

repeating vague charges. He demands to know definitely who his accusers are. In reply Pilate scornfully denies that he has sufficient interest in the matter to have an opinion, and states that the representatives of Christ's own nation are the accusers. He again asks what is the ground of this accusation. Thereupon Jesus explains the nature of his kingdom in a way to convince Pilate that he is no disturber of the public peace, but from a heathen's standpoint, only a harmless religious enthusiast. His contemptuous question, "What is truth?" closed the interview. Thou sayest—The common formula of assent in Palestine and Greece. An unequivocal "I am."

3-5. Accused him of many things—Leading Jesus forth again Pilate declared him innocent (Luke 23: 4; John 18: 38). Immediately his ears were fiercely and clamorously assailed with a multiplicity of accusations, to which Jesus made no reply, exciting thereby the wonderment of his judge. He answered nothing—(Isa. 53: 7). Matt. (R. V.) "to not even one word." Pilate marvelled—At his meekness, forbearance and self control. To have replied would have been useless. Amid the babel of their invectives Pilate caught the word "Galilee," and enquired if Jesus were a Galilean (Luke 23: 6-12), and, on ascertaining that he belonged to the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas, he thought to relieve himself from a dilemma, and heal an old feud by an act of courtesy, and accordingly he sent Jesus to the tetrarch of Galilee, who was then in Jerusalem. But Herod had no desire to meddle with so delicate a matter, so after mockery and abuse he sent Jesus back to the Roman governor. The trial was resumed, and in the most solemn manner a second time the innocence of Jesus was pronounced (Luke 23: 13-16). Here Pilate, not wishing to offend the chief priests, proposed his *first expedient*, or compromise, between justice and the Jews. He will scourge, but not kill, Jesus.

II. THE CRUEL MOB. 6. The feast—The passover. Used to release (R. V.)—Thus, it is the custom in the Massachusetts State's Prison to release one or two prisoners every Thanksgiving day. A murderer, however, could not be released lawfully (Ex. 21: 12). There is no reference elsewhere, outside of the New Testament, to this custom. It was a Roman usage. Pilate hopes now to circumvent the chief priests, whose true motive he clearly perceived (Matt. 27: 18) by an appeal to the multitude. Surely Jesus, the lately popular rabbi, has some friends who will vote for him. If only a decent number will shout his name Pilate will only too gladly respond. When, therefore, the crowd, turning its attention from Jesus for a moment, surged up to the judgment seat and demanded the usual favor, he proposed that, assuming for the purpose that Jesus was guilty, the Jews should accept the release of their king.

7. Barabbas—"The son of Abbas." An old version of Matt. 27: 17 gives his name as

"Jesus Barabbas." "Jesus," which is the same as "Joshua" (Acts 7: 45; Heb. 4: 8), was a common name among the Jews. Had made insurrection—He and his fellow insurgents were in prison. John calls him a robber. Matthew says that he was a celebrated prisoner. Peter calls him a "murderer" (Acts 3: 14). He had posed as a patriot, and therefore was idolized by the populace. The hollowness of their charge against Jesus is again exposed.

8. Crying aloud—The R. V. adopts another word here, "having gone up," i. e., having returned from the palace of Herod (Lange), or rising up in excitement, clamoring around the hall.

9. The King of the Jews—Either spoken in the hope of enlisting the patriotic feelings of the people, or a bitter mockery of their aspirations after independence. Matthew says that he called him "Jesus which is called Christ."

10. For envy—So shrewd an observer of human nature could not miss the real motive. Read John 11: 48-50 and 12: 19. While this altercation was going on Pilate received a message from his wife (Matt. 27: 19). Her name is given in tradition as Claudia Procula. In the Greek church she has been canonized. It is very likely that she was one of those Godfearing heathen women who were longing and groping in the dark after "the unknown God" (Schaff). The voice of a heathen woman was the only one that pleaded for Jesus?

11. Stirred up the multitude—How were they so easily moved? Jesus had disappointed their expectations; the slanderous charges of contempt for the temple and sedition were sedulously circulated and believed; and an excited mob has the cruel, wolfish spirit which hounds down the helpless victim of its unreasoning fury.

12. What will ye then—Pilate is helpless and in despair. He abdicates his functions as a judge, and bids the mob pronounce sentence.

13. Crucify him—With appalling promptness comes the answer. They would glut their revenge with his agonies and stamp his memory with indelible infamy.

15. What evil hath he done—Well might Pilate ask this question. No answer could be given, and none was attempted. The mob now knew its power, and shouted with passionate malignity, "Crucify him."

III. THE COWARD JUDGE. 15. Pilate, fearing a tumult, at last yielded to the clamor, and, washing his hands (Matt. 27: 24, 25) in token that he yielded against his better judgment, pronounced sentence and released Barabbas. Content—Satisfy the people, so as to allay the excitement. Scourged—According to Roman law, torture could not be inflicted before sentence, but the shameful treatment of Jesus by the soldiers is an illustration of the fact, well known from other sources, that in the provinces and towards