

# MEN WHO MET JESUS

ECS   
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*The Word to the World*

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# INTRODUCTION

You and I meet people every day. Some of the encounters we have turn out to be significant ones, but most are of no lasting consequence. Many people crossed paths with Jesus Christ when He walked this earth 2,000 years ago but, since Jesus was God in human form, it follows that to come face to face with Him had eternal consequences—for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, for time and forever. Within these next few pages you will learn about three men who met Jesus the very day He died. You'll find out how they responded to Him and the significance of their responses.

Your path, too, crosses the path of this same Jesus, even though He no longer lives here on earth. As you read this booklet you will encounter Him. So, go ahead! Study the brief sketches of these men. Two are eternally blessed for their response to the Lord; the other has bewailed his treatment of Him these many centuries. And as you read, ask yourself, "What is God saying to me in all this?" Read each

chapter carefully. If a verse in the Bible is mentioned but not included in the text, look that verse up in a Bible. Finding a Bible reference is like looking up a street address: the “town” is the book, the “street” is the chapter number, and the “house number” is the verse number. For example, John 3:16 means the book of John, chapter 3, and verse 16. The location of the book can be found by using the table-of-contents in the Bible you are using.

As a way of reinforcing what you read, each chapter concludes with a short test comprised of multiple-choice questions. If you would like your answers to be checked, mail the entire booklet to the organization or person who gave you the booklet. Alternatively, send it to the address on the last page. The tests will be checked and returned to you, along with a credit certificate. We will help you with any incorrect answers and will gladly respond to any questions you may have.

Fill in the information below before you begin:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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A decorative graphic of a leafy branch, with the leaves pointing towards the top right, positioned behind the chapter title.

## CHAPTER ONE

# THE RULER WHO FAILED JESUS

*In the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He answered and said to him, "It is as you say."*

—Mark 15:1–2

*Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said to him, "Let Him be crucified!" Then the governor said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, saying, "Let Him be crucified!" When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it."*

—Matthew 27:22–24

Pontius Pilate signed the death warrant for Jesus Christ. His unhappy face peers out at us from all four accounts of Christ's earthly life (the New Testament books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John). For his decision to crucify the Son of God and put Him to open shame, Pilate is branded a weakling and a coward. He stands condemned in history, forever disgraced by what he did to Jesus. And what did he do? Something millions of people have done from that day to this—he denied Christ a fair trial.

Pilate had a good general knowledge of the facts concerning Jesus. As Roman governor, he would have known the movements, the message, and the miracles of Jesus. And the Bible tells us that Pilate knew why Jesus' enemies wanted Him killed: "They had handed Him over because of envy" (Matthew 27:18).

Pilate would have preferred to sit on the fence, but the crowds screaming for Jesus' death forced his hand. He had to investigate Jesus and decide what to do with Him. The fact that you are reading this course puts you in much the same position as Pilate. What will *you* do with Jesus?

## **PILATE FEARED THE CLAIMS OF JESUS**

For Pilate, life could never be the same after meeting Jesus. He and Jesus had come face to face, and we read that Pilate was frightened (John 19:8).

He feared the claims of Christ. He feared the character of Christ. He feared the crisis that this man created in his life.

He feared the invasion of Jesus into his *personal life*. History tells us that Pilate was a coarse, tactless, and stubborn man. He liked to get his own way regardless of who got hurt. When placed alongside the Son of God, Pilate could not compare to him. But then, neither can we! What mortal man can compare to the sinless Son of God?

The face of the One who now stood before Pilate gave evidence of the torture He had endured. Jesus had been cruelly questioned, mocked, and beaten. Pilate thought Jesus was weak and within his power. "Do You not know that I have power to crucify You?" (John 19:10), he demanded. Pilate thought *he* was the one in control, but he was wrong. Even though it did not look like it, Jesus was the one controlling the situation.

Maybe you too have viewed Jesus as only a pale, weak, and unreal person, someone who has little impact or sway on your life today. But do not be mistaken. That man is God's eternal Son. He is God of all creation. *He* is the one who will be the final judge, not you.

Pilate dreaded the invasion of Jesus into his *public life*. Hear the angry cry of the crowds: "If you let this man go," they screamed, "you are not Caesar's friend!" His whole career stood in the

balance, for if he chose to free Jesus, he might have to face the scorn of Caesar in Rome. Pilate did not really want to reject the claims of Christ, but he did not want to accept them either.

Are you where Pilate was? Are you afraid to decide about Jesus because you know He is going to invade both your personal life and your public life? Be sure He will! The moment you accept Him, things will change in your life. Pilate put off making a decision about Christ as long as he could, but the issue kept coming back. Perhaps you realize that you cannot put off deciding about Christ. What will you do with Jesus?

## **PILATE FOUGHT THE CLAIMS OF JESUS**

Pilate tried to *disclaim* the issue. When he discovered that Jesus came from Galilee, he sent Him to the ruler of that region—Herod. “This has nothing to do with me after all,” he thought. “Let Herod deal with it.” But his plan did not work. Soon Jesus was back and Pilate found he still had to decide. Are you trying to dodge the issue? It cannot be done.

Pilate tried to *dismiss* the issue. He said to the Jews, “Take Him and judge Him according to your law.” In other words, “Case dismissed!” But it was no use. He soon discovered that the case of Jesus was far more than a religious issue. In fact, it turned out to be the most important one he had ever faced.



Pilate tried to *discuss* the issue. He began to argue with Jesus. He questioned Him over and over, but received no reply. “Why won’t You talk to me?” he cried out at one point. But there really was nothing to discuss. Pilate knew the issues very well. He simply had to decide whether to do the right thing or the wrong thing with Jesus. Would he stand with or against Jesus? It was as simple as that. Pilate had to decide—and so must you.

Pilate tried to *distract* the issue. First he called for Barabbas, a well-known criminal, and gave the screaming crowds a choice. “Which shall I set free for you?” he asked, “Jesus or Barabbas?” He hoped the crowd would choose Jesus and “get him off the hook.” But the crowd chose Barabbas—so Pilate had to decide alone. Next, he said, “I will whip Him and let Him go.” He hoped that would satisfy the bloodthirsty crowd. But they still screamed for His death. Our world, ever hostile to Christ and His claims, will never make it easy to follow Him. In fact, it will not be satisfied until you completely reject Christ. But Christ will not be satisfied until you crown Him Lord of your life.

Finally, Pilate tried to *disown* the issue. He called for a basin of water. “I wash my hands of the whole affair,” he said. “You take Him and crucify Him. It has nothing to do with me.” He did that to try to set his mind at ease—and then he authorized Christ’s execution. But nothing can possibly wash

the blood of Christ from the hands of the person who has refused Him.

## **PILATE FACED THE CLAIMS OF JESUS**

Before long, Pilate *had* to make his decision about Christ. He could put it off no longer. He turned away from Jesus and delivered Him to death by crucifixion.

It was a terrible choice. Seven years later Pilate was stripped of all his authority by the same Caesar he had tried to please. He was sent into a lonely exile. The man who had been concerned about losing Caesar's friendship was nobody's friend after that.

What will you do with Jesus? Will you crucify Him or crown Him? The decision is yours.

# THE RULER WHO FAILED JESUS

## CHAPTER ONE EXAM



In the blank space on the right side of the page write the letter that gives the correct answer.

1. Circumstances forced Pilate to
  - A. crucify Jesus
  - B. make a decision about Jesus
  - C. dismiss the case against Jesus
  - D. send Jesus to Caesar

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2. All men fall short of God's righteous standard when they
  - A. make a difficult decision
  - B. are compared to Jesus
  - C. are threatened by an angry crowd
  - D. must take a stand between right and wrong

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3. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod because
  - A. he wanted to do Herod a favor
  - B. Herod asked to see Jesus
  - C. he hoped Herod would deal with Jesus so he would not have to
  - D. he felt sorry for Jesus

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4. From the crowd's reaction to Pilate we learn that
- A. given the opportunity, most people would accept Christ
  - B. crowds always follow their leader
  - C. the crowd is always right
  - D. the crowd will always reject Christ
- \_\_\_\_\_
5. Pilate's washing his hands
- A. moves us to feel sorry for him in his dilemma
  - B. did not absolve him from his personal responsibility in relation to Christ
  - C. cleared him of all responsibility in relation to Christ
  - D. earned him great reward in his political future
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### WHAT DO YOU SAY?

What is your personal answer to the question:  
"What shall I do then with Jesus who is called the Christ?"

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