

What Every Ruler Should Know

by Bill Crews

Time and again Pilate (Pontius Pilate, Roman procurator of Judaea) had declared that he had found no “crime” or “fault” in Jesus, and that He was not worthy of death. He had spoken of “releasing” Him. He had resorted to various futile efforts to either release Jesus or to escape having to even make a decision.

Immediately upon receiving Jesus as a prisoner and hearing the accusations of the Jews against Him, Pilate had examined Him privately and had come out to the crowd and announced: *“I find no crime (or fault) in him”* (Lk. 23:4). At that point the Roman trial should have ended, the crowd should have been dismissed, and the prisoner should have been released. But Pilate was too weak, too afraid, and too much concerned with pacifying the Jewish leaders and the multitude to do what justice called for. They persisted, and he vacillated. Other measures to which he resorted:

- (1) Learning that Jesus had come from Nazareth in Galilee, Pilate sent Him to Herod Antipas (ruler of Galilee and Perea), hoping that he would decide upon the fate of Jesus, but Herod did not do so and had sent Him back to Pilate (Lk. 23:6-12).
- (2) Drawing upon his popular Passover custom of releasing a prisoner of their choosing, he gave the crowd a choice, not among all the prisoners, but only between Jesus and the notorious Barabbas. But, prompted by the chief priests and the elders, the crowd cries for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of Jesus. (Lk. 23:13-21)
- (3) Pilate offered to chastise Jesus (that is, to have him beaten severely) and then release Him, but the crowd would have none of it (Lk. 23:22-23).
- (4) Pilate had washed his hands symbolically before the people and hypocritically declared, *“I am innocent of the blood of this righteous man,”* only to hear from them the chilling response, *“His blood be upon us, and upon our children”* (Matt. 27:24-25).
- (5) Pilate had Jesus scourged, allowed the band of Roman soldiers to mock and abuse Him, and then, hoping to gain some sympathy for Him, had Him brought out for all the people to see, but the chief priests and officers cried out, *“Crucify, crucify”* (Jn. 19:1-6).

All of his indirect efforts had failed. Pilate then blurted out, *“Take him yourselves, and crucify him, for I find no crime in him”* (Jn. 19:6). Someone responded with words that struck fear in Pilate (vs. 7), and once again he conferred privately with Jesus. When Jesus responded with silence, Pilate said, *“Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee?”* Poor little man; he did not know that the Creator of the universe was before him. Jesus then broke His silence with words that should seize the attention of every ruler upon this earth: *“Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above”* (Jn. 19:11).

How true this is, and how much every person who finds himself in a position of authority over others needs to take notice of it. All human authority is subservient to divine authority, could not exist if God did not permit, and will one day have to answer to God. Every king, prime minister, president, premier, dictator, legislator, judge, governor, mayor, soldier, policeman, and deputy needs to know this. To Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Daniel said of God, *“He removeth kings, and setteth up kings”* (Dan. 2:21). And later, *“To the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will”* (Dan. 4:17, 32). Like the masters of slaves addressed in Ephesians 6:9 and Colossians 4:1, all in authority need to know that the Master over all is in heaven.

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