemy”
 - A decision, which only the Romans had authority to give
 - Pilate
 - Roman prefect/governor of Judea from A.D. 26–36
 - Official residence was at Caesarea, but he was in Jerusalem for Passover
 - “As the emperor Tiberius’ prefect in the region, Pilate was responsible for resolving both civil and criminal cases, and he had authority to carry out capital punishments.”²

¹ D. A. Carson, “The Gospels and Acts,” in NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2054.

² John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Mk 15:1.

- Ruthless
 - “Josephus describes an incident when demonstrations broke out because Pilate used money from the temple treasury to build an aqueduct for Jerusalem. Pilate sent soldiers to secretly mingle with the protestors and then suddenly attack, killing many and scattering the crowd.”³
 - “Luke 13:1 refers to a similar episode near the Temple Mount where Pilate massacred some Galileans, ‘mixing their blood with their sacrifices.’”⁴
- Opportunistic and Pragmatic
 - Backed down from Caesarean Jews regarding “army standards bearing the images of Roman emperors” (idols in Jewish eyes).⁵
 - Backed down regarding Jewish protests over his decision to put golden shields in Herod’s palace in Jerusalem.⁶

B. Asking (15:2)

2 And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” And he answered him, “You have said so.”

- “And Pilate asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’”
 - Pilate obviously had some initial interaction with the Sanhedrin not mentioned in the text
 - The Sanhedrin told Pilate that Jesus was the so-called “King of the Jews”
 - Luke 23:2 “And they began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.’”
 - The “king” part stuck out to Pilate
- “And he answered him, ‘You have said so.’”
 - Jesus consented to the title of “King of the Jews”
 - Of course this was actually true
 - Could be a simultaneous admission that He is the King of the Jews while rejecting that phrase as a self-designation⁷
 - Pilate obviously was not convinced Jesus was actually guilty and needed more information

³ Strauss, 674.

⁴ Strauss, 674.

⁵ Strauss, 674.

⁶ Strauss, 674.

⁷ Decker, 236.

C. Accusations (15:3-4)

3 And the chief priests accused him of many things. 4 And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you."

- "And the chief priests accused him of many things."
 - The chief priests added more accusations to the question that Pilate had asked
 - Luke 23:2 "And they began to accuse him, saying, 'We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.'"
 - "In the larger context of Mark's gospel, we can think of other possible charges: violating the law of Moses (3:2, 6) and encouraging others to do so (2:24), disrupting and defiling temple worship (11:18, 28), threatening the temple's destruction (13:2; 15:38), and undermining religious authority (12:1-12)."⁸

- "And Pilate again asked him, 'Have you no answer to make?'"
 - Pilate was shocked by Jesus' tranquil and calm demeanor in such a situation
- "See how many charges they bring against you."
 - Pilate's shock from Jesus' calm is due to the many charges that the chief priests were leveling against Jesus

D. Amazement (15:5)

5 But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

- "But Jesus made no further answer,"
 - Jesus did not bow to discuss and engage on their level
 - Jesus remained silent as He had done earlier
 - Mark 14:61 Silence before the Sanhedrin overnight
 - Isaiah 53:7 "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth."
- "So that Pilate was amazed."
 - In what sense was Pilate amazed?
 - Shocked in a positive way
 - "At the contrast between the intensity of Jesus' accusers and Jesus' refusal to defend himself, especially when facing crucifixion."⁹

⁸ Strauss, 675-76.

⁹ D. A. Carson, "The Gospels and Acts," in NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2054.

- “Pilate was amazed at Jesus’ silence, since accused prisoners predictably and vehemently denied the charges against them.”¹⁰
- “In the present context, however, Pilate seems baffled that Jesus would refuse to defend himself, despite his apparent innocence. Like the disciples, Pilate is oblivious that Jesus has chosen this path for himself and that it is God’s purpose to ‘deliver him over’ to suffering and death as a ransom for sins (9:31; 10:33, 45).”¹¹
- “Some scholars draw a connection to Isa 52:15, where the Servant is the object of amazement by the nations,”¹²
 - Isaiah 52:15 “so shall he sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths because of him, for that which has not been told them they see, and that which they have not heard they understand.”
- Pilate is amazed that Jesus would willingly accept the outcome of this trial, even if it meant crucifixion
- This is the amazing and shocking element of the gospel
 - God becomes man, not just to wow everyone
 - God becomes man, to die for them
 - Jesus had accepted this outcome and path of suffering
 - He would ultimately suffer to the point of death on a cross
- This determined mindset from Jesus amazed Pilate
 - We see the same response from the lost today
 - They are intrigued by some element of Jesus or Christianity
 - His love, kindness and compassion
 - His wise teaching
 - His humble demeanor
 - His supernatural powers
 - His heroic sacrifice
 - Perhaps, even you are still at this place of intrigue
- Let’s be clear, the gospel of Jesus Christ does not call people to intellectual intrigue
 - The gospel of Jesus Christ is not for the purpose of one’s fascination, contemplation, intrigue and wonder
 - The gospel of Jesus Christ demands belief, devotion, repentance and life-change

¹⁰ John MacArthur Jr., ed., The MacArthur Study Bible, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1499.

¹¹ Strauss, 676.

¹² Strauss, 676.

II. Pilate negotiates with the crowd (15:6-15)

A. Pilate's custom (15:6-8)

6 Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. 7 And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. 8 And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them.

- “Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked.”
 - This is an annual custom that Mark helps the reader to understand
 - The Jews requested Pilate to do for them what he normally did for them in releasing a prisoner (v. 8)
 - Potentially an annual Passover tradition
 - For Pilate, this was probably a nice way to keep peace between the Jews and Roman rulers
 - “Ancient secular sources indicate that Roman governors occasionally granted amnesty at the request of their subjects. Assuming that the people would ask for their king (whom they had so acknowledged earlier in the week; 11:1–10) to be freed, Pilate undoubtedly saw this annual custom as the way out of his dilemma regarding Jesus.”¹³
 - What kind of prisoners had been released in the past?
 - Rebels who had committed murder in the insurrection (v. 7)
- “And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection,”
 - Who are these rebels?
 - They are revolutionaries or freedom fighters who had actually done violence in their protest against Rome
 - These rebels are at least identified as those “who had committed murder”
 - These rebels appear to be linked to “the insurrection”
 - When did this insurrection take place and what were the details?
 - “Mark seems to assume this rebellion was a well-known incident, though we cannot identify it more specifically. There were many opposition movements and violent demonstrations against the Romans in first-century Palestine.”¹⁴
- “There was a man called Barabbas.”
 - Barabbas is named as one of these murderers from the insurrection

¹³ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1499.

¹⁴ Strauss, 677.

- In some ways, he was a hero of the Jewish nationalistic movement among the people
- “And the crowd came up”
 - Who is in this crowd?
 - Jewish people (Judean?) who were intrigued by Jesus during Passover week but easily swayed by the chief priests
- “And began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them.”
 - The crowd asked for Pilate to fulfill his usual custom of releasing a prisoner
 - Regular deal and agreement between Romans and Jews in Judea

B. The crowd considered (15:9-10)

9 And he answered them, saying, “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” 10 For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.

- “And he answered them, saying, ‘Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?’”
 - Pilate offers Jesus as the one to be released
 - Pilate saw this as a way for him to help the innocent Jesus
- “For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up.”
 - Pilate realized that this was primarily the work of the chief priests
 - It was the Sanhedrin that tried Jesus and delivered Him to Pilate
 - Pilate also saw and suspected a motivation of “envy” that drove the chief priests to deliver Jesus up
 - This envy was probably because Jesus was stealing authority and popularity from the Sanhedrin (especially that week at Passover)
 - Pilate appears to be accurate with his assessment of the situation
 - Pilate thought the people needed to have a chance to voice their desire rather than just the angry Jewish leaders
 - Matthew 27:18-19 “For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. 19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, ‘Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.’”
 - Pilate thought he was doing Jesus and the people a favor all the while keeping his job in tact and secure

C. The chief priests’ control (15:11)

11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.

- “But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead.”
 - There were Jewish people present at this point, not just Jewish leaders
 - These Jews present were victims of the heavy influence of the chief priests
 - The chief priests moved the crowd to demand Barabbas rather than Jesus
 - Was this crowd primarily Judean Jews that were more inclined to listen to the chief priests?
 - “It seems surprising that the priestly aristocracy would favor the release of Barabbas, since insurrectionists and social bandits posed a threat to their own authority as well as that of the Romans. But they obviously consider Jesus a greater immediate threat because of his influence with the people.”¹⁵

D. The crowd’s craving (15:12-13)

12 And Pilate again said to them, “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?” 13 And they cried out again, “Crucify him.”

- “And Pilate again said to them, ‘Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?’”
 - The chief priests were obviously successful in moving the crowd to desire Barabbas, not Jesus
 - Pilate asked the next obvious question about what he should do with Jesus
 - Pilate appears to care the most about what the people think
 - Probably because his job is on the line
- “And they cried out again, ‘Crucify him.’”
 - They cried out “again” in the way that “they shouted back” to Pilate
 - NASB, NET - “They shouted *back*, ‘Crucify Him!’”
 - The outcome of crucifixion must have been agreed upon among the Jews because of the certain “blasphemy” of Jesus
 - “As ‘king of the Jews’ (vv. 12, 18) and therefore a rival to Roman authority, a guilty verdict can have only one outcome.”¹⁶

E. Pilate’s confusion (15:14)

¹⁵ Strauss, 678-79.

¹⁶ D. A. Carson, “The Gospels and Acts,” in NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2055.

14 And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.”

- “And Pilate said to them, ‘Why? What evil has he done?’”
 - Pilate was certainly confused or uncertain at this point
 - Although he had heard several accusations from the chief priests, he still had a hard time understanding why Jesus was guilty
- “But they shouted all the more, ‘Crucify him.’”
 - Despite Pilate’s attempts to reason with the crowd, the crowd had made up their mind
 - They only increased their voice and desire to have Jesus crucified
 - “The question goes unanswered. The crowd is uninterested in debate and shouts all the louder for Jesus’ death.”¹⁷
 - “Crucifixion was the cruelest form of punishment practiced by the Romans. Roman citizens could not normally undergo it. It was reserved for the worst crimes, like treason and evasion of due process in a capital case. The Roman historian Cicero called it ‘a cruel and disgusting penalty’ (Against Verres 2.5.63–66 §§163–70); Josephus (J. W. 7.6.4 [7.203]) called it the worst of deaths.”¹⁸

F. Pilate’s caving (15:15)

15 So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

- “So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas,”
 - Pilate’s goal was to satisfy the crowd of Jews
 - This would be job security for Pilate
 - Pilate ended up releasing Barabbas
 - We still only know Barabbas to be a murderer in the insurrection
- Here we find the limit of Pilate’s commitment to Jesus
 - Pilate was amazed by Jesus and desired to help Him
 - However, when it demanded more than he was willing to give, he succumbed to the pressure of the people
- This is a portrait of how the lost still respond to Jesus
 - The world is exposed to the life, and ministry of Jesus
 - Initial response is one of intrigue
 - The world then encounters real life, forcing them to make a decision about Jesus
 - Press forward and persevere to know and follow Christ?

¹⁷ Strauss, 679.

¹⁸ Biblical Studies Press, The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

- Our mission is to represent the good news of Christ to the world, yet many will respond with initial intrigue to the Person of Jesus
- Scripture also informs us that like Pilate many will not move past intrigue into commitment unto Christ
- What are we to do in such circumstances?
 - We must press forward in continual prayer and faithful living of a life devoted to Christ
 - God has the power to open eyes and cause the lost to be born again
 - He will accomplish His perfect plan in His perfect time
 - God allowed Pilate's fear of man to bring about Christ's death on the cross for our salvation and forgiveness of sins