

Our **GUIDE**

for little ones

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IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Lesson 48

Jesus' Trial By Pilate

John 18:28-38

The Sanhedrin had worked through the night. They had arrested Jesus of Nazareth — after midnight. They had given Him a speedy trial. They had judged Him to be guilty of blasphemy against God and therefore worthy of death. Now there is only one thing left to do. They must bring Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, and try to persuade him that Jesus deserves to die.

What do you think, will that be easy? Will Pilate be quick to agree with them, and then right away command his soldiers to take Jesus away to be killed? Maybe he will — *if the Sanhedrin has a strong case against Jesus*, if they can accuse Him of *real crimes*, of *bad crimes*, of crimes against *Rome*.

But these rulers of the Jews know

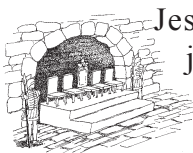
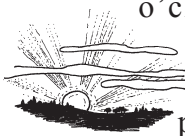
that their case against Jesus is *weak*. Pilate will ask to hear their accusations, their charges, against Jesus. What can they say? Will Pilate be satisfied with a charge of *blasphemy*? Will Pilate be willing to put Jesus to death because He claimed to be the *Son of God*? No, the Jews were smart enough to know that blasphemy was no crime in a *Roman court*. Pilate would surely say, “Don’t waste my time with things that have to do only with your *religion!*”

So ... what can they do? They must convince Pilate, somehow, that Jesus is a threat to, a danger to, *Rome*.

Note to Parents: These papers are intended for the younger Sunday School students — grade 3 and below. Vocabulary and concepts are such that children in this age group, even the 3rd graders, will profit most if the stories are read *to* them, not *by* them. Most lessons have two stories, for two sittings if that proves to be beneficial. Our hope is that parents will find these lessons to be useful tools in the teaching of Bible stories and Bible truths to their children in the “off” season.

How can they do that? Well, Jesus claimed to be Christ, a *King*. Surely Pilate will want to know about *that*, because anybody who tries to make himself *king* in Judea would be rebelling against *Rome*. Trouble is, it wasn't *true*. Jesus had never, ever, showed any interest at all in a kingdom that was *earthly*. The Jews *knew* that. But they do not care about *truth*. Or about *justice*. Jesus must *die* — that's all that mattered to them. Let's see, now, what they do.

It's early in the day — about 6 o'clock in the morning. The rulers of the Jews are in a hurry. They want, as soon as possible, to get Jesus out of their hands and into the hands of the Romans, so that, by the time the people of Jerusalem are up and around, it will be too late for them to do anything to save



Jesus. So here they are, at the judgment hall, at the crack of dawn.

Pilate is an early riser. Soon he comes out to the Jews. He sees that there is a prisoner here — a prisoner brought, not by two or three temple police, but by nearly a *hundred men*. Not just temple police, but the *whole Sanhedrin* is at his door. And at 6:00 in the morning! Pilate doesn't like the looks of this at all.

“What accusation bring ye against this man?” Pilate asks.

Now listen closely to the Jews' answer. “If he were not a malefactor (that is, a criminal), we would not have

delivered him up unto thee.”

In other words, “Trust us. We're all here. The whole Sanhedrin. All of the rulers of the Jews. We all agree. This man is guilty. Just take our word for it.”

Pilate must have guessed immediately what is going on here. This man, whoever He is, has gotten the rulers of the Jews really riled. They want Him *killed*. But they have a flimsy case. So they are hoping that Pilate will simply pass judgment without examining the charges.

Pilate, however, is not going to let them get away with that. He answers, “Okay, if this is a matter of *your* law, not *Roman* law, then go ahead and judge Him. Don't bring Him to *my* court.”

Now what to do. The rulers of the Jews see that their first trick has failed. Pilate is forcing them to bring charges. So they explain to Pilate that Roman law does not allow them to put anyone to death. And this man deserves to die. Why? Listen to them: “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.”

All lies. *Deliberate* lies. Never had Jesus tried to stir up the people against the Roman government. Never had He forbidden to give tribute to Caesar. And when the people had tried to *make* Him king, Jesus had *refused*. All of the charges were *false*.

Did Pilate believe any of it? Most likely not. The rulers of the Jews are

standing here pretending to be *loyal to Caesar*. That's a joke. Everybody knows that they are *not*. So they *must be lying*. However, the charges against Jesus are serious, and Pilate must check them out. So he brings Jesus into the judgment hall for questioning.

Pilate doesn't ask Jesus about taxes, or about stirring up the people. No, he gets right to the point. He asks, "Art thou the king of the Jews?"

That was the right question. But how will Jesus answer it? Will He answer No, because He is not the kind of king that Pilate is thinking about, an *earthly* king, a king of this *world*, a king like *Herod*, or like *Caesar*? Or will He say Yes, because He really *is* King, King of a *heavenly* kingdom, a kingdom *not* of this world?

You can see, can't you, that Jesus must give more than a simple Yes or No answer. Jesus will make sure that Pilate knows the truth — because Pilate must pass *judgment* on *Jesus*. No earthly judge in the history of the world has had to make a judgment more *important*, more *serious*, than this judgment by Pilate. Standing before Pilate in the judgment hall is the *Son of God*, as a *weak, helpless man*. What will Pilate now say? Innocent? Or guilty? Will he set Jesus free? Or will he decide that Jesus must *die*? To make this judgment, Pilate must know the *truth*.

Jesus therefore tells Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would

my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews."

That really settled it. Just one sentence. A man who could be captured by a small band of soldiers and temple police could surely not be dangerous to *Caesar* and to the armies of *Rome*. Pilate has, right here, all the proof he needs that the Jews are *lying*. This man is obviously a threat to *nobody*.

And yet.... And yet.... Jesus had said something about a *kingdom*. *His* kingdom. "*My* kingdom is not of this world." Pilate looks at Jesus, standing there tied with a rope, and asks, "Art thou a *king* then?"

Now Jesus can answer with a straight-forward Yes. And also this: "To this end I was born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the *truth*."

Can you imagine how strange those words of Jesus sounded in the ears of Pilate. The only kingdom Pilate understood was *earthly*. The only majesty he knew was a *scepter*. The only power he knew was a *sword*. And here Jesus stands, a *king* (He says), armed not with a *sword*, but with ... *truth*. Who can believe *this*?

"Every one that is of the truth," Jesus said, "heareth my voice." Ah, yes, that makes the difference. To "hear" Jesus' voice, one must be "of the truth." The *Spirit of truth* must have come to live in his heart. Of such is the kingdom of heaven. The rulers of the Jews were not of it. Neither was Pilate. "What is

truth?!” Pilate asks Jesus, and then, without waiting for, or wanting, an answer, he went back out again to the Jews who were waiting for his verdict, his judgment.

“I find in him,” Pilate declared, “no fault at all.” Let Jesus think what He wants about *truth*. Without a *sword* ... He’s *harmless*.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. Early in the morning, the Jews brought Jesus to the Roman governor. What was his name?
2. The Jews had condemned Jesus to death because He said He was the Son of God. Did the Jews, then, right away tell Pilate that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy?
3. The Jews told Pilate that Jesus claimed to be Christ, a king. What kind of king were they talking about?
4. What did Jesus tell Pilate about His kingdom?
5. What verdict, or judgment, did Pilate announce to the Jews?

Jesus Before Herod

Luke 23:5-11

“I find in him no fault at all.”

That was Pilate’s judgment, his verdict. After giving that verdict, he should have said, “Case closed!” and then ordered the Jews away from the judgment hall and let Jesus go free. But he didn’t.

Why not? It was because Pilate could tell, right from the beginning, how

bitterly the Jews hated this man Jesus. He could see it on their faces. He could hear it in their voices. If Pilate sets this man free, they will be furious. And they will do everything they can to make life miserable for Pilate.

Not surprisingly, Pilate’s verdict of innocence was greeted by a howl of dismay from the rulers of the Jews. And they shouted more charges — anything they could think of to persuade Pilate that Jesus was indeed a criminal and that He was a danger to Rome. Pilate let them do it.

And, all the while, Pilate was watching Jesus. Jesus just stood there. Outrageous charges were being made against Him by the wicked rulers of the Jews. And Jesus said not a word to defend Himself. Pilate had never before seen anything like this. Here are the Jews, demanding that Jesus be put to *death*, and Jesus does not argue, He does not say, “They’re lying! I didn’t do that!” He stands there as if He is *deaf*. Finally Pilate said to Him, “Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?”

Jesus didn’t answer that question either. And Pilate, the Bible tells us, “marveled greatly.” He didn’t know the prophecy of Isaiah. The rulers of the Jews *did*. But they didn’t even *think* about it. “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,” the prophet said of the promised Messiah, “yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, ... so he openeth not his mouth.”

Pilate is beginning to squirm. He feels trapped. He knows Jesus is innocent. And, in fact, Pilate is beginning to be *afraid* of this man who is so different from any other man that Pilate has ever known. How can he ever condemn this man to *death*? But there are also the shouts of the angry mob, the rulers of the Jews — and Pilate wonders how he will ever dare set Jesus *free*.

Then Pilate hears from the shouting of the Jews that Jesus is from *Galilee*. Ah, thinks Pilate, maybe I can get *rid* of this case. *Herod* is king of Galilee. And he's even now in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. I'll turn the whole thing over to *him*. *He* can judge this case. So Pilate sends Jesus and His accusers off to King Herod.

Herod was glad about that. He had heard a lot about this man, especially about all of His amazing *miracles*. And now here is Jesus right in Herod's court. Maybe He'll do a miracle or two for the king.

Herod began, therefore, to ask Jesus many questions — most likely about those *miracles*, because that's all that he was interested in. But Jesus answered him nothing.

The rulers of the Jews, however, were there to get from Herod a *verdict*. And they wanted it to be a verdict of *guilty*. So they began loudly to accuse Jesus of many things, hoping to persuade Herod that Jesus deserved to die.

Did Herod believe any of that? Not any more than Pilate did. Both of these judges saw Jesus as being quite harmless. And, unlike Pilate, Herod was

not at all afraid of these rulers of the Jews. Herod was king in *Galilee*. He didn't let himself be bothered by all of the angry charges of the Jews of Jerusalem. Herod was, however, annoyed by *Jesus*. When Herod asks *questions*, he expects to hear *answers*. Who does Jesus think He is, that He doesn't have to answer *Herod*? Does He think He's some kind of a *king*? Well, Herod will show Him what he thinks of *that*. He puts a fancy robe on Jesus, and then he and his men *mock* Jesus. That's what Herod thinks of Jesus' "kingship." It's a *joke*.



And then Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.

How Well Did You Listen?

1. When Pilate announced his verdict to the Jews, what did they do?
2. How did Jesus answer all of the lying accusations of the Jews? What Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled by Jesus' silence?
3. Why did Pilate not set Jesus free after he announced his verdict of innocence? Why was Pilate also afraid of *Jesus*?
4. To whom did Pilate therefore send Jesus? Why was Herod glad to see Him?
5. Why was Herod annoyed by Jesus? What did Herod and his men do to Jesus?

How Well Do You Understand?

1. Why did the Jews go to Pilate's judgment hall so early in the morning?
2. When Pilate asked the Jews to state their accusation against Jesus, they first said simply, "If He were not a malefactor we

wouldn't have brought Him here." Do you understand why they gave that answer?

3. After this, the Jews accused Jesus of "forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." Do you remember what Jesus had *really* taught about giving tribute to Caesar?

4. The Jews also accused Jesus of claiming to be Christ, a king. Can you explain why *even this* was a lie?

5. How did Jesus show to Pilate, in just one sentence, that He was not a danger to Rome?

6. If Pilate were a *just* judge, what would he have done as soon as he declared that Jesus is innocent?

7. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod?

8. Herod was an Edomite. How did this descendant of Esau show what he thought of the *real King of the Jews*?

Memory Verse

Isaiah 53:7a "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth."

Before Pilate,
Jesus was not armed with a sword.
What was He armed with?
Follow the correct path to find the answer.

