

To make the best sense of this post it is important to keep in mind what I said in the previous one.

In his response to my views of in [How Jesus Became God](#) - that Jesus most likely was not given a decent burial on the day of his crucifixion by Joseph of Arimathea - Craig Evans has maintained, among other things, that Pilate was not the kind of governor who would ignore Jewish sensitivities. For Craig, Pilate started his rule by making a big mistake of bringing into Jerusalem the Roman standards that bore on them the image of the emperor. But once he realized that the Jewish populace was offended, he backed down and from then on he showed that he had learned his lesson. For that reason, Craig finds it "hard to believe" that at a later time Pilate would do something so opposed to Jewish custom as allow a body unburied on the day of a person's death.

This view strikes me as extremely problematic, for several reasons. To start with, it flies in the face of what we in fact know about Roman practices of crucifixion. I should point out that if it were *Jews* who had executed Jesus, then indeed their law would have required them to bury him that day; but it was not Jews, it was Romans who killed him. Jewish law does not apply to Romans and Jews could not insist that it did. Even if they did insist, they would be doing nothing different from what every other nation, race, and people did - protest that they wanted to bury their dead. Romans never, so far as we know, paid attention to these local sensitivities in the case of the crucifixion of enemies of the state.

Second, I showed yesterday that Craig very much misreads the incident of the Roman standards, as based on the account that he himself cites (the Jewish historian Josephus). Pilate showed, in that incident itself, that he did not care a twit about Jewish sensitivities - he was offensive, intransigent, and brutal.

Most important for this current post is a fact that Craig (understandably) fails to mention in his discussion of Pontius Pilate, in his critique of my view. That is that we have hard *evidence* that Pilate did not "learn his lesson" when it came to offending Jewish sensitivities. The evidence comes from the same source Craig uses, and it shows beyond any doubt that Pilate was the vicious, insensitive ruler that history, but not Craig, has portrayed him as being.

In a second story from Josephus we learn of an incident from later in Pilate's rule, by which time, in Craig's calculation, Pilate had grown sensitive to Jewish customs. You can figure out for yourself whether you think he is right about that.

This second anecdote again comes from Josephus [Antiquities](#), book 18. Pilate wanted to provide fresh water for Jerusalem and so arranged to have an aqueduct built (a noble idea) - but he paid for it by raiding the treasury in the Jewish Temple (not a noble idea). The Jewish populace was incensed, and staged a massive protest (Josephus speaks of tens of thousands of Jews). And did this massive indignation remind Pilate that he should not trample on Jewish customs, practices, and insensitivities? Well, not exactly.

Instead of backing down (we have no record of Pilate *ever* backing down: remember the golden shields, the standards, and now the aqueduct), Pilate had his soldier disguise themselves in local dress with clubs under their outer garments and mingle among the crowds. And then when the crowds refused to disperse, he gave the signal, the soldiers broke out their weapons, and started pounding people left and right. Chaos ensued, and many people died.

If someone wants to maintain that Pilate was a wise ruler who, after an initial but understandable mistake, realized what he was dealing with when trying to rule Judea and so took particular care not to offend, let alone, harm his Jewish subjects - this is Craig's view - then I think one is compelled to present some evidence of this view. On the contrary, all of the evidence points in the opposite direction, from the two sources of information we have of Pilate's reign, Josephus and Philo of Alexandria. We would do well to recall Philo's assessment of Pilate's governorship, spoken after he had been removed from office. When Philo speaks Pilate's:

“corruption, and his acts of insolence, and his rapine, and his habit of insulting people, and his cruelty, and his continual murders of people untried and uncondemned, and his never ending, and gratuitous, and most grievous inhumanity.” (Flaccus, 83)

When Craig insists that Pilate would not have flaunted Jewish sensitivities in following the standard Roman practices of crucifixion, I think he is simply overlooking every surviving piece of historical evidence that we have about the man.



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