

# Jesus before Pilate

(Matthew 27:1-26)

Characters

Narrator

Pilate

Jesus

Priest

Crowd

Props

Judgement seat

Bowl of water

Narr: The Chief Priests and Teachers of the Law had Jesus arrested as he prayed in the garden. They marched him to the High Priest's house where he was questioned. Even though they could find nothing that he was guilty of, they decided that he must be put to death. So they bound Jesus and took him to Pilate's palace in Jerusalem. Jesus was brought before Pilate.

Pilate: What is the charge?

Priest: This man is causing unrest across Jerusalem. His teaching is false and he is a liar. He claims to be a King and must be put to death before he causes a riot.

Pilate: A King? King of what?

Priest: King of the Jews.

Pilate: King of the Jews? Is this true? Are you the King of the Jews?

Jesus: Yes, it is as you say.

Priest: See! See what a liar he is! He is a false teacher! He is trying to start a revolt! He is a danger to us all!!

Pilate: Do you hear what they are saying about you? Do you have anything to say in reply? What is your defence?

Narr: But Jesus remained silent; he said nothing, and Pilate was amazed.

Pilate: I find no basis for a charge against this man. He's done nothing wrong, nothing to warrant his death.

Priest: He claims to be King! He opposes Caesar! You are no friend of Caesar's if you let him go. He deserves to die.

Pilate: (sits down)

Narr: Pilate sat down on the judgement seat to think. But then a message was brought to him from his wife: 'Have nothing to do with this Jesus,' it said, 'I have suffered all night in a dream because of him. Have nothing to do with him.' Pilate looked at Jesus. He didn't really care if he lived or died, that didn't worry him at all. No, there was only one person that Pilate cared about and that was Pilate. If he let Jesus go reports might get back to Cesar that he had let a traitor free. But If he signed his death warrant his wife would not be happy and that could be just as bad! No, he couldn't make this decision. Somehow he would have to get someone else to make it for him. Then suddenly he remembered the Passover tradition.

Pilate: (Jumping up) Fetch Barabbas!

Narr: Barabbas was a murderer, a notorious criminal. The tradition that Pilate had remembered was that each Passover the people could choose one prisoner to be released. His plan was to offer them Barabbas or Jesus because he was sure they would choose Jesus over a brutal murderer.

Pilate: As is the Passover custom you can choose one prisoner to be released. Do you choose this Jesus, the King of the Jews, or the murderer Barabbas?

Narr: But the priests had been at work in the crowd.

Priest: Choose Barabbas! Jesus must be put to death! If you shout for Jesus you will pay!

Narr: So when Pilate asked his question, all the people shouted:

Crowd: Barabbas! Give us Barabbas!

Pilate: What shall I do then with this Jesus who is called Christ?

Crowd: Crucify him! Crucify him!

Pilate: But tell me what crime he has committed?

Crowd: Crucify him! Crucify him! Crucify him!

Narr: Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere and that there was likely to be a riot. So he took some water and washed his hands, making sure that all could see him, and said:

Pilate: I am innocent of this man's blood! It is your responsibility!

Narr: Then he signed Jesus death warrant.

Pilate: Have your way then! Take him away! Flog him, and crucify him!

Narr: And he watched as Jesus was mocked and scourged and taken away to be crucified.

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