



**John 18:28-40**

***“Who Do You Want? Jesus or a Political Messiah?”***

**28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning. But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover.**

**29 Pilate then went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"**

**30 They answered and said to him, "If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you."**

**31 Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,"**

**32 that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.**

**33 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"**

**34 Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?"**

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

**36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."**

**37 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."**

**38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all.**

**39 " But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"**

**40 Then they all cried again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.**

Kids if you were ever accused of something you didn't do, and were brought to trial in a court of law, before a judge, you would hope that the trial would be fair and that they would be concerned about getting to the truth of the matter. Well unfortunately, that isn't what is going on in the trial of Jesus...

The Praetorium was the Roman military Governor's residence in Jerusalem, now the place Pilate lived for most of the year was actually the palace that Herod the Great had built in Caesarea. Caesarea was

much nicer in the way that a resort town is nicer than city. But during the great feasts like Passover, when Jerusalem was filled to bursting with Jews from around the world and the chances of a riot or even a rebellion were much higher, the Roman Governor would be in Jerusalem.

Now the Priests and the members of the Sanhedrin couldn't actually go inside the Praetorium as entering the home of a gentile would have made them ceremonially unclean, and they wouldn't have been able to go up to the temple or participate in all or part of the feast of Unleavened Bread that was part of the Passover. So they could only go so far as the porch or outer portico of the house, which meant that Pilate would have to interview Jesus and then come out to speak to them.

Isn't it Ironic that here we have men, who are taking part in the most awful act of judicial murder in history, who are willing to bribe, and to suborn perjury, and do whatever it takes to put Jesus, the Son of God to death, are very scrupulous about this minor detail. But then again, their religion is done for the benefit of the eyes of men, not to please God. So even as they are treading the ten commandments under foot, they are careful not to get their shoes ceremonially unclean with gentile dust.

While most of the Jews don't go inside, it is likely that John, an Apostle of Jesus Christ who was known to High Priest, just as he had gone into the Courtyard of the High Priest, also went did, and thus got to hear and then record not only the public exchange between Pilate and the crowd, but also the more private exchange between Jesus and Pilate inside the building.

Pilate's question to them about the accusation, indeed the very idea that there would be a trial probably shocked them, Pilate had already helped them by giving them a detachment of troops to arrest Jesus – they had probably told Him a dangerous rebel had entered the city on Passover, and so they were probably expecting him merely to rubber stamp their crucifixion request as well. But something stops him. I think it was probably the demeanor of Jesus. Pilate was corrupt, and weak, and vicious, but he wasn't an idiot. As soon as he saw Christ his peace, his calm, how gentle and lowly in heart he was, and how he clearly was not dressed for armed conflict he knew this man was no threat to Caesar. So Pilate must have been thinking at that point, "what's their game? What are they up to?" In any event, he knew that there was no charge in Roman law that could be brought against him, and from that point he tried to set Jesus free, especially because we also read in Matt. 27:19 that Pilate's wife sent a message to him saying **"Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."**

So Pilate says in essence to them, you have a problem with this man, you take care of it. And they answer, **"It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,"** They've already decided they won't be satisfied with anything less than crucifixion, and while they might be able to get away with a spur of the moment stoning once in a while, only the Romans had the authority to crucify someone.

He will not be stoned, rather He will be Crucified, because the Jews wanted Him to have a death that would show him to be accursed and drive men away from Him and being hanged on a tree the most accursed of deaths. Deut 21:23 "his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

But friends don't think it was the Jews who had determined that, they are not guiding these events, rather God was, and it was precisely God's intention that the entire world know and see that Jesus was indeed accursed at that moment, that he was acting as the sin bearer for all of His sheep, and that the

justice of a Holy God was about to falling Upon Him: Isaiah 53:6 *All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

And so he was going to the Cross to bear the curse for His Sheep, as *Gal. 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")*,

Jesus indeed had prophetically stated that this would be the manner of His death, *John 12:32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.*

Well I want to focus on three questions that Pilate asks, two are asked of Christ, and the third is asked of the Jews. In one sense they are all good questions. Incidentally, just a quick note, we don't read that Pilate asked for an interpreter, and it is very unlikely that he learned Aramaic, so it is likely that the exchange here took place in Koine Greek which was the lingua franca of the area, this means that John would have been recording what he heard without having to translate it into Greek.

The first is his question to Christ in verse 33, *"Are You the King of the Jews?"* No doubt at this point Pilate asked this somewhat incredulously. The Jews said this man was a rebel, someone seeking to set himself upon the throne of David. But looking at Him, Pilate can't believe that he would claim such a thing. Jesus' replies "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" In other words, is that what they told you? If by that question, you mean a political king seeking to overthrow the government the way that Annas and Caiaphas claimed, then the answer is no.

Pilate's next answer is somewhat exasperated, I'm not a Jew, your own countrymen have delivered you into my hands, they want you dead why? Is it something against Jewish or Roman law, if it's Jewish law it's not my problem, but if it's rebellion, then that's another matter.

Jesus now gives an answer that indicates that he has not come to kick out the Romans or take earthly kingdoms by force, he has not broken Roman law at all. Jesus tells Him that while He is a King, and that His is the Kingdom, his Kingdom is the Kingdom of Heaven. The Kingdom that unlike Rome or the other kingdoms of the world will never pass away. He even offers Pilate PROOF He is not a rebel, if He were, his servants would have FOUGHT to stop him being delivered to the Jews, and as Pilate would have gotten back exactly the same number of troops he sent out to help catch him, Pilate would have known that no fighting occurred.

But Pilate now cannot quite fit it together, a Kingdom not of the earth with a King whose servants don't fight the way other king's servants do? What kind of King is this? So he asks again, You are king then? And here Jesus admits yes He is, He is the Messiah. He is the Sent one. Even earthly kings are born into the world with no control over the events of their birth, but Jesus deliberately came into the world, he was born of a chosen virgin, for a purpose, to bear witness to the truth, for He is the truth. Jesus has declared openly He came from Heaven as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, that those who have been given ears to hear might believe in Him, and confess Him, with those three simple but terribly important words, **JESUS IS LORD!**

So let me ask all of you the first of three questions – how do **YOU** answer Pilate's question? Is Jesus the King of the Jews? Is He the Messiah? Do you believe that Jesus is Lord? And not Just Lord objectively, but **YOUR LORD**. That He is and always was the Ruler of the Kingdom of Heaven? So

many people will say well I believe Jesus was a good *man* but all of this stuff about being sent, and virgin births, and being the Messiah. No, I don't believe that. Well if that is the case do not delude yourself that you are a Christian, for that is who CHRIST declared that He was. Pilate thought Jesus was a "good man" three times he declared he found no fault in Him. Did that make Pilate a Christian? NOT AT ALL. To be a Christian, is to believe that Jesus is King and Lord of your life, and Pilate certainly didn't believe that.

His Second Question I want to focus in on was Pilate's question "What is Truth?" in response to Christ's statement that he bore witness to the truth, and that those who were of the truth heard his voice. And by "hear" we know that Jesus means hear as the sheep hear the voice of their shepherd, they hear His voice and they follow. Who hears Christ's voice? His Sheep! Others do not Hear it. They do not know Him and they do not know the truth. That is why Jesus said to the Pharisees they did not believe in Him.

*John 10:26 "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.*

*27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

*28 "And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.*

What of Pilate? Here was a man surrounded by lies and liars all day long, a man who had become so cynical, he doubted there was anything like truth. Everything is relative, there are just grey areas perceptions, there's what you like and what I like, but there is no God and there is no truth. Just grey areas. No one can tell what the truth is. We don't really want to know, even. It is as one philosopher put it, **truth comes knocking, and we say go away I'm busy looking for the truth, and truth goes away puzzling**. Why was that? Because Pilate didn't want the truth, He like all men had exchanged the truth of God for the lie and was much happier with the darkness than the light. He asks *what is truth* and then immediately walks away. Because he doesn't want the answer. So saying there is no truth is just a convenient way of denying the truth of pushing it away and as Churchill put it:

*The truth is incontrovertible, malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end; there it is. - Winston Churchill*

So here is my second question, how do you answer that question Pilate asked? *What is truth?* How do you answer, can you say with the Psalmist to God: *The entirety of Your word is truth, And every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever*. Can you confess: "Jesus Christ is the way the truth and the Life, No Man Comes to the Father But By Him?" Or is it all grey areas, is the bible, as so many of my relatives, believe a hopeless mishmash of lies and truth and we can tell which is which because the true parts are the ones we like and lies are the ones we don't? Is there no way to know the truth for certain?

Finally there was that last question of Pilate to the Jews, "*Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?*" Pilate asks it hoping no doubt that some in the crowd will go against the will of the high priests and cry out for Jesus to be released. But there were no doubt many in the crowd who came hoping that a real rebel by the name of Barabbas a name meaning – "son of the father" would be released and they cry out for Him and the priests no doubt encourage it. It's ironic isn't it, they come insisting that Jesus who is innocent, be put to death for rebellion against Caesar, and then demand the release of an insurrectionist who really is guilty of rebellion against Caesar. Why did the crowd go along with it? Well they had tried to make Jesus their political king and had failed, and now here he

was broken and disgraced, so instead give us this local hero, this local insurrectionist. Give us the phony "SON of the FATHER" and away with the real son of the father. But how often do men do that, away with this kingdom of heaven and Son of God stuff, we need action, we need political change, only then can we be saved. We need a King like the other nations! We need a messiah but a political messiah! Oh how often have I run into this one! Rebellion against the state will save us! Socialism will save us, no libertarianism will save us. We even create churches that are really just preaching politics either left or right. And that isn't new, I was reading to the kids yesterday...

What do you say though? Do you want the King of the Jews or a do you want a political leader? I'm sorry but I'm tired of political leaders who dress themselves in Messianic Garb. Are you? Is the kingdom you are interested in one of the fleeting kingdoms of men, or is it the heavenly kingdom that will outlast all of them?

You see none of the political solutions will meet our real need, your problem and my problem is not political enemies, our problem like that of the Jews is SIN.

**John 3:14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,**

**15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**

**16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**