

Jesus on Trial, Part 1

John 18.28-40

After interrogating Jesus, the Jews led Him to Pilate. They wanted Him dead, but He'd have to be sentenced and executed by the Romans. What ensued was a veneer of religious piety covering heinous sin, and failure to recognize and respond to truth. Has anything changed in 2000 years?

A Study in Contrasts (John 18.28-19.16)

A Outside, Jews demand death (18.28-32)

B Inside, Pilate talks about kingship (18.33-38a)

C Outside, Pilate says Jesus not guilty (18.38b-40)

D Inside, soldiers scourge Jesus (19.1-3)

C' Outside, Pilate says Jesus not guilty (19.4-8)

B' Inside, Pilate talks about power (19.9-11)

A' Outside, Jews obtain death (19.12-16)

Observations from Jesus Before Pilate

- Jewish leaders display false holiness and empty religion
- False accusations and appeasing the world
- Jesus is King...but He hasn't come to reign (See Jn. 6.15)
- Truth vs. the World: Pilate's internal struggle



1. John does not record Jesus' questioning before Caiaphas, but the other Gospels do. Read their accounts (Matt. 26.57, 59-68; Mark 14.53-65; Luke 22.63-65). What charges were brought against Him? What statement by Jesus led them to condemn Him to death? How does understanding the Jewish religious leaders' decision that Jesus was worthy of death help 'fill in the blanks' as to why they had to bring Him to Pilate (see John 18.31)? While Jesus declaring that He was the Son of God incited their murderous intentions, what different charge did they make against Jesus before Pilate (Luke 23.2)? Why do you think they changed their accusation?
2. In John 18.33-38a, John records a private conversation between Jesus and Pilate. Pilate's initial question to Jesus ("Are You the King of the Jews?") may be an expression of incredulity: "Are *YOU* the king of the Jews?!" After all, Jesus was nothing like rebel Jewish zealots, violent guerillas who sought to overthrow Rome! Why do you think Jesus asked Pilate what he did in v34? Imagine the pain Jesus would have felt in Pilate's response: *Your own people delivered You to me!* In response to Pilate's question, "What have You done?!", Jesus speaks of His kingdom (v36). What does "My kingdom is not of this world" mean? Pilate, who was concerned about keeping the peace, realizes Jesus is no threat to Rome. When he asks Jesus, "So You are a king?" (v37), Jesus responds in the affirmative, but changes the subject. Why does He do this? Had Jesus come to reign? What was the issue that Jesus wanted Pilate to consider? Is Jesus inviting the Roman governor to believe in Him?!
3. Consider all the ironies in this narrative: The Jews scrupulously retain ritual purity (v28) while breaking the sixth commandment! They want to eat the Passover lamb, while delivering up to death the Lamb of God (Jn. 1.29)! They plan to extinguish 'the Light' by killing Jesus, but it is through death that the Light will be seen. They accuse Jesus of being a revolutionary, a would-be king, then choose Barabbas, an actual revolutionary, to be released. The Jews want to kill the truth, and succeed by getting Pilate to release the one who is guilty. What other ironies in this account do you see?