

## John 18:28-19:3

*28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. 29 So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?"*

28,29 Here they are trying to kill their own Messiah to preserve their power and financial income, and they are worried about not getting to participate in the Passover Feast. The Passover is about God delivering them from the death of the firstborn through the blood of a lamb (Exodus 12:13,14), and they are trying to kill God's only begotten Son, the Lamb of God, who is trying to deliver them. The irony is unmatched. "Quick, let us kill the Lamb of God in time to celebrate when God used the blood of a lamb to save us!"

Scholars, and I use that term loosely, once doubted the existence of Pilate because they could not find records placing such a man in Judea. There are mentions of him in several historical works and the early church fathers, but these were brushed off as the additions of zealous Christian scribes. Amazing how much they can explain away to try to deny the Scriptures. It is pathetic that they cannot see their own desperate bias.

In 1961, the Pilate Stone was excavated in Caesarea. It was a stone that dedicated a structure to an emperor and the one dedicating it was Pontius Pilate the prefect of Judea. Once it was found in stone and dated to the same period, there was no denying it. The overzealous scribe theory disappeared back into the imaginations of the so-called scholars who do not want to bend their knee to Jesus.

The prefect's normal workday was from early morning till noon. The last night's watch ended at 6 A.M. so this was all taking place around that time. Pilate asked what the charges were. He probably understood exactly what was going on, as he had authorized a large portion of his troops to assist in the arrest the night before.

*30 They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."*

30 Evil is not really a charge. It is more of an insistence that Pilate just do their dirty work. Shortly before this, Pilate's sponsor in Rome, Sejanus, was executed for treason. Again, we see the sovereign timing of God. This put Pilate in a precarious position. If he upset Rome or his overseer in Syria for any reason, he could be removed. Up until this time, he had been a brutal prefect and generally without regard for Jewish customs. Now he was suddenly forced to try to be a politician, pleasing everyone. The Jewish leaders are just ordering him to carry out their will, but he needs an indictment, or he could be in trouble with Rome.

*31 Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." 32 This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die.*

31,32 Pilate did not want to be dragged into this, but the need to have him order the execution necessitated his cooperation. "This", all this: the sole authority of Rome to execute, the upper hand of the Jews over Pilate after the execution of Sejanus, the insistence of the Jews in having Jesus put to death. It all fell into place because of prophecy both of King David (Psalm 22:16-18) and Jesus (Matthew 20:19).

*33 So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"*

33 Pilate knew the charges and the leverage that the Jews had over him. He got straight to the real issue. Was Jesus a threat to Rome? Was He a militant Messiah? Was he fomenting a Hasmonean type revolt? Jesus takes a direct question and answers with a question. He is turning an interrogation into a chance to witness to Pilate.

*34 Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?"*

34 When we are confronting people with spiritual truth, we should be inquiring about what they think of Jesus. Do they believe in him because of their parents, pastor, friends, or do they personally believe in Him? And what is it they believe? Is it the biblical Jesus or just one of many ascended masters?

Here was Jesus, face bruised, swollen, bleeding in His sweaty clothes from Galilee before the fresh commander of 3000 soldiers, and Jesus puts him on trial. Pilate's answer will determine his own eternal destiny! This is another amazing reversal of roles. Jesus remains in control of this whole process. Pilate knew where Jesus was leading him. The Romans tended to look down on the Jews as being religious elitists. He was not going to tell Jesus what was going on in his heart.

*35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?"*

35 In other words, "Why are you trying to talk with me like this! I am not one of you. Here is a reality check. Your fellow Jews turned you in. Why?"

The Jewish leadership did not like the zealots. They saw the militant Jews as a threat to the detente that they had worked out with Rome in order to stay in power. Pilate is trying to determine if Jesus is really a typical zealot trying to raise an army, or a prophet that is a thorn in the side of the Jewish leadership (John 11:48).

*36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."*

36 Jesus put Pilate's fears to rest but raised some new ones we will see in a moment. Perhaps the Crusaders and conquistadors and others forgot to read this verse. Jesus was never about subjugating people. This world's order is not what Jesus is after. He is after hearts that enter a spiritual kingdom. Christians who get wrapped up in politics need to constantly remind themselves of this verse. We are recruiting people for a

spiritual kingdom, not an earthly one. We are building a spiritual army that fights with spiritual weapons, not physical ones. Jesus could have made His disciples supermen, Samsons, or Davids but that is not what Jesus is after. He wants them to be spiritually victorious (Ephesians 6:12), for that is what will last.

In the Greek wording of the end of this verse Jesus said, “*now my kingdom is not of this world.*” The word “now” is interesting. Should we read, “Now that the Jewish nation has rejected their Messiah...” or “now the kingdom of God is shifting to a totally spiritual nature...” or it could be translated “presently it is the case that... but the day will come when it will be earthly also.” It is something for us to think about. The point is that Jesus is not after what Pilate and Rome are concerned about. What are you seeking?

*37 Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."*

37 Jesus declared that He was not merely born but that He came into the world for a purpose. He has come to declare truth. Those who listen to Jesus receive the truth, the kingdom of God. Whoever is on the side of truth listens to Jesus.

Sometimes someone will tell me that they are a follower of Christ but then contradict something Christ taught. We have a community full of people who respect Jesus but do not think the Bible accurately relays His teaching. They are not on the side of truth, for they do not listen to Jesus. Truth sets us free (John 8:32). Truth opens our eyes. Truth exposes our selfish desires. The King speaks truth, and we bow our knee and receive it or we turn our heads and declare we are lord.

*38 Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. 39 But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" 40 They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.*

38-40 Pilate asked the most important question one can ask? But was he being facetious? He didn't wait for an answer, but truth was literally staring him in the face. Pilate had discerned that Jesus was not a revolutionary. He was no threat to Rome, but He was a threat to the leadership of the Jews, the ones presently trying to manipulate Pilate. To release Jesus would be to strengthen Pilate's position and weaken theirs. There was no basis for a charge and any Roman who abused the power of the sword could have to answer to the emperor. Pilate we in a catch 22.

Thinking to turn the tables on the religious leaders, Pilate reminded the people that he would release one prisoner granting them amnesty. He may have thought that the people would side with Jesus against their own leadership. I think the people trusted their leaders as to whom they should choose. By choosing Barabbas, a zealot the religious leaders would just as soon see executed, it shows how threatened they felt by Jesus.

Pilate then had Jesus flogged (1 Peter 2:24). The Romans had three forms of flogging. This was probably the less severe *fustigatio*, a kind of beating to warn those

who were out of line but had not yet committed a serious crime. Many of you saw the different beatings portrayed graphically in the movie *The Passion*. He will be flogged again in the severe form *verberatio* when He is sentenced.

*<sup>1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. <sup>2</sup> And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. <sup>3</sup> They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.*

19:1-3 This was a common Roman game they often played with prisoners, The King Says. It was a game of humiliation. With Jesus it was doubly significant because He is the King of kings (Revelation 17:14). Soldiers usually detested an assignment in Jerusalem because of zealot assassins and the strict Jewish culture. They took out their animosity toward the Jews on those condemned to death. They unwittingly place a crown of thorns on His head, intending to symbolize a crown of royalty, but in reality it was a picture of the curse on sin from Genesis 3 being place on our Savior (Genesis 3:17,18). Even in this humiliation and mutilation, Christ is controlling the details. By this time Jesus' face would have become unrecognizable (Isaiah 52:14).

Questions:

Describe the irony in the Jews refusal to enter the palace.

How do we know Pilate was a historical figure?

Why was Pilate in a bind?

How was a Roman trial different from a Jewish one?

How did Jesus reach out to Pilate?

How has ignoring verse 36 given Christianity a bad name?

Who listens to Jesus?