

- *Few people willing to see the truth, stand by it and act on it*

- *Jesus scourged*

### 1. Pilate displays great insincerity

- *None of Jesus' accusers had any charge against Him that could stand up to examination*

- *Declared Jesus innocent but had no strength of character to withstand the pressure of the Jewish leaders*

- *Attempts a compromise*

- *He does not regard it as greatly wicked to punish an innocent man*

### 2. The Jewish leaders show great insincerity

- *Persuade the common people*

- *Pilate's further attempts to avoid deciding against Jesus*

Almost everyone in the story of Jesus' trial and condemnation is guilty of extreme insincerity. There are few people who are willing to see the truth, stand by the truth and act on the truth.

Jesus is brought back to Pilate again. Pilate declares Him innocent<sup>□1</sup> and offers to release Jesus or Barabbas<sup>□2</sup>. He scourges Him<sup>□3</sup> and finally releases Him to be crucified<sup>□4</sup>.

1. **Pilate displays great insincerity.** He tells the Jewish authorities that he could find no reason to accuse Him of any crime<sup>□1</sup>. Most of the observers of Jesus at this time mention His purity. Pilate emphasises Jesus' innocence. Herod was hostile but had no charge to make against Him<sup>□2</sup>. Peter who witnessed the early stages of these events said Jesus 'committed no sin'<sup>□3</sup>. The soldier who observed Jesus said, 'This man was innocent'<sup>□4</sup>. Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins had to be a 'lamb without blemish', like most of the sacrifices of the Mosaic law. One sinner could not die for another sinner. Only a sinless Saviour could help us. God let Jesus' enemies thoroughly examine Him. None of them had any charge against Jesus that could stand up to examination.

But it all goes to show Pilate's great insincerity. Despite his knowledge that Jesus is innocent of any crime, Pilate shows his weakness and injustice. Perhaps more than anyone in the history of the world, Pilate is famous for making an unjust decision. The decision came upon him suddenly. He wanted to make a right decision, but had no strength of character to withstand the pressure of the Jewish leaders. He had tried to pass the responsibility to someone else, but the attempt had not succeeded. Now he shows his unwillingness to sincerely do the work that he is given authority to do. Pilate tries compromise. 'I will punish him and release him'<sup>□1</sup>. He has just pronounced that Jesus is innocent yet still says, 'I will punish him'. He is already going against what he knows is right. He knows Jesus is innocent but Pilate is under pressure to have Him murdered within the framework of the law! Yet he would rather not go all the way with his wickedness. He will compromise if he can, and punish Jesus. He hopes to please the Jews and does not regard it as greatly wicked to punish an innocent man.

2. **The Jewish leaders show great insincerity.** With one voice the people demand that Jesus should be crucified. The word 'they' in 23:18 means the people generally. Luke's Gospel was not the first account of these events, and he assumes that we know about Barabbas and the way the Jewish leaders persuaded the common people to demand Jesus' death. (Verse 17 is omitted by the best manuscripts. It was not in the original text but was added by early scribes because of Matthew 27:15 and Mark 15:6.)

Pilate thinks he has another way of avoiding a decision against Jesus. He can pronounce Jesus guilty as the Jews wish but then set Him free in accordance with the custom of releasing a prisoner at Passover time. But that does not please the Jewish leaders either. It

□1 23:13-16

□2 Matt 27:15-23; Mark 15:6-14; Luke 23:17-23; John 18:39-40

□3 John 19:1-15

□4 Matt 27:24-26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24-25; John 19:16

□1 23:13-14

□2 23:15

□3 1 Peter

2:22

□4 23:47

□1 23:16

again shows the insincerity of Jesus' enemies. They all know Barabbas is guilty. He is a bloodthirsty revolutionary<sup>□1</sup>. Pilate appeals to them a second time<sup>□2</sup>, but the Jewish leaders and the people of Jerusalem prefer to see a murderer released and someone who claims to be a Messiah executed<sup>□3</sup>. Pilate's third attempt<sup>□4</sup> meets with no success<sup>□5</sup>.

□1 23:19  
 □2 23:20  
 □3 23:21  
 □4 23:22  
 □5 23:23

• *Wilful and blind hatred of Jesus*

• *A very clear picture of what human sinfulness is*

• *Despite the fact that Jesus helped and blessed all – including wicked sinners*

• *Sin is blind and ignorant animosity towards God*

• *Pilate yields to Jewish demands – the innocent punished and the guilty released*

So it is all wilful and yet blind hatred of Jesus. This is the essence of the human problem. Here we have a very clear picture of human sinfulness. Sin is hatred of the righteousness of God. Why should Jesus face such opposition and hatred? He healed people. He forgave people in the name of God. He changed the lives of hardened and wicked sinners. He brought people like Levi the tax collector from his corrupt work for the pagan Romans to faith in the God of Israel. He brought Zacchaeus to return the profits he had swindled plus 300 per cent. Why should anyone want to be so cruel and unjust as to crucify Jesus?

But this is what sin is like. Sin is blind and ignorant animosity towards God. Men and women rebel against God. They have an entirely wrong attitude to Him. Although deep within us all there is some kind of sense of justice, yet it is all abandoned when it comes to the way in which we treat God and His Son. Somehow we feel threatened by Jesus even when His greatest desire is to save us. These ignorant and wicked men are blindly hating Jesus while He is in the very process of going to the cross to be the Saviour of their sins. However, it is pleasant to recall that a few weeks later – on the Day of Pentecost – many of those who had cried 'Crucify Him!' would be brought to distress by Peter's preaching and would find forgiveness and salvation.

Pilate gives in to the Jewish demands<sup>□1</sup>. The guilty man is released; the innocent Saviour is crucified. Barabbas is of course a picture of what happens to all of us who put our faith in Jesus. Even to the Pilates and the Caiaphases of this world salvation is offered. There is no truth in their mouth; their heart is destruction<sup>□2</sup> – but the Saviour dies for those who have made a wrong decision, those who have shown great insincerity. We who are guilty men and women are released, because Jesus the innocent Saviour is crucified instead of us.

□1 23:24

□2 Psalm 5:9



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