

JESUS' TRIAL AND CRUCIFIXION

Matthew 27:11-26, Mark 15:1-15, Luke 23:1-25, John 18:28-40; Matthew 27:27-37, Mark 15:16-25, Luke 23:26-34, John 19:16-27

Early in the morning the Chief Priests and elders bound Jesus and took Him to Pilate, the Roman Governor.

'Are you the King of the Jews?' Pilate demanded. 'You have said so,' Jesus replied.

The Chief Priests and elders made accusations that Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews and was leading a rebellion. Jesus remained quiet and this amazed Pilate.

'Don't you hear the accusations they are bringing against you?' Pilate asked Jesus. Then he announced to the Chief Priests and crowd, 'I find no basis for a charge against this man.'

But they insisted, 'He stirs up the people all over Judea by His teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.'

On hearing that Jesus was from Galilee, the region ruled by Herod Antipas, Pilate, knowing that Herod was in Jerusalem for the feast, sent Jesus to be questioned by him.

Herod was pleased to meet Jesus as he had heard a lot about Him and demanded that Jesus perform a miracle. Jesus did not respond. The Chief Priests and elders stood there making accusations against Jesus. Jesus kept quiet.

Then Herod mockingly dressed Jesus in a royal robe and put a crown of thorns on His head. Herod's soldiers ridiculed and hit Jesus.

Herod then sent Jesus back to Pilate. That day Pilate and Herod became friends; previously they had been enemies.

Pilate summoned Jesus and asked. 'Are you the King of the Jews?' Jesus replied, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest.' 'So you are a King then?' said Pilate. 'The reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth,' Jesus answered.

Pilate addressed the Chief Priests and rulers of the people. 'I do not find this man guilty of the charges you bring against Him. Herod has done the same and found no basis for your accusations. I am going to punish Him and then release Him.'

But the Chief Priests and elders incited the crowd to shout, 'Crucify Him! Crucify Him!'

While this was going on Pilate's wife sent him a message. 'Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal in a dream because of Him.' It was the custom for a prisoner to be released at the Passover feast. So Pilate asked the crowd. 'Who do you want released, Barabbas or Jesus?' Barabbas had been imprisoned for leading a rebellion and for murder. 'Barabbas,' they shouted back.

'What shall I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?' Pilate asked. 'Crucify Him!' came the reply.

Pilate could see the crowd was getting out of control. He washed his hands in front of them and declared, 'I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility.' The crowd replied, 'His blood be on us and our children.'

Pilate released Barabbas and handed over Jesus to be flogged and crucified.

Roman soldiers made Jesus carry His own cross. Two criminals sentenced to death by crucifixion were forced to do the same. They were led out of the city to be crucified. A large crowd followed, including women who mourned and wailed for Jesus.

Jesus was weak from His beatings and fell. The soldiers grabbed a man in the crowd, Simon from Cyrene in North Africa ... and forced him to carry the cross.

They led Jesus out of the city to a place called Golgotha (meaning the place of a skull.) Jesus and the two criminals were nailed to their crosses. Jesus was in the middle with a criminal either side. It was 9 o'clock in the morning.

The soldiers divided Jesus' clothes among them. The inner garment, woven in one piece without seams, was too valuable to divide so they cast lots for it. It fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 22:18, 'They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.'

Those who passed by hurled insults at Jesus, shaking their heads and saying, 'You said you would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days. Come down from the cross and save yourself.'

The Chief Priests and elders mocked, 'He saved others but He cannot save Himself.' The soldiers also joined in the mocking.

One of the criminals joined in with those insulting Jesus. 'Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other criminal rebuked him. 'Don't you fear God? We are getting our just punishment but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he turned and said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth. Today you will be with me in paradise.'

At noon, darkness came over the land until three in the afternoon.

At around three in the afternoon, Jesus called out in a loud voice, 'My God, my God why have you forsaken me?' Then Jesus exclaimed, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' He breathed His last breath.

The Roman centurion in charge of the crucifixion, who had been watching Jesus die, suddenly praised God and said, 'Surely this was the Son of God.'

As evening approached and the next day was the Sabbath, Pilate gave permission for the legs of those being crucified to be broken so they would quickly die. The legs of the two criminals either side of Jesus were broken. However, as Jesus was already dead, a soldier thrust a spear into His side and blood drained out. It fulfilled the prophecies that, 'Not one of His bones will be broken' (Psalm 34:10), and 'they will look at the one they have pierced' (Zechariah 12:10).

A good and upright man, named Joseph from Aramethea, who was a member of the Jewish Council, went to Pilate and asked permission to bury Jesus. Pilate agreed.

Joseph took the body of Jesus down, wrapped it in linen cloth and took it to an empty tomb cut in the rock.

A large stone was rolled over the entrance. The Pharisees, aware that Jesus had said, 'After three days I will rise again,' asked Pilate to post a guard on the tomb.

The tomb was sealed and a guard set on it.

(Script courtesy of *FreeBibleImages.org*)