

193. The Gospel of John 18:38-19:5

Jesus on Trial-Part 5

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This morning in our study in the Gospel of John we have entered into Chapter 18—which focuses on the morning of Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane and the two trials He would be put thru before being crucified.

The first being a *religious* trial and the second a *civil* trial.

This first trial took place before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council—the second one before Pilate the Roman governor of the region.

We've already looked at the religious trial Jesus was put thru—and now we want to continue looking at the civil trial that He endured that morning:

II. The Civil Trial of Jesus

A. Jesus stands before Pilate the first time

John 18:28–29, 33-38 (NKJV)

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?"... 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."

Jesus explained to Pilate that He was a King—but not like Pilate imagined.

Jesus said that His Kingdom was not of this world—He had no standing army, His followers did not fight—and His Kingdom was an inward Kingdom of the heart based on truth. This conversation convinced Pilate that Jesus was not a dangerous revolutionary and so he rendered a verdict of not guilty declaring—"*I find no fault in Him at all!*"

But the Jewish rulers were adamant that Pilate condemn Jesus, so they kept repeating their charges and, in the course of shouting their accusations—they mentioned that Jesus was from Galilee.

When Pilate heard that, he saw a way out of his dilemma—since Galilee was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Jesus to Herod (who was in town for the Passover) thinking he was now free of this somewhat unusual Prisoner.

This now begins the second phase of Jesus’ civil trial.

B. Jesus stands before Herod

The account of the Lord’s hearing before Herod appears only in Luke’s Gospel.

Luke 23:8–11 (NKJV)

⁸ Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long *time* to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. ⁹ Then he questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. ¹⁰ And the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. ¹¹ Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

The Herod mentioned here is Herod Antipas—one of the sons of Herod the Great.

When Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided between his three sons—Herod Antipas, Archelaus, and Philip. Herod the Great was the king who had the babies in Bethlehem slaughtered two years old and under in a twisted and demonic attempt to keep the Messiah from reigning.

His son Antipas was the Herod that was in power during Jesus’ earthly life and ministry—the Herod we read about in the Gospels. Herod Antipas wasn’t a great ruler; in fact he wasn’t even a *good* ruler—his rule was characterized by selfishness and deception.

It’s interesting that when Jesus met Herod, He had absolutely nothing to say to him—not a word.

- Some might be prone to think—*“Why was that? The Lord didn’t even give Herod a chance to reject Him before He refused to speak to him, that doesn’t seem fair.”*

Look, Herod had already received ample opportunities to repent and receive Jesus during his many talks with John the Baptist.

So now, when Herod finally got to meet Jesus face to face, the Lord had nothing to say to him—the opportunities had come to an end, his time to receive Jesus had run out—and the Lord’s silence was in effect the *silence of judgment* upon Herod’s life.

A person will only get so much time to decide what they’re going to do with Jesus—the day of God’s grace will eventually come to an end giving way to the night of eternal darkness and destruction in hell—even as God said, *“My Spirit will not strive with man forever.”* (Genesis 6:3)

That’s why we are admonished in the N.T.—*“Today is the day of salvation, if you hear His voice don’t harden your heart...”* (2 Corinthians 6:1-2); *“Our life is but a vapor—here today and gone tomorrow.”* (James 4:13-14)

I believe many will wind up in hell that did believe that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior of the world (head-knowledge), who fully intended to get their lives right with Him someday, but just needed a little more time.

Many of those people will die before they have a chance to receive Jesus into their hearts as their Lord and Savior.

At least when it came to standing before Pilate—Jesus did answer some of *his* questions.

Pilate and Herod thought (just like every skeptic when presented with the Gospel) that they were sitting in judgment of Jesus—little did they realize that what they decided to do with Jesus in their day was going to judge and condemn them on ‘that Day’—when they stand before Him on the Day of Judgment.

Luke 23:11 (NKJV)

¹¹ Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

C. Jesus stands before Pilate the second time

So now Pilate finds Jesus standing in front of him once again.

I find this is the case with everyone who is being asked to make a judgment about Jesus—as much as they try to get out of making a decision, the Holy Spirit keeps bringing Jesus before them.

Praise God for that, for few people accept Jesus as their Savior the first time they hear the Gospel—thank God for His loving tenacity...!

Luke 23:13-15 (NKJV)

¹³ Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, ¹⁴ said to them, "You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. And indeed, having examined *Him* in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; ¹⁵ no, neither did Herod, for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him.

Now, at this point, Pilate tries to end this charade of the Jewish leadership seeking to railroad an innocent Man. He does so by putting into practice his annual goodwill gesture toward the Jewish population living in and around Jerusalem (a custom the Jewish leaders requested, and Pilate went along with)—and that was to release a Jewish prisoner every year at Passover time:

John 18:39 (NKJV)

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?"

As I’ve have already pointed out—Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and wanted to let Him go. So, he chose the most hardcore, wicked criminal in his jail—a man named Barabbas and stood him next to Jesus in front of the crowd. You see Pilate figured the people would no doubt choose Jesus to be released instead of Barabbas.

After all the Jews called Jesus their King—certainly they would choose their King over a notorious criminal! But that’s not what happened:

John 18:40 (NKJV)

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

➤ *Why did the crowd choose Barabbas over Jesus?—*

Matthew 27:20 (NKJV)

...the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus.

➤ *How did the Jewish leaders persuade the multitudes to choose Barabbas and condemn Jesus?*

It was probably through a combination of bribes; intimidation; and that—Barabbas was more likely to be their Messiah than Jesus.

At least Barabbas had tried to lead a revolt against the Roman government—which in their minds was what the Messiah was supposed to do when he came. They viewed Jesus as a pacifist who taught His followers to love their enemies—and therefore He couldn't be the true Messiah who was supposed to be a warrior—not a whip!

Who was this Barabbas?

The Gospels tell us he was a thief, a murderer and an insurrectionist—so this guy was a bad dude.

The name Barabbas means *'son of the father'*—the question is *"son of what father?"*

Obviously he wasn't a son of God the Father—he was a son of the devil—as Jesus put it in John 8 of the Pharisees—*"You are of your father the devil...who was a murderer from the beginning."*

This scene where the Jews reject their real Messiah Who was the Son of the Heavenly Father for Barabbas the son of another father (Satan) who was a rebel, murderer, insurrectionist, and thief—is a foreshadowing of how someday the nation will choose the ultimate son of Satan, the Antichrist, a false Messiah, whom they will believe to be the true Messiah—at least for a time:

John 5:43 (NKJV)

⁴³ I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. [until the events of Matthew 24:15 unfold]

Now, as I said, Pilate was hoping that the crowd would choose Jesus instead of Barabbas —

Matthew 27:15-18 (NKJV)

¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. ¹⁶ And at that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that they had handed Him over because of envy.

Pilate seems to have begun presiding over this *trial* of Jesus in a calm, rational and professional way—I mean, he had no doubt presided over hundreds of cases before this in the 6 years he had served as governor of the region.

I'm sure that when Pilate opened his court early that morning and shortly thereafter some of the leaders of the Sanhedrin came with a prisoner in tow—he figured this would be no different than any other case he had sat in judgment over.

But upon hearing the accusations against Jesus and questioning Him personally—Pilate knew Jesus was innocent and was being railroaded by the Jewish leadership.

That in and of itself wasn't so unusual—people are falsely accused all the time by those who have it in for them for whatever reason—Pilate knew that—nothing out of the ordinary. However, what *was* odd was that this Man being falsely accused—wasn't trying to defend Himself—and that struck Pilate as extremely odd to say the least.

I mean, that was very unusual especially because Pilate had heard many an accused man over the years loudly defending himself, declaring his innocence—or at very least begging for mercy. Yet when Pilate tried to get Jesus to say something in His own defense—***He was silent***:

Matthew 27:12-14 (NKJV)

¹² And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. ¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" ¹⁴ But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.

We know that Jesus' silence was a fulfillment of prophecy—

Isaiah 53:7 (NLT)

⁷ He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth.

Jesus was silent because He had come to die—that was His mission! He said, *"For this cause I came into the world."* (John 12:27)

He was innocent—but He came to die for the guilty.

So, we know why Jesus was silent that morning—but to Pilate this was extremely odd behavior to the point of being somewhat disturbing that this Man being accused of a capital crime wasn't defending Himself.

On top of that Matthew records something that no other Gospel writer records—something which no doubt added to Pilate's dissolving composure (taking into account that the Romans were very superstitious people).

Right in the middle of this trial Pilate's wife, Procula, sent him a message—

Matthew 27:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just [righteous] Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."

Whether or not this dream came from the Holy Spirit we're not told—but it does beg the question—*'Will God use dreams to communicate things to unbelievers?'*

I believe the answer to that question is ***'YES'***.

(Muslims and others all over the world that are having dreams where Jesus is appearing to them, preaching the Gospel and many are getting saved)

One thing *is* for sure—the *Romans believed* the gods used dreams to communicate to mortals. The fact that Pilate's own wife had a dream warning him not to pass judgment on this innocent Man seemed to have so unnerved Pilate—that it could have been the main reason he tried so hard to let Jesus go!

But Pilate was about to go from *anxiety* to full blown panic in just a short while as we're going to see—but first things first. Again, it's obvious from the Gospels that Pilate didn't want to execute Jesus.

He knew that Jesus was innocent, and that the Jewish leadership had delivered Him because of envy—so he thought that by scourging Jesus it would satisfy their bloodlust and allow him to let the Prophet from Nazareth named Jesus go free.

John 19:1-5 (NKJV)

¹So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. ²And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. ³Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands. ⁴Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him." ⁵Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!"

We're not sure how to take that last statement by Pilate—"Behold the Man!"

1. Was he saying, *"Look at this Man! Surely, He's been put through enough punishment for whatever crime you claim He is guilty of. Let's leave it at that and I'll let Him go now."*
2. Or this statement might be Pilate's way of expressing his awe and admiration for someone who had been beaten so badly and was still standing—*"Wow, here standing before you is a real Man!"*

Either way the bottom line is that unless you understand how brutal a scourging was you won't have the capacity to appreciate why Pilate said this—nor the depth of what Jesus endured to save us.

- A scourging was done at the scourging post where the prisoner was stripped from neck to waist,
- They were tied bent over so that his back was fully exposed,
- The skin was stretched tight.
- The scourge itself consisted of a wooden handle wrapped in leather which had nine leather straps extending from the handle.
- All up and down each strap were embedded little pieces of jagged bone, or sharp shards of broken pottery.
- At the end of each leather strap was a small lead weight so that maximum velocity could be achieved by the soldier doing the scourging.

Understand, this whip had one purpose—to rip pieces of flesh out with every lash. The Romans actually used scourging as an interrogation method (Explain how this applied to Jesus).

The scourging was so brutal that a man's back was reduced to raw hamburger—often exposing ribs and organs.

History records that some men went insane from the pain and many others died right there at the scourging post from loss of blood. It was so brutal in fact that Rome forbid its own citizens from being scourged—and eventually outlawed the practice altogether.

Now the question that Christians have wrestled with over the years is—

- *"Why if our salvation was purchased by Jesus dying on the cross—why did He have to endure the scourging also?"*

Well, His suffering and death for our sins consisted of *both* the scourging and the cross—both were involved in Jesus' atoning work on our behalf. There are numerous places in the Old Testament that prophesied of Jesus' death by crucifixion—

Psalms 22:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

Zechariah 12:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

However, there are other verses that also predicted He would be scourged as well—

Isaiah 50:6 (NKJV)

⁶ I gave My back to those who struck Me...

Isaiah 53:5 (NKJV)

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

I have to believe that both the scourging and the crucifixion together was how the Lord Jesus paid for our sins—and leaves us speechless and humbled by His great love. However, remember that Jesus also endured the beating at the hands of the high priest’s temple guards, and then Pilate’s soldiers, who kept punching Him with closed fists.

Who also put a crown of 6-inch nail hard Judean thorns on His head—and beat in into His skull with rods. Who pulled out His beard with their hands so disfiguring the Lord that Isaiah tells us He was no longer recognizable as a human being (Isaiah 52:14).

Then on top of all of that, you add the brutal scourging—you can begin to understand why Pilate believed the crowd’s thirst for blood would have been satisfied so that he could finally let Jesus go free.

Pilate *thought* that would be the case—however that wasn’t how it turned out.

Next week we’ll finish Jesus’ trial before Pilate.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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