



'given from above' – John Chapter 18 & 19

John 19:11 - "You would have no power over me if it were not **given** to you **from above**."



Who was Pontius Pilate?

- Born into the Pontii family, Pilate is from southern Italy of Samnite descent.
- Pilate was part of the equestrian class, a social group situated just below the senators in Roman society, and probably was a Roman knight and a likely military leader.
- From 26-36AD, Pontus was appointed the fifth prefect (governor) of Judaea serving under Emperor Tiberius.
- Confirmed by an inscription from Caesarea in ancient Palestine, a stone was found 1961 titles Pontus Pilate as prefect. The discovery provided firm first-century evidence of his existence and job, confirming what was written in the Biblical text.
- His appointment by tradition was through the intervention of Sejanus, a favourite of the Roman emperor Tiberius. Sejanus was the chief administrator of the Roman Empire for the emperor Tiberius.
- Sejanus was related to the distinguished senatorial family Corneliu Lentuli. Tiberius, through his sister-in-law Antonia, had Sejanus arrested and executed sometime during 31AD.
- Pilate was effectively a dictator; so long as he kept Rome happy, he had absolute power, including power of life and death. According to Philo of Alexandria he was a man of "inflexible, stubborn and cruel disposition"
- According to researchers, Pilate had 6,000 crack troops with him and 30,000 more on call in nearby Syria. On occasions, Pilate ordered his troops to carry imperial images of Caesar in The Temple and appropriated sacred Temple funds to build an aqueduct.
- Pilate once surrounded a mob of several thousand people in a stadium and threatened to chop off their heads. On another occasion, he ordered his men to infiltrate a demonstration and beat up everyone they could.
- Pilate was well known for having executed prisoners even without trial. Jewish leaders brought Jesus to Pilate because they didn't have the power to execute Christ; only Pilate had that legal right under Roman law.
- Pilate permitted the legal death sentence on Jesus (John 19:12) somewhere between 33-37AD
- After a harsh attack on the Samaritans at Mt Gerizim in 36AD, Pilate was reported Vitellius, legate of Syria, after he ordered his cavalry to break up a gathering around a prophet in Samaria.
- His career ended when he was recalled to Rome in 37AD, particularly on the charge that he had executed men without proper trial, and for excessive cruelty. However, after this, he seems to have disappeared from history.
- According to Eusebius of Caesarea's Ecclesiastical History, Pilate killed himself on orders from the emperor Caligula.

Pontius Pilate from the scriptures

- All four Gospels include Pilate as a main figure in the final hours of Jesus' life (Mt27, Lk23, Mk 15, Jn18-19)
- There is an earlier reference to Pilate in Luke 13:1.
- The Jewish leaders didn't have the power to execute Christ; only Pilate had that legal right under Roman law.
- Pilate struggled with the same issue we all wrestle with. He wanted to do the right thing to get the right results and right reactions...where 'right' means better for Pilate!
- Luke 23:1-7 (Mark 15:1-5)(Matt 27:11-14) records that the Sanhedrin brought Jesus to Pilate and accused him of stirring rebellion, opposing the payment of taxes and calling himself king.
- Pilate himself was afraid of Jesus. When Pilate found out that Jesus was claiming to be the Son of God "*he was even more afraid*" (John 19:8).
- Pilate was overwhelmed at the peace of Jesus. Matthew 27:13-14 says Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor.
- John records Jesus and Pilate had a philosophical debate during the trial. "You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me," Jesus said. And Pilate asked, "What is truth?"
- All agree that after questioning Jesus, the Gospels recorded that Pilate knew that execution was not what Jesus deserved.
- Matthew 27:19 records: *While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him".*
- Fear was real for Pilate. Was Pilate more concerned about justice, or fear of the mob - the city swelled to 2m people. How could 6,000 troops resist a rioting mob? Would they appeal to Caesar? Would they reject Pilate too?
- The four gospels all claim that Pilate offered the crowd a choice between freeing Barabbas, a man accused of leading a violent rebellion, or Jesus.
- John 19:12 records that Pilate tried to set Jesus free. Matthew 27:24-25 says that Pilate failed to convince the crowd that Jesus was innocent. Pilate "took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. 'I am innocent of this man's blood,' he said. 'It is your responsibility!'"
- John 19:19 records: "*Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: jesus of nazareth, the king of the jews.*" Pilate ordered the sign above Jesus to say "the King of the Jews" in the main languages of the region and the empire, all to the humiliation of the Jewish leadership. He kept the sign up despite their protests (Jn 19:19-21).
- John 19:38-42 records that after Jesus' death, Pilate granted permission to Joseph of Arimathea to take the body of Christ and bury it in a new tomb. Jesus had taught that he would rise from the dead so Pilate put Roman guards at the tomb, with pressure from Jewish leaders declaring the disciples would steal the body.
- Despite safeguards, the tomb was empty Sunday morning.

*Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said... "You would have no power over me if it were not **given** to you **from above**." (Jn18:4,19:11)*

