

## OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST BROUGHT BEFORE PILATE

When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. (Matt. 27: 24-26)

The “tumult” made by inciting the mob to demand that our Lord be crucified and Barabbas released was what caused the breakdown of Pilate’s morale. It may have been vain for Pilate to wash his hands but the Jews perfectly understood the symbolism of this act by which he claimed to establish his own innocence in what was to become the greatest crime in human history. The Jews’ response, “His blood be on us, and on our children”, has proved to be the costliest statement that ever fell from human lips; and the history of the Jews ever since has been one of ceaseless blood-flowing and suffering – a historical fact which it is impossible to dissociate from the terrible events we are tracing in the Scriptures.

After the release of Barabbas the scourging of our Lord Jesus Christ by the soldiers of Pilate, as the customary preliminary to crucifixion, took place. This scourging of our Lord, which was done in public after He had been stripped and tied to a stake, is so terrible to contemplate that one is bowed with shame to think that human beings could so act towards One Who had come down from Heaven and taken a body of flesh and blood in order that He might as Man – sinless Man – redeem us from all iniquity. How deep the mystery that man’s sin must reach its greatest height in his hatred and violence toward the One Who was now about to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. How important, therefore, for all who own allegiance to Him to remember that our Lord’s scourging was a part of His redemptive Sacrifice. Isaiah foresaw this and declared:

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:5)

Though Pilate had released Barabbas and had now allowed Jesus to be cruelly scourged, he had not yet handed Him over to be crucified. It is from John’s Gospel that we learn the precise details of what transpired and the scourging – though Matthew and Mark add certain details. It is quite clear that Pilate yet hoped to turn the Jewish rulers away from their determination to kill Jesus, and this fact the following passage from John’s Gospel establishes:

And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote Him with their hands. Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring Him forth to you, that ye may know that I

find on fault in Him. Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!

When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him. The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God (Jonh 19: 2-7)

The unresisting Son of God had now become an object for the sport and malice of the common soldiers who put on Him a purple robe (emblem of Gentile rulers) and a crown of thorns (emblem of the curse). They then carry their mockery further by placing a reed (emblem of weakness) in His hand and addressing Him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" When Pilate saw our Lord with His bruised and bleeding body, wearing the crown of thorns and affording so terrible a spectacle of suffering and humiliation, he evidently hoped it might satisfy the hate and blood-lust of the Jewish rulers and that he might set our Lord free.

It is to be noted that Pilate twice declares, "I find no fault in Him"; and on the first occasion gives that as the reason for bringing our Lord forth, with the words, "Behold the Man!" As, however, the Jews still demanded our Lord's crucifixion, Pilate tells them to go and do it and ways a second time, "for I find no fault in Him".

What a fearful guilt all this places on the heads of the Jewish rulers. Our Lord's perfect Goodness and His devastating exposure from time to time of the Scribes, the Pharisees and the Sadducees for their abominable "hypocrisy" had engendered an undying hatred in their wicked hearts which could only be solaced by see Him put to death by crucifixion.

When Pilate heard that our Lord Jesus Christ lay claim to being the Son of God, "he was the more afraid". To a heathen Gentile who had closely observed our Lord's meek yet majestic bearing while under the stress of a trial, it was not a matter for scorn that He made such a claim but one which could not be cast aside. Pilate, therefore, "went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art Thou?" To this our Lord made no reply. Pilate is amazed at His silence and reminds Him that he has power either to crucify or release Him. Our Lord's reply to this once again reveals that He recognized no second causes. He, therefore, says to Pilate, "Thou couldst 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" (John 19: 8-11).

On the strength of this statement of our Lord we are told "from thenceforth Pilate sought to release Him". The Jews, noting this firm attitude of Pilate, resort to a political subterfuge. They triumphantly declare:

If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Casear (John 19:12)

[The time was now about 6 AM and the opening of "the day of the preparation" for the Jews' Passover – Friday, Nisan 14<sup>th</sup> in the calendar].

The record in John continues thus:

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha ... and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your king! But they cried out, Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your king? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar (John 19: 13-15).

The perfidy of these last words is beyond conception when it is realized that the Jews were groaning under the yoke of Caesar and often made insurrections to free themselves and obtain their independence for which they longed.

The end of the trial of our Lord before Pilate had now come. The chief priests and rulers, aided by a multitude whom they incited to the point of a tumult, forced Pilate's hand and though we know well Pilate should have acted in the light of his own consciousness that our Lord was guiltless and the victim of Jewish envy, he was not strong enough to risk his own position as a ruler by embittering the whole Jewish hierarchy and so endangering his own status with the Authorities at Rome. So Jesus had to be sacrificed on the altar of Pilate's personal wellbeing.

The record ends thus:

Then delivered he Him therefor unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led Him away (John 19:16).

Mark's statement is as follows:

And when they had mocked Him, they took off the purple from Him, and put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him (Mark 15:20)

Excerpt from "The Restored Vision" by A. E. Ware, pages 322-32