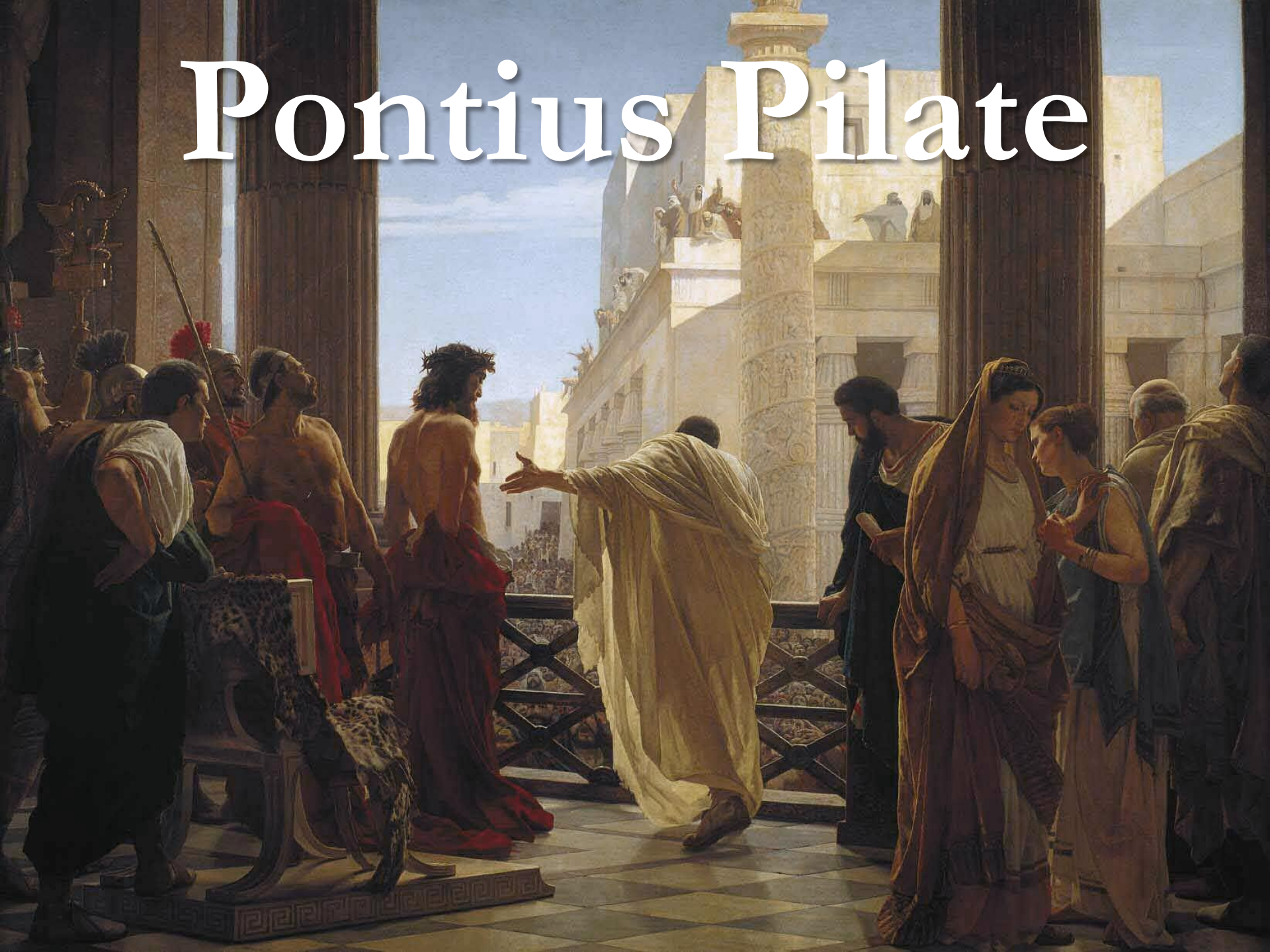


# Pontius Pilate



Over 500,000 copies in print

# PONTIUS PILATE

*A Novel*

PAUL L. MAIER





## Herod Archelaus

- Ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumaea following his father's death until he was deposed by Rome in A.D. 6.
- At that time, Judea was placed under direct Roman administration.

# Roman Prefects in Judea

DANIEL

- Coponius 6-9 A.D.
- Marcus Ambivulus 9-12 A.D.
- Annius Rufus 12-15 A.D.
- Valerius Gratus 15-26 A.D.
- **Pontius Pilate 26-36 A.D.**
- Marcus Antonius Felix 52-60 A.D.
- Porcius Festus 60-62 A.D.



# Tiberius

(42 B.C. – A.D. 37)

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The Reluctant  
Emperor  
A.D. 14-37



# By 22 A.D.

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- Tiberius seems to have tired of politics.
- He began to share his tribunician authority with his son Drusus, and began making yearly excursions to Campania that reportedly became longer and longer every year.



















**Tiberius' Villa Jovis**



# Enter Lucius Aelius Sejanus

DANIEL

- The prefect of the Praetorian Guard, an elite unit of the Roman army formed by Augustus in 27 B.C., with the specific function to serve as a bodyguard to the emperor and members of the imperial family.
- Sejanus quickly became a trusted advisor to Tiberius, and by A.D. 23, he exerted a considerable influence over the decisions of the emperor, who referred to Sejanus as *Socius Laborum* (“my partner in my toils”).
- A statue was erected in his honor in the Theatre of Pompey.

# Growing Enmity

- Between Sejanus and Tiberius' son and heir, Drusus.
- During an argument Drusus had struck the prefect with his fist, and he openly lamented that “a stranger was invited to assist in the government while the emperor's son was alive.”



# Sejanus Secures His Place DANIEL

- Tiberius was already in his sixties, thus the possibility of Drusus succeeding his father in the near future loomed large.
- To secure his position, Sejanus secretly plotted against Drusus and seduced his wife Livilla.
- With her as an accomplice, Drusus was slowly poisoned and died of seemingly natural causes on September 13, A.D. 23.

# Drusus Was Dead...

DANIEL

- And Tiberius, now in his 60's, seems to have made no effort to elevate a replacement.
- Finally, in A.D. 26, Tiberius retired from Rome to an Imperial villa-complex he had inherited from Augustus, on the island of Capri.
- Capri was a traditional holiday retreat for Rome's upper classes, particularly those who valued cultured leisure (otium) and a Hellenised lifestyle.



# Tiberius' "Retirement"

DANIEL

- He leaves his administration more than ever in the care of Sejanus and looked toward the sons of his adopted son, Germanicus (Nero Caesar, Drusus Caesar and Caligula), as possible heirs.
- Sejanus induced the emperor to withdraw permanently to the island of Capri, where he lived until his death in A.D. 37.
- Guarded by the Praetorians, Sejanus easily controlled all information that passed between Tiberius and the capital.

# What Does This Have To Do With Pilate?

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# Who Was Pontius Pilate? DANIEL

- We are dependent upon two sources:

1. The New Testament Gospels
2. Two Ancient Jewish writers:  
Philo and Josephus

# Little Known About Him

DANIEL

- There is an ancient tradition linking his birthplace with the small village of Bisenti in Central Italy.
- There is also a tradition in Scotland that Pilate was born in the village of Fortingall; other places such as Tarragona in Spain and Forchheim in Germany have been proposed as Pilate's birthplace.
- He was of the equestrian class, the second of the property-based classes of ancient Rome, ranking below the senatorial class.



# According to Josephus

DANIEL

- In A.D. 26, soon after Pilate's arrival, Caesarea (the Roman seat of government in Judea) was the scene of a major act of civil disobedience to protest against Pilate's order to plant eagle standards on the Temple Mount of Jerusalem.
- While Pilate's predecessors had respected Jewish customs, he often openly challenged their beliefs.

# Josephus Also Tells Us:

DANIEL

- Pilate once allowed his soldiers to bring standards with Caesar's image into the city at night.
- When the citizens of Jerusalem discovered these the following day, they appealed to Pilate to remove the ensigns of Caesar from the city.
- After five days of deliberation, Pilate had his soldiers surround the demonstrators, threatening them with death, which to his surprise, they were willing to accept rather than submit to desecration of Mosaic law.
- Pilate finally relented and removed the images.



# Philo Describes a Later Incident

- In which Pilate antagonized the Jews by setting up gold-coated shields in Herod's Palace in Jerusalem.
- The shields were ostensibly to honor Tiberius, and this time did not contain engraved images; however, Philo writes that the shields were set up “not so much to honour Tiberius as to annoy the multitude.”
- The Jews protested the installation of the shields at first to Pilate, and then, when he declined to remove them, by writing to Tiberius.
- Upon reading the letters, Tiberius “wrote to Pilate with a host of reproaches and rebukes for his audacious violation of precedent and bade him at once take down the shields and have them transferred from the capital to Caesarea.”

# Josephus Also Recounts:

DANIEL

- Another incident in which Pilate spent corban money (Mark 7:11) from the Temple to build an aqueduct.
- Pilate had soldiers hidden in the crowd of Jews while addressing them and, when Jews again protested his actions he gave the signal for his soldiers to randomly attack, beat and kill – in an attempt to silence Jewish petition.



# Philo's Pilate

DANIEL

- In describing Pilate's personality, Philo writes in the 1st century that Pilate had "vindictiveness and furious temper," and was "naturally inflexible, a blend of self-will and relentlessness."
- Referring to Pilate's governance: "his 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."

Is This The  
Pilate That We  
See In The  
Gospels?



## We See Pilate...

DANIEL

Acquiescing to the pressure of the Jews in the gospel accounts, ultimately bowing to their wishes despite his clear pronouncements of innocence concerning Jesus.

**And So, the Critic says:**

DANIEL

The Bible's account of Pilate is largely fictitious (and probably anti-Semitic), as the weak leader we see in the Gospels is not the ruthless tyrant that we see described in history.

**So, What is our Answer?**



# Well, Back in Rome...

DANIEL

- Beginning in A.D. 29, Sejanus began a series of purge trials of senators and wealthy equestrians in the city, removing those capable of opposing his power as well as extending the imperial (and his own) treasury.
- **Networks of spies and informers brought the victims to trial with false accusations of treason, and many chose suicide over the disgrace of being condemned and executed.**

# Sejanus Rules in Rome

DANIEL

- **Historian, Cassius Dio:**

“Sejanus was so great a person by reason both of his excessive haughtiness and of his vast power, that, to put it briefly, he himself seemed to be the emperor and Tiberius a kind of island potentate, inasmuch as the latter spent his time on the island of Capreae.”



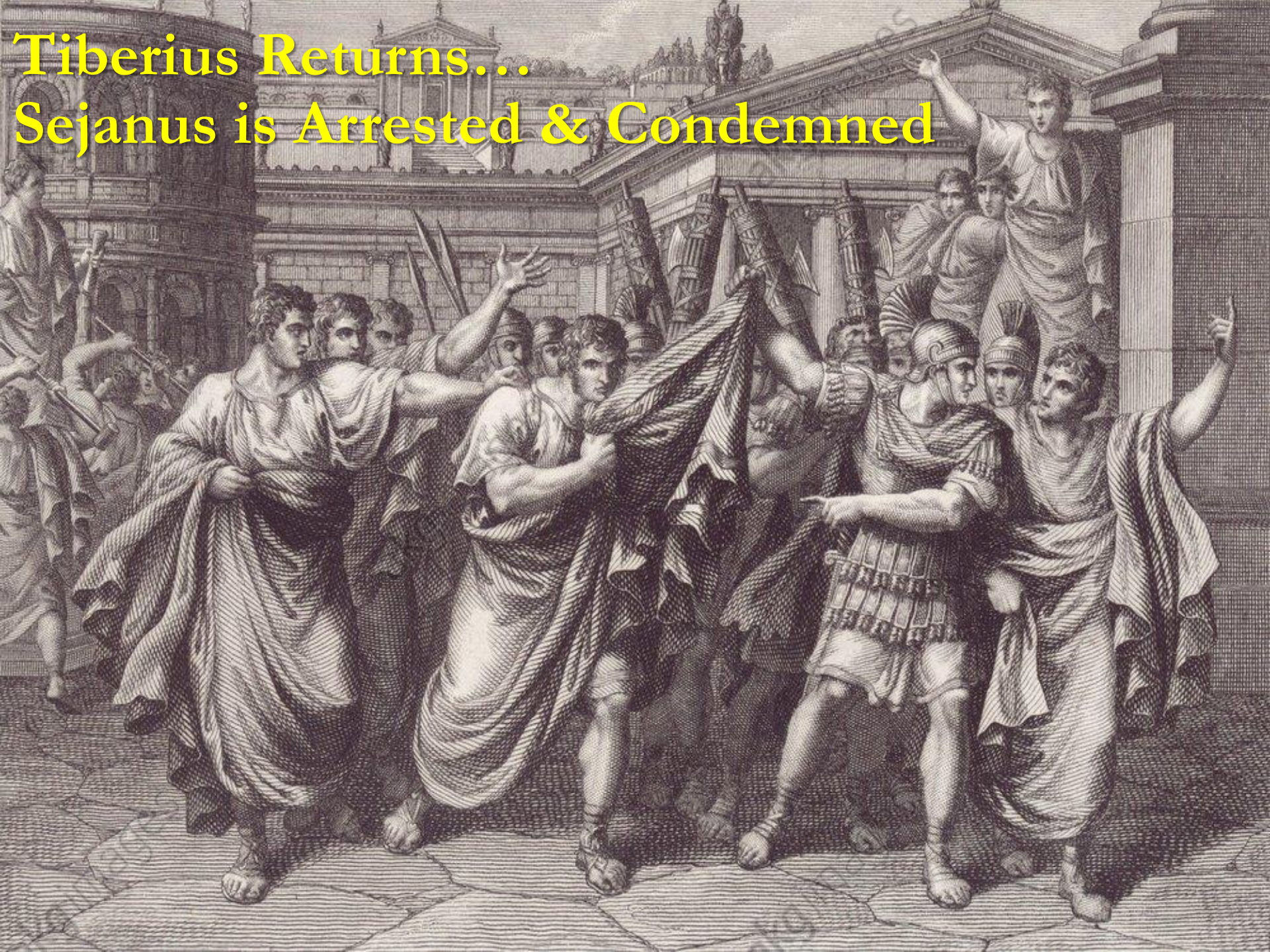
# Power Play

DANIEL

- Sejanus moves to make his rule official.
- He executes political opponents and exiles two of Tiberius' adopted sons, Nero and Drusus, who later starved to death in suspicious circumstances.
- Only Caligula, the youngest son of Germanicus, managed to survive the purges of Sejanus, by moving to Capri with Tiberius in A.D. 31.



# Tiberius Returns... Sejanus is Arrested & Condemned





# Sejanus' Downfall

DANIEL

- He was summarily strangled to death and his body unceremoniously cast down the Gemonian stairs, where the crowd tore it to pieces.
- Riots ensued, in which crowds hunted and killed anyone they could link to Sejanus, his statues were torn down, and his name obliterated from all public records.
- On October 24, Sejanus' eldest son Strabo was arrested and executed; his remaining children were executed in December of that year.

# Tiberius Wouldn't Rest

DANIEL

Until the full measure of his  
revenge was enacted.

He persecuted all those who  
could in any way be tied to  
the schemes of Sejanus or  
had courted his friendship.



# Tacitus wrote:

DANIEL

“Executions were now a stimulus to his fury, and he ordered the death of all who were lying in prison under accusation of complicity with Sejanus. There lay, singly or in heaps, the unnumbered dead, of every age and sex, the illustrious with the obscure. Kinsfolk and friends were not allowed to be near them, to weep over them, or even to gaze on them too long. Spies were set round them, who noted the sorrow of each mourner and followed the rotting corpses, till they were dragged to the Tiber, where, floating or driven on the bank, no one dared to burn or to touch them.”

In What Year...

DANIEL

Does Pilate Become  
Prefect in Judea?

A.D. 26

And Who Appointed Him?



A.D. 33



# Pilate's Verdicts

DANIEL

1. John 18:38b – “I find no guilt in Him.”
2. Mark 15:14 – “What evil has He done?”
  - Matthew 27:19 – “Have nothing to do with that righteous Man”
3. Luke 23:14 – “I have found no guilt in this man”
  - Luke 23:15a – “nor has Herod”
4. Luke 23:15b – “nothing deserving death has been done by Him”
5. Luke 23:16 – “I will punish Him and release Him”
6. John 19:4 – “I find no guilt in Him”
7. John 19:6 – “I find no guilt in Him”



# The Gospel is Clear:

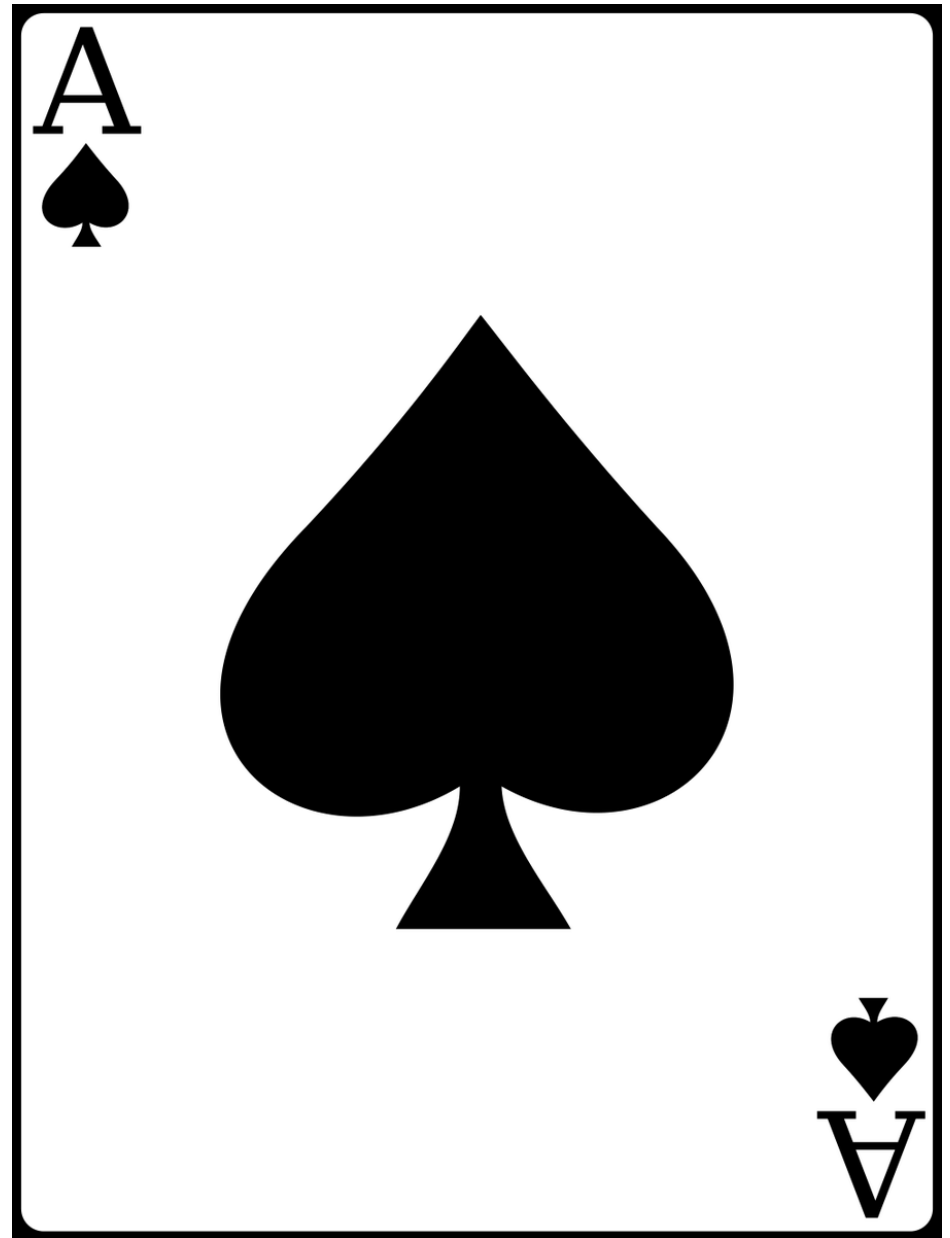
DANIEL

Pilate finds Jesus entirely innocent of the charges leveled against him and he does everything he can, from passing the Lord off to Herod, to offering Barabbas, to severely scourging Christ.

So, why does this “vindictive,” “furious,” “relentless,” “inflexible,” “murderous,” “inhumane,” anti-Semitic prefect bow to the will of the Sanhedrin?

Because  
the Jews  
Have a  
Trump  
Card.

What is it?





## John 19:12

DANIEL

As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

# Why Does Pilate Give In? DANIEL

Because he knows that because of his association with Sejanus, he is all out of chances in Rome, and if the Jewish leaders appeal to Tiberius, it will not only be the end of his political career but also his life.



## Matthew 27:24

DANIEL

When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this Man’s blood; see to that yourselves.”

# What Became of Pilate?

DANIEL

- Josephus reports that at a village named Tirathana near Mount Gerizim, Pilate sent in “a detachment of cavalry and heavy-armed infantry, who in an encounter with [Samaritans] in the village slew some in a pitched battle and put the others to flight. Many prisoners were taken, of whom Pilate put to death the principal leaders and those who were most influential.”
- **Pilate was sent to Rome to explain his actions regarding this incident, however, by the time Pilate got to Rome, Tiberius had died.**



# The Death of Pilate

DANIEL

- Eusebius, quoting early apocryphal accounts, stated that Pilate suffered misfortune in the reign of Caligula (A.D. 37–41), was exiled to Gaul and eventually killed himself there in Vienne.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> century historian Agapius of Hierapolis, in his *Universal History*, says that Pilate killed himself during the first year of Caligula's reign, in A.D. 37/38.

# “Less Reliable” Sources

DANIEL

- One source, the *Mors Pilati* (14<sup>th</sup> century), says:

His body was thrown first into the Tiber, but the waters were so “disturbed by evil spirits” that the body was taken to Vienne and sunk in the Rhône: a monument at Vienne, called Pilate’s tomb, is still there. As the waters of the Rhone likewise rejected Pilate’s corpse, it was again removed and sunk in the lake at Lausanne. The corpse’s final disposition was in a deep and lonely mountain tarn, which, according to later tradition, was on a mountain, still called Pilatus, overlooking Lucerne. Every Good Friday, the body is said to reemerge from the waters and wash its hands.



# According to Tertullian... DANIEL

- Pontius Pilate informed Tiberius of the unjust sentence of death which he had pronounced against an innocent and divine person; the Emperor was so moved by his report of the miracles of Christ and his resurrection, that he proposed the reception of Christ among the gods of Rome, but the Senate refused.
- In another place Tertullian says that the “whole story of Christ was reported to Caesar...by Pilate, himself in his secret heart already a Christian.”

DANIEL