Pilate

The day emperor Tiberius contacted me to say I was going to be made governor was so exciting. My wife and I ate and drank all night to celebrate. What a privilege but what a responsibility - who wouldn’t want to be in a privileged position as an important part of the most powerful empire on earth.

Under our Lord Tiberius things haven’t always been easy – especially not in my province of Judea where we’ve often had battles and even wars with the Jews who seem to be overrunning the place, but on the whole the privileges outweigh the problems – a beautiful house, with a steady income, slaves, food and drink whenever I want – I can deal with a few wars as long as I still get to live the life we’ve worked hard for.

But just recently there have been more problems than usual and it’s all because of this man called Jesus. His followers are calling him Jesus the Christ – the anointed one. But I’m not going to call him that – the only anointed one in this town is the emperor. He’s got a mum called Mary, a few brothers and sisters but the most amazing thing is that he is claiming to be the son of God.

Not surprisingly lots of people in my province are not too happy about that claim – I’ve got a coin here, part of our currency and let me read what it says to you - "Tiberius Caesar Divi Augusti Filius Augustus" – do you know what that means? Caesar augustus Tiberius son of the divine augustus – do you understand what that means? It means that Tiberius is the son of the divine, he is the son of God – and yet Jesus is claiming that title.

So anyway…you can imagine it’s caused some problems. To be honest I wasn’t that concerned about it to start with – nutters have come and gone – I can’t tell you how many strange people have turned up here claiming to be God.

But as things went on it became clear that there was something different about this man. Seemingly sensible people were following him around and listening to every word he said, intelligent people were claiming that he could perform miracles, heal the sick all that sort of stuff. I had heard it all before but this time there seemed to be something very different going on.

But of course his claim to be the son of God didn’t go down well, and to cut a long story short I found myself last week presiding at Jesus’ trial. The accusation against him was that of blasphemy – the usual punishment would be death and as a Roman governor, let me tell you death is the least troublemakers likke him deserve. The stakes were high and I don’t think in all my years as Governor I have felt more nervous or encountered more of a hostile environment than I did in this trial.

So I took my seat there in the judge’s chair and as the trial was just getting going one of my advisors handed me a note. It was from my wife who had been at home taking a nap and it read “Don’t have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him” – you can imagine the confusion that came when I read that.

But there was no time to stop and think, people were waiting for a verdict and they had already made up their mind. Also on trial that day was Barabbas, I’d dealt with him many times before, he was a notorious and evil man – to my amazement the crowd started chanting his name – free Barabbas, crucify Jesus, free Barabbas, crucify Jesus.

What was I to do? My wife had warned me not to get involved with him, she believed him to be innocent. Try as I might I couldn’t find any hard evidence to pin on him, I think I was coming to the same conclusion as her – this man is innocent. I hate the Jews I would happily see them all dead, but this man simply didn’t seem to have committed any crime.

But the crowd were getting more and more aggressive – they kept shouting “crucify him” over and over, what had started with a few raised tempers was rapidly turning into an out and out uprising. So I decided I had to act fast.

How could I show some respect to my wife’s concerns, give the crowds what they wanted and also keep my job.

And then I came upon a brilliant idea – I would play those jews at their own game. They talk often about ceremonial washing, of doing away with sin by pouring water on yourself. If I did that everyone would be happy – whatever happened next wouldn’t be my fault, another enemy of rome would be dead, the emperor would be happy, the crowds would be satisfied and I could go home to my wife and tell her I took her concerns seriously.

So that’s exactly what I did – as I washed my hands in front of the whole crowd I declared – “I am innocent of this man’s blood – it is your responsibility”

The crowd were so riled up by this point that they responded almost as one voice – “Let his blood be upon us and on our chidren!”

And that was that. So I released Barabbas to them – no doubt I’ll see him again sometime in his next run in with the law. I was glad it was over, but part of me hated that I had declared an enemy of Rome as innocent – so as a parting shot I had him publicly flogged.

Soon after he was sent to be crucified – to be added to the list of those who thought they could challenge us but have ended up dead as a result.

But here is the problem…ever since then I have had a nagging feeling. Would those words “Let his blood be upon us and on our children” come back to haunt me? I can’t help but thinking there was more to this man’s blood than I may have thought…

If you were Pilate what would you have done?

Have you ever been as filled with rage as the crowd were? How have you dealt with it?

What do you think the individuals in the crowd did after the crucifixion? Do you think any of them came to realise the significance of what had taken place?