

Ascertaining the Truth — The Acid Test

If we read Jn 18:31-38; 19:12-16; and Mt 27:11-26, can we ascertain¹ what Pilate was going through, and perhaps identify² with him, considering what we would do if we were a political leader? How valuable is the gift of eternal life and at what cost is it turned down for such a justification as Pilate's, or that of the rich young ruler?

So we must ascertain his motive in washing his hands in Mt 27:24, since he claimed the authority in Jn 19:10, and made the choice in verses 15-16. Let's consider Jn 18:29-38 and see whether we can ascertain the motive of Pilate in commanding the inscription in Jn 19:19 and 22.

The Test of Character

Standing up for the truth in the world today is always a test of our character, as we are seen as those who have the glory of our Master — that inner worth that demands respect of others, even as Pilate respected Yahshua. Nevertheless, we, as he, will be rejected if it comes to what came to Pilate. He held on to his own life, just as the rich young ruler rejected Yahshua when it came to the crunch, the showdown, the critical moment of decision, the economic squeeze.

So with our Master's glory imparted to us (Jn 17:22) we are seen in the world not just by what we do, but how we do it; not just by what we say, but how we say it; not just by what we hear, but how we hear it. It takes glory to stand up for the truth in how we answer accusations, etc. It takes our Master's glory, not our own, as we identify with Him, sharing in His sufferings (Rom 8:16-17). Standing up for the truth is the test of that glory, which we either have or don't have. It is the test of who we are, as seen by what we do and how we do it.

¹To *ascertain* is to find out with certainty.

²To *identify* is to put oneself in his place so as to understand what he was going through; to share his thoughts, feelings, problems, considering Mt 27:19.

Ichabod is the condition of the so-called church of the past 1900 years, as shown by how they acted against “heretics” — their glory departed. Our Master’s glory never departed, even unto death (2 Cor 5:21; Acts 2:24).

The “acid test” of how we stand up for the truth provides the proof of the glory and value or quality we are to Him. What qualifies us as belonging to Him? How we respond to the gospel when we hear it from a sent one (Mt 10:34-41; Jn 7:17-18; 18:37).

Our Master did not give in to compromise because He had the glory His Father gave Him, and we have the very same glory He gave us, if we actually belong to Him. So now, as Jn 15:18 proves true for us, it will take the courage that comes from glory (inner worth). We are being observed (1 Pet 2:12) and scrutinized as to who we are according to what we do (and how we do it) and what we don’t do. The truth wins in the end.

Our Master has already warned us in Mk 13:9 that we will be taken before ecumenical councils, since we will not participate in the ecumenical movement (which all religions and denominations will be forced to join). They want to make Jn 17:21-23 happen in the flesh, since they know that if this prayer is not answered, *their* Jesus would rightly be viewed as an impostor. Then in Mk 13:11-13, our Master goes on to tell us what we will face, just as He did.

The Greatest Evil and the Greatest Good

Yahshua’s arrest, trial, and crucifixion was the greatest evil and the greatest good in history. The most evil scheme was carried out against the One who was their long-awaited Messiah, and ironically it was actually the first time those corrupt Jews offered up a perfect Lamb, who died for their sins. 3000 on the day of Pentecost were pierced to the heart when they heard the words in Acts 2:36-45. As a result, they obeyed the many other words they heard about the true gospel of forgiveness and obedience to the One who died and went into death on their behalf (2 Cor 5:14-21). This was the thunderclap

which caused a revolutionary change in those who 53 days before had screamed, “Crucify Him! His blood be on us and our children!” (Mt 27:22-25). They found forgiveness for crucifying their long-awaited Messiah.

53 or 54 days before Pentecost, such evil and corruption surrounded the event of our Master’s crucifixion, which the apostles spoke of in Acts 2:36-37. Judas had betrayed our Master, selling out for 30 pieces of silver. The other disciples also abandoned Him in His darkest hour. Peter denied Him three times. False witnesses accused Him. The trial was under the cover of night, and Caiaphas and the religious authorities conveniently looked the other way. The fickle crowd that had cheered as He rode into the city of Jerusalem soon demanded His blood, and even that it be upon their heads and their children’s heads (Mt 27:25).

All these things that happened set the stage for the Father’s grand plan for Jn 3:16, to test to the core all who would receive His Son. Severe testing is required of all who would reign forever and ever over all things (the universe, Rev 22:1-5) as the wife of the Lamb, the very habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph 2:21-22; Rev 21:2,3,9,12). Yet not all of the world He died for would receive Him, and Jn 15:18 would be the great testing, as we said in the beginning, to see who would stand up for the truth regardless of the cost.

Standing up for the truth in the world today will be the greatest test of our character and the glory of our Master, as we speak as 1 Pet 4:11 for His glory (what we say and how we say it), speaking the very utterances of God. Only those who are willing to do God’s will will be able to hear right (Jn 7:17-18) and not receive those who seek their own glory (which is not the glory that is given to those who were willing to do God’s will and are in fact doing it, Mk 3:31-35).

So who we are is seen by what we do. Taking our stand for Messiah, our Master, takes the same courage and non-compromising character as His, when He was on earth in His flesh, as the *man* that He was.

Did Pilate Fail the Test?

Pilate's role in the event is what we must ascertain as good or evil, and what his eternal destiny could be. What Pilate did and did not do can help us to stand up for the truth, which Pilate did or did not do in the end. As governor of Judea, Pilate was the judge, and was called to judge the Son of God. So we must now ascertain his actions, which judge his true character. His decision as to the innocence or guilt of "the Man" sent to him would be the making of Pilate's future life in eternity, according to Pilate's moral conscience and what he would do with this man called Yahshua. Did Pilate fail the test? How do we judge him? This question has been years in the making for me, always seeing his honest heart, even as the rich young ruler when he asked what he must do to have eternal life in Mk 10:17.

How will we stand for the truth? Seemingly fed up with fake religion, Pilate asked abruptly, "What is truth?"

First, then, read Jn 18:31-32. After Yahshua was arrested, He was bound and taken to the high priest to stand trial. Matthew's gospel places our Master before the Sanhedrin (the highest court), where He would stand before the elders and scribes to answer charges of high treason and blasphemy. John's gospel says that after our Master had been questioned by Annas, who was serving as high priest in Jerusalem for that year, he was sent to Caiaphas for further interrogation. Then Caiaphas sent our Master to Pilate, governor of Judea, who was charged with making the final decision on what to do with Yahshua.

Pilate's respect for Jewish law was good. As governor he could have just pronounced the death sentence upon our Master, but instead Pilate told the Jews to take Him and judge Him by their own law (Jn 18:31), but they claimed it was unlawful for them to put anyone to death. Crucifixion was a Roman system of death penalty. So the refusal to judge Yahshua by Jewish law forced Pilate to make the decision regarding our

Master's fate. But, little did the corrupt Jews know, their deceitful plan for His crucifixion was the means by which our Father's plan of salvation was being fulfilled. The corrupt Jews, whom the prophet Malachi describes as unable to offer an acceptable sacrifice (Mal 1:6-10), unwittingly offered up the Lamb of God that would take on the sin of the whole world (Jn 1:29). But that atonement was effective only for all who would *receive* Him (2 Cor 5:14-15) and no longer live for themselves, but for Yahshua, the Lamb of God, and His purpose, as Acts 2:44-45 describes.

So Pilate examines Yahshua (Jn 18:33-38; Mt 27:11-26; Lk 23:1-25), and is forced to make a decision about Yahshua's fate. Pilate questions Yahshua in private about His true identity. "Are you the king of the Jews?" In this brief conversation, Pilate would get a glimpse of the Spirit that dwelt in Him, that could answer the way He did through Him.

Yahshua's fate and destiny was prophesied by the prophets long ago. His kingdom was not of this world order (Jn 18:36), and there could be no mixing between the two realms (Col 1:13), as Constantine mixed church and state. Yahshua, as He said in Acts 1:6-7, even after His resurrection, was not willing to be drawn into the political realm. He was not intending to do what His disciples asked: to destroy the Romans and reestablish Israel then as a political nation of twelve tribes. His intention for them was to testify of the *truth* (Jn 18:37), and it is the same for us today. Everyone who is of the truth will hear His voice, as Jn 10:27-30, and all who hear His voice are one (Jn 17:23), in love with Him and one another (Jn 13:34-35).

Jn 7:17-18 is the bottom line concerning a man's ability to hear the truth. The question "What is truth?" has been the subject of debate among philosophers and wise men throughout history. The answer to this question still divides people today over which Jesus is the real one, or even whether there is a real or true one (2 Cor 11:4; 1 Jn 5:20). Truth for the "us" in 1 Jn 2:19 is the reality of the Body of Messiah (Jn 13:34; 17:21-23). Yahshua is the *Way* (Gen 18:19; Gal 3:26-29), the *Truth*, and the *Life* (Jn

14:6; Jn 1:4; 1 Jn 5:12). Whoever has the Son has the Life, and the Life is the reality of the truth lived out in the watching world.

The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever. (Ps 119:160)

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (Jn 8:31-32)

“The truth shall make you free” from the world system you hated your life in (Jn 12:25-26), so that you are no longer of this world (1 Cor 1:2; 2 Pet 1:4; Jn 15:26-27; 14:15,21-24; 15:12-13; 1 Jn 3:14,16,23,24; Jn 15:18).

Pilate’s Dilemma

So does Pilate actually reject Yahshua? (Jn 19:12-16)

To *refuse* is to decline to accept (Lk 10:16). Which is the greater, to give up eternal life, or to give up one’s possessions, and everything else that stands in the way of eternal life? What was Pilate’s dilemma? Was it that he knew the truth about Yahshua, and having heard of Him, was now confronted with His face and words? But did he act upon them? Did he act on the truth of who he was face to face with? Pilate knew from talking with Yahshua that not only was He innocent of the crimes of which He was accused, but He was indeed the king of the Jews and the Son of God. Pilate seemed to have believed Him, which led him ultimately to write these words: *Yahshua of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (Jn 19:19,22). Why then did Pilate become friends with Herod that day?

Lk 23:12-25 — Can we evaluate Pilate’s dilemma? A dilemma is any situation in which one must choose between unpleasant alternatives, as faced by the rich young ruler when he heard what it meant to have eternal life. It was a choice which in his mind was too hard to make. Between the alternatives, he chose the easiest in the short term. Now it was Pilate’s choice between two alternatives. Pilate’s dilemma is further heightened by the prospect of losing his friendship with the Emperor, Caesar.

The thought of risking this friendship (Jms 4:4) by not obeying the crowd of gathered screaming Jews (Mt 27:25) presented a great dilemma in his heart and soul, especially after hearing of his wife's dream (Mt 27:19). Not yielding to their demand would risk losing political favors and opportunities to advance his career.

So he brings Yahshua out and sits down on the judgment seat (Jn 19:13) to contemplate his decision for one last time. "Here is your king!" he says to the Jews (verse 14). This could have been his response to prompting in his flesh — to keep his life or to lose it (Satan's spirit confusing him in a dilemma) — maybe in hopes of saving himself from taking a stand for what he knew was right and of the truth. Pilate's attempt to save innocent blood is only drowned by the loud cries of the Jews (Jn 19:14-15). So then what did Pilate do (which he had the authority to *not* do)? After the chief priests loudly proclaimed Caesar as their king, reluctantly, squeamishly, demurring, thinking about his earthly life, but with full awareness of Yahshua's innocence, Pilate made his decision. Possibly it would seal his eternal destiny, haunting him not only for the rest of his life on earth, but also in the lake of fire, along with the rich young ruler and the rich man and his brothers (Mk 10:17,22; Lk 16:23-28).

So we must learn by this that choosing right never comes without opposition, as we see also in the case of the rich young ruler. The decision to follow Yahshua is the decision to forsake everything in and of the world, even one's own life, which he must hate (Lk 14:26-33; Jn 12:25-26) in order to follow Him (Mk 10:17-22,28-30).

To fail to stand for right, as in the dilemma faced by both the rich young ruler and Pilate, was an eternal sin, for both knew the right thing to do (Jms 4:17) as regards the gospel of Messiah. Decisions come with a price — to forsake the world, to forsake one's own life, parents, children, wives, farms, homes, everything, so as to gain the pearl of great price and the hidden treasure (Mt 13:44-46). The decision to lose your friends, loved ones, or as Pilate, the opportunities to excel in some area of one's life — college degrees, recognition among the elite... Whenever one chooses to do good over evil, right

over wrong, this shows who he is (even as to redeemed or unredeemed character) to those who are watching. This is not always popular or easy, but it pays eternal dividends.

It was *easier* for Pilate or the rich young ruler to make their decisions than to forsake all to have eternal life.

So we must always guard against compromising the truth. We must never hide our light if we are the light of the world. How else can they ever see the truth? We must shine as lights (Phil 2:14-16) if we are the light (Mt 5:13-16). The Holy Spirit never leads us where He cannot keep us if we will call upon our Savior (1 Jn 5:18,21, KJV). He will surely keep us if we cry out to Him. Even though the truth is, in certain situations, a heavy burden, we can cast it upon Him, for He cares for us (His own), especially in this world which is governed by falsehood.

What if He had not been Crucified?

But what if the Jews had not screamed for His blood, or what if Pilate and Herod, who found no fault in Him, had decided *not* to execute judgment upon Him? What would we now do about our sins and eternal destiny? Shall we *thank* the apostate Jews? Shall we thank Herod and Pilate for making that decision against what was left in their conscience to choose between good and evil? (Gen 3:22; 9:1-7; Rom 2:6-16)

Are we glad they chose evil, even though they will suffer for it? In what way shall they be judged in Rom 2:16 and Rev 20:12-15? Did they go straight to the lake of fire, in view of Jn 3:18, or will there be mercy for them since their circumstances were so hard, greater than the rich young ruler? What about the water of life, the Holy Spirit in Rev 21:6-8 and 22:17? Were they not thirsty? Did they not have the opportunity to drink? (Jn 7:37-39)

On the day of Pentecost, were they among the 3000 who were cut to the heart? Acts 2:36 — “...this Yahshua whom *you* crucified,” as the many kept on hearing what the apostles were preaching throughout Jerusalem (Acts 2:22-24,36; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30) —

they murdered, killed, slew by the greatest torture, hanging Him on a tree in the Roman way. That is what the Jews wanted, handing Him over to the Romans to be executed, but they found no fault in Him. Only the Jews found fault in their long-awaited Messiah; they were betrayers and murderers (Acts 7:51-52; Mt 27:24-26; 26:57-67; Lk 23:13-25; Mk 15:11-15,29-31; Jn 18:19-24; 19:10,11,12,15). The Roman courts (Pilate and Herod) found no fault in Him, but the Jews screamed, “Crucify Him!” So Jn 19:15 was the turning point for Pilate (verse 16).

Concerning the water of life in Rev 22:17, how hard would it have been for Pilate and Herod to drink without cause to refuse — especially Pilate, who was more responsible and was enlightened by his encounter with the words of life?

Some Written Responses to the Teaching...

Gader Peretz — One man stands out as one of the most interesting figures in the New Testament. For nearly two centuries, people have wondered as to what the judgment for Pontius Pilate would be. The exchange between the Roman governor and Messiah is a pivotal point in the last hours before Yahshua’s brutal execution on a torturous stake. This man Pilate is a key player, as recorded in all four of the gospels, each bringing out unique details of the dialogue between them and the ensuing judgment.

Our tendency is to feel so ill-equipped, yet we must be grow up in every aspect, so as to be prepared for the day when, as Paul said in 1 Cor 6:3, “Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more matters of this life?” One day we will be faced with the possibility of judging Pilate. Most conclusions drawn thus far have been based on subjective feelings, not on objective evidence. A certain sympathy, an affinity for the Roman governor’s predicament, is typically aroused.

The population of Jerusalem had swollen to the point of bursting, with pilgrims coming from all over the empire to celebrate the Feast of Passover, one of the mandatory annual appearances. Already having squelched previous uprisings, the Romans considered the Jews the most stubborn — an indomitable and resistant people. It took the iron might of the Rome’s unyielding military control to maintain rule and order. The nation of Israel was regarded as the least desirable duty in the empire. As

governor, Pilate's career would either decline into obscurity, or if he ruled well, perhaps he would be promoted to a more desirable location.

These thoughts swirling through his mind as he sat on the judgment seat, this was the most troubling encounter for him. Mixed emotions conflicted with a sense of duty, compounded by a resistance to being manipulated, a sense of fairness and desire for justice. Never before had he been presented with such a conundrum. Most other decisions had been relatively easy — cut and dried. The facts demanded a certain verdict. Yet instinctively, he knew this one was far different, the most complex and agonizing decision he had faced in his career. He hated that feeling, especially when it was brought on by a *Jew*.

A riot was brewing. With over two and a half million Jews there (as reckoned by Josephus), the situation was like sitting on a powder keg. Doubtless, there were hundreds of zealots with concealed weapons beneath their cloaks, just waiting for the opportunity to rise up and overthrow the oppressive Roman rule. The Romans were heavily outnumbered, and the sheer numbers could make the loss of life catastrophic, despite their more advanced weaponry and military training. Pilate was in a lose-lose situation, so perhaps he just cut his losses and chose the easiest course of action — to turn over an innocent man to be unjustly killed, as opposed to putting down a riot and coping with the resulting bloodshed and mayhem. When reckoned this way, sacrificing one man for the sake of others was the most expedient course. *Expediency* is the easiest course of action, convenient but not necessarily proper or moral. The word *expedient* implies a disregard of moral considerations.

Our Father had given Pilate's wife a dream. So God himself had provided a warning to him as to how to judge this man — a righteous or just man, as his wife had sent word. He instinctively knew Yahshua to be a just and righteous man, and he judged the accusations of the Jews to be motivated by envy. He tried every avenue he could think of to release this man — appealing to the Jews' sense of reason, demurring to judge him, and sending him off to Herod to be judged by another. Finally, he washed his hands so as to absolve himself of responsibility, declaring himself innocent of an unjust execution. Did the Jews' declaration of acceptance of the responsibility transfer the eternal weight of an unjust execution onto themselves and relieve Pilate of his share of the guilt? Or did it remain (eternally) a consequence of his position as one with final authority to put to him death?

What about Messiah's prayer to our Father, "Please forgive them, for they know not what they do"? Was this merely for the Roman soldiers, who had the grim job of carrying out the death sentence? This would seem unlikely, since our Father was the institutor of capital punishment for murderers. It is difficult to think it merely applied to these men dutifully carrying out the death sentence. Could it be possible that Yahshua's prayer of forgiveness extended to *all* the Romans, including Pilate?

But when distilled to its essence, if his motive was purely one of self-preservation, then his destiny is sealed and he is bound for the lake of fire. As a ruler and governor in a place of authority, he faced many weighty decisions, often finding himself in an unenviable position. Did his decision serve to bolster his political career, or was he acting as a public servant? What a precarious line to tread — teetering on the razor's edge between justice and self-interest. If, as the rich young ruler had done, he had acted out of a motivation of self and knowingly rejected the difficult truth, then his eternal condemnation is deserved.

Shoer — As we were reading the teaching I kept going back and forth in my mind about the two major aspects that seemed to be throughout: 1) the aspect of Pilate and what he had to struggle with in order to make a decision that would have eternal consequences (whether he realized that or not at the time); and 2) our obligation as priests who represent our Master in these last days — i.e., whether or not we are going to stand up for the truth and prove our character or compromise (taking the easy way out) when it is our personal skin, reputation, or favor that is on the line.

Another thing that stuck out to me was how the teaching brought out the fact that the religious Jews had been cut off back during the time of Malachi (Mal 1:6-14) for offering lame sacrifices, but in their apostate condition, ironically and unwittingly they offered a pure, spotless sacrifice that would atone for the sins of the whole world. I was amazed at our Father's ultimate purpose and plan in this. But as it said in the teaching, not all of the world He died for would receive Him. Jn 15:18 would be the great testing to see who would stand up for the truth regardless of the cost. This of course goes for people in the nations who are living by the dictates of their own consciences, but certainly also for us, who are supposed to be the light of the world and therefore will have to stand in the face of unpopularity, misunderstanding, lies, attacks (verbally and ultimately physically), and being "hated by all nations on account of Me" (Mt 24:9).

It said, "Standing up in the world today will be the greatest test of our character." I see this right now in the little ways of how easy it is to

deny our Master (Mk 8:38) and be ashamed of the gospel (Rom 1:16). I remember Yônêq saying once that the gospel had the power to save if we weren't ashamed of it. I see how easy it is to be ashamed of how you will be perceived by the world you are supposed to be a light to.

So, Pilate had to grapple with his own conscience, and, as the teaching brought out, his wife's dream and the fact that he had a personal encounter with our Master Yahshua. He also had to deal with the political and civic pressure of Jerusalem swelling to 2.5 million during the festival, and the potential for a massive riot if he didn't play his cards right.

So, in asking the question of whether his motives in the matter were good or evil, it is difficult to say with certainty. I think about the difficult situation he was in as governor of Judea (which I've heard was the most difficult place to rule over in the whole empire) and having to deal with this huge swell of people who were being stoked by religious zealots who had an agenda and a massive sway over the populace. What would be the right thing to do in this situation? To free the one man, risking an all-out riot and potentially killing not just one, but hundreds of innocent people, or to give heed to the Jews who obviously hated our Master, but preserve the peace of the city during this tumultuous time. I can't image being in that situation and having to judge.

But who knows what the inner workings of Pilate really were? He had a bright future if he could rule well and maintain peace in the most difficult province in Rome. This could have certainly been at work in him. I have heard that the worst possible detail for a Roman soldier was to be deployed to Judea, because of the hatred in the people toward Rome due to the occupation. It must have been a very tense place to try to rule and maintain peace, working with the local religious leadership among the Jews, but not completely giving in to them and being controlled by them.

It said in the teaching that a person's actions judge his true character. Pilate's actions condemned an innocent man to death on a cross. So, I guess that brings us back to the question of what his real motives were, which it says will come into play (Ecc 12:14). It said in the teaching that a dilemma is any situation in which one must choose between unpleasant alternatives. This was certainly what Pilate had to face when our Master's trial in his hands. I am sure that it was an intense battle in his conscience — the struggle between standing up for one man and appeasing the masses. I guess that is ultimately what makes good men great or righteous men unrighteous. If his favor with Caesar was being called into question (and he probably knew that the powerfully persuasive Jews had

the ability to call his loyalty into question if he did not go along with their momentum), then that must also have been a huge factor. It could have been political benefit or simply a fear that his loyalty to the higher authority would be called into question by the deceptive Jewish leadership, thus turning a good relationship with Caesar into a treasonous one where he would then become the one on trial.

I guess this all comes back to what Yônêq said in the teaching: that choosing right over wrong, good over evil, never comes without opposition or even earthly consequences, but that it pays eternal dividends.

So I am not sure how to judge Pilate, but I think that I see a great lesson to be learned about not compromising the truth that one knows in his own conscience, or the mandate that we have received from our Master Yahshua to be a light to the world, and to accurately represent Him. This will take uncompromising loyalty and devotion, and as Yônêq said, “The truth shall make you free from the world system you hated your life in.” As time goes on, and our mettle continues to be tested, I see how we have to continually hate our life in this world — not just years ago when things were rough, and we were down and out. Satan always tries to make us forget how alone and without hope we actually were, but it doesn’t change the fact of where we were actually at and what our Master Yahshua did for us in our time of desperate need (Ps 40:1-3).

David Yonah — I have seen the quandary that Pilate found himself in, having to choose between two unsavory options, as perhaps the classic definition of *dilemma*. For a long time I have favored the opinion that Pilate felt compelled to send Yahshua to His execution because the alternative would have involved perhaps the death of many people, were a riot to ensue. Therefore, as the High Priest had said, it was better for one man to die than the whole nation. It was a decision which I thought disgusted him, and would not have been made were it not for the long-range consequences. He went to great lengths to judge the situation fairly, eventually deciding to release Him, but was unable to do so without injury and death to many.

Up until now, this is how I have seen Pilate. But perhaps all he was truly interested in was the report to Caesar and how it would affect his career. The one glitch that has always bothered me is the statement that Pilate and Herod became friends. I don’t know what that means. Were they now pals, or just no longer enemies? Was Pilate’s decision to send Yahshua to Herod taken as a diplomatic overture towards peaceful co-existence? Or was it a shrewd maneuver to pass the buck?

The teaching seems to indicate that Pilate refused to surrender his life. And if I remember what Kharash said long ago, history (for what it's worth) does not paint a favorable picture of him prior to this trial; in fact, just the opposite. It is said that Pilate died some five years after this incident. Perhaps he was, after all, just one more greasy, self-seeking politician who manipulated the truth for his own gain. When push comes to shove, I don't feel that I have enough information to judge Pilate.

Ayil — The thunderclap I heard in the article was that Pilate chose to go against this knowledge of our Master's kingliness, his wife's advice, his favorable impression of our Master's truthfulness and authority, and seemingly even our Master being the Son of God. Pilate chose to not stand by his sense of who our Master was and His innocence for the sake of his career, his future, and the "easiness" of giving in to the demands of the Jews.

It made me really want to be connected to my brothers and the anointing so that I wouldn't compromise because of cowardice when I find myself sitting "on the judgment seat." I've always leaned in the direction of regarding Pilate with mercy, but this view of his decision puts a healthy fear in me of how quickly and easily men can choose the expedient route and forfeit all.

Emet — It is pretty amazing how this teaching starts by saying to consider what we would do in Pilate's position. To me it is a difficult thing to reconcile "where I am" in my walk with our Master to where the standard is. But at the same time, "Here I am," and here are all who have responded to the call of our Master to drink freely (without cause to refuse). So far nothing has stood in my way to be with Him and His people. I see how pitifully I fall when tested. But here I am, and here we are, and I have nothing else. Where else can I go to hear words of eternal life? I did not give up a position such as Pilate's. I did not give up the riches that the rich young ruler had. I probably could never have attained to either.

Still, in the absolute standard of what has value and what does not... a man is no fool to give what he cannot keep. Somehow Pilate seemed to have a pretty deep understanding of who was before him. Our Master communicated quite clearly by what He did and how He did it, what He said and how He said it (and what He did *not* say), that He was connected to the eternal God. He did not have to defend Himself and He did not have to struggle to maintain His existence as all who are under the curse of sin do. He did not live in the insecurity of fallen man.

Even with the best position, Pilate was still a mere man. Here today, gone tomorrow. And where would he spend eternity? Somehow, he did not have the courage to put his trust in and ally himself with the One who could give him eternal life. I can understand that Pilate saw other consequences in a decision to release our Master, consequences beyond the effect on his position, like a rioting crowd. But still, it is hard for me to see that it would not have been worth it to stand for the only innocent man he ever met.

As I said in the beginning, I do not know how I would do. But I know how I *want* to do. I am thankful for the amazing mercy of our God at this time to bring me into His salvation and want to save me. He knows each man's frame. I trust he knew what Pilate could bear. I know that with all my lacks, He is showing me mercy *so that* He could bring me along to the place where I can stand up to the greatest testing, so that I can receive His stamp of approval and be found *fit* to be a true ruler. For what good has any ruler been who was not willing to stand absolutely for the truth — even or maybe especially to His own hurt — like our Master Yahshua.