

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**
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DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 39

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

Life is not fair. To expect justice all the time in this life is not possible. Those with absolute power seem to have gotten away with all sorts of crime and sin including murder. They died without paying the price for their evil deeds.

These despots will be with us for the rest of man's existence until the reign of Christ. But in the mean time we have to be realistic and accept the fact that this world is not fair. But we thank God that our sovereign Heavenly

Father is always fair and just. He never under or over punishes anyone. Everyone will receive their just rewards in God's time.

What we have in our study this week is the unjust treatment by sinful men against our LORD. He was herded back and forth before evil leaders who care more for their own skin than truth and righteousness. Yet despite their evil deeds every Christian can rest assured that God is always in control, ultimately and immediately. Nothing happens without His knowledge and permission. The Christian must learn this precious lesson when it is his turn to face injustice in his life. Let Jesus Christ our LORD be our example.

UNDERSTANDING

The Trial of Jesus before Pilate

The trial of Jesus before the chief priests and the leaders of the people was a "kangaroo court." They had prejudged Jesus and predetermined the outcome of the trial. They were set in their mind and heart to put Him to death. They had brought false witnesses to testify against Him. According to Roman law, they had no authority to sentence Jesus to death. So at daybreak, they led Jesus before Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator who governed Judaea from A.D. 26-36.

According to the Jewish historian, Josephus, Pilate had at least three unpleasant encounters with the Jews. In the first instance, when he set his army in Jerusalem, the Jews protested at the army's standard which contained the images of Caesar. The Jews regarded this as a graven image. Initially, Pilate refused to accommodate their request and threatened to slaughter them but the

Jews would rather be slain than to have these images in Jerusalem. Finally, Pilate gave in and removed the images.

In second instance, Pilate had shields bearing the names of pagan gods on the walls of Herod's palace in Jerusalem. Again, the Jews protested but this time Pilate removed them only on the order of Tiberius Caesar, the emperor. In the third instance, he wanted to provide more water for Jerusalem. For this project, he took the temple treasury to build the aqueduct. The Jews put up a resistance and many of the rioters and innocent people were killed by the soldiers. Philo, the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, wrote of Pilate's murders without trial, his acceptance of bribes, plundering, outrages, wanton insults and cruelty. He characterized Pilate as "unbending, self-willed, harsh, and malignant" (Hobbs, *Matthew*, 387).

When the Jews delivered Jesus to the hall of judgement in Pilate's palace, they refused to enter the hall lest they should be defiled and could not eat the Passover. Pilate therefore went out to them. Pilate asked the Jews for their accusations against Jesus. They listed three charges which were all political in nature: (1) that Jesus corrupted the nation; (2) that Jesus taught the people not to pay taxes to Caesar; and (3) that Jesus claimed Himself to be Christ the King. They were all untrue except the third one. Indeed, Jesus did claim Himself to be the Christ and the King but "of the Jews". Pilate refused to try Jesus and told them to judge Jesus by their own law. The Jews replied that they did not have the power to put Jesus to death. God was in control – the Scriptures must be fulfilled for Jesus had predicted the manner in which He would die.

Pilate then entered into the judgement hall and called for Jesus. "Jesus stood before the governor" – what a dramatic scene: the King of the Universe standing before a ruler of a very small portion of the earth! Who is on trial, Jesus or Pilate? Pilate asked Jesus, "Art thou, the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered him, "Do you say this of yourself or did others tell it to you about me?" Pilate evaded the question. Instead, he asked Jesus what He had done. Jesus answered that His kingdom was not of this world. If His kingdom were of this world, then His servants would fight and protect Him. He would not be taken captive by the Jews. Pilate then asked Jesus, "Art thou a king then?" Pilate's question invited an affirmative answer, of course, in scorn. But Jesus replied, "You say (you just admitted) that I am a king." Jesus explained that it was for this very purpose (born a king) that He had come into the world (meaning that He came from another world or realm, Heaven). He had come to "bear witness unto the truth" and to reconcile man to God. Everyone, who is convicted of his sinful nature and realizes his need of a Saviour, will hear His voice to repent. Do we not see that this was an implied invitation to Pilate? Pilate steered away from this line of conversation. He asked, "What is truth?" The answer is right before him—Jesus is the Truth but Pilate deliberately refused to see and acknowledge this truth like many today.

Pilate made his way out onto the porch and said to the Jews, "I find in Him no fault at all." But the chief priests and the leaders of the people accused Jesus of many things. Jesus remained silent. Pilate was surprised, "Do you not hear the many things they say and witness against you?" Jesus answered not a word! Pilate once

again told the chief priests and the people that he could not find any fault in Jesus. But the protests of the chief priests and the people became more intense and fierce. They shouted that Jesus stirred up the people by His teaching throughout all Jewry from Galilee to Jerusalem.

Evil men would resort to lies after lies in order to get their way and to sway others to their point of view. That is the nature of the heart of man. We see a demonstration of this in the chief priests and the leaders of Israel. They stooped to lies and half truths to put Jesus away. Pilate was the governor and wields the great power of the Roman government but he was weakened by his own sin and self-interest.

The Trial of Jesus before Herod Antipas

The moment Pilate heard of Galilee, he sent Jesus to Herod. From the human point of view, this is supposed to be good politics. The problem facing him was a sensitive and religious one. Herod was in Jerusalem at that time. Pilate must have sighed in relief. Herod was thrilled. He had heard a lot about Jesus' ministry and had longed to see him personally for some time. Maybe he hoped to be entertained by Jesus' miracles. He questioned Jesus and tried to get Him to respond but Jesus said nothing. Why? Jesus knew that it was useless to defend Himself. Herod was more interested in being entertained than in finding out the truth. The chief priests and the scribes were present. They strongly and fiercely accused Jesus of the same lies and half truths. **In the face of such injustice, Jesus chose to remain silent.** Herod was disappointed and lost interest. He then joined his soldiers in mocking Jesus by

clothing Him in a robe that befits royalty. Then, he sent Jesus back to Pilate. Before this, Herod and Pilate were enemies but Pilate, being shrewd, took the opportunity to befriend Herod for Herod was a leader of the Jews.

Common enemies make quick friends of former enemies. They both saw in Jesus Christ someone whom they could use to win the hearts and minds of the people of Israel. All they needed to do was to pander to their whims and fancies.

The Trial of Jesus before Pilate Again

Pilate called the chief priests, the Jewish rulers, and the people together. He told them that they had brought Jesus to him on the charge that He has misled the people but he had found that Jesus was innocent. In addition, Pilate said that Herod too had not found anything worthy of condemning Jesus to death. Jesus had two witnesses declaring that He was innocent. By Jewish authority, Jesus should have been released. Pilate had on two earlier attempts tried to release Him. This was his third time. He tried to persuade the three representative groups of Jews to release Jesus but failed. He succumbed to their pressure and offered to scourge Jesus before releasing Him. He thought that this severe punishment would satisfy the religious leaders and the people but he was wrong.

Then Pilate tried another tactic. He remembered that there was a Jewish custom to release a prisoner of the people's choosing at the Passover feast. There was a notorious prisoner by the name of Barabbas who was a robber, an insurrectionist and a murderer. He was a convicted murderer who was scheduled to be

crucified. Pilate gave them a choice, “Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas or Jesus which is called Christ, the King of the Jews?” It is interesting to note that Pilate repeated the titles which the Jews used to refer to Jesus. Pilate knew that the Jewish leaders had delivered Jesus to him because they were jealous of Him.

While Pilate sat in judgement of Jesus, his wife sent him a note telling him not to have anything to do with “this just man” as she had suffered many things on that day in a dream because of Him. The Romans accord a lot of importance to dreams. The chief priests and the Jewish leaders stirred up the masses to ask for the release of Barabbas and for the death of Jesus. And so the people cried out, “Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas.”

Pilate’s problem and dilemma was further aggravated by his wife’s plight. He was still willing to release Jesus. He asked the people again, “Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you?” Then the people cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas.” Then Pilate asked them, “What shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ?” They said in unison, “Crucify Him, Crucify Him.” Pilate tried again. He told the crowd that he could not find any cause to take Jesus’ life. He offered again to scourge Jesus before releasing Him but the people shouted loudly, “Let Him be crucified.” We see that Pilate did not handle the situation resolutely. He had all the power and authority to make the decision but he wavered and hesitated. The situation got out of hand. When Pilate saw that he could not prevail, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it.” This is a symbolic transfer of guilt to the people. The people understood. They

responded, “His blood be on us, and our children.” What terrible words. They subjected their children who were not there and those who were not even born yet to this guilt. Then Pilate gave his sentence. He released Barabbas, and delivered Jesus to them to be crucified. However, his guilt could not be so easily removed. He was equally responsible as he knew that Jesus was innocent. He had the witness of Herod, all the power and authority to see that justice was done but he failed. The only way his guilt can be cleansed is through the cleansing power of Christ—“the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). It was recorded that six years later, Pilate was recalled by Rome and banished to Gaul.

Jesus Tortured by the Roman Soldiers

Pilate had Jesus scourged. He was stripped, bound to a whipping post face downward and whipped mercilessly with a whip composed of several thongs. At the end of each thong were bits of bones or metal which tore the flesh from His back and shoulders and left His body a bloody mess. After this horrible ordeal, the soldiers led Jesus into the common hall called the Praetorium where they stripped Him and put a purple robe on Him to mock Him. They plaited a crown of thorns and pressed it onto His forehead cutting the flesh, causing it to bleed. This completed the mockery. They placed a reed in His right hand and bowed to Him saluting Him mockingly, “Hail, King of the Jews!” The Roman soldiers gave a raw display of their anti-Jewish attitude and feelings. They slapped Jesus, spat on Him and took the reed to smite Him on the head. Despite the humiliation and suffering, Jesus showed dignity as He received the dastardly treatment in the

hands of the soldiers. The Jewish religious leaders and the people have done a terrible thing. The Creator could have destroyed them with one word. But He did not.

The Cowardice of Pilate

Pilate said to the people again, "Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in Him." Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate exclaimed, "Behold the man!" When the chief priests and all the others saw Jesus, they cried out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him." Pilate once again said that he could not find any fault in Jesus. The Jews answered that Jesus deserved to be put to death because He had called Himself the Son of God. Already upset by his wife's dream, Pilate experienced spiritual dread when he heard Jesus' claim to deity.

Pilate went into the hall. He asked Jesus, "Whence art Thou?" But Jesus kept silent. Then Pilate said to Jesus that he had the power to crucify Him and to release Him. With calmness and authority, Jesus answered, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." Jesus meant that Pilate could not have any power or authority unless it was given "from above" by God. All existing authorities are ordained of God (Romans 13:1 –*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God*). This does not mean that God approved of all governments. In what way therefore was Caiaphas' sin greater than Pilate's? Caiaphas' spiritual authority also came from God. He used his God-given authority to cause Pilate, the government, to put

the Son of God to death for his own selfish goal. Thus, his sin was greater than that of Pilate's. What about Judas' sin of betrayal?

Pilate once again tried to release Jesus. But the Jews cried out in fury to him, "If you let this man go, thou art not a friend of Caesar: whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Caesar." Pilate, on hearing this, was truly frightened. He knew Jesus had no political designs but the implied threat to report to Caesar was too great a risk for him. Pilate capitulated and took his place at the judgement seat in the place called the Pavement. Before he passed the judgement, he threw another insult against the Jews saying, "Behold your King!" But the people shouted, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." Pilate asked them again, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." It is significant that only the chief priests answered. They were the representatives and mediators of God and man and yet they betrayed their duty and trust by openly acknowledging that a heathen was their king when the King of kings was standing right in front of them. Being the most religious of the lot, they should have seen Jesus for who He really is, 'the Son of God.' Instead they wanted to crucify Him. Pilate then delivered Jesus to the Jews to be crucified.

PRACTICAL VALUE

It is impossible to read these accounts of the sufferings of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ without feeling sad and guilty. He did it for us. We were there too when they crucified our LORD. How much more ought we to love Him knowing that He suffered that we might have the forgiveness of

sins and eternal life. Should we not be willing to suffer for His sake too?

We learn how we should conduct ourselves with humility and dignity when our enemies tell lies about us. In this case silence does not mean consent. Jesus' silence when falsely charged does not mean that He agreed with all the charges against Him. He knew that they were proud and prejudiced and that their minds were set. Silence is the best policy in this instance. Jesus responded only when the truth needs to be spoken.

We learn about crowd mentality. The crowd was easily manipulated. They do not know how to think for themselves. People basically follow the masses. There is no difference between the crowds today and those during the days of Christ. People, who are jealous of others, will stoop to any level to get what they want. They stop at nothing to satisfy their own selfish ends. They would lie and stir up others to support their cause. We should be more discerning and wary of such characters. To have such discernment and courage we need God and His Holy Word in our hearts. This is a spiritual warfare. We also learn how a person's concern for his own selfish gains and security can cripple him from using his power and authority.

The Lord Jesus Christ set the greatest and best example for us all. Follow in His footsteps and learn to conduct ourselves with humility and dignity. AMEN

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LESSON 39

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

DAILY READING & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: John 18:28-38, Matthew 27:1-2, 11-14, Mark 15:1-5, Luke 23:1-5.

TUESDAY: Luke 23:6-12.

WEDNESDAY: Matthew 27:15-26, Mark 15:6-15, Luke 23:13-25, John 18:39-40.

THURSDAY: Matthew 27:26-30, Mark 15:15-19, John 19:1-3.

FRIDAY: John 19:4-16.

Discussion Questions

- 1. What did Jesus mean when He said "my kingdom is not of this world"?**

- 2. Under what circumstance would you follow Christ's example and not seek to defend yourself but accept what evil men might dish out to you?**

3. Did Pilate practice situational ethics by passing the “buck” to the people to decide for him what he ought to do? Explain.

4. By washing his hands, was Pilate actually free from the guilt of Christ’s crucifixion? Explain.

5. Why did Jesus have to be so severely mocked and persecuted before His crucifixion? Why did God not simply have Him crucified without the physical abuses and scourging?

6. What can the Christian do in order not to succumb to peer-pressure?

7. What impression do you have of the Lord Jesus from His behaviour before the crowd and His persecutors? Why do you think Jesus behaved the way He did?
