

# Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 3/31/19

**Monday** – Read Mark 15:1-15. **Wishing to Satisfy the Crowd.** Take out a sheet of paper, turn it sideways, and make four columns, one for each of the four gospels. Each day use one of the columns to describe what new information you have learned about the trial of Jesus before Pilate as you read the gospel for the day. Today we'll study the story of Jesus' trial before Pilate from Mark's gospel. Mark tells us that Pilate wished to satisfy the crowd. This crowd was most likely made up of money changers and shop owners who worked in the Temple Courts. They were angry that Jesus had shut down their businesses earlier that week. How does Pilate's desire to please the crowd relate to your life today? Why did Jesus remain silent during most of his trial before Pilate? Pray for strength to remain faithful in the face of peer pressure.

**Tuesday** – Read Matthew 27:11-26. **Jesus or Barabbas?** Notice the first name of Barabbas according to Matthew. The name, *Jesus*, means "*Savior*." We have a choice here between two very different men sharing the name Savior. How did Jesus and Barabbas differ? Matthew is the only writer who tells us about Pilate's wife. In many churches Pilate's wife was canonized as a saint. Only Matthew records what is written in verses 24 and 25. Matthew's gospel was likely written shortly after the Jews were defeated by the Romans and the city of Jerusalem destroyed after the Great Jewish Revolt against Rome. How would Roman Christians have read this passage in the light of these recent events? How does this passage speak to you? Pray for peace in our world and that Jesus will help you to be a peacemaker.

**Wednesday** – Read Luke 23:1-25. **Pilate and Herod.** How does Luke's account differ from Matthew and Mark? Notice the charges the Sanhedrin makes against Jesus. Jesus had said, "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" yet this mattered little here. Pilate saw through these charges. The Gospels portray Pilate, the Roman governor, as sympathetic with Jesus. With the gospels having been written at a time when the Jews in the Holy Land had revolted against Rome, emphasizing Pilate's desire to set Jesus free, and the Jewish leaders' antipathy toward Jesus would have helped Romans to accept Jesus more readily. Notice Pilate sends Jesus for trial by Herod Antipas who ruled over the Galilee region where Jesus lived. Herod had put John the Baptist to death. Jesus was silent before Herod, who himself was a scoundrel. Luke draws a contrast between Barabbas, a would-be messiah who murdered with the sword, and Jesus, a Messiah who would lay down his own life for the rest of humankind. Note how in each successive gospel Pilate's attempt to free Jesus becomes more pronounced. Pray for God's will to be done in your life.

**Thursday** – Read John 18:28-19:16. **The Passover Lamb.** In John's Gospel, Jesus is tried and crucified on the day of the Passover feast. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke this takes place on the day after the Passover feast. John wants to connect the death of Jesus with the actual time when the Passover lambs were slaughtered. In verses 36-37 Jesus makes clear that, while he is a king, his kingdom is not a direct challenge to Rome; rather, Jesus' mission was to testify to the truth. In John's account, Pilate has Jesus flogged, in the hope that this would be sufficient punishment for the Sanhedrin and the crowd, and then presents the bloodied, beaten, and humiliated Jesus to the crowd, stating that he found no basis for putting him to death. But this crowd wanted Jesus to die, and Pilate was afraid. Though the religious leaders hated Caesar, they preferred Caesar to Jesus because Jesus threatened their religious world.

**Friday** – Read Isaiah 53:4-7. **The Suffering Servant.** These verses in Isaiah speak of the suffering servant. Christians have related this passage to the way that Jesus suffered. When Jesus was sentenced to death, it appeared that his mission would die with him. It appeared that God had abandoned him in his greatest hour of need. In all four Gospels, Jesus remained silent and did not defend himself because he came to die and to offer salvation to the world. These verses help us understand the *Penal or Substitution Theory of Atonement* in which Jesus was willing to receive the punishment that we deserved for our sins in order to reconcile us to God. Thank Jesus for his willingness to suffer to offer you forgiveness.

**Saturday** – Read Acts 4:1-31. **Peter – Before and After the Resurrection.** Just weeks after Jesus' death and resurrection, following his ascension to heaven, Peter and John, now emboldened by the power of the Holy Spirit and having been with the resurrected Jesus, were arrested and taken before the Sanhedrin. Notice that Peter, who had been afraid to admit knowing Jesus when Jesus was before the Sanhedrin, now speaks with power and boldness. This passage points to all who played a part in Jesus' condemnation and death. Contrast the courage of Peter with the actions of Pilate. Pray for strength and courage.

**Lectionary Readings:** Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; II Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 13:1-3, 11-32.

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