



How Were Politics Part of Jesus' Crucifixion?

Luke 23:2: (NASB) *And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a King.*

Special Guest: Tom Ruggirello



Thinking about the death of Jesus always produces a variety of emotions. On one hand, we feel a deep sense of gratitude, hope and praise, for without his willing sacrifice and ignominious death we would all remain under the sentence of sin with no possible way out. In short, we, and the entire human race would be doomed to destruction. On the other hand, when we think of his death we feel the dull persistent aching pain of sadness, for we know that Jesus was an entirely innocent man who was subject to the most unfair and devious kinds of deception, mistreatment and torture. Did you ever

wonder what was behind the events that brought Jesus to the point of crucifixion? Did you ever think about who did what and why to position the savior of all mankind as an enemy of the state?

(The conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity.)

TOM: I just want to tell you how grateful I am for your ministry on Christian Questions. I know it has been a blessing to many, and I am really honored to be with you. I have known you both most of my adult life, and you are both wonderful examples of Christlike living, and you are the right people to be doing that.

I have been an elder with the Chicago Bible Students for about 30 years now. You asked what was my interest in this subject, and like you, anything that has to do with Jesus interests me.

But what really amazes me about this whole story is how Jesus dealt with the people who persecuted him. He came to save the very people who did these things to him, who hated him. And I marvel at that. How could he not hate them for what they did or harbor even an ounce of bitterness in his heart? So, the answer to that question is extremely important, because as Christians we are supposed to follow the pattern that he laid out for us. When I have situations in my life, I have something to look for as to how my leader dealt with these experiences of those who mistreated him.

We are going to look at the politics that led up to his death, some of the backroom dealings that were accomplished in order to get what the scribes and Pharisees wanted. In examining the events that led up to his death, we are going to see there was a premeditated design by the Pharisees and the Sadducees to kill Jesus. There was evil motivation there. And we will get into some of the wrong motivation they had. You can learn from studying a poor example as well as a good example. And in this story, we have both. It is important to get the lessons from each side.



RICK: We need to define the characters first. When you look at Jesus, what do you see in terms of his motivation, who he was and what he stood for?

TOM: Actions tell you what a person's motivations are. When someone sacrifices their life and endures extreme suffering for the benefit of others, that is an indication of pure motivation. In Jesus' case, I think only the purest form of love could motivate him to do what he did for us. In Jesus, we see a pure desire to do good for others in spite of what was happening to him.

RICK: We will use the purity of his desire, his focus and his mission as the backdrop. Then we are going to look at the rest of the characters and see where they fit, looking at the contrasts and the differences. We are going to learn some powerful lessons. Jesus is our model. Next we have the Pharisees and Sadducees. We often lump both of these groups together as standing against Jesus, but who were they, and what were their differences?

TOM: These two groups were very different. As you say, we tend to lump them all together, but they had very different views and outlooks on what their roles were.

The Pharisees were the more religious teachers of Israel. They were widely accepted as the teachers of the day. You would think the Sadducees, who were the priests, would be in that role, but they were not and we will see why.

The name "Pharisee," meaning "separated ones," is believed to originally be a derogatory name given to them by the Sadducees to depict how they separated themselves. In their conceit, they separated themselves from the Gentiles and from other Jews who were not keeping the rituals of the Law as they were.

RICK: They put themselves in a very unique position in relation to the Law, being separate with their thinking. What was that separate kind of position? They put themselves above the average person, right?

A graphic of a yellow scroll with dark brown wooden rollers at the top and bottom. The scroll is unrolled and contains text in a bold, black, serif font.

THE PHARISEES WANTED A
FORMULA FOR EVERYTHING.
THEY WANTED WRITTEN
INSTRUCTIONS FOR EVERY
DETAIL OF LIFE, AND GOD
JUST DID NOT PROVIDE
THAT LEVEL OF DETAIL IN
THE MOSAIC LAW.

TOM: Yes, They had the oral law of traditions they created, because they said there was not enough detail in the Mosaic Law. I will give you an example. The Mosaic Law says you should not work on the Sabbath. That is all it says. So, somebody comes to a priest and says, "What does that mean? Can I walk two blocks to get my cow back into the barn?" So, somebody has to decide how much work is too much. The Pharisees set up all these laws that would dictate every ounce of activity that the Jewish person could and could not do.



RICK: So, they added to the written Law.

TOM: Yes. It is called the "oral tradition of interpretations." And the Sadducees hated them. That was one big area of disagreement between the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

A text showing the prominence of the oral traditions:

Matthew 15:1-3: (NASB) *¹Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread. ³And he answered and said to them, Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?*

RICK: *Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders?* - It was not, "Why do they go against the Mosaic Law?" but it was about the tradition of the elders which seemed to be bigger than the Mosaic Law at that point.

TOM: And there was nothing wrong with trying to explain what hand washing meant and what the Sabbath meant, but they took it to such an extreme that they created a set of formulas, that if you follow these formulas, you will be okay with God. And Jesus said, well, your outward behavior is good, but your inward is an abomination. They were not keeping the *heart intent* of the Law.

RICK: The Pharisees created a very narrow path for acceptability before God because of all these traditions. We will see that Jesus went and talked to all those people who were outside that very narrow path and, of course, the Pharisees did not like it.

JONATHAN: We can see Christianity today in some ways doing the same thing.

RICK: We have to be careful we do not add to or subtract from the written word of God. To try to explain it is one thing, but to begin to add all of these extra things is not so good.

Who were the Sadducees?

TOM: The name "Sadducee" probably comes from the term "house of Zadok," who was a high priest during the reign of David and Solomon when the first Temple was built. Zadok established his house in the priesthood, so the Sadducees were the priests. In fact, you could not be a priest if you were not in the lineage here. So, this was handed down. They performed all the functions of the Temple. The problem was they got disinterested in the Temple because they were affected by Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy took them away from their Jewishness, so they lost a lot of the importance of the Law and wanted to be more cosmopolitan. They were more into the politics and the running of the state rather than the religious elements that they should have been involved in. So, they became much more political. And the Pharisees, of course, hated that, since the Sadducees ran the Temple more as politicians than as priests. There was a real strong division between the two groups.

RICK: The Sadducees were supposed to be religious but became entirely political, and the Pharisees were supposed to be what? Sort of supporting them, but they became oppressively religious in the way they pushed the people?



TOM: In that sense, the Pharisees almost became *too* religious. They became zealots for the wrong things - for the "letter" of the Law (and not the "spirit" of the Law) and the oral traditions. But it is not that the Sadducees were not religious, but they were a watered-down mixture of Judaism with Greek philosophy.

RICK: The third group we want to define is the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. Both were high priests, and both were involved in the process of trying to destroy Jesus. Why two high priests, and what were the differences between them?

TOM: Well, this is a perfect example of the politics involved in the Sadducees, because there was an effect with the Roman Empire. The Romans would not allow the Jews to appoint their own high priests anymore, because they saw him as a political figure that had control of the politics of Israel. Rather than allowing the Jews to appoint a religious high priest, they appointed who they thought would be more subservient and more favorable to Rome. The reason there were two high priests was because Annas was a very strong-willed and dominant man, and he would kind of buck the Roman system, so the Romans took him out and said, "We will replace you with Caiaphas," who was his son-in-law and a little weaker, more able to be controlled.

Even though Caiaphas was the official high priest appointed by the Romans, Annas, because of his dominant personality, was still the key figure. He was still the chief, and Caiaphas was under him.

RICK: Did Caiaphas hold the title?



TOM: Caiaphas was the high priest, yes. He was called from Egypt. The Jews in Egypt were deeply entrenched in Greek philosophy even more than those in Israel.

RICK: There are already contradictions. The Pharisees are not doing what they are supposed to be doing and are making religion impossible for the average person. The Sadducees have ditched religion for politics. Annas was a powerful man, Caiaphas is just a figurehead, and none of this is in accordance with Jewish law, right?

TOM: There is one point that emphasizes this, and I believe it is only mentioned in the book of John. When Jesus was first arrested, do you know where he went?

John 18:13: (KJV) *And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.*

He was taken to the house of Annas. Only after Annas examined him was he taken to Caiaphas. It shows the hierarchy.

(Source: "The Life of Christ," Frederic W. Farrar) Since the days of Herod the Great, the high priesthood had been degraded from a permanent religious office to a temporary secular distinction.



This shows it was a political position. It was not a position held for life, like it had been under the Jewish system, but it was appointed by the Romans. This really contributed to the corruption of how the high priesthood was supposed to operate, because now you have the Gentile influence in there.

RICK: A very powerful Gentile influence is brought into Judaism, and that influence is entirely pagan.

So, Annas has power and Caiaphas is the figurehead. This is not what Judaism was supposed to be.

Let's begin looking critically at the politically-motivated actions of the Pharisees and Sadducees, starting with the time after Jesus triumphantly rides into Jerusalem after clearing the Temple of the money changers.

He wreaked havoc with the money changers because there was corruption in the Temple. What is the stark difference between Jesus' view and use of the Temple versus the money changers' view? How did the money changers fit in with the Pharisees and the Sadducees?

TOM: The difference becomes very obvious when you look at what Jesus did when he came to the Temple in contrast with what the money changers did there. When Jesus came to the temple, he healed the blind. He healed the lame. He taught about his coming kingdom. He never asked for money and never looked down on the poor. He, in fact, came to the poor. He was attracted to the poor. He was there to serve others.



The job of a money changer was to change funds. You could not put a Roman coin in the Jewish Temple - you had to use the Jewish Temple money. It was a legitimate operation to exchange. The problem was the exorbitant exchange rates they were charging people. First of all, they should not have been in the Temple - this should have been done outside. Second, the exchange rate was so bad that Jesus said it was like *a den of thieves*. The money changers were making exorbitant profits. But there was also something else - there were also sellers of animals in the court of the Temple. They were doing the same thing as the money changers,

charging exorbitant rates for the animals they were selling to the people. These animals in turn were offered in the Temple. One thing that really infuriated Jesus was the tables of those who sold the doves. It was a little animal, inexpensive and for the poor.

It outraged him they would charge exorbitant rates and make it difficult for the poor to do a service for God.

PEOPLE CAME FROM ALL OVER TO JERUSALEM FOR PASSOVER. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO TRAVEL WITH A LAMB FOR SACRIFICE BECAUSE IF IT GOT INJURED OR WAS UNCLEAN, IT COULD NOT BE USED. ANIMAL SELLERS SOLD "PRE-APPROVED" LAMBS FOR TRAVELERS TO USE. OTHER TYPES OF ANIMALS SOLD INCLUDED OXEN AND PIGEONS. THIS AREA WOULD HAVE BEEN NOISY AND SMELLY!



"Scouring the Moneychangers from the Temple,"
by El Greco, 1541-1614
oil on canvas, circa 1600
National Gallery, London

Also known as *The Purification of the Temple* and *Christ Cleansing the Temple*. El Greco made probably five paintings on the subject. Moneychangers and traders are evicted from the holy place.

The reaction of the priests and Pharisees to what Jesus was doing:

Matthew 21:14-15: (NASB) ¹⁴And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. ¹⁵But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, Hosanna to the Son of David, they became indignant.

RICK: How could they become indignant after such goodness?

TOM: What amazes me is that he is healing people, raising the dead, performing miracles, and that had no impact on them.

I do not think they are reacting to the good works; I think they are ignoring the good works. They are reacting to the crowd shouting, *Hosanna to the son of David* because that phrase was reserved for the Messiah. He was being proclaimed as Messiah and obviously the priest did not believe this, so it was a "false" claim. But how do you not recognize the good works?

JONATHAN: Envy plus greed. Those two were the formula behind them. And that is totally evil.

RICK: The interesting thing is oftentimes during his ministry, Jesus would address something like that immediately with words or a parable. But he did not this time. What was it that he did that is a little bit different to address the attitudes that he was seeing from the Pharisees here?

TOM: He *did* respond. In some ways it was similar, because if a disciple would say something, Jesus might give a parable that gave a character lesson, but here he gave a series of three parables, and they are all condemning of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Each parable is teaching a similar point, but the Pharisees were not getting it at first.

RICK: He gave those parables the next day.

TOM: Yes, when he came back to the Temple.



The first parable - the Parable of Two Sons:

Matthew 21:28-31: (NASB) ²⁸But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in the vineyard. ²⁹And he answered, I will not; but afterward he regretted it and went. ³⁰The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, I will, sir; but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, The first. Verily I say unto you that the publican and harlot go into the kingdom before you.

RICK: The Pharisees made the road to God's kingdom so narrow that these people were automatically excluded. And Jesus has the nerve to say that the ones you are excluding are the ones who are going to get into the kingdom before you. That is a tough lesson for them to hear!

TOM: Especially because they thought *they* were the most righteous. "How could you say that to us? We are the most righteous!"

This parable was a particularly stinging rebuke to the Pharisees because they believed in a coming kingdom. They believed that to enter the kingdom they had to live holy lives. And yet, Jesus said that the lowest dregs of society, the tax collectors and harlots, would enter before them. His application was clear. *They* were the disobedient sons, who like the second son in the parable, said that they would do the will of the Father, but when it came right down to doing it, they refused. *They* were the ones being excluded.

What a lesson for us! How important it is for us to know the will of the Father. And then have the heart conviction to do His will. But first we must know it. If we do not know what God wants us to be doing with our lives, then how can we be obedient sons?

The second parable - The Parable of the Landowner:

Matthew 21:33-48: (NASB) ³³Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. ³⁴When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce. ³⁵The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third. ³⁶Again he sent another group of slaves larger than the first; and they did the same thing to them. ³⁷But afterward he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son. ³⁸But when the vine-growers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. ³⁹They took him, and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. ⁴⁰Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vine-growers? ⁴¹They said to him, He will bring those wretches to a wretched end, and will rent out the vineyard to other vine-growers who will pay him the proceeds at the proper seasons. ⁴²Jesus said to them, Did you never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes? ⁴³Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. ⁴⁴And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust. ⁴⁵When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they understood that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶When they sought to seize him, they feared the people, because they considered him to be a prophet.

TOM: A man had a vineyard and gave it to certain men to care for it. When it was time for harvest, he sent his servants to receive the fruitage of the vineyard. But when the servants got there, the keepers of the vineyard stoned some and killed the servants who went to collect the fruitage. Then the owner

says, "Well, I'll send my son because they will respect him because he's my son," and they end up killing him as well.

At that point the Pharisees and Sadducees had not caught on that Jesus was talking about them, but he brings the point home in verse 43:

*Therefore, I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruit thereof - The vineyard is the character development of Israel they *should* have been developing. Because they were unfaithful stewards, they were making these minuscule little laws for people to follow and missing that the whole point of the Law was character growth.*

RICK: Another stinging rebuke for the Pharisees, and they get the point! They are told that they are not going to have the privilege of the kingdom anymore. In that first parable, it is, "You have done the wrong thing." The second parable warns, "It is going to be removed from you."

After taking away the stewardship of Israel, who has he given it to? It was the Gentiles who were brought in - you and I are the stewards of the Lord's vineyard, and the point we must always remember is that the Lord expects fruitage from the vineyard. This is not just a lesson of personal character growth, but it is a lesson for all of us in trying to help the entire brotherhood grow in Christlikeness. We each have a responsibility to help the vineyard, to nourish fellow Christians and care for them. That is being a faithful steward over God's vineyard. For the Pharisees, they finally got the point, and in verse 46 we are told that they wanted to lay hands on Jesus but were afraid of the multitude.

The third parable - the Parable of the Marriage Feast:

Matthew 22:1-14: (NASB) ¹Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, ²The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son. ³And he sent out his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come. ⁴Again he sent out other slaves saying, Tell those who have been invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened livestock are all butchered and everything is ready; come to the wedding feast. ⁵But they paid no attention and went their way, one to his own farm, another to his business, ⁶and the rest seized his slaves and mistreated them and killed them. ⁷But the king was enraged, and he sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and set their city on fire. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore to the main highways, and as many as you find there, invite to the wedding feast. ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. ¹¹But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw a man there who was not dressed in wedding clothes, ¹²and he said to him, Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes? And the man was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen.

TOM: This third parable continues to make the same point about their failure. It is about a king who planned a wedding feast for his son. He sent his servants out to invite guests, but all the invited guests refused to come. In fact, they mistreated the servants again and killed them. And as a result, the king was

angry. He went and killed those guests and burned their cities. Then he went out into the highways and byways to invite new guests.

Now the Pharisees were getting it. They did not need an explanation. They knew he was talking about them, and they went to counsel together how they would stumble or discredit him in his speech.

RICK: It was from this point on the Pharisees and the Sadducees took counsel together on how they might discredit Jesus by entangling him in his own speech.

TOM: That is a remarkable thing that we cannot underestimate. These two groups *hated* each other. It was unnatural for them to counsel together, but now they had a common enemy, and so politics say if you have something you want to get accomplished, you have to have bipartisan support. And that is what they were trying to achieve here. That is the only reason they would cooperate, because they really did not cooperate on anything else.

Two powerful forces in Israel sought to attack and destroy Jesus.

RICK: They never cooperated with each other except in relation to trying to trap Jesus.

The Pharisees come up with the first plan of attack:

Matthew 22:15-16: (NASB) ¹⁵Then the Pharisees went and plotted together how they might trap him in what he said. ¹⁶And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying...

TOM: At face value you might not get how clever this is. This is really an ingenious evil, because they were trying to portray an honest dispute between themselves and the Herodians. If you know who the Herodians are, then you see what the trick is. They were primarily a political body attached, as the name would suggest, to the house of Herod. They were members of the royal court of Herod, and by being in the royal court of Herod, they represented the interests of Rome.



The debate here was the Pharisees' disciples said, "We should not pay a tax to Caesar." The Herodians said, "We should pay the taxes." The dilemma they thought they were creating for Jesus was, if he says they should not pay the taxes, then the Herodians are going to get him in trouble. If he says we *should* pay the taxes, the people who were listening will not like him because they hated the taxes. They thought this would be a "lose-lose" situation.

The question was intended solely to get Jesus into trouble, regardless of how he answered. This is an example of playing politics. The trap was set with the presence of the Herodians. If Jesus should say that it was not proper to pay taxes, then the Herodians would label him as an enemy of Rome and turn him over to either Herod or Pontius Pilate. If Jesus answered yes, that it was proper to pay tribute, then he would have been discredited before the multitude, which hated the oppressive taxes of the Romans.

Here is how they present the question:

Matthew 22:16-17: (NASB) ¹⁶...saying, Teacher, we know that you are truthful and teach the way of God in truth, and defer to no one; for you are not partial to any. ¹⁷Tell us then, what do you think? Is it lawful to give a poll-tax to Caesar, or not?

RICK: It comes across so nice - "Gee, we are just wondering what you think about this really difficult dilemma." How does Jesus answer this lose-lose question?

TOM: Well, he does not start by answering it directly. He starts by talking about the motivation of those who came to him. He suggests that in debating the issue of tribute money, these people were neglecting something even more important, and that is what they owed to God.

That is a wonderful lesson for anyone who is a Christian. Men in the world work for things like money and social position. They put that as their first priority in life. But seldom do they realize what we all owe to God. I think that is the point that disarmed those who were waiting for Jesus to make a mistake so they could set their trap. Their trap was very clever, and yet the way Jesus answered was so logical and disarming that it left them all in dumb silence.

RICK: Jesus' answer is, "You should not even be talking about this. You are missing the point."

Matthew 22:19-21: (NASB) ¹⁹Show me the coin used for the poll-tax. And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰And he said to them, Whose likeness and inscription is this? ²¹They said to him, Caesar's. Then he said to them, Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's.



RICK: His perspective on this matter is one of crystal clear spirituality. How does he put this question into a whole different perspective they could not have even imagined?

TOM: He is saying, "It is proper to pay your tax, but that does not mean anything. What you owe to God is what is important. You have the wrong emphasis. You have to emphasize what you should be doing with your life, not the few pittance of tax money that you owe. So, he really answered the question brilliantly.

RICK: What should we take from that because this is a debate we hear today. Should I pay taxes or should I not? Should I be involved in demonstrating against the taxation of my paycheck? What do we do as Christians per Jesus' answer?

TOM: We have to realize that those issues can distract us from what we should be doing with our lives. The Lord looks at the heart. If we had to put a rating on what God rates as the most important things, he rates heart development as number one. These other things are fluff. He does not care about these things, and so for us they should also be inconsequential.

The world labors over these. They debate over these things, and it is very easy to get caught up. But the Christian should not. They should stay away from the politics of the world, because that can just suck you in and get you into these kinds of ridiculous debates. Listen to the words of Jesus, because they go right to the heart of what we should be trying to do in our Christian lives.

RICK: In the fabrication of this question to try and make Jesus look foolish, it is actually the Pharisees who end up looking foolish, because he gives them an answer that exposes their *lack of true religion*, their *lack of true spirituality* and exposes that their motivation is to trap him. It is a political move that fails.

Jesus got right to the heart of the matter. If we want to learn from him, we have to be listening. The Pharisees were not there to learn from Jesus. They were just playing a game and trying to win.

The question for us is, "Will we get stuck on the trivial issues of life, like taxes, or can we see the importance of the deeper issues?" We can spend a lifetime on trivialities and never honestly consider the real issues of life that Jesus is trying to show us.

Everyone who heard his answer marveled at the wisdom, and certainly could not refute what he said. It was the Pharisees who were made to look foolish. They were supposed to be the great teachers of God's Law but everyone could see that this simple Galilean, who was not preoccupied with the way he looked, or the way he sounded, or his popularity, that he truly was the Great Teacher.

The Pharisees fail to trap Jesus - how do you think the Sadducees responded?

RICK: Just because the Pharisees failed did not mean the Sadducees would just roll over. After all, they saw themselves as the more powerful group anyway. We need to stress the Pharisees and Sadducees were very different, and they did not like each other.

TOM: Yes, absolutely not. But they were together on this issue.

RICK: And this was a rarity for the Pharisees and Sadducees to be together on much of anything.



The Sadducees came up with their own plan of attack:

Matthew 22:24-28: (KJV) ²⁴...Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. ²⁵Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife deceased, and having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: ²⁶Likewise, the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. ²⁷And last of all, the woman died also. ²⁸Therefore, in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? For they all had her.



**In the resurrection
whose wife shall she be?**

TOM: This is the same motivation that the Pharisees had with the taxation question. The Sadducees did not believe in a resurrection, so it makes sense that this question would come from them. Therefore, they are trying not only to discredit Jesus with a seemingly impossible question, but they are trying to discredit the doctrine of the resurrection as well.

If they could make the resurrection look unreasonable, then their own position would be vindicated and they would look good!

RICK: One of the memories I have learning from childhood about the Sadducees is they did not believe in the resurrection - that is why they are "sad, you see." That is the only way I ever remembered that fact!

Matthew 22:30-32: (KJV) ³⁰...In the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven, ³¹But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, ³²I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

TOM: Here again in Jesus' answer we need to know what Jesus is addressing. When he says they are like the angels, the Sadducees did not believe in angels. He would now give them an answer they would find impossible to refute.

He quoted from the writings of Moses:

Exodus 3:6: (KJV) Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.

The Sadducees believed only in the five written books of Moses. What better authority to quote from than the authority they recognized and accepted?

Jesus was saying, "You, Sadducees, recognize Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as faithful, holy men. God is going to reward them in the resurrection. If you are faithful to God, He is not going to leave you in the grave." In other words, these holy men of God, which the Sadducees accepted as such, must receive a resurrection because a principle of God is to give life to those who serve him. He used this to prove there is going to be a resurrection.

But what about answering the part about whose wife will she be of the seven husbands? He is answering something we would never have known about. It gives us a glimpse into how the social condition of his kingdom is going to be, that there will be no marriage or giving in marriage. That's something we



would not have known had this question not been asked. So, Jesus gives us a deeper insight into the social fabric of how the kingdom will be made up.

RICK: Jesus' answer to them, then, diffuses the question by using what they believe to show them they are not believing what they say they believe. He goes to a source that they trust and says the source that you trust contradicts your own belief system. He then adds a dimension about the coming social condition that we would not otherwise know.

We can see the political wrangling between these two groups to try to trap Jesus, and both times it worked against them. They received answers they did not expect.



A chat comment from "joyfulandtriumphant:" They were indignant because Jesus threatened their power. Proper use of power is especially emphasized for us as Christians also in regard to leadership. *1 Peter 5:2-3: (NAS) Shepherd the flock of God, not as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*

RICK: The lesson that we should have in following Jesus' life and words is the proper use of power, something the Pharisees and Sadducees obviously did not do.

Both attacks have failed. But why are the Sadducees suddenly so much more involved now in trying to trap Jesus? When you look at the Gospels, you do not see them mentioned often like the Pharisees. Why?

TOM: It indicates that at the last part of Jesus' ministry, they started seeing him as a political problem, not as a religious teacher. It was not a religious issue for the Sadducees; it was about his popularity and their jealousy, but also, Jesus was a threat to their power. Another, even more compelling reason for the Sadducees' hatred was the actions of Jesus in scourging the Temple of the money changers.

The Temple was the exclusive domain of the Sadducees, and in the earlier part of Matthew 21, it was after the second scourging of the Temple that the Sadducees began to take an active part in trying to discredit Jesus.

The Sadducees had, for the most part, concentrated on the civil operation of Israel, consequently, we see very little interaction between Jesus and the Sadducees in the early part of his ministry, when he was a more insignificant religious teacher. It was not until the very end that we see the Sadducees take an active part in the persecution of the Lord. The fact that the Sadducees even noticed Jesus at all indicates that they came to attach a political significance to him. They were worried now about the popularity of Jesus and the claims of his kingship. He became a direct threat to their political power.

In the final scenes of our Lord's life, the Sadducees were the primary movers in carrying out his death. The Sadducees had influential ties with the Roman authorities. They were accustomed to dealing with the Romans and so they really were best suited to carry out the evil intentions of both groups.

(Source: "The Life of Christ," Frederic W. Farrar) There is every reason to believe that the shops which had intruded under the temple porticoes were not only sanctioned by their authority but even managed for their profit. To interfere with these was to rob them of one important source of that wealth and worldly comfort to which they attached such extravagant importance.

TOM: He was hitting them in their money belt.

RICK: We see how their motivation was out of line with what it was supposed to be. Being under Roman rule, they wrangled for whatever political power they could get. While they should have been deeply concerned with the issues of the Jewish Law, they were simply far more concerned with issues of Roman and Jewish politics so they could maintain power and profitability from the Temple. This upset Jesus greatly.

TOM: The word "motivation" is coming in here a lot tonight. The test of motivation is really important. It is not always your outward conduct that God judges; it is the motivation of the heart. Those who are attempting and want to please God have to keep control and keep inspiration to have the right motivation of heart. That is everything.

RICK: The Pharisees and Sadducees found common ground, even though they were enemies, because their motivation was to destroy Jesus, destroy the miracle worker, destroy the one who took care of the poor, destroy the one who brought peace and brought something good to everyone he touched. That was their motivation to destroy him.

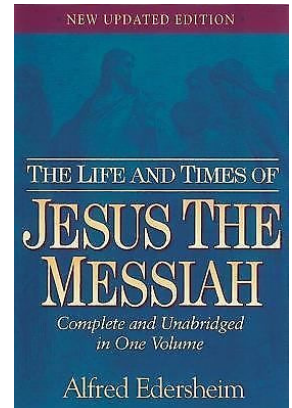
TOM: That floors me! They could see the good things he did and not be affected. We know there were some Pharisees who were, but they were afraid. They kept quiet. Nicodemus was a perfect example. He was a believer, and yet he came to Jesus secretly by night. It is troubling to me that they could see those things and not be touched by them.





RICK: When we talk about the last night of Jesus, we always talk about the illegal trials he underwent. What happened in that environment with the "trials" of the night before Jesus' crucifixion?

TOM: In his book, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, Alfred Edersheim examines what happened at the house of Caiaphas, and he compares it to what *should* have happened under Jewish Law. He came up with six major violations of that the men present would have known.



1. The absence of a note taker, or a court reporter, as we know them today.

2. The absence of a defense attorney for Jesus. Now, we might think that is a modern phenomenon that defendants should always have an attorney to represent them. In fact, if you cannot afford them, our courts will always appoint a public defender. That is not something new, as it was a part of the Jewish Law.

3. The proceedings were held in the palace of Caiaphas rather than the usual meeting place of the Sanhedrin. This would have outraged every principle of Jewish criminal law. In fact, it was like going to the home of the trial judge to have the trial. That is how bad it was.

RICK: The whole American justice system is based on the Old Testament, to have a just way of dealing with people. I find that fascinating because people just love to hate Christianity and the Bible these days in this country, and yet they all clamor for justice. But when you try to define the justice they are clamoring for, they use a system from the Old Testament.

TOM: Back to the proceedings, all these men knew the rules. These were not ignorant men. They were educated in the Law. They knew what they were doing.

RICK: Motivation, then, comes into play again, because it does not matter what I *know*. What matters is what I *want*. Their motivation overrode their better sense of doing things God's way.

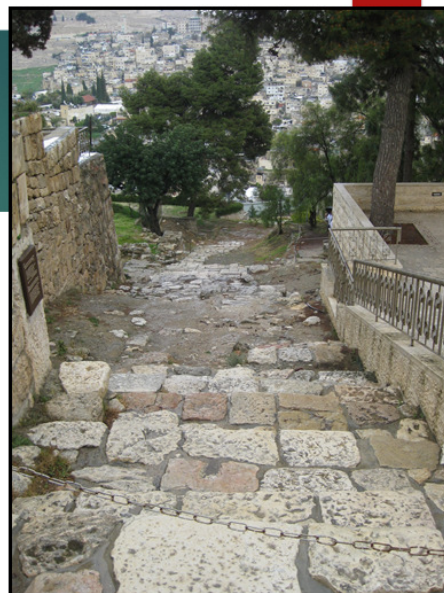
TOM: 4. A verdict was always decided through a vote of the Sanhedrin members. There was no vote taken; he was just condemned.

5. It was illegal for a verdict to be decided on the same day as the trial. This was especially true if the verdict was death. This allowed for emotions to cool, letting calm reason make a decision. They decided right away what they would do.

6. No such proceedings should have been begun at night or even in the afternoon. No process could take place on Sabbaths or feast days or even the day before.



The view up and down the ancient steps leading to where is presumed to be the House of Caiaphas in Jerusalem



All of these things were violated in the trial of Jesus.

RICK: Why would somebody do that? "Because my political position is being threatened, and I have to stop it no matter what the cost."

TOM: These men thought they had to do what they were doing, and they disguised it as "for the good of the nation he has to die." They justified their wrong actions, and so an important phrase is "politics took precedence over principle." Nothing should violate a righteous moral principle. No matter what the end goal, the righteous principle should come first, and they did not do that.

RICK: It is a matter of understanding righteousness versus the expediency of the moment. The expediency of the moment oftentimes gives individuals that sense of, "I gotta, I wanna and, therefore, I must." And like you said, they framed it as for the good of the nation, so we can break the laws of our nation, right?

TOM: That is typical of politics. Politics does not always look for what is best in the nation. There are interest groups and there is a violation of moral principles all the time for other expedencies.

RICK: That is what they say, and that is what we have to be aware of. This is about what they *wanted*, not at all about what was *right*.

With all that was wrong in the Pharisee and Sadducee approach, was there anything right at all?

RICK: Can you even call this a trial?

TOM: It was more like an inquisition. They were looking for ways to kill Jesus, and so they were trying to come up with whatever they could. They brought in witnesses, but unlike the refined questions the Pharisees and Sadducees had devised earlier, these witnesses were ill prepared and contradicted themselves. It was obvious their testimonies would not stand up before Pilate.

They had to come up with some kind of charge against Jesus. But even as an inquisition it was unfair. They slapped Jesus, they punched him for things they construed as disrespectful. Under the Mosaic Law, this should never have happened.

RICK: There is no scriptural precedent for this whatsoever to be found no matter how hard you look.

TOM: Right, right. It was totally unjust.

But after examining how, as a trial, the proceedings were illegal, Edersheim says that this was not really a formal trial, and no death sentence was actually pronounced by the Sanhedrin. The authority for pronouncing death sentences had been taken away from them by the Romans.

What the Pharisees and Sadducees were really trying to accomplish was to find some charge that would convince a Roman governor that this was a man worthy of death. In other words, this was more like an inquisition than a trial.

When they finally led Jesus to Pilate they took him not as someone who had already been condemned, but as someone who they had charges against that was worthy of death. But even the thought of an inquisition demands questioning.

Under a system whose judicial groundwork had been laid by the Mosaic Law, what right did they have to convene an inquisition? Who was there to defend Jesus' rights? Who was there to object to unfair questions and badgering? Who could stop a guard from slapping Jesus for giving an answer that was construed as disrespectful? If this was not a trial under the Mosaic Law, the rules of fairness and the spirit of the Law should still have applied, and the entire proceedings should never have been allowed.



"Jesus was arrested and taken to Caiaphas the high priest," hanging in Jerusalem at the presumed House of Caiaphas.



RICK: What does all of this mean to us? We are looking at the sum total of the religious leaders of Israel at the time of Jesus stacking themselves against him in an entirely unlawful way. They were so politically motivated that they did not seem to care about what the Scriptures said.

When we look at our world today, we could get into that same situation as a Christian. We can get ourselves so politically motivated and politically fired up that we say, this is right and that is wrong, and I have to stand for this through the political process. What is your thought on that?

TOM: I think to sum up, the simple rule of the church is to bring us closer to God, to make us more like Christ, to ingrain in us the principles of righteousness and truth. It is *not* to get involved in worldly politics, *not* to try to fix this world, because this world is not going to endure. There is going to be a new kingdom coming. That is where our loyalties must be. These men got distracted. They turned their eyes toward self-preservation and prosperity in the world, and they missed the point of what religion is supposed to do for us.

RICK: They missed it, and we can miss it as well. We better look in the mirror and make sure we are not following the same paths with the same lack of principles.

You mentioned that the witnesses they gathered together were contradictory and did not hold up. How would the Pharisees and Sadducees be able to bring their fabricated case to the next level if they could not even get their witnesses to agree?

TOM: It is very interesting what they did. If you look at the trial or the inquisition, their final conclusion was, this is blasphemy. They asked Jesus, "Are you the Son of God?" And he in essence answered, "Yes, I am."

The high priest tore his clothes and said, "What need we of further witnesses? This man has claimed blasphemy to God." When they go to Pilate, not one word about blasphemy was mentioned. It was all political things against Rome. They made up things! They lied! They made it all up how Jesus would undermine the authority of Rome.

RICK: They come up with a way to convince themselves that he needs to die.

Jesus gives them the information they need, because they cannot get it any other way:

Matthew 26:63-68: (NASB) ⁶³But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to him, I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God. ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven. ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, he has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; ⁶⁶what do you think? They answered, he deserves death! ⁶⁷Then they spat in his face and beat him with their fists; and others slapped him, ⁶⁸and said, Prophecy to us, you Christ; who is the one who hit you?

RICK: They were trying to find charges and Jesus actually gave them more of an answer than he had to. Why would he do that? Why did he do that?



TOM: We saw before how he could easily have gotten out of any argument. He could have gotten out of this very easily, because he knew the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and they were both there that night. He could have very easily started talking about the resurrection and the Sadducees would have argued against that. The Pharisees would have supported it. In fact, the Apostle Paul does the very same thing in Acts 23 - he got the Pharisees and Sadducees fighting against each other and was released.

Jesus did not do that, because he had a higher goal in mind. He had to come and die. So, he gave himself up by saying, "I am the Son of God." This shows his willingness to be sacrificed for us.

RICK: But they did not bring that charge of blasphemy before Pilate. They brought something else...

TOM: They knew blasphemy to a Jewish God meant nothing to Pilate. He would have laughed in their faces, so they made up charges. They created something that would get Pilate's attention. And, of course, they said Jesus forbade to give tribute money to Caesar. Was that true? That was a blatant lie. His answer had been that you pay tribute money, but it does not mean anything. So, that was a blatant lie, but it certainly got Pilate's attention, because that is what Rome was all about - collecting the money.

RICK: They made up charges, they misquoted him in those charges. They misquoted him by saying he said, "I am able to destroy the Temple of God and build it up in three days," but that is technically not what Jesus said.

TOM: Not at all. In fact, he made that statement three and a half years earlier. He said, "If YOU destroy this Temple," and he was talking about his body as the Temple. They thought he meant the literal Temple. "But if you destroy this body, I will raise it up in three days." He did not say, "I will destroy this." He said, "If YOU do this."

What is interesting about the first argument about the tribute money is, who had been arguing about the tribute money? It was the disciples of the *Pharisees* who said they should not pay. Jesus could have gotten *them* in trouble!

RICK: This is where the deceptiveness and the dishonesty of the Pharisees and Sadducees really comes into play. Then you see the incredible clarity and honesty of Jesus in his choosing not to go after them, choosing just to let it be, to allow God's will to be done in his life.

(Source: Biblical commentary by C.T. Russell) The world's worst wickedness in the world's history is that form of wickedness which parades under the cloak of religion which does evil in the name of that which is right, true, and good.

RICK: That is exactly what we see here. We see this cloak of righteousness, but under it is just absolute heinous, sinful thought and sinful action that is as wrong as wrong can be.

We have seen the Pharisees and Sadducees and their damaging motivation, and we see Jesus' response to all that. Let's turn our attention to Pontius Pilate



now, as he would ultimately be the decision maker. And as you mentioned, the Pharisees and Sadducees could not be the decision maker in Jesus being brought to death. They had to bring capital punishment cases through Pontius Pilate.

I have always thought about Pilate as a really weak kind of a guy. Give us a little bit of background into Pilate and his thinking in this particular situation.



"Christ Before Pilate,"
by Il Tintoretto, 1518-1594
oil on canvas, circa 1565-1567
Scuola di San Rocco, Venice

(Photo taken on site by
CQ Rewind team member who attests
the canvas is very large and beautiful)

Who was Josephus?

*According to Wikipedia, Josephus was a first-century Romano-Jewish scholar and historian. He recorded Jewish history with special emphasis on the first century CE and the First Jewish-Roman War. His written works provide valuable insight into first century Judaism and the background of early Christianity.

TOM: Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea, and the Romans had taken away the authority of Jews to perform executions. He was a vital link for the enemies to get what they wanted. Pilate was the final judge, so they had to come to him. He did not want to kill Jesus, as he saw Jesus was an innocent man. In fact, there is one text where he asked for a bowl of water, washed his hands and said, "I am innocent of this blood." He saw this was something that should not have been done, but he did it anyway. And his motivation is interesting as well. Was he such a weak man that he would willingly do something so evil?

RICK: It looks like it, though. Why don't you think so?

TOM: There were some previous experiences that he had had with the Jews, and this is really the height of politics. Josephus* talks about three incidences that happened prior to this time that set the whole political stage on why the Jews could have such power over Pontius Pilate.



For example, he brought some golden Roman shields into the city with the inscription of Tiberius Caesar on them. He thought it was honoring Caesar, but the Jews thought it was blasphemy because of idol worship.

The Jews took great offense to this, feeling that it was a form of idolatry. But this put Pilate in a difficult situation. He was afraid to remove the shields for fear of offending Caesar and so he refused to take them down. He was not going to let them control what he did with these shields! The Jews were very angry at him and wrote to Tiberius Caesar. The philosophy of Caesar was to keep the people content so the tax money continued to come in. He strongly reprimanded Pilate and said to take the shields out. He took them to Caesarea, which was not a holy city like Jerusalem.

So, Pilate was reprimanded. Now this threat of writing to Tiberius Caesar hung over his head. Anytime something would happen the Jews did not like, they could write and get Pilate in trouble. This incident made it clear to Pilate that the Jews were not afraid to go over his head and report him to Caesar. This became a deciding factor in how he later gave in so easily to the demands of the Jews regarding Jesus.

RICK: This type of thing happened three different times with Pilate?

TOM: A letter to Tiberius was only written once out of the three. But the other two show how ruthless Pontius Pilate was. He murdered many of the Jews who protested some of the things he did.

Another example was he built an aqueduct from "Solomon's pool" near Bethlehem to Jerusalem. It is about 23 miles distance for the benefit of Jerusalem, but he used Temple money to do it, and of course, the Jews were incensed. They revolted and they came to his home in Caesarea and surrounded it. Pilate had his Roman soldiers dressed in cloaks so they would not be recognized and had the Jews beaten with clubs. Some of them died. This was called the Aqueduct Riot. (See Bonus Material at the end of this Rewind for Josephus' commentary on this event.)



Parts of that same aqueduct still stand today. See photos.



There was one other incident that happened the same way. There was a real political struggle going on between the Pharisees, Sadducees and Pontius Pilate, and the Jews had the upper hand because of this one philosophy of "keep the people content."

RICK: You really see now how politics were overwhelmingly in control of this situation, because the Sadducees, who were so politically vibrant, should not have been. But being so politically involved, they knew they could bend Pilate because they had done it before. They knew if they created enough ruckus for something that was not going to make that big of difference from Pilate's perspective, they could get what they wanted even if it was wrong.

They played all of their political cards, and they pressed him on this issue in such a way that not necessarily was he weak, but he had to be "wise as a serpent." He had to know when to give in to keep the peace so those above him would still see him with respect.

TOM: But even in him we see a very similar lesson, that his preservation, the power that he was trying to preserve for himself, meant that was more important than the principle of knowing that he was crucifying an innocent man. So there again, self-preservation took precedence over the principle of doing what was right.

RICK: That is what politics ends up being about more often than not. It ends up being that way inside of religion, outside of religion.

JONATHAN: We did see him, though, challenge the scribes and Pharisees because he saw the hypocrisy. He asked for specifics respecting the treason,



and that floored them. They were surprised. "Well, why aren't you taking our word for it?" But he pushed as much as he could.

TOM: He could have done more, obviously, but when it got right down to it, his life was more important than an innocent man's. His position was more important.

RICK: In each case, when we look at the Pharisees, we look at the Sadducees, we look at Annas, we look at Caiaphas and we look at Pontius Pilate - that exact principle seems to come up. "My position is more important than the life of this man. My position, what I have, my power, my influence, what I have built is more important than the life of that man. I do not care how innocent he is. He is destroying something that belongs to me." This speaks volumes!

TOM: That is one of the great lessons we have to take out of this, that principle is always more important than what is expedient. We have a very short vision of what is expedient for us. We should never put that above principle.

RICK: Christianity has been guilty of these kinds of things throughout the ages. Think about the Inquisitions. Think about the papal system and their forcing themselves upon others.

When we look at Christianity, we see there has been an incredible amount of corruption. The question you have to ask yourself is, "Am I involved in a Christian organization or church that is pushing that kind of political pressure, and pushing the envelope of right versus wrong and expediency versus principle? Am I getting involved in that by just being quiet and listening?" If that is what is happening around you, you have got to ask yourself the questions, "Why am I where I am? Should I be looking for something different, something higher, something that reflects godly behavior and godly righteousness?" We have got to be focused on the right things.

What was the result of all this overwhelming political pressure?

RICK: When you think of God's chosen people and that kind of influence at the top, in the leadership positions, that kind of corruption, it is deeply troubling.

TOM: If you go through the history of Israel, and the history of mankind for that matter, when the leadership is corrupt the people tend to follow. When the leadership is good and is righteous and follows God, the people tend to follow. Proper leadership is very important.

In God's kingdom, we are going to have proper leadership, and the people will follow.

RICK: Make sure whatever role you play is really, totally, entirely, completely, utterly motivated by godly righteousness, not by what you like, not by what you want, not by pressure, not by power, but by godly righteousness.



This fear of violating the policy of Tiberius influenced Pilate's decisions:

Mark 15:11-15: (ASV) ¹¹*But the chief priests stirred up the multitude, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. ¹²And Pilate again answered and said unto them, What then shall I do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? ¹³And they cried out again, Crucify him. ¹⁴And Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out exceedingly, Crucify him. ¹⁵And Pilate, wishing to content the multitude, released unto them Barabbas, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.*

RICK: Pilate gives in, as he learned through the experiences with the policy of Tiberius that you have to keep the people calm. To him, I imagine, it looked like a tidal wave of anger if he did not give in to it.

JONATHAN: Wasn't Barabbas in prison for insurrection and rioting, which is one of the false claims they're accusing Jesus of? How ironic.

TOM: *Wishing to content the multitude* - sometimes we read right past it, but that is the key. This is what led Pilate to do what he did. In a way, I feel bad for him. He saw innocence. He tried to do something. He just did not have the courage to put his own political future on the line for one of the Jews.

John 19:10-12: (ASV) ¹⁰*Pilate therefore saith unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? Knowest thou not that I have power to release thee, and have power to crucify thee? ¹¹Jesus answered him, Thou wouldest have no power against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath greater sin. ¹²Upon this Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.*

RICK: Pilate is looking for Jesus to give him the words, to give him the motivation to stand up for him, and Jesus really does not do that, does he?

TOM: No, he was a willing sacrifice. *If thou release this man, thou art not Caesar's friend: every one that maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar* - That was the political dagger that got Pilate to do what they wanted him to do.

RICK: Do we in any way, shape, or form in our daily existence, as Christians, do we ever bend in that direction of doing the thing that is more convenient because of the peer pressure, because of the political pressure, because of the financial pressure, or whatever pressure it is, do we do the thing that is more convenient rather than the thing that is right in God's eyes?

TOM: There is another factor that comes in here, and that is fear, not just selfishness. I think he was afraid of what would happen. And I think a lot of times, we are motivated by fear. We are afraid that if I do the right thing, it is going to hurt me.

I guess it is similar to losing your position, but fear motivates a lot of people. The answer to fear is looking to the promises of God that He will not abandon us, that He will reward righteousness, maybe not in our time frame, but in His time frame. It will end in our blessing. Nothing we do towards righteousness will end up hurting us, only in our blessing.



RICK: That will be the eventual end. Sometimes doing something towards righteousness ends up hurting in between. Jesus is the perfect example, but look at the perfect result.

We have a lot of guilty parties here, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate. What role do you think Satan played in this scenario? What was he doing? What role was he playing? How was he provoking this behind the scenes?

TOM: We can only surmise, right? We have no Scripture that tells us exactly how he was involved. But Paul tells us he is the *god of this world*. If you historically trace that he was always intent on destroying the seed of promise, right from the Garden of Eden, when God said *the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head*, I think that was a keynote for Satan. It influenced his conduct - "If that is how you intend to kill me, I am going to try to destroy that seed." If you trace the lineage of the promised seed that came through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you find he made every attempt to destroy that seed.

I think that is why there is anti-Semitism today, because it is Satan's attempt to destroy the seed of Abraham. I think he was highly involved in this, and if he could not destroy the seed, he was going to corrupt it. Corrupting something good is often more deceptive than destroying it, because now the people think they are doing right in the eyes of God, yet it is corrupted. So, I think that is what he was doing.

I think he corrupted the Jewish system with the oral traditions. I think he corrupted the Sadducees by the Greek philosophies, and when they lost the purity of the Mosaic Law, they lost the true direction of God. He really had them more captive than had he wiped them out. He was using them. So, I think he was very involved in all of this. He contributed to the death of Jesus.

RICK: One of the best ways to beat down your enemy is to not take away what they believe in, but to corrupt what they believe in.

By allowing the oral traditions of the Pharisees to work their way in and become known as rock solid "law" of the Jewish people is an utter corruption of what the Law really was supposed to stand for.

To allow the Sadducees to have all of that Greek pagan influence in their thinking and to become more politically oriented was a corruption of a system that could have glorified God.

To the person on the outside looking in, you say, "Oh, a Pharisee. There is somebody who knows the Law. I guess I should listen to them." But no, because they are teaching a corrupted version of something godly, which is more powerful than taking the whole thing away.

TOM: Satan continues to do that. It is something that has worked before. Why not keep doing it? When we look back on the history of Christianity, it is one corruption after another. Christianity has murdered more people in the name of God than any other entity. He has corrupted Christianity in many ways.



Christianity, the Inquisitions were all about impure Christianity. The persecution of Christians by Christians was a corruption. Many of the doctrinal things that came out were corruptions, the system, the big beautiful temples, the awe inspiring churches that just inspire by their stained glass. Well, that is just fluff. That does not really mean anything. It is really what worked before. So, Satan has done it continually throughout the age, and we have to be cognizant of that.

RICK: And today when you look at the gospel of abundance, the idea that "God wants you to be rich," that is a corruption. That is *not* what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is about, not even remotely close. When you start to take the Bible and take every word literally without understanding the symbolism in Scripture, that's a corruption. We have to be really careful that we do not fall into those types of corruption as well.

In relation to all this corruption and Satan's activity, do you think Jesus really understood the depth and the ugliness of the corruption that was going to be used against him? How much do you think he got or how much might have been new to him?

TOM: I do not know that he knew every single detail of what was going to be done. I think he was maybe even surprised at the level of corruption, but he knew he was going to be mistreated. If you read Psalms 22, which is a prophecy of Jesus, it talks about *the bulls of Bashan* (see **Bonus Material for commentary**) coming around and surrounded by wild dogs. He knew all those texts, so he knew it was going to be really hard, his own people hating him. But whether he knew every specific detail of what they would do, I do not know for sure.

RICK: The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus *learned obedience by the things that he suffered*. So comment on that in relation to the evil he had to face at this point in his life. This, again, was the culmination of a lot of long-time planning of political corruption that really came to a head, especially when the Pharisees and Sadducees joined forces.

TOM: That phrase, *he learned obedience*, does not suggest that he did not know how to obey the Father. It means he perfected his obedience in circumstances that he had not experienced before. Never in his pre-human existence was he ever challenged with such evil, such contradiction against himself, and yet he obeyed in every instance. It was almost like the hardening of steel. His obedience just became that much stronger when it was challenged that much more bitterly.

That is a reason for our own trials. If we can be loyal to principle and loyal to truth and loyal to God when they are being challenged, we will be better for them, and I think that is what happened to Jesus. He became a more faithful individual through the suffering he experienced.

RICK: That faithfulness was incredibly costly, because it cost him even having his Father's face turned from him. The torment and the torture that he went through cost him physically. It cost him emotionally because all of his faithful

followers abandoned him, and yet he stayed true. Like you said, the "steel" became stronger and stronger, and it did not yield at all to any of this. What do we walk away with from all of this?

TOM: We have examined the good and the bad. With the Pharisees and Sadducees, the lesson is that true religion is not based on outward form. In fact, the Scriptures are so clear that God hates it when people are just pretending to be religious, the outward form. If that is the only thing that is important to us, we are missing the mark. He is looking for religion to change our hearts. And that is what we see in someone who is rightly exercised by experience. He is looking for sincerity and conviction, not in self-preservation.

When you look at people like Pilate, we see the lesson of how important it is for us to live by righteous principles, to defend the principles when necessary, to stand up for what is right and to always put righteousness as more important than what is expedient for our financial or social welfare. Those are the things that God is looking for, not how successful we are in business or in society.

And then turning to Jesus, of course, I absolutely love his ability to quietly accept the injustices that were done to him for the sake of pleasing the Father. Pleasing God was more important to him than being unfairly persecuted. That is one of the legacies he left, not just that he came to die for us, but he came to set the example for us on how to live a righteous life.

RICK: Tom, thanks so much for being with us tonight and going through this. It is a real eye-opening experience to see all of these things unfold.

We want to learn lessons from the failures of others. We need to look at the failures of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and understand that those failures can mean success if we take the lessons and look at the things to watch out for.

Politics and religion simply don't mix!

*So, how were politics part of Jesus' crucifixion?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Tom!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*

*And now even more to think about...
only in the **Full Edition** of CQ Rewind!*



Josephus on the Aqueduct Riot and Pontius Pilate

"He spent money from the sacred treasury in the construction of an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem, intercepting the source of the stream at a distance of thirty-five kilometers. The Jews did not acquiesce in the operations that this involved; and tens of thousands of men assembled and cried out against him, bidding him to relinquish his promotion of such designs. Some too even hurled insults and abuse of the sort that a throng will commonly engage in. He thereupon ordered a large number of soldiers to be dressed in Jewish garments, under which they carried clubs, and he sent them off this way and that, thus surrounding the Jews, whom he ordered to withdraw. When

the Jews were in full torrent of abuse he gave his soldiers the prearranged signal. They, however, inflicted much harder blows than Pilate had ordered, punishing alike both those who were rioting and those who were not. But the Jews showed no faint-heartedness; and so, caught unarmed, as they were, by men delivering a prepared attack, many of them actually were slain on the spot, while some withdrew disabled by blows. Thus ended the uprising." (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 18:60-62).

"On a later occasion he provoked a fresh uproar by expending upon the construction of an aqueduct the sacred treasure known as Corbonas; the water was brought from a distance of seventy kilometers. Indignant at this proceeding, the populace formed a ring round the tribunal of Pilate, then on a visit to Jerusalem, and besieged him with angry clamor. He, foreseeing the tumult, had interspersed among the crowd a troop of his soldiers, armed but disguised in civilian dress, with orders not to use their swords, but to beat any rioters with cudgels. He now from his tribunal gave the agreed signal. Large numbers of the Jews perished, some from the blows which they received, others trodden to death by their companions in the ensuing flight. Cowed by the fate of the victims, the multitude was reduced to silence." (Josephus, The Jewish War 2:175-177).

The "Bulls of Bashan" as described in Gill's Exposition of the Bible

Many bulls have compassed me: By whom are meant the chief priests, elders, Scribes, and Pharisees, among the Jews, and Herod and Pontius Pilate among the Gentiles, comparable to bulls for their fierceness, rage, and fury against Christ, Psalm 2:1; and for their pushing at him with their horns of power and authority, and for their trampling him under their feet, his person and offices; these compassed him about at his apprehension, arraignment, trial, and condemnation; and there were many of them to one child, Jesus:

strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round; Bashan was a very fruitful country, in which cattle of various sorts, and bulls among the rest, were fed and fattened; see Deuteronomy 32:14; bulls are noted for their strength in other writers. Hence great men, who abounded in riches and power, and used them to the oppression of the poor, are compared to the kine of Bashan, Amos 4:1; and a very fit name this was for the kings and princes of the earth; for Caiaphas, Annas, and the chief priests, that lived upon the fat of the land, who beset Christ around, and employed all their power and policy to take him and bring him to death; nor is it unusual with Heathen writers to compare great personages to bulls.

For more behind-the-scenes of what led up to the crucifixion, we recommend reading the short article, "The World's Greatest Trial," found at <http://www.blessedbible.com/linked/greatesttrialbooklet.pdf>

What is the "Pilate Stone?"

The Pilate Stone is a damaged block of carved limestone discovered in 1961 with a partially intact inscription mentioning Pontius Pilate. It is important because it provides contemporaneous evidence for the historical existence of the Pilate of the New Testament.

It is thought that he made his headquarters at Caesarea Maritima and traveled to Jerusalem only when necessary.

According to Wikipedia, the partial inscription reads (conjectural letters in brackets):

[DIS AUGUSTI]S TIBERIÉUM
[...PO]NTIUS PILATUS
[...PRAEF]ECTUS IUDA[EA]E
[...FECIT D]E[DICAVIT]

The translation from Latin to English for the inscription reads:

To the Divine Augusti [this] Tiberieum
...Pontius Pilate
...prefect of Judea
...has dedicated [this]

It is thought the artifact relates to a dedication of a building in honor of the emperor Tiberius.

The original stone is at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. The top left photo shows a replica of the stone located at Caesarea Maritima. The top right photo recreates the inscription. The bottom two photos are from what is now the archeological site and national park at Caesarea Maritima, halfway between the cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa.

