

Jesus on Trial, Part 2

John 19.1-16

John's account of Jesus' trial is progressively darker. Pilate is a pawn in Satan's scheme. Jesus is innocent. Pilate knows it, but the Jews resort to political blackmail. He can provide justice, or preserve power. The Jews can destroy him, so he hands Jesus over to them.

How the Jews Pressured Pilate to Pervert Justice

- 1) Jesus is scourged (1-3)
- 2) Pilate declares that Jesus is innocent (4-6)
- 3) Pilate afraid: Jesus called Himself "Son of God" (7-9)
- 4) Claims power over Jesus, which Jesus refutes (10-11)
- 5) Pilate afraid when Jews say he's no "friend of Caesar" (12)
- 6) Jesus is "your King;" Jews: "We have no king but Caesar!" (13-15)
- 7) Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified (16)



1. While John's record of the trial of Jesus before Pilate begins in John 18.28, in chapter 19 the tenor of the trial changes. In John 18.28-40, Pilate seeks to determine whether or not Jesus is a threat to Rome as the Jews charged. But now, all that is forgotten. The political charge fades. In John 19, the Jews no longer even try to convince Pilate of it! Instead, what do they charge Jesus with (7)? Without evidence to establish Jesus' guilt, the Jews resort to a form of judicial blackmail. What pressures do they bring on Pilate to give in to their demands?
2. It's obvious that Pilate finds no grounds for crucifying Jesus, as the Jews are demanding (see 18.38; 19.4, 6). If Jesus is innocent, why did Pilate have Him scourged (19.1-3)? After scourging Jesus, Pilate brings Him out – beaten and bloodied, deridingly dressed in a purple robe and a crown of thorns, mocking the charge that He is a king. What do you think Pilate hoped to achieve by this?
3. When Pilate presented Jesus, he called Him "the Man" (v5). In v12 the Jews also refer to Jesus this way ("If you release *this Man*..."). While both verses read "Man", Pilate calls Jesus *anthropos* (think of 'anthropology'), an adult human male; in contrast, the Jews refer to Jesus as τοῦτον (*touton*), a masculine demonstrative pronoun, which contemptuously designates Him as "this fellow" or "this guy" (also in Jn. 18.30). Jesus is less than human to them! What other examples can you think of where humans justify mistreatment and even killing other humans by tacitly denying their humanity?
4. To be known as a "friend of Caesar" was a coveted title, one which Pilate likely had received. When Pilate heard the Jews say, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar" (12b), it would have stung. If this got back to Rome, he could lose both his title and his power. When the Jews added, "Everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar" (12c), the threat to his power is palpable. By threatening his power, the Jews pressured Pilate to disregard his sense of justice in order to appease their demands. The Jews hatred for Jesus illustrates a timeless truth: Those who embrace evil will use any means necessary to achieve their ends.