

Day Fifteen

Jesus: Real, Relevant, Raw and Radical!

Cross Examination

Luke 23:1-16(NLT) Then the entire council took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. 2 They began to state their case: “This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.” 3 So Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied, “You have said it.” 4 Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, “I find nothing wrong with this man!” 5 Then they became insistent. “But he is causing riots by his teaching wherever he goes—all over Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem!” 6 “Oh, is he a Galilean?” Pilate asked. 7 When they said that he was, Pilate sent him to Herod Antipas, because Galilee was under Herod’s jurisdiction, and Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. 8 Herod was delighted at the opportunity to see Jesus, because he had heard about him and had been hoping for a long time to see him perform a miracle. 9 He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer. 10 Meanwhile, the leading priests and the teachers of religious law stood there shouting their accusations. 11 Then Herod and his soldiers began mocking and ridiculing Jesus. Finally, they put a royal robe on him and sent him back to Pilate. 12 (Herod and Pilate, who had been enemies before, became friends that day.)

The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead. However, they did not have the authority to put anybody to death. That morbid privilege was left in the hands of the Roman authority which, in this instance, was Pontius Pilate. Pilate governed the areas of Judea, Samaria and the area South as far as the Dead Sea to Gaza. He had absolute authority over the non-Roman citizens of the province. Non-Christian authors (Tacitus, Philo, and Flavius Josephus) mention, not only his name, but also several details about him personally, as well as his way of governing. His character comes in question. It speaks of unlimited harshness, pride, violence, greed, insults, continual executions without trial, and endless and unbearable cruelty. His insensitive policies brought Pilate into conflict with the Jews. **Luke 13:1(NLT)** “About this time Jesus was informed that Pilate had murdered some people from Galilee as they were offering sacrifices at the Temple.”

Pilate had no problem in using his power and forcibly enforcing his authority. The Jews were very much aware of this because they were the ones continually on the other end of his abuse. So, in their minds, this should be relatively easy to get the verdict they want. Yet, we see something very peculiar take place. In all three trials that Jesus appeared before the Jewish leaders, the verdict was quick and decisive. Jesus was found guilty and sentenced to death. The fact that Pilate struggled with making a decision should be a cause of inspection for us. This aggressive, compassionless, ruthless ruler, who had no sense of being just or fair, struggled with Jesus. This maniacal murderer, who at a whim, would put people to death, could not make up his

mind about Jesus. He was gripped with fear. He tried to pass the buck by sending Jesus to Herod. Herod, who was cut from the same cloth as Pilate. Herod, having his own cruel fun, returned the favor and sent Jesus right back to Pilate. What is going on here? While the religious leaders are standing outside shouting for blood, Pilate and Herod are playing hot potato with Jesus. These two leaders, that were always at odds, suddenly found friendship with each other.

Luke 23:13-15(NLT) *“Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, ¹⁴and he announced his verdict. ‘You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. **I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent.** ¹⁵**Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty.’”***

Why the struggle? Who really is appearing before who? It is not so much that Jesus appeared before Pilate and Herod, just the opposite is true; they were appearing before Jesus. When you come face to face with Love and Truth personified, what kind of verdict could you render? How can you find guilt in the Guiltless? Jesus holds up under all scrutiny and examination. The difference between the Jewish leaders and Pilate, is that the Jewish leaders allowed their hatred to determine their judgment; whereas, Pilate allowed the evidence to speak for itself. **Knowing that Jesus uttered very little, we know that it was not the words of Jesus that persuaded Pilate, but the Person of Jesus.**

John 18:33-40(NLT) *“Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. **‘Are you the king of the Jews?’** he asked him. ³⁴ Jesus replied, *‘Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?’* ³⁵ *‘Am I a Jew?’* Pilate retorted. *‘Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?’* ³⁶ **Jesus answered, ‘My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.’”***

The power of this moment cannot be emphasized enough. God, standing before man, so that man can judge for himself whether this is the King or not. God, allowing man to bring about a judgment, so that man can escape the ultimate judgment. The guilty judging the innocent for the sake of the guilty. The guilty (the people) screaming for the guilty (Barabbas) to be released and the innocent (Jesus) to be punished. The only way for the guilty to be freed is for the innocent to take their place. So, Pilate’s question, **“Are you the King of the Jews?”** Can only be answered by saying, not only is He the King of the Jews, but He is the King of the Romans as well. He is the King of the unshakable kingdom. “Pilate, you are a governor of an earthly kingdom, which

unbeknownst to you will collapse.” We know today that the kingdom Pilate was part of is as extinct as the Dodo bird.

If you were a betting man, your money would not have been on Jesus. Yet, it was Pilate who was part of a failing kingdom. Jesus is the King of the kingdom that never will end!

Hebrews 12:27-29(NLT) *“This means that all of creation will be shaken and removed, so that only unshakable things will remain. 28 Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe.”* In this kingdom, the King died for the subjects. In this kingdom, it is the King that takes the punishment. In this kingdom, love and truth reign. This kingdom cannot be shaken, but everything else will be shaken. Can you feel the shaking? Rest assured, if you are part of God’s kingdom, you are part of that which is unshakable! No matter how much the world is being shaken, your King is at the helm of His kingdom and it is unshakable...

Prayer:

- **Thank the Lord that He is your King; worship Him because of who He is!**
- **Ask the Lord to help you cultivate a heart of gratitude for all Jesus has done.**
- **Jesus suffered incredible ridicule yet never opened up His mouth. Ask the Lord to give you His love for those who might be ridiculing your faith.**
- **Pray for a renewed sense of purpose and direction, so that we would not miss what God wants to do through us.**