

Mark Chapter 15

Mark 15:1 And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried [him] away, and delivered [him] to Pilate."

“Straightway in the morning”: At daybreak, probably between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m. Having illegally decided Jesus’ guilt during the night (14:53-65; John 18:13-24), the Sanhedrin formally convened after daybreak to pronounce a sentence.

“Chief priests” (see note on Matt. 2:4). “Elders and scribes” (see notes on 14:43; Matt. 2:4).

The “whole council” would be Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish judicial body, which must ratify the sentence pronounced by night (in 14:64). The entire Sanhedrin (see notes on 14:43, 53; Matthew 26:59).

This meeting is described (in Luke 22:66-71). It amounted to little more than reiterating the charges earlier made against Jesus and affirming His guilty verdict.

“Pilate” Roman procurator (governor), of Judea from A.D. 26-36. His official residence was at Caesarea, but he was in Jerusalem for Passover. Pilate alone however, who wielded Rome’s authority in Palestine, could actually have a death sentence carried out.

Jesus was first taken to Annas, then Caiphas (the high priest), and then to the Roman in charge, Pilate. We see a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy, here, (they shall deliver him to the Gentiles). Rome had power in Jerusalem in those days and only the Romans could order Jesus’ death.

Mark 15:2 "And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest [it]."

“Pilate asked him”: John records (John 18:30), that the Jewish leaders demanded that Pilate simply agree to the death sentence they had already pronounced on Jesus (14:64). Pilate refused, and the Jewish leaders then presented their false charges against Jesus (Luke 23:2). Having heard those charges, Pilate then questioned Him.

Pilate really was not in favor of killing Jesus. He asked Jesus, Are you the king of the Jews? The only charge Pilate took seriously was that Jesus claimed to be a king, thus making Him guilty of rebellion against Rome. Jesus answered Pilate in a way that left no argument. This was as if He was saying, "Yes, but you said it". Pilate’s question reveals that he had already been informed of this charge (Luke 23:2).

Jesus answer acknowledged that He was the rightful king of Israel, but implied that Pilate’s concept of what that meant differed from His (John 18:34-37).

Mark 15:3 "And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing."

Sometimes, the best answer is no answer at all, and we see that was what the Lord did there. The chief priests were accusing Jesus of everything they could think of to try to stir Pilate up. They mentioned Jesus being King of the Jews, thinking Pilate would think that Jesus would lead the Jews against Rome.

Mark 15:4 "And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee."

Answerest thou nothing": Pilate was amazed at Jesus' silence, since accused prisoners predictably and vehemently denied the charges against them. Jesus may have remained silent in fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 42:1-2; John 18:38), or both.

As we said before, Pilate was truly trying to get to the bottom of this. He was not on anyone's side at that moment. He marveled that Jesus was not defending Himself by answering back all these accusations, as we see (in verse 5).

Mark 15:5 "But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marveled."

On Jesus' silence see (Isaiah 53:7 and 1 Peter 2:23).

Mark 15:6 "Now at [that] feast he released unto them one prisoner, whomsoever they desired."

"At that feast": The Passover.

Ancient secular sources indicate that Roman governors occasionally granted amnesty at the request of their subjects. Assuming that the people would ask for their king whom they had so acknowledged earlier in the week (11:1-10), to be freed, Pilate undoubtedly saw this annual custom as the way out of his dilemma regarding Jesus.

This was like a governor pardoning a criminal. It was the custom to pardon one prisoner during the Passover feast. Pilate somewhere along here sent Jesus to Herod to be judged, because Pilate could find no fault in Him. We also see (in Luke 23:12).

And the same day Pilate and Herod were made friends together: for before they were at enmity between themselves.

Pilate and Herod, even though they were involved in sentencing Jesus, were not as guilty as these high priests, priests, scribes, and Pharisees.

Mark 15:7 "And there was [one] named Barabbas, [which lay] bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection."

"Barabbas": A robber (John 18:40), and murderer (Luke 23:18-19), in some way involved as an anti-Roman insurrectionist.

Whether his involvement was motivated by political conviction or personal greed is not known. It is impossible to identify the specific insurrection in question, but such uprisings were common in Jesus' day and were precursors of the wholesale revolt of A.D. 66-70.

This Barabbas was not only a murderer but had tried to overthrow the government, as well. Barabbas was not just a regular criminal, but a vicious murderer.

Mark 15:8-9 "And the multitude crying aloud began to desire [him to do] as he had ever done unto them." "But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?"

You see, from the very beginning Pilate could find no fault in Jesus. In this question Pilate was asking them to ask for the release of Jesus.

Pilate knew that Jesus was innocent of any wrong doing. He could see right through these accusations of the high priests. He knew that their jealousy of His powerful ministry had caused them to try to get Jesus killed. He knew that Jesus was not guilty of any crime punishable by death.

Mark 15:10 "For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy."

“Delivered him for envy”: Pilate realized that the Jewish authorities had not handed Jesus over to him out of loyalty to Rome. He saw through their deceit to the underlying reason, their jealousy over Jesus' popularity with the people.

We see priests who were supposed to be upholding the things of God, who were so puffed up with pride that they were about to destroy the Savior of the World. High priests were supposed to know the Scriptures, and yet they would not believe that Jesus was Messiah.

Mark 15:11 "But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them."

The Chief priests had a hold on the people. They used their great influence here, and caused the people to cry out for this murderer Barabbas over Jesus.

Mark 15:12 "And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do [unto him] whom ye call the King of the Jews?"

I believe Pilate was seeking every way he could to not kill Jesus. Pilate actually believed Jesus was who He said He was, I believe. Pilate told them, you will have to judge your King yourselves.

Mark 15:13 "And they cried out again, Crucify him."

“Crucify Him” (see note on Matt. 27:31). Crucifixion, the common Roman method of execution for slaves and foreigners, was described by the Roman writer Cicero as “the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible.”

This cry will ring through all the ages. These two words "crucify him" changed all of history. It brought death and hell to those who do not believe, and life everlasting for those who do believe.

Mark 15:14 "Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him."

Pilate, through these verses, tried to make the people understand that they were crucifying an innocent man. The people would not listen to Pilate, but listened to these evil priests. What a terrible thing to know that you asked for Jesus to be crucified. They were crying out, but we had our part in this as well.

Every person who ever lived (except Jesus), had sin in his life at one time. Our sins helped cause Jesus to be crucified. He was crucified for our sins, so that we might go free.

Mark 15:15 "And [so] Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged [him], to be crucified."

“Scourged”: With a whip (known as a flagellum), consisting of a wooden handle to which metal-tipped leather thongs were attached. Being scourged with a flagellum was a fearful ordeal, ripping the flesh down to the bone, causing severe bleeding. It was a beating from which prisoners often died.

In Matthew, we read about Pilate's attitude:

Matthew 27:24 "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]."

This was all against the wishes of Pilate. The people spoke, and Pilate allowed this, because it was the will of the people.

Mark 15:16 "And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they call together the whole band."

"Praetorium" means governor's courtroom, or hall of judgment. This "whole band" here, meant large number of soldiers. Probably located in the Fortress Antonia complex.

“Band” is a cohort (six hundred men), of Roman soldiers. It may rather refer to a smaller contingent from among such a cohort as all the soldiers who were not on duty at that time gathered to mock Jesus.

Mark 15:17 "And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his [head],"

“Clothed him with purple ... crown of thorns”: “Purple” was the color traditionally worn by royalty; the “crown of thorns” was in mockery of a royal crown. The callous soldiers decided to hold a mock coronation of Jesus as king of the Jews.

Little did they know that He should be robed in purple (purple is one of the godly colors). Purple showed Jesus as the King of not only the Jews, but was looking forward to when He will come in the clouds as King of kings and Lord of lords when he will be King of all the earth.

Thorns were a very hated plant on the earth. This "crown of thorns" showed just how little regard these soldiers had for our Lord. Of course, it was painful also, with the thorns sticking in His head.

Mark 15:18 "And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!"

“Hail, King of the Jews”: The greeting was a parody of that given to Caesar.

This salute was a sarcastic salute. They were saying, "You say you are King, but look at you now."

Mark 15:19 "And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing [their] knees worshipped him."

“Reed”: An imitation of a royal scepter.

All of this was mocking Jesus. Had they only known who He really was, they would never have done this. This spitting and striking Jesus went on and on. Bowing to worship Him was laughing at Him and making fun, as well.

Mark 15:20 "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."

We know from other Scriptures that they took Him outside the city wall to be crucified.

Mark Chapter 15 Questions

1. After the council of priests, elders, and scribes met, they bound Jesus and took Him to whom?
2. Who was the only one who could order the death penalty in those days?
3. What did Pilate ask Jesus?
4. How did Jesus answer?

5. When the chief priests accused Jesus of many things, what did Jesus answer?
6. Why did the chief priest tell Pilate that Jesus said He was King of the Jews?
7. Why did Pilate marvel at Jesus?
8. This release of a prisoner at the feast was like what?
9. Why did Pilate send Jesus to Herod?
10. What good thing for Pilate came of all this?
11. Who was truly to blame for the crucifixion?
12. Who was the murderer who was bound for trial?
13. Who did Pilate want to release?
14. Who did the people want released?
15. Who had swayed the people's opinion?
16. What did Pilate know was the real reason the priests wanted Jesus killed?
17. Pilate asked the people what, to do with Jesus, what did they answer?
18. What did Pilate try to convince them of to no avail?
19. What part did we have in Jesus being crucified?
20. What physical thing did Pilate do to show that he had no part in this?
21. Who took Jesus away?
22. What does Praetorium mean?
23. What color robe did they put on Jesus?
24. What did this purple robe really show Jesus as?
25. What was His crown made of?
26. What other terrible things did the soldiers do to Jesus?
27. What did they put on Him to take Him to crucify Him?