

**The Gospel of John**  
**Week Twenty-Seven**  
**John 18:28-19:16**

**Day One**

<sup>28</sup> Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup> So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" <sup>30</sup> "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." <sup>31</sup> Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected.

v. 28 – Annas could not advance the interrogation so he sent Jesus to his son-in-law to continue the process leading to Jesus' execution. Caiaphas then took Jesus to the Roman governor, Pilate. The governor would have had official hours in the early morning until about noon before the afternoon heat became oppressive. Usually the governor lived in Caesarea except during a high holiday like the Passover. So they could access Pilate locally during that time, which was all working to their advantage as the Jews worked secretly and quickly.

**Isn't it ironic that the Jews would not enter the palace because they did not want to become ceremonially unclean, yet they had no problems manipulating the legal process so that Jesus could be killed?** Religion does strange things to people and skews their thinking and values as it gives them a false sense of spiritual security. The Passover was at hand and the Jews wanted to celebrate the Passover meal, not realizing that the true Passover Lamb was actually in their midst. They were getting ready to slaughter a lamb for each house while at the same time preparing to slay the sinless Lamb of God who would render the Jewish Passover useless and irrelevant by His death.

**Do you have any religious rituals that you maintain while your heart attitude isn't what it should be, like happened in this case?** Don't answer too quickly.

v. 29 – Pilate would have been briefed already about this case, but he wanted to hear from the Jews what their charges were against Jesus. I can see God's hand in this, for He wanted those charges to be a matter of public record. There could be no secret persecution or execution. Everyone had to go on record as to what they thought about Jesus, then, now and forever!

vs. 30&31 – Pilate implied that he did not consider the charges credible and a waste of his time. The Jews were indignant, saying that they would not have delivered Jesus without just cause. The Jews could not deal with Jesus as they wished, for they wanted him executed. Yet they could have done to Jesus what they did to Stephen in Acts 7, which was to stone Him. Once again, we see God's purpose accomplished here, for the Jews could not hang anyone on a tree to die crucified. Only the Romans could do that, so

the Jews needed the Romans to do what they could not but what God wanted, which was to hang Jesus on a cross. This death is an indication of the judgment due every sinner and gives us insight into what God thinks of sin.

Pilate advised them to judge Jesus by their own Law, which they had done already. Well, they had judged Him, but not according to their Law, for they could find no fault with Him. It was their incorrect interpretation of their Law that allowed them to do what they were doing, plus for another reason that Pilate understood:

"Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, *knowing it was out of envy* that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him (Mark 15:9-10).

The Romans had revoked the right of the Jews to take lives as their Law allowed for blasphemy, for Rome maintained the right to execute for their governors and officials only. Again, this did not seem to keep the Jews from killing Stephen as described in Acts 7, but for now, they needed Pilate to do their dirty work.

## Day Two

<sup>32</sup> This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled. <sup>33</sup> Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" <sup>34</sup> "Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" <sup>35</sup> "Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" <sup>36</sup> Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

v. 32 – The “this” in this verse refers to the fact that the Jews could not take life, only the Roman government could do so. If the Jews could take life, they would stone someone to death as their Law allowed. Jesus needed to die on a cross, however, so He had to be sentenced by the Romans for that to happen. God was in control of every aspect of these proceedings. Nothing happened by accident. **Do you have the same confidence that God is directing the affairs in your life?**

v. 33 – **I wonder how John knew so much of what happened between Pilate and Jesus? Did Jesus tell him when He came back to life? Was it a matter of record in the palace where all the proceedings were recorded in shorthand?** I am not sure, but we have a firsthand account of their meeting. Pilate interrogated Jesus and asked if He was truly the King of the Jews. This was the charge brought against Jesus, which was of course punishable according to Roman law if that charge was true.

v. 34 – Jesus was a bit coy with Pilate, asking him if this question was borne of spiritual insight or rumor and hearsay. This is an indication of what is yet to come, when all men will be asked that question and judged according to their answer. Those who know this will be saved and those that don't will be lost.

v. 35 – Pilate quickly responded that he had no intention of getting involved in Jewish religious questions. The Jews had charged Jesus with being a King and Pilate wanted to know what Jesus had done. Many of those who came before Pilate, I am sure, were an unsavory lot, mostly zealots who were murdering Romans to try and liberate Israel. Pilate must have had a sense that this man before him was not like the usual criminal. While Pilate’s spiritual lights were out, he had some “street smarts” that allowed him to discern both what was happening and the unique nature of the man Jesus before him.

v. 36 – Jesus told Pilate that His kingdom was of another world, which was true. Yet that Kingdom would have a great impact on the Roman Empire in the decades to come. It reminds me of the vision that Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar. This King and His kingdom would smash all the other kingdoms by its very nature, for all wickedness would fall before God’s righteousness:

While you were watching, a rock was cut out, but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and smashed them. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were broken to pieces at the same time and became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summer. The wind swept them away without leaving a trace. But the rock that struck the statue became a huge mountain and filled the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35).

Of course, that rock was Jesus and His kingdom, which when it arrived works to bring down all those who oppose Him and the purpose of God.

### Day Three

<sup>37</sup> "You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." <sup>38</sup> "What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. <sup>39</sup> But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews?'" <sup>40</sup> They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

v. 37 – Pilate had extracted a declaration from Jesus that He was indeed a King. Jesus was more open with Pilate than He had ever been with the Jews, admitting that He was not only a King but also a witness to the truth of God. Jesus said that His followers were not interested in political gain, but in truth, which perhaps was a statement condemning those who had delivered Him to Pilate. They did not love the truth, but were liars like their father:

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

v. 38 – Pilate dismissed what Jesus said about truth by cynically asking, “What is truth?” Yet Pilate had some sense of what truth was, for he went outside and told the Jews that he found no fault or crime in Jesus. Pilate was a shrewd politician, but he probably had no patience for the Jews and their Law, so perhaps he wanted to take that chance to resist their religiosity. I admire Pilate’s insight here, but I detest his cowardice in not following through on what he discerned was correct where Jesus was concerned.

v. 39 – There is no historical record of this custom to release a prisoner at the Passover. **Yet can you see the relevance of such an act?** The Passover was a time when the sentence of death passed over all those who were not covered by the Passover Lamb. Perhaps this custom foreshadowed what was to come, for the Passover Lamb, Jesus, set many prisoners free from this point forward. Jesus’ substitutionary death saved Barabbas in the natural here, but it spiritually saved many more like Barabbas who put their trust in Jesus from that point forward.

**Can you see that in some sense we were all in Barabbas at that point in time – in rebellion and imprisoned by our sins?** We were all under the penalty of law for our sin, yet Jesus took our place so that we could be released. We have all also been in the place of Jesus’ accusers, judging others guilty while exonerating our own behavior. **Can you see that? Can you thank God for His release in Christ?**

v. 40 – The people shouted back their choice for the prisoner release. Pilate was trying to give them a way out of their folly, but they were insistent. **Have you been insistent of your own way, only to find out later it was the wrong way?** You can be sincere and be sincerely wrong! The Jews chose a murdering zealot who wanted to overthrow Rome by force instead of the Prince of Peace. That gives us a picture of man’s sinful heart, which makes wrong the right thing to do and right the wrong thing to do.

#### [Day Four](#)

<sup>1</sup> Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. <sup>2</sup> The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed him in a purple robe <sup>3</sup> and went up to him again and again, saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" And they struck him in the face. <sup>4</sup> Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." <sup>5</sup> When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

v. 1 – Perhaps Pilate thought that if he disfigured and brutalized Jesus, then the Jews would be satisfied. So they flogged Jesus, which in and of itself was a horrendous means of torture. Many died from the flogging itself, which was designed to rip the flesh of those being struck.

vs. 2&3 – The Roman soldiers were a hardened lot, not too excited about spending their time in Palestine, where zealots lurked at every juncture, ready to cut their throats! They had a helpless prisoner in Jesus, so they took some time to abuse him for amusement. Keep in mind that everything that happened to Jesus was an indication of how God feels

about sin and was the penalty due to you and me for our sins. Jesus stepped in and took the blows that were our due! Thank You, Lord! What a gracious and merciful God we have! What's more, this is why Jesus is exalted far above all rulers and powers, for He was humiliated once so that He can be exalted forever.

We see in this treatment what mankind thinks of the Lord Himself. They spit on Him, slapped and mocked Him. This gives another indication of how far man fell when sin entered creation. Instead of honoring and magnifying our Creator, we abuse Him. We can understand ever more what Paul wrote in Romans 1:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another (Romans 1:21-24).

v. 4 – Pilate wanted to show the Jews how he had tortured Jesus, hoping that this would prevent them from demanding the death sentence. It did not, for the reason that Jesus had to go to Calvary according to the Father's will. There could be no shortcuts to the cross for Jesus and there can't be any for you. You must do what Jesus said:

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

The cross isn't just inconvenient; it is a death process. You cannot circumvent the fact that God requires all of you when you follow Him. **Have you picked up your cross? Are you bearing it patiently? Do you have an adequate understanding that this will lead you to a deeper, fuller life in Him? Do you trust God that He will raise you up on when it's all finished?**

v. 5 – Jesus made His appearance and Pilate proclaimed Him to be the man! I find it fascinating that Pilate would have found Jesus innocent, yet still beat Him almost beyond recognition and then paraded his handiwork to a bloodthirsty mob. What perverted justice! There is only one source of justice and that is God Himself. You cannot count on any justice from the world's system. That doesn't mean that justice isn't carried out from time to time, but it is not a reliable source, even in our churches. The problem is that we search for perfect justice administered by imperfect people in a broken world. It will not occur on this side of the Lord's return, so don't put your trust in man's systems. Put your trust in God so that even if you have to pick up your cross now, you know that there will be a time of reckoning and justice.

### Day Five

<sup>6</sup> As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis

for a charge against him." <sup>7</sup>The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God." <sup>8</sup>When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, <sup>9</sup> and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer.

v. 5 – The sight of Jesus did not placate the Jews. It only made them more angry and adamant. They then stated why they had brought Jesus to Pilate and what they wanted him to do. They wanted him to crucify Jesus. I am sure they had seen many Jews crucified, hanging along the roadsides as a warning to others not to rebel or commit crimes. In this instance, the Jews wanted Rome to perform a crucifixion on their behalf, which showed how much hatred the Jews had for Jesus. The Jews hated tax collectors because they colluded with Rome and now they were colluding with Rome for their own ends. What hypocrites they were!

Pilate told them to do what he knew they could not do: Take Jesus and crucify Him yourself. The Jews had no law to do this, so that is why they needed Pilate to do their dirty work. Pilate was wise in that he found no crime of which Jesus was guilty. Pilate declared Jesus innocent for all time, thus exonerating Jesus from any charge that could come against him then or now. Jesus' Roman tribunal declared Him innocent while the Jews declared him guilty.

v. 6 – Notice here that the Jews shifted course in their accusations. They saw that their charge that Jesus was a king who was a threat to Rome was not working, so they changed their charge to the fact that Jesus had declared Himself to be God's Son, making Himself equal to God. They were determined to have Jesus hung and they would do whatever it took to make it happen. The "charges" against Jesus were true – He was a King and the Son of God. Yet these were not crimes, unless perverted, sinful man is the one bringing the charges. Then right is wrong and wrong is right.

v. 7 – When Pilate heard these charges, he was afraid. He didn't only have a king on his hands, he had a holy man. Maybe this charge brought some fear of God on Pilate. I have experienced how nervous some people can be when they find out I am a pastor. They don't know how to act and they try to be especially polite. Some also believe that I somehow have a special connection to God, so they act awkwardly or strangely. I am not sure what happened here, but Pilate was frightened when he heard Jesus was the Son of God.

The verse says that Pilate was "more afraid," which tells me he was already fearful in his dealings with Jesus. Jesus evokes some kind of response from everyone. **What kind of response does he evoke from you?**

vs. 8&9 – Pilate tried to re-engage Jesus, asking Him where He was from. Jesus gave no answer. The interrogation was over as far as Jesus was concerned. Pilate had all the answers he was going to get, so this attempt to get Jesus talking was not going to work. Pilate was perhaps looking for some way, any way, out of this dilemma because he sensed there was something about Jesus that, while stirring the crowd into a frenzy, was different

and certainly not criminal. Unfortunately for him, he did not have the courage to carry through on his accurate discernment, but soon yielded to the crowd's demands.

### Day Six

<sup>10</sup> "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" <sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." <sup>12</sup> From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

v. 10 – Pilate was probably becoming exasperated with a case that he felt should have resolved itself at that point. Jesus refused to respond to his question for some reason. Perhaps Pilate thought Jesus some dreamy, out-of-touch idealist who did not understand the gravity of the situation. On the contrary, Jesus understood better than Pilate that Pilate did have the authority to sentence him and where that authority had come from.

v. 11 – Jesus saw clearly that Pilate was acting with authority that the Father had given him. Jesus would not be there if the Father had not arranged the meeting. While Pilate was guilty of sin in his actions, Caiaphas, the leader of the Jewish council and high priest, had the greater sin. This indicates that there are degrees of sin in God's eyes, for the high priest was more accountable for his actions since he knew Scripture and was a fellow Jew.

A visitor to Israel is taken to Masada, the place where the Jews held out against a Roman siege in 70 AD, only to commit mass suicide the night before the Romans captured the citadel. The siege ramp is still in place that the Romans used to scale the mountain and it was built by Jews whom the Romans captured in their conquest of Palestine. The Jews up in Masada refused to kill any of the Jews who were building that ramp that would lead to the fortress' fall because they were fellow Jews, even though it meant the death of those at the top of the mountain. Here Caiaphas was betraying a fellow Jew, which shows the hatred he had for Jesus and the lengths he would go to protect the family business, which was the high priesthood.

I find it interesting that Jesus did not preach to Pilate, nor did He tell him he had no right to talk to or judge Him. Jesus submitted to the authorities at hand, like He submitted to the Father's will. Jesus lived out what Paul wrote years later:

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup>Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13:1-2).

**How well do you submit to the authorities that God established in every situation you encounter?**

v. 12 – I have to admire Pilate’s courage in at least trying to carry out his convictions. He was a weak man and a prisoner of his own political system, but he tried everything he knew to do to release Jesus. The man knew Jesus was innocent, which is more than the Jewish council was willing to admit. His attempts, however, were thwarted by the Jews, who reminded him that they could cause political trouble him by reporting to Rome that he was a friend of someone who was not a friend of Rome.

**Do you have the courage to carry out your convictions? Or do you talk but not follow through?**

### Day Seven

<sup>13</sup> When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). <sup>14</sup> It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. <sup>15</sup> But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered. <sup>16</sup> Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified. So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.

v. 13 – Pilate indicated that he was ready to pass judgment as he sat down on the judgment seat. Perhaps Jesus’ words caused him to be less afraid of the decision as he was about to sentence Jesus to death. This scenario was ominous and strangely reminiscent of what will take place at the Last Judgment, when God will sit on His throne and judge men. Here man was judging God. Pilate was a willing but reluctant player and the Jews were the protagonists.

v. 14 – **It was the day of the Passover celebration, so what meal did the disciples eat with Jesus the night before? Did they move their Passover dinner up a night because of what would take place with Pilate?** At any rate, Pilate tried once more to impress the people with the gravity of who Jesus was and what they were proposing to do. The people had their king before them and they cried out that He should be crucified. In other words, they ordered the slaying of Jesus the Passover Lamb so that all those who apply His blood would be saved from the avenging angel.

v. 15 – The people shouted that Jesus should be taken away and crucified. Pilate was still bewildered by their demands, or perhaps he was mocking them at this point. They wanted to crucify one who proclaimed to be their king and he was amused. He had already washed his hands of the matter and was not in the final stages of passing sentence. Perhaps he enjoyed the scene of the Jews making fools of themselves, hanging an innocent man. At any rate, Pilate had done all he could do at that point.

v. 16 – So the Jews declared that they had no king but Caesar and they spoke the truth. They had rejected God as their king back when they demanded a king in the time of Samuel and nothing had changed. Those Jews did not want God ruling over them.

But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do" (1 Samuel 8:6-9).

So Pilate gave the order and handed Jesus over to be crucified. From then on, the soldiers were in charge of Jesus and would do what needed to be done to kill Him.

*Forgive us, Lord, for there is a part of me in each one of those involved in this story. I am part the mob, choosing rebellion over submission. I am part the leaders, who want no King over them but my own limited perspective. There is part Pilate in me, who knows the truth but is too cowardly and weak to carry it out. And there is part soldier in me, who wants to treat you as I choose and not as you deserve. Forgive me, Lord.*

**Can you identify any parts or actions of this cast of characters that are a part of your life, past or present?**