

• *The Jewish leaders take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman procurator*

• *He recognises that Jesus is no threat to his political career*

• *The ultimate question: what will you do with Jesus?*

Pilate

1. *Pilate finds himself unexpectedly challenged with a decision he has to make about Jesus*

2. *He tries to make a right decision*

3. *He finds himself coming under pressure*

4. *He tries to pass the responsibility to someone else*

Herod

• *A vain and wicked man guilty of many sins and crimes*

Let us try to get a picture of what is happening at this stage of Jesus' sufferings. Jesus is now taken to Pilate^{□1}. Matthew records Judas' suicide^{□2}. Jesus is tried before Pilate^{□3}. Then He is sent to Herod^{□4}. Pontius Pilate was the sixth of the various 'procurators' ruling Judea on behalf of the Roman empire. He did not normally stay in Jerusalem but was there to keep order during the Passover season. Now the Jewish leaders come to Pilate with a whole string of accusations against Jesus. They accuse Jesus of being a dangerous enemy of the state, of refusing to pay taxes, of assuming the title 'king'^{□5}. Pilate takes Jesus into the palace of Herod where he is staying (as John's Gospel tells us) and enquires more closely into Jesus' claims. 'Are you the King of the Jews?' he asks^{□6}. Jesus says 'Yes', but Pilate knows that this is not a political claim and is no threat to his political career. 'I find no fault in this man,' he says^{□7}.

Pilate faces the question that everyone has to face: what will you do with Jesus? What will you do when Jesus is standing before you and you are interviewing Him (or is He interviewing you?) and you have to make a decision about Him. What will you do when you have a strong conviction that something you are involved in is not right and yet you are in the presence of Jesus. What happened to Pontius Pilate literally and physically often happens to us in our spiritual experience.

1. **Pilate finds himself unexpectedly challenged with a decision he has to make about Jesus.** He did not normally spend time in Jerusalem; his headquarters were at Caesarea. He hated the Jews and often was quite violent towards them. He spent his time in the theatres, at the Roman baths, watching athletics and games, and enjoying the 'high society' that was part of his life as a leading military figure. Suddenly he is brought face to face with Jesus and he has to make a decision. What will he do with Jesus?

2. **He tries to make a right decision** ^{□1}. 'I find no fault in him,' he says to the Jewish leaders. He wants to do the right thing if he can.

3. **He finds himself coming under pressure**^{□1}. The Jewish leaders will not easily give up. Pilate finds himself pressurised to do something he knows is unjust.

4. **He tries to pass the responsibility to someone else**^{□1}. Jesus is a Galilean, and Herod is the ruler of Galilee. Now Pilate thinks he has a way out. He will pass the responsibility to Herod Antipas. But it can be surprisingly difficult to push aside a challenge which comes from the presence of Jesus.

So Herod also finds himself face to face with Jesus. Herod's story is totally different. This Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great whom we know from Matthew 2, was a vain and wicked man, who was guilty of many sins and crimes^{□1}. He had beheaded John the Baptist^{□2} when John criticised him for marrying the wife of his half-brother Philip. Now Herod is also confronted with Jesus. Pilate had never wanted to see Jesus; Herod had often wanted to see Him.

□1 Matthew 27:1-2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28

□2 Matthew 27:3-10

□3 Matthew 27:11-

14; Mark 15:2-5;

Luke 23:2-5; John

18:29-38

□4 Luke 23:6-12

□5 23:1-2

□6 23:3

□7 23:4

□1 23:4

□1 23:5

□1 23:6-12

• *But Jesus would not speak to him*

1. *Herod is interested in the supernatural*

2. *He is interested in preaching and religious discussion*

3. *But God's voice had ceased to come to him*

4. *Herod confirms his own rejection*

Pilate and Herod

• *Became friends through their common rejection of Jesus despite hearing God's voice*

• *The question for us is: what will we do with Jesus when we hear His voice?*

Jesus has a lot to say to Pilate, but nothing to say to Herod. There is one thing worse than being confronted with a decision, and that is not being confronted with a decision because Jesus will not speak to you.

1. **Herod is interested in the supernatural.** He has heard about Jesus' miracles and is interested in seeing miracles. Who isn't? But being interested in miracles is not the same as being interested in being reconciled to God.

2. **He is interested in preaching and religious discussion.** We remember how he liked to hear the preaching of John the Baptist.

3. **But God's voice had ceased to come to him.** Why should God speak to us if we will not heed what He has already said? God had often spoken to Herod Antipas. John the Baptist had told Herod all that he needed to hear. But Herod would never listen to John. So why should Jesus say anything more to him? Those who will not hear God's voice will find that He ceases to speak.

4. **Herod confirms his own rejection.** He makes his rejection sure by intensifying his hatred of God. He has plenty of interest in religion, but no interest in changing his ways.

The two men become friends. Jesus either brings people together because they love Him or He brings them together because they reject Him. People only become friends if they have something in common. What Pilate and Herod had in common was that they both found a way to reject Jesus. When God's judgement day comes people will not be able to plead that they had no chance to hear God's voice. All sorts of people are confronted with Jesus. Some are like Pilate. They are totally ignorant, but Jesus is willing speak to them. The question is: what will they do when Jesus tell them about the kind of King that He is?

Others have heard God's voice in the past, but judgement day has already come for them. There is no point in talking to them any further. They go on living in this world but God has finished with them. The very presence of Jesus could do little for Pilate and nothing for Herod. The question is: what will we do with Jesus when we hear His voice?

¹ see Mark 8:15; Luke 3:19; Luke 13:31-32
² Matthew 14:1-12



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