

# The Gospel of John

## Jesus Before Pilate (Part 2)

John 18:38b-19:7

### INTRODUCTION:

We are in finishing the 18th chapter of John's gospel and entering chapter 19. This is the final week of Christ's life before His crucifixion. Here in this passage of John we are in the middle of a series of trials that our Lord was put through: three of them with the Jewish leaders and three of them with the Gentile leaders. In all, there were six phases to this miscarriage of justice.

Now last time we looked at **phase one** before Pilate which was Jesus' initial hearing. The Passover is later that day. The Jews did not want to be ceremonially unclean so they did not want to enter the Praetorium where Pilate was so Pilate came out to them. According to their manmade law, if they entered a Gentile habitation they would be defiled and then they could not eat the Passover.

But this was not a law of God. The true law of God is found in Numbers 19. It said you would be ceremonially unclean if you touched a dead body.

This is an amazing level of hypocrisy. **The Jewish leaders do not want to be defiled, but they are about to kill the Son of God. They were happy to keep the letter of their own invented law while killing the one who wrote the real law in the first place and came to fulfill it.**

So they stayed outside.

The end result of that hearing is found in the last part of verse 38.

**John 18:38b (NASB)**

...he (Pilate) went out again to the Jews and \*said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.

The verdict: NOT GUILTY! He has committed no crime that I can see. There have been no witnesses. There has been no testimony. There has been no evidence. But the Jews are not done. They continue to press the issue in order to get Pilate to say "OK! He is Guilty. I will execute Him."

### Stand and Read Scripture

**John 18:38b-19:7 (NASB)**

...And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and \*said to them, "I find no guilt in Him. <sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" <sup>40</sup> So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

19 Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. <sup>2</sup> And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; <sup>3</sup> and they *began* to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps *in the face*. <sup>4</sup> Pilate came out again and \*said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." <sup>5</sup> Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* \*said to them, "Behold, the Man!" <sup>6</sup> So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate \*said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." <sup>7</sup> The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God."

## Prayer

In their sinful blindness, **the Jews were convinced that they were honoring God by killing His Son**. The Judge of all the earth was being arraigned by His own fallen creation. The Son of God was being condemned as a blasphemer. Liars would give false witness against the living truth. And He who was the resurrection and the life was handed over to die. John tells us that all of this detail has been given to us to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, so that we might believe in Him and have life in His name.

Our text is giving us a narrative of the events of the trials of Jesus, leading up to His death and resurrection. It is not my intention to sermonize this, but merely to take you through the drama of this history with all the relevant data revealed in Scripture to help us understand it. Now, obviously, Matthew, Mark, and Luke also record the history of our Lord's crucifixion and the events leading up to it. Although we will not look in detail at those other accounts, we will insert references from them to help us understand the passage.

One thing has become extremely clear already and that is this: the Jewish leaders want Jesus executed. Rome has the power of execution; that right had been taken away from the Jews by the Romans. The Jews could not legally carry out the death penalty. Even though they had attempted to capture Jesus several times in the past and failed, now they wanted to play by the law and by the rules.

Why?

The simple answer is they wanted the crowds to believe that it was the Romans who were pressing the issue in order to somehow validate their actions.

But the real reason was because Jesus had said when He died He would be lifted up. Jesus had to die on the cross and that is a **Roman** means of execution. He was not to die by being thrown down and crushed by stones.

Isn't it amazing? All of this madness is under the full control of God to fulfill the specific words that Jesus spoke.

Now as you come to this section, running all the way down into verse 16 of chapter 19, we are going to see three things unfold here - **Pilate's failing proposals**. He keeps coming up with proposals, ways that he could separate himself of this responsibility that he knows is wrong. So we will look at Pilate's failing proposals. Then next week, Lord willing, we will look at Pilate's **fatal panic** and then his **final pronouncement**.

So let us look at his failing proposals. He knows Jesus is innocent. He knows the whole thing is a plot by the Jewish leaders to have Jesus murdered. Jesus is no criminal; He is no threat to Rome at all. He is no threat to the security of Jerusalem. But the Jews are a threat to Pilate's security. He cannot afford another revolt. He cannot afford the idea that he is going to resist Jewish pressure, because he has done that already three times in his rule there, and all of them turned out very badly.

So his dilemma is clear. Rome wants fair and just rule. The Jews do not want fairness or justice. They are like a lynch mob and want to execute an innocent man. Pilate does not want to do that, but he also does not want another revolt by the Jews.

He is trapped. If he rules justly, according to the law of Rome and his own conscience, and lets Jesus go, the situation is likely to get even worse. If he rules unjustly, then he has slain his conscience, violated his oath, and worse, sold himself to the Jews again by blackmail. There has to be a way out.

He already tried a couple of ideas in chapter 18. He told them that he would lift the restriction that had been placed upon them that they could **not** carry out a death penalty and told them to "Go kill Him yourselves". But that did not work. So He tried another one. According to Luke He sent Him to Herod. But that did not work either. Herod sent Him back after mocking Jesus. Now he has declared Jesus innocent. What else can he do? Is there another proposal he can make?

## **BODY:**

### **I. KILL HIM YOURSELF.**

And again he says, "Go do what you want." He says it a total of six different times in the scriptures. Now Pilate is feeling the pressure to do what they want him to do, even though he knows it's unjust.

Why does he feel the pressure?

He was already on very thin ice with Tiberius Caesar who was his boss because he had so many times needlessly and stupidly provoked the Jews and caused rebellion and riot. Caesar did not want to hear anything else about his incompetence as a governor. He knew if the Jews started another riot he would lose his position and maybe his life, because Tiberius was as cruel as he was. So he is trying to maintain his job as a judge and a governor.

At the same time, he is trying to hold onto some kind of a clear conscience about justice. If you want to crucify Him, crucify Him yourselves. But even though you would think that the Jews would jump all over that opportunity, they chose to have no part of it.

So he came up with another plan.

### **II. RELEASE A PRISONER.**

Mark 15 tells us that Pilate had developed a custom that he thought might get him off of the hook with the Jews. Every year at the Passover, Pilate let a Jewish prisoner free. This was a good will gesture of Pilate. And, of course, he gave the people the right to choose who that prisoner would be, and he assumed that they would choose the least threatening prisoner. If they were going to turn a prisoner loose, it would make sense that they would

not chose a murderous prisoner. It would be some non-threatening prisoner to themselves. More than likely it would someone who had committed some kind of political crime against Rome or whatever.

### **John 18:39 (NASB)**

<sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"

Pilate thought that this proposal might just work, because Jesus was not a robber. Jesus was a miracle worker. Jesus healed the sick, made the lame to walk, and fed the people. He even raised peopled from the dead. "Wouldn't you rather have Him than an insurrectionist rebel who was in prison for murder?" The Scripture says that Barabbas was a robber and a murderer.

### **John 18:40 (NASB)**

<sup>40</sup> So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate is sinking. He releases Barabbas to appease the Jews, but he still has Jesus on his hands, and now they're screaming, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" So he comes up with one more plan.

## **III. SCOURGE JESUS.**

### **John 19:1 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him.

Why did Pilate scourge Him? He already said He is not guilty of anything. So this would unjust and illegal, but this is a desperate effort to do something short of execution to satisfy the bloodlust of this crowd. Pilate thought he would just punish Jesus and then release Him.

### **John 19:2-3 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; <sup>3</sup> and they *began* to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps *in the face*. <sup>4</sup> Pilate came out again and *said* to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." <sup>5</sup> Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* *said* to them, "Behold, the Man!"

"Here is your king. Here is your threat. Here is your dangerous rebel. Here is the one that Rome should fear. Here is the one that you should fear. This is absurd and ridiculous. He is helpless; He is pitiful; He is powerless; He is beaten; and He is pathetic. Look at Him! Isn't that enough? He has no one beside Him; no force, no army has come to His aid. Isn't this enough?"

He thinks by mocking Jesus and showing Him as a pathetic, bloody, beaten piece of human flesh, they will be satisfied.

### **John 19:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> Pilate came out again and \*said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.”

He keeps reiterating the “not guilty” verdict.

**John 19:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. *Pilate* \*said to them, “Behold, the Man!”

Why was Pilate doing this? He wanted Jesus off his hands. He did not want to kill Jesus due to his own conscience’s sake and his own sense of justice. Not to mention that he hated to do what the Jews wanted him to do because he hated them. But he is trapped. If they riot, he will be finished. Maybe this would satisfy them. Torturing of a pure and innocent man and ripping Him raw might be a compromise they could accept.

But NO!

**IV. JESUS IS YOUR KING.**

And once again, verse 6, the response is the same:

**John 19:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate \*said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.”

They are, of course, leading the entire mob in this cry: “Crucify, crucify!”

Remember in verses two and three the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, crushed it down on His skull. Put a purple robe on Him, some kind of a faded red Roman robe that was now purple because it had faded in the sun. This was supposed to be their earthly king.

There are seven separate indictments in the gospel accounts that they tried. First, Matthew 26, they said, “**He threatened to destroy the temple.**” That is His crime. Then John 18:30, they said, “**He is an evildoer,**” just sort of generic. Then in Luke 23 they said, “**He is perverting the nation.**” Also in Luke 23 they said, “**He is forbidding tax tribute to Caesar.**” They also said in Luke 23, “**He is stirring up the people.**” And they also said in that same chapter, “**He is presenting Himself as a king.**”

But those first six basic indictments had no evidence, so they come to Number Seven:

**John 19:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup> The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God.”

That is blasphemy.

So they end up with an indictment that is actually true. He **is** the Son of God, so they kill Him for the truth.

**CONCLUSION:**

I am sure, that even if you do not confess Jesus as Lord, you are thinking to yourself, "What they did is horrible. I would never let that happen." You might be saying Jesus is a good teacher, a great religious leader, a man who gives a life example of kindness and sacrifice. But Hebrews 6 says this: If you reject Him, "**You crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame.**"

I have got news for you: there is no middle ground. You either confess Him as Lord or you stand with the crucifiers. You either say, "He is Lord," or, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." And if you say, "I will not have that Man to reign over my life," you have taken your place with the crucifiers.

Jesus said, "**He who is not with Me is** – " what? " – **against Me.**" Luke tells us that Jesus actually said this was Satan's hour. This is the hour for the serpent to bruise the Savior's heel. So why did they do this? Because their father is Satan and this is Satan's hour. But more importantly, they did it because God permitted it as Jesus began bearing punishment for our sins.

When the Jews were given the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, they screamed "Barabbas. I want you to hear what Matthew wrote.

### **Matthew 27:22-23 (NASB)**

**<sup>22</sup> Pilate \*said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all \*said, "Crucify Him!" <sup>23</sup> And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!"**

Here is the bottom line: Christ wasn't just crucified once. He is crucified over and over for every heart that rejects Him. If you have rejected Christ you stand with the crucifiers and you say, "We will not have this man rule over us." You say are in essence saying, "We have no god but Caesar." You have a different god; you have no interest in the lordship of Christ.

If that is your attitude, if that is your decision, you are among the crucifiers. There is no middle ground. You are either among those who embrace Him as Lord and Savior, or you are with the crucifiers. If you continue in that attitude toward Christ you will spend eternity separated from the glory of God with the crucifiers. So before you indict the Jews for what they did historically, look at your own heart. To reject Christ now is to once again crucify Him. In effect you are saying "I have no interest in Him; put Him to death."

**He is Lord!**