

# Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,  
day after day, and that the people of God  
were filled with joy!

## Friday – Luke 23:6-16 – Jesus before Herod.

Herod got nowhere with his line of questioning, and Jesus remained silent. So, the chief priests and the scribes, men of the Sanhedrin who have not let Jesus out of their sight since they had him seized in the Mount of Olives, step in and launch another vicious attack on Him. There's going to be no let up as far as they are concerned. Jesus will be put to death. That is the only thing they have in their mind, and they will go around every palace, court and council in Jerusalem until they get what they want. But Herod doesn't give them what they crave. Why should he? There's nothing in it for him. He's under no obligation to the Sanhedrin; he knows how much the people in and around Galilee like Jesus, and he'll gain more by simply returning the compliment to Pilate by sending Jesus back to him. So, joined by his guard, filled with contempt for Jesus, together they mock him. Once again, the Lord Jesus, already battered, bruised, and bloodied, is pilloried, laughed at, scorned, and mocked. Dressing Jesus in a 'brilliant' white robe, a garment reserved for the great and illustrious, Herod is making a crude statement of utter ridicule and despising as he sends Jesus back to Pilate.

Now we read something remarkable: "And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that day." These two men, who formerly had nothing but 'enmity' for each other and viewed each other as bitter rivals and enemies, are now brought together through this back and forth with Jesus, not merely to have a level of mutual respect for the other, but to become friends. Again, you couldn't make this up.

Pilate now calls in the whole Sanhedrin. As the judge they brought Jesus to, he will give his formal verdict. His tone and language are judicial. He states that his investigation into Jesus has revealed nothing commensurate with the charges they levelled against him. He then proceeds to say that Herod also had found nothing that would warrant Jesus' death. So, having summed up the case and verified his position with the corroboration of the decision Herod had taken, Pilate declares his verdict, that he would punish and release Jesus. On what grounds he was going to punish him, Pilate doesn't say, but clearly, it's an attempt to appease the men standing in front of him. But it is clear. Jesus is innocent of all charges brought against Him; He will be released, and there it will end. Of course, we know it doesn't, but we will get into that, God willing, next week.

Q1. Herod seems to think this is all a bit of fun, but how do the members of the Sanhedrin see it?

Q2. What does Herod do?

Q3. What does Pilate do when Jesus comes back to him?

#### **Thursday – Luke 23:6-16 – Jesus before Herod.**

Having delivered his verdict – ‘this man is innocent’- Pilate is bombarded with assertions stating otherwise by the Sanhedrin. Through it all, Jesus remains silent, something which Matthew tells us greatly amazed Pilate (Matthew 27:14). Jesus knew what was being played out. Still, He didn’t see the need to give credence to the Sanhedrin’s protestations by saying anything. His silence leaves the responsibility where it belongs, with Pilate, the judge. Sometimes in life, it is better to say nothing.

Seeing his attempt to draw the Jews into agreeing with him fail, that the man under charge was innocent, Pilate now latches onto the point raised by the Jews that Jesus was possibly a Galilean. It seems innocuous to you and me, but he saw it as his way out of what was quickly becoming a quagmire for him. If Jesus was a Galilean, Pilate could turn him over to the rule in Galilee. The response comes back favourably for Pilate, and even though he has already declared his verdict, Pilate, the representative of the premier legal system in the world, absolves himself of his responsibility, and sends Jesus to Herod without a thought or moment’s hesitation.

This man, Herod, is Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great. He had inherited and, by Roman grant, was permitted to rule in the regions of Galilee and Perea. Mark refers to him in his gospel as King Herod, which was a title given to Herod by the people. He is the Herod who had taken his brother Philip’s wife, Herodias, and beheaded John the Baptist when he had called him out for doing so; the Herod who thought Jesus was John the Baptist, returned from the dead; the man Jesus referred to as ‘that fox’ (Luke 13:32). The fact that he was in Jerusalem for the Passover was part of the political practice of being seen in the right place at the right time, but on this occasion, it was convenient for and suited Pilate.

Herod receives Jesus with open arms. It isn’t every day that the Roman governor delegates a crucial process to the provincial Jewish leader. Besides, Herod had wanted to meet Jesus for some time so that he could be entertained by one of Jesus’ miracles. Now that he has Jesus in his presence, Herod forgoes the task of setting up a trial, the purpose for which Jesus had been sent to him and proceeds to ask Jesus several questions; but Jesus doesn’t respond. He stands there silently, knowing Herod to be a vacuous and utterly shallow individual; there is no way Jesus will perform for him. Had Herod gotten on with the trial, there is no reason to think that Jesus would not have engaged with him, but not while the stage show was in full swing.

Q1. What piece of information does Pilate latch onto, and what does he do?

Q2. Is Herod pleased to see Jesus, and why is that the case?

Q3. How does Jesus respond and why?

#### **Monday – Luke 23:1-5 (John 18:29-32) – Jesus before Pilate.**

Luke tells us that the ‘whole company’ brought Jesus to Pilate. This means that the entire Sanhedrin, presumably along with a detachment of the Levitical Temple police, were involved. But why such a large contingent of men? Evidently, a number of them wanted to be involved in the process, but there was also the fear possibly of how the ordinary people might react, even if it was still early in the morning. So, a policy of safety in numbers was adopted. There was also the issue of showing to Pilate that they were serious about what they were going to request; that is, it wasn’t just a few members of the Sanhedrin that were involved in wanting this man to be put to death; they were all in on it, to a man.

So, as John tells us, Jesus is brought to Pilate at the Praetorium. Praetorium means the seat of the garrison commander or the governor; a building Jews would not enter for fear of defiling themselves, especially during this significant Passover season. To understand what now unfolds, it is necessary also to read John 18:29-32. In that passage, Pilate goes out to meet the assembled body, not out of courtesy to Jewish scruples but because it was the Roman practice to conduct court proceedings in public. So, Pilate takes his place on the judge’s chair and begins a Roman trial as normal. First, he asks the prosecutors to declare the accusation they are bringing against Jesus, assuming they will have at least one charge to lay against Jesus. But the members of the Sanhedrin don’t want Pilate to do what he has the responsibility to do; they want him to dispense with the court proceedings and advance to the sentencing stage, because they have already tried Jesus and found him guilty. Pilate should just be taking their word that this man must be sentenced. But Pilate is having none of it. He refuses to play the role of executor just because the Sanhedrin wants him to. Of course, he knows that they have probably tried Jesus already, even though to have done so would have been illegal according to their laws, but he gives them the opportunity to state clearly what they have done. They, however, continue to avoid giving straight answers to his questions, and speak to the level of sentence they are legally permitted to declare under Roman rule. In doing so, they reveal what they are after—the death penalty for Jesus. In so doing, John tells us that they merely fulfil the words that Jesus has previously spoken. Nothing that is being said or done here is beyond the will of God the Father.

Q1. Who brings Jesus to Pilate?

Q2. What do the men of the Sanhedrin want Pilate to do?

Q3. How does Pilate respond?

## Tuesday – Luke 23:1-5 – Jesus before Pilate.

Jesus has been brought before Pilate by the Sanhedrin following the initial interaction, which we find in John 18:29-32 and considered yesterday; they now offer Pilate not a pronouncement of accusation on Jesus as he has asked for, but a statement of what they, as a court, have already established about Jesus. Why do they do this? Because they don't want Pilate to try Jesus. They know that the 'witnesses' they have wouldn't stand a chance in front of Pilate, and they're not going to risk that. So, they simply state the crimes Jesus is guilty of committing as they see them. The fact that neither of the crimes cited was even mentioned in the two trials held by the Sanhedrin is evidently irrelevant. They are effectively saying, trust us; we have tried this man, based on witness testimony, found him guilty, and want you to proceed to sentence him to death, because we can't under Roman law. The facts are that the court was convened at an illegal time, the witnesses lied, and the crimes Jesus was found guilty of are not the crimes they now accuse him of, as they seek the death penalty for him. To put it in plain simple language, the highest Jewish Court, in its entirety, is lying to the Roman governor to get an innocent man put to death. You couldn't make it up, but that is what happened.

Jesus is charged with three crimes that demand the death penalty. The first is being an agitator in the nation. In their political maneuvering, they use a word for 'nation', which the Jews seldom use. Usually, they would have used a word for 'nation' which conveyed a sense of them being God's chosen covenant people, but here they use other nations when speaking of themselves. So, they are trying their best not to offend Pilate by either doing or saying anything that might come across as being arrogant, in case it might jeopardize their flawed case against Jesus.

The second and third charges are presented together, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he is the Christ, a king. Again, both are lies and aim to present Jesus as a political activist, agitator, and troublemaker. Not paying taxes in the Roman system was, as with any government, not good, and telling other people not to do it, well, was beyond unacceptable. Asserting oneself to be a 'King' in opposition to the Roman empire, again, was not something they would respond to well. But when that is added to the word Christ or Messiah, that was even more threatening, because the person claiming this is setting himself up as a king of the Jews, which was more than a significant issue for the Romans.

- Q1. What do the Sanhedrin want Pilate to do?
- Q2. What is the first crime they accuse Jesus of?
- Q3. What are the second and third crimes they accuse Him of?

## Wednesday – Luke 23:1-5 (John 18:33-38) – Jesus before Pilate.

Jesus is still before Pilate. John tells us that Pilate got up from his judgement chair and went inside the Praetorium building, giving the order that Jesus be brought inside as goes. Pilate's attempts to get to the bottom of what is going on have got nowhere with the Sanhedrin, so he decides to interrogate Jesus himself. The idea that Jesus was some highly influential political activist Pilate had never heard of is implausible. Pilate would have known of Jesus, no one could have attracted the crowds Jesus did without the Roman governor being made aware of it, but the charges that the Jews have just brought against Jesus seem farfetched to Pilate. The way he even asks Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?", speaks of the incredulity he is taking the Sanhedrin's charges with. As he looks at Jesus, bruised, bloodied, and bedraggled, he thinks, 'how can this man think he is the king of the Jews?' More than that, how can these Jewish leaders believe that? There may also be a degree of mockery in the question. The Romans despised the Jews, and the idea that this man could purport to be their king was laughable.

We read in John 18 how Jesus responds to Pilate's question by engaging in a dialogue with Pilate. It's a conversation in which Jesus first seeks to draw Pilate out to see just how engaged he wants to be in finding out the truth about who the Messiah, king of the Jews, might be. And then, he proceeds to instruct Pilate on what His kingdom is not and what it is, before deducing the resulting implications. Namely, it is a spiritual kingdom, not of this world. To Pilate's direct question, "So, are you a king?", Jesus responds by putting it back to him in terms of what he has said, and then announces that His purpose in coming into the world is to bear witness to the truth. This solicits the phenomenal question from Pilate, "What is truth?" Throughout the exchange, Jesus leads the conversation, setting the terms of what is being discussed and leading it to the conclusion He wants it to reach. The Sanhedrin has predicated all they have said and done on lies, and now Jesus has Pilate asking the question, 'What is truth?'. In bringing Pilate to this point, Jesus knows that Pilate is not seeking the truth, but is asserting that he believes there can be no absolute truth in the way religious advocates believe it.

Pilate goes back outside and announces that he has found Jesus innocent; acquitting Him makes no difference to the ordinarily conscientious law-bidding Sanhedrin and their police; they are not there to hear anything else but the day and time of Jesus' death.

- Q1. What does Pilate decide to do?
- Q2. What happens during the conversation Jesus has with Pilate?
- Q3. What verdict does Pilate bring, and how does the Sanhedrin respond?