



Stuff They Didn't Teach Me In Sunday School



Episode 121 - History's Greatest Cave-In (Mark 15)

King of the Jews

Pontius Pilate was no fool. He knew most of the charges against Jesus were total nonsense. Still, he had to wonder: was Jesus proclaiming Himself King of the Jews? Was He rising up against Caesar? A quick interview with Jesus was enough to convince the governor that Jesus was no threat. So why did the most powerful man in Jerusalem, with troops at his disposal from the most powerful nation in the world, back down?

- Describe a time you saw someone back down from doing what they knew was right.
- What convinced them it was in their best interest to back down?

An Alternate Named Barabbas

Pilate had basically two objectives—save his career and convince the rulers it would be best to set Jesus free. To encourage this, he offered the crowd a choice between releasing Jesus or an extremely dangerous criminal in the prison. Surely, the Roman leaders realized Barabbas was a huge threat to them. He was already condemned for insurrection—a murderous attack on the Romans. If Barabbas went free and continued his violent life, the emperor might remove them from office and replace them with leaders better able to deal with their Jewish rebels.

- Why do you think the Jewish leaders saw Jesus as a bigger threat than Barabbas?
- How did their demand for Barabbas' freedom put Pilate in a weaker position?

Pilate Caves

After the crowds demanded Barabbas' freedom and Jesus' condemnation, it was all over for Pilate. He had a simple choice to make—save Jesus or save his own career. With the crowds growing louder, Pilate granted them their wish and condemned Jesus to death.

- Describe some situations where you have faced a similar decision to that which Pilate faced.

All Alone

Mark shows Jesus suffering all alone. Abandoned by His disciples He stands by Himself during His arrest, His trials, His flogging and His crucifixion.

- Describe a time you found yourself all alone without a friend.
- What makes such isolation so difficult?

Jesus' suffering and death reveal a glimpse into the future that each of us deserves because of our sinful lives. Each of us deserves to be bound hand and foot and thrown into the outer darkness. But innocent Jesus took our place. He allowed His hands and feet to be nailed to the cross and suffered alone in the darkness, paying for all the sins of all people of all time.

- What objections do you hear people raise against the idea of God creating a place like hell?
- How does the cross and Jesus' suffering help to answer their objections?
- Describe the sacrifices you have seen people make for their loved ones.
- How does that help us see more clearly the love of Jesus in suffering such punishment for all of us?