

Christ's Trial Before Pilate

by C.I. Scofield

The sermon highlights the trial of Jesus before Pilate, emphasizing the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice and the human interest in Pilate's decision.

Scripture: Mark 15:1, Luke 23:6, Luke 23:13, John 3:18, Romans 3:19, Hebrews 6:6

Topics: "Vicarious Atonement", "Redemption Through Christ"

Description

C.I. Scofield delves into the profound analysis of the interactions between Jesus, Pilate, and Barabbas, emphasizing the foundational doctrine of redemption through vicarious sacrifice. The lesson highlights the human response to Jesus' presence, focusing on Pontius Pilate's struggle to do what is just despite personal interests. It challenges listeners to reflect on the countless 'Pilates' throughout history who have faced the decision of accepting or rejecting Jesus, often choosing worldly gain over righteousness.

Transcript

(Mark xv:1-15.)

I. The Analysis.

1. Jesus and Pilate (verses 1-5).--See below.

2. Jesus and Barabbas (verses 6-15).--The foundation doctrine of redemption is vicarious sacrifice, and in all Scripture there is no better illustration of substitution. (1) Barabbas means "son of his father," and that describes us all. By nature we are all sons of our father, Adam. (2) Barabbas was justly condemned to die. He was not on probation to see if he would become a good man. The law had condemned him; he was awaiting execution (Rom. iii:19; John iii:18-36). (3) He was unconditionally released simply because another was dying in his place. (4) He did nothing whatever to secure his pardon but accept it.

3. The Final Testing of Man Under Law (verses 6-15). --For centuries man had been under the testing of the law. What was the result? The religious leaders of the nation to whom the law was given could not discern the Lord of glory, though they were expecting Him, and had a wonderful mosaic portrait of Him in the law and the prophets. Neither could they discern perfect moral loveliness, but clamored for the release of a murderer and the crucifixion of Jesus.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

It is not easy to say what is the deepest heart of things here. In a very supreme sense, of course, Jesus is the central figure, as in any scene in which He appears. But so incontestable is His prominence that often it is not the fact to be insisted upon--it goes without saying. Often the real question is: What will this or that man or body of men do concerning Jesus who is in the midst? For the Incarnate Word, like the written Word, is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and His very presence compels disclosures of what is passing in the inmost being of the bystander.

In this lesson the human interest centers upon Pontius Pilate.

Think of Pilate. When a famous skeptic saw Munckacsy's "Christ Before Pilate" he said with a sigh, after looking long at that great picture, "The artist has reversed the positions of these men; he has painted, not Christ before Pilate, but Pilate before Christ." And so it was. One pities Pilate while condemning him. Compelled to admit the sinlessness of Jesus, and therefore urged by the law, by his conscience, and by the importunities of his wife to deal justly, he yet dealt unjustly. Even his inclination seems to have been strongly on the side of Jesus; he "sought how he might set Him free."

Do not imagine that there has been but one Pontius Pilate in the personal history of Jesus Christ. Alas, there have been countless millions of Pilates during the nineteen centuries in which Christ has been on trial in the forum of conscience and of reason. When Pilate said: "I find no fault in Him," he acknowledged a fact unique in human history. Of no other human being could that justly be said. Jesus alone among the sons of men has been without fault. All other goodness has been flawed with badness; all other greatness has been linked with littleness; Jesus is the only sinless one. And so Pilate believed. So all men who know the story of His life have believed and do believe.

So, believing, Pilate pronounced the sentence which sent Him to the cross; so believing thousands are "crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh." In what essential respect do they differ from the Roman governor of infamous memory?

Three possible courses were open before the first Pilate-- have been and are open to all succeeding Pilates. The first course was the obvious one of evasion and delay. Catching at a word (Luke xxiii:6) Pilate sought to shift upon Herod the decision for or against Jesus. But no, it was Pilate's question, and he could not pass it over to another. Again Jesus stood before Pilate; evasion had failed. Then two courses only remained--to act upon the logic of his own admission of the faultlessness of Jesus, or, in deliberate violation of conscience, to cast Jesus out. He chose the latter course. Why? Because it seemed to accord with his present interests. To side with Jesus might, in the then precarious favor in which he stood with Caesar, mean the sacrifice of his worldly prospects. To incur at that time the enmity of the Jews might mean the sacrifice of his governorship, and he was not prepared to do right by Jesus at the cost of worldly prosperity. For the present prosperity of a questionable business, for a dance, or a game at cards, or a sensual play, millions are rejecting that very Jesus whom they profess to admire and to find without fault.

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