

Review: Paul L Maier, *Pontius Pilate*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, 1968

Pages: 372

Pontius Pilate Brought to Life

This is a surprisingly entertaining and educational read about the mercurial governor of Judea. While written as historical fiction, the fictitious elements are written with a ring of truth, and take nothing away from historicity and fidelity to the New Testament account.

There is a treasure trove of Roman history, custom, and brutality interspersed which helps understand Pilate's possible worldview.

Overall, an excellent companion to any NT study of Pontius Pilate.

I) (pp. 1-12)

Romans took advantage of daylight since night illumination was poor.

Tiberius was titled *princeps* ("first citizen"). He had the *Castra Praetoria* built on Viminal Hill.

Mulsum was a wine-honey mixture.

L. Aelius Sejanus was an Etruscan, and Praetorian Guard prefect over 9,000 men.

Speech was more restricted in Imperial Rome.

The *angusticlavia* was a thin purple border strip indicating equestrian rank. These were below the senators who wore a wider *laticlavia*.

Valerius Gratus had been Judaeen prefect for eleven years prior to Pilate.

Aelius Lamia was legatus of Syria.

Sejanus is said to have arranged Pilate's appointment, which came with a 100,000 sesterce salary.

Rome's experiment with a vassal King Herod had failed.

II) (pp. 13-27)

Gaius was a common Roman name.

Annius Rufus was Judaeen prefect from AD 12-15.

Provinces outside Italy were either *senatorial* (older and pacified), or *imperial* (Egypt and on the frontier).

General Pompey was the last Roman to look inside the Holy of Holies after his conquest of Jerusalem.

Pompa is procession.

III) (pp. 28-41)

Penates were household deities, related to the well-known *lares*.

7M Jews lived in Judea in Roman times.

If Rome were not governing, Parthia would have entered into the vacuum and blocked the former's access to Egypt.

IV) (pp. 42-51)

Pilate chose a direct sea voyage to Judea.

Puteoli on the Bay of Naples was Italy's major port.

The Alexandrian library is said to have housed half a million papyrus scrolls.

Rome drew up an alliance with Judea as early as 161 BC which gave them protection from the Syrians.

Antipater of Judea was father of Herod the Great and helped Caesar militarily.

V) (pp. 52-62)

Herod the Great created the artificial port of Caesarea by driving huge stone pilings into the sea in a semicircular arc. The mole was 200ft wide with towers built on top.

The Herodians shifted from Pompey to Caesar, but after the Ides of March to Cassius, then to Antony, and finally to Augustus. Herod the Great first came to Rome with nothing, four years after Caesar's assassination.

Legio XII Fulminata and Legio VI Ferrata were stationed in Syria.

Valerius Gratus had Annas replaced with his son-in-law Caiaphas.

VI) (pp. 63-80)

Few Roman citizens lived in Caesarea.

Pilate's troops were non-Roman auxiliaries, a mix of Syrian and Samaritan nationalities. However, these would be loyal to Rome due to their hatred of the Jews.

Judea was divided into eleven toparchies or districts.

A band of twenty was usual for Mediterranean diplomacy.

VII) (pp. 81-94)

In 1961, an Italian archaeological expedition found a 2 X 3 ft stone at Caesaria with an epigraph of Pontius Pilate honouring Emperor Tiberius.

Herod's son Archelaus proved a failure and was exiled by Rome.

Herod-Philip's wife was Herodias.

VIII) (pp. 95-109)

Jordan river is 3,500 ft below the level of Jerusalem, and is the lowest river in the world.

Pilate's aqueduct involved 20mi of tunneling under Bethlehem and had a 500-1 drop. It was paid for out of Temple funds and finished in May of 29.

Jews paid a: *tributum soli* (land tax); *tributum capitis* (poll tax); *annona* (grain and cattle levy for the military); and *publicum* (diverse customs and duties).

Corban means "sacrifice".

Having a Temple Mount higher than Jerusalem allowed for continuous water pressure to city conduits.

IX) (pp. 110-121)

Pacuvius was an epicure who held mock funerals for himself: "This way I get to enjoy my own funeral, and each new day is a bonus for one fully prepared to die".

X) (pp. 122-130)

Agrippina's son Nero was not the infamous emperor. Tiberius banished them to different islands for suspected treason (Nero committed suicide on Pontia).

Jus gladii was "law of the sword" or capital punishment. Pilate decided to withdraw this right from the Sanhedrin.

XI) (pp. 131-145)

King Aretas of Nabatea was planning to invade Galilee and Judea.

Herod was a Roman citizen.

XII) (pp. 146-155)

Gaius Galerius was Prefect of Egypt at the time.

Sejanus was elected consul in AD 31, the highest office of the Old Republic.

Zelot Galileans were rioting on the steps of the fortress Antonia and were killed (as recounted in Luke 13.1).

XIII) (pp. 156-166)

A.U.C. was used for *Ab Urbe Condita* (“from the founding of the city”).

Sertorius Macro delivered the letter from Tiberius on Capri to the Senate denouncing Sejanus as a traitor. He was sentenced to death, plus, they killed his children too.

XIV) (pp. 167-177)

Macro became Praetorian Prefect, and Pomponius Flaccus replaced Aelius Lamia as Legate of Syria.

Pilate had gold-coated shields honouring Tiberius Caesar hung in the hall of the Herodian palace.

XV) (pp. 178-191)

XVI) (pp. 192-205)

XVII) (pp. 206-214)

The Sanhedrin held an extraordinary night session to try Jesus. A majority of two votes were necessary for a condemnation, and capital trials were only to be held at daytime.

Jewish tradition was medical assistance could not be given even for a broken leg on the Sabbath.

XVIII) (pp. 215-240)

The *interrogatio* was the Roman trial opening. Some suggested it would have been more difficult to get a guilty verdict from Herod Antipas since he had already killed John.

XIX) (pp. 241-251)

XX) (pp. 252-263)

The Jews would place feathers below the nostrils of the deceased for about ten minutes

XXI) (pp. 264-281)

King Artabanus III of Parthia moved to control Armenia, which was Rome's protectorate.

XXII) (pp. 282-291)

The *mare clausum* period was November 10 to March 10 because of the treacherous Mediterranean sea.

The imperial post system took forty days between Syria and Rome.

Mansiones were overnight rest stations having fresh horses, spaced every $8\frac{1}{3}$ mi.

Suicide was popular, since a man tried and condemned forfeited his estate and was debarred from private burial.

XXIII) (pp. 292-307)

When Tiberius died, Rome celebrated. Caligula was then inaugurated with over 160,000 animals sacrificed.

Thallus was a renowned historian of Samaritan origin.

Julius Herod Agrippa was grandson of Herod the Great. He was king of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis and Batanea.

XXIV) (pp. 308-326)

Caligula forced Macro and his family to commit suicide. He sought to be worshipped in the Temple of Castor and Pollux.

Caligula exiled Herod Agrippa to Gaul.

The only security under Caligula was said to be anonymity.

On January 23, 41, Praetorian Chaerea killed Caligula.

XXV) (pp. 327-335)

Claudius became emperor, but had to sacrifice Chaerea. He abolished the crime of *maiestas*.

XXVI) (pp. 336-348)

Epilogue (pp. 349-354)

The Ethiopian Church has June 25 as St Pilate and St Procula's Day.

Senators ported the *lituus*, a spiral-headed staff symbolising the Roman augur. This became the bishop's crosier.

Eusebius had trouble documenting Pilate's presumed suicide.

Philo is a hostile witness who despised foreign rule in Judea.

The Sanhedrin went into exile forty years before the destruction of the temple.

Tiberius died before Pilate reached Rome in his recall, thought to have been murdered by Caligula.