

Chapter 83

"I find no fault in this Man!"

Matthew 27 vv 11-14

Mark 15 vv 1-5

Luke 25 vv 1-7

John 18 vv 28-58

Look, there stand the distinguished elders of the Jewish people in front of the fine palace of the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate! Why don't they go into the palace? ... In the palace? ... Not likely! They would not do that!

Why not then? ... What, would they go into a heathen's house? ... By doing so they would become unclean. Then they would no longer be able to continue in the Passover celebrations. No, they won't do that. Not for anything! They remain in the street outside the palace.

Shortly afterwards the proud governor steps outside. Alright then, he will go to meet the Jews. If they will not come to him in the judgment hall, then he will go outside. He notices at once that something unusual is going on. Everything points that way. Otherwise the Jewish chief priests would never come to him at this early hour of the morning.

Still bound, Jesus is roughly pushed forward and they demand that Jesus be sentenced by Pilate.

Pilate gives the "Evildoer" a searching look ... but when he sees that calm friendly face, doubt rises in his heart. Is this man an evildoer? ... He appears to be nothing of the sort. Surely that cannot be so. He sees also the angry looks which these prominent Jews give to the bound Man. He sees their eyes full of hatred and envy. No, Pilate

is not at all anxious to condemn this Prisoner just like that, without closer examination.

He asks calmly: "What accusation bring ye against this Man?" Pilate means: "What has He done? "Why is it that you want this Man to be condemned?"

A look of dissatisfaction shows on the faces of the chief priests. Oh, they had hoped that Pilate would ask no further questions. They had hoped that Pilate would sentence this Nazarite at once just because they wanted it so much. They hadn't expected this question. Furthermore it is getting lighter and it will not be long before the inhabitants of Jerusalem are awake. No, that mustn't happen. Jesus must be put to death before the people awake. That is the intention of the Sanhedrin, but if Pilate dawdles much more their wonderful plan will fail completely.

Angrily, and spitefully they answer: "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee."

They mean: "Why do you ask that? Do you not trust us? Do you think we would want to punish anyone who is innocent? There is no need to ask such a question." They want almost to compel Pilate to condemn Jesus just like that. They look at the governor insolently. If they thought however that Pilate would be frightened by their loud protestations, then they were

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deceived.

A hard look comes into the Roman's eyes. He stands erect and answers tauntingly: "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law." Does Pilate then give permission? Are the Jews then allowed to do what they will to Jesus?...

No, indeed! He lets them feel for a moment, scornfully, that they are under the might of the Romans. He does not mean it, for they may no longer put anyone to death without the approval of the Romans. That is why I said that Pilate spoke "tauntingly".

The Jews understand very well what the governor means. They answer gruffly: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

Pilate keeps to his demand that they should inform him on what grounds Jesus must be condemned. He wants to hear the charge.

Well, now they have got to say something, but what? ... They cannot just say that they dislike Jesus intensely because He has pointed out to them their sinful ways. They cannot just say that they hate Jesus because He so often rebukes them. ... No, that will not do, for Pilate would not be in the least disturbed about that, and he would immediately set Jesus free.

They consider for a moment. And then? ... Then they come up with three serious charges. Just listen!

The first charge is: "We found this fellow perverting the nation". That is to say: "He is trying to stir up the people to rebellion."

The second charge is: "He was forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." That means: "Jesus is stirring up the Jewish people to refuse to pay taxes to the Romans."

And finally they add a third charge: "He says that He is Christ, a King."

There now, those are three serious charges. That will give Pilate a shock. Now he will realise that they are not handing Jesus over for nothing. That is what they hope. Pilate must have the impression that this Nazarite is a dangerous man, a rebel!

Children, what the chief priests say here is not true. Jesus is no trouble-maker. Jesus had only a short time before said that they must render unto Caesar that to which he had a right. These are great lies which they declare.

Only the last charge is true. Indeed, Jesus is the Christ; He is the King of Israel.

When the Roman governor hears these strong accusations, he takes Jesus inside into the judgment hall. He has heard a lot about the King of the Jews who was one day to come. Well then, he will investigate whether this is true of which He is accused by the Jews.

Inquisitively he looks upon the Lord Jesus and asks: "Art thou the King of the Jews?"

Calmly Jesus answers: "Thou sayest it." The Lord means: "Yes." But Pilate has no need to be afraid of Him. Jesus will do the Romans no harm. That is why the Lord continues: "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

In amazement the proud Roman looks upon the Lord Jesus. He understands very well what Jesus means. Yes, if Jesus were indeed an earthly king, then the headstrong Jews would never have delivered Him over, for he knows that the Jewish nation is looking forward longingly for the promised King. No, this strange, singular Man is no trouble-maker. Pilate need have no fear of this Prisoner. The governor does not indeed

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understand what Jesus means by that "Kingdom of heaven", but one thing he is quite clear about: This Jesus is no dangerous Man. The Romans have nothing to dread from Him.

Look, the governor stands up and proceeds outside to the Jewish chief priests who are waiting in suspense for his verdict.

When Pilate appears it becomes breathlessly quiet. What will he say? ...

Listen, there his opinion sounds: "I find no fault in this Man!"

Did you hear that? Here the Roman judge declares openly that Jesus is innocent.

A look of disappointment comes to the face of the Pharisees and Sadducees. They look at Pilate with eyes full of wrath and hatred. Oh, must they after all let this hated Nazarete go free? ... No! No! Never! They clench their fists in helpless rage. Yet they do not give up hope yet. They keep on accusing Jesus. They maintain their charges.

"He stirreth up the people", they cry angrily, "teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee unto this place."

Pilate is a little taken aback by this. He is not really quite sure how he should act. He doesn't know how to get himself out of this.

Surely though that is not so difficult? He must let Jesus go. Of course! After all, he has said himself that he finds no fault in Jesus. Yes, but he dare not do it. He is afraid of the wrath of these chief priests. He is afraid that a commotion will indeed arise. Pilate finds himself in a very difficult situation.

All at once his face brightens however. He has heard the Jews say that Jesus began in Galilee.

He asks hurriedly: "Is this Man a Galilean

then?" The chief priests answer: "Yes." "Oh," says Pilate sighing with relief, "then it is nothing to do with me. Then you must not come to me, but to Herod, the king of Galilee. Herod must decide this case."

Quickly he calls a few Roman soldiers and commands them to bring Jesus to Herod. Herod is also in Jerusalem during the Passover.

To the consternation of the Jewish leaders, the Roman soldiers make their way with Jesus to the palace of Herod. The Jews tremble with rage, but they can do nothing to prevent it and ... from sheer necessity they also go along.

On the way the crowd grows. Doors are thrown open. Out of curiosity many of the people come outside and join the group. They want to know what is going on and how it will end.

Pilate remains behind. He is pleased to be rid of this awkward case. So then, Herod must now sort it out. He has got out of it quite neatly.

Luke 21 vv 8-12

Look, there is the crowd, which every moment becomes greater, standing before Herod's palace. He too was doubtless surprised.

But as soon as he realises that they have brought Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth to him, he is pleased. Pleased? ... Why? ... Just listen!

As you know Herod had had John the Baptist beheaded. Again and again his conscience smote him regarding that base deed. When he heard that a new prophet had arisen, a Prophet who performed many signs and wonders, then he feared that John had risen from the dead. This thought frequently disturbed him, it gave him scarcely a moment's rest.

Now that he sees Jesus however, he

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notices that his fear had been ill-grounded. This wonder-working Prophet is not John the Baptist. What a relief! He breathes again.

In the meantime the chief priests lay many charges against Jesus. What it was that they said at this time God's Word does not tell us, but we may be fairly certain that they told Herod also that He was one to stir up rebellion.

Herod begins to interrogate Jesus, but ... the Saviour answers him not a word. Try as Herod may to get Jesus to speak, he does not succeed. Jesus is silent and remains silent. The Lord Jesus spares not one word for this murderer of John the Baptist.

Herod is bitterly disappointed. He has heard that Jesus had done so many wonders and now he hopes that this wonderful prophet will perform a few miracles for him too, in his palace.

Yet Jesus remains silent! If He had performed one or two miracles, Herod would probably have set Him free. But Jesus will not buy His freedom, by doing a few tricks like a king or magician, in front of this godless prince.

If a poor wretch, a sick person, one blind or lame, or crippled, or possessed came or was brought to Him, then He had never refused. He had always helped. He had never thrust anyone away. Here however He refuses to do anything. He is no conjurer! He is the Saviour! ... He is silent!

Well, if Jesus will not do Herod a favour then Herod will make fun of Jesus for a little while. This wonderful, silent Man would be the King of Israel? ... Good. ... Then Herod will treat Him as a mock-king.

He calls for an old, torn and worn out royal robe, and this purple, gorgeous robe is cast around Jesus' shoulders. The king and his rough

soldiers then mock the Son of God. Is it not terrible?

Oh, boys and girls, under all this mockery, scorn and contempt, the Lord Jesus, who is indeed the king of Israel, remains silent. He allows it to take place. He could have punished that ungodly, scornful king very severely, but He does not avenge Himself. Like a sheep, that is dumb before her shearers, so He opened not His mouth. Of His own free will He suffers this horrible insult. Freely He submits to this amazing humiliation.

He is suffering here as Surety and Saviour for His people. He humbles Himself, that His people may be exalted. He endures such deep humiliation and contempt, that God's people may wear the crown of glory in heaven, a crown of glory obtained by the Messiah. No, they are not worthy of this crown, they have no right to it, but they receive it through grace. Our heads should be filled with solemn awe, when we see the bitter suffering which Jesus had to endure, in order that God's people might be redeemed from everlasting ruin.

At last Herod is tired of playing with Jesus. He sends his men of war with Jesus back to Pilate. At the same time however the Roman soldiers bring a message to Pilate that Herod also can find no fault in Jesus. The sentence of Herod also reads: "I find no fault in this Man."

This is yet another token of Jesus' innocence. Pilate and Herod have no idea that they are being used as a means of making the innocence of the Saviour appear all the more clearly, both of these earthly rulers declare that Jesus is without fault. Pilate and Herod indeed become friends, for Herod was pleased that Pilate had sent the Lord Jesus to him also.