

“Hail, King of the Jews!”

Matthew 27 v 1 to 31

Jesus delivered to Pilate (Matthew 27 v 1, 2)

This was the official gathering of the Sanhedrin following the informal (and illegal) night session, also described in Luke 22 v 66 to 71. As Luke shows, this morning trial was essentially the same as the previous, informal examination. The Sanhedrin gave Jesus over to Pontius Pilate, the Roman appointed governor over Judea, because they did not have the authority to put Him to death.

Judas hangs himself (Matthew 27 v 3 to 10)

The death of Judas – Zechariah 11 v 12, 13 notes the betrayal for 30 pieces of silver, and that the money would end up in the hands of a potter. The field was called Akeldama (Field of Blood, Acts 1 v 18, 19) for two reasons: firstly because it was bought with blood money; and secondly because that is where Judas hung himself.

“Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah” (v 9) – there has been debate about the quotation attributed to Jeremiah, because it is actually found in Zechariah. Some think that Jeremiah spoke this prophecy and Zechariah recorded it; some others think that Matthew refers to the ‘scroll of Jeremiah’, which included the book of Zechariah – Jeremiah was placed first among the prophets, and often represented all the other prophetic books.

- What lessons does this account of the death of Judas teach us about the inevitable consequences of sin? Was Judas’ situation unique, or is there a sense in which we can be tempted to act like him?

Jesus before Pilate (Matthew 27 v 11 to 14)

Matthew condenses the full account, telling us only of the second appearance of Jesus before Pilate. His first appearance is described in Luke 23 v 1 to 6. Hoping to avoid making a judgment about Jesus, Pilate sent him to Herod, the ‘puppet’ ruler of Galilee (Luke 23 v 7 to 12). Jesus refused to say anything to Herod, so he returned to Pilate...

When the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate, they accused him of promoting himself as a king in defiance of Caesar (Luke 23 v 2). They wanted to make Jesus seem like a dangerous revolutionary against the Roman Empire. Therefore, Pilate asked Jesus the simple question (v 11): “Are You the King of the Jews?”

- Consider the silence of Jesus (v 14), and compare with Luke 23 v 9 and 1 Peter 2 v 21 to 23. What are the lessons for our own life and witness? Why do you think was Pilate “amazed” (v 14)?

The crowd chooses Barabbas (Matthew 27 v 15 to 23)

- In v 22 Pilate asked a crucial question. In what sense is this a question that everyone must answer?
- Barabbas, a criminal, was released instead of Jesus. In what way can our experience echo that of Barabbas? In what sense is Barabbas a ‘model’ for every believer?

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Pilate delivers Jesus to be crucified (Matthew 27 v 24 to 26)

- The Jewish people made a fateful choice (v 20, 25). Why did they choose Barabbas? What were the consequences of this choice for the nation of Israel? What happened some 40 years later?
- What kind of a man was Pilate? Did he want to do what was right? Did he listen to his wife's urgent plea (v 19)? What do you think stopped Pilate from doing the right thing?

Jesus is mocked (Matthew 27 v 27 to 31)

- Picture the mocking of the soldiers, remembering that Jesus had just been scourged, a punishment of brutal severity.
- Picture the stripping, the scarlet robe, the crown of thorns on Jesus' head, the reed in his right hand, the spitting, and the mocking words: "Hail, King of the Jews!" (v 29).
- Why did Jesus submit without protest to such treatment, and why did God allow this to happen to his Son?