

## LESSON FOUR

**LEADER:** Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, and said to them, “You brought this man to me as one who is misleading the people. Look, I have examined him in your

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presence. I have found in this man no basis for the charges you are bringing against him. Herod did not either, for he sent him back to us. See, he has done nothing worthy of death. So I will have him flogged and release him.”<sup>a</sup>

**MEN:** At the time of the Festival the governor had a custom to release to the crowd any one prisoner they wanted.

**CONGREGATION:** At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner named Barabbas, who had been thrown in prison for a rebellion in the city and for murder. The crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

**LEADER:** So when they were assembled, Pilate said to them, “Do you want me to release the King of the Jews to you? Which one do you want me to release to you? Barabbas—or Jesus, who is called Christ?” For Pilate in fact knew that they had handed Jesus over to him because of envy.

**WOMEN:** While he was sitting on the judgment seat, Pilate’s wife sent him a message. “Have nothing to do with that righteous man,” she said, “since I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him.”

**MEN:** But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus put to death.

**LEADER:** The governor asked them, “Which of the two do you want me to release to you?”

**CONGREGATION:** They all shouted together with one voice: “Take him away! Release Barabbas to us!”

**LEADER:** Pilate said to them, “Then what do you want me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews? What should I do with Jesus, who is called Christ?”

**CONGREGATION:** They all said to him, “Crucify him!”

**LEADER:** But the governor said, “Why? What has he done wrong?”

**CONGREGATION:** But they kept shouting even louder: “Crucify him!”

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<sup>a</sup> Luke 23:13-16

**MEN:** Pilate addressed them again, because he wanted to release Jesus. But they kept shouting, “Crucify! Crucify him!”

**LEADER:** He said to them the third time, “Why? What evil has he done? I have found no grounds for sentencing him to death. So I will whip him and release him.”

**WOMEN:** But they kept pressuring him with loud voices, demanding that he be crucified. And their voices were overwhelming.<sup>a</sup>

**CONGREGATION:** Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.<sup>b</sup>

**LEADER:** The governor’s soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole cohort<sup>c</sup> of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand, knelt in front of him, and mocked him by saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spit on him, took the staff, and hit him repeatedly on his head. They also kept hitting him in the face.<sup>d</sup>

**MEN:** Pilate went outside again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.”

**LEADER:** So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold the man!”

**CONGREGATION:** When the chief priests and guards saw him, they shouted, “Crucify! Crucify!”

**MEN:** Pilate told them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no basis for a charge against him.”

**WOMEN:** The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

**LEADER:** When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He went back inside the palace again and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?”

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<sup>a</sup> Matthew 27:15-23; Mark 15:6-14; Luke 23:17-23; John 18:39-40

<sup>b</sup> John 19:1; Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15

<sup>c</sup> A Roman *cohort* was about six hundred soldiers.

<sup>d</sup> Matthew 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19; Luke 23:17-25; John 19:2-3

**WOMEN:** But Jesus gave him no answer.

**MEN:** So Pilate asked him, “Are you not talking to me? Don’t you know that I have the authority to release you or to crucify you?”

**LEADER:** Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over me at all if it had not been given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.”

**CONGREGATION:** From then on Pilate tried to release Jesus. But the Jews shouted, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar! Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar!”

**LEADER:** When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside. He sat down on the judge’s seat at a place called the Stone Pavement, or Gabbatha in Aramaic. It was about the sixth hour<sup>a</sup> on the Preparation Day for the Passover. Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your king!”

**CONGREGATION:** They shouted, “Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!”

**LEADER:** Pilate said to them, “Should I crucify your king?”

**MEN:** “We have no king but Caesar!” the chief priests answered.<sup>b</sup>

**CONGREGATION:** When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing and that instead it was turning into a riot, he decided that what they demanded would be done.

**MEN:** He took water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, “I am innocent of this righteous man’s blood. It is your responsibility.”

**CONGREGATION:** And all the people answered, “Let his blood be on us and on our children!”

**LEADER:** Since he wanted to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them.

**WOMEN:** So then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> The word *about* indicates an approximate time reference. Likely this was in the first part of the day, between 6 AM and 9 AM, using the time system of the Roman civil day, which began at 12 midnight. Mark 15:25 states that Jesus was crucified at 9 AM. John also seems to use Roman civil time to calculate the day in John 20:19 (because the evening is considered part of the *first day of the week*. Jewish time regarded sunset as the beginning of the next day).

<sup>b</sup> John 19:4-15

**LEADER:** After they had mocked him, the soldiers took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. Jesus was carrying his own cross.

**MEN:** As they were going out of the city, a certain man, Simon of Cyrene (the father of Alexander and Rufus), was passing by on his way in from the country. They placed the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

**WOMEN:** A large crowd of the people was following him, including women who were mourning and wailing for him.

**LEADER:** Jesus turned to them and said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. Be sure of this: The days are coming when they will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never gave birth, and the breasts that never nursed.’ Then they will begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us.’<sup>b</sup> For if they do these things to the green wood, what will happen to the dry?”<sup>c</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Matthew 27:24-26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24; John 19:16

<sup>b</sup> Hosea 10:8

<sup>c</sup> Matthew 27:31-32; Mark 15:16-19; Luke 23:26-31; John 19:16-17