

JOHN 18:28-35
THE CIVIL TRIAL!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 18 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

Keep in mind that Jesus has been arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and taken to the house of Annas for the first of three religious' trials.

Annas was not the High Priest at this time, even though he held that position at one time. He was removed by Rome and each of his sons were placed in that position by Rome and they too fell into disfavor with Rome and removed.

Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas was now in that position and put there once again by Rome.

Because of that Caiaphas was not seen as the High Priest by the people because Rome put him there. It was Annas that had the power, kind of the power behind the scenes.

So here with Annas we see him ask Jesus what His doctrine was all about, and he wanted to know about the men who were His disciples.

And Jesus told Annas, “**. . . ‘I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.’**” John 18:20-21.

Please understand that Jesus was not being sarcastic here or disrespectful to the High Priest. What He said to the High Priest, to Annas, was absolutely true. That is why they arrested Jesus in the first place, because they did not agree with what He was saying.

What was the big issue?

The big issue was that Jesus, being a man, claimed to be God. And He was in the Incarnation. Fully God and fully man!

It is after Jesus spoke those words, we see one of the Temple police officers hit Jesus in the face, claiming that Jesus was disrespectful to Annas!

And Jesus responded back by saying, **“... ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?’”** John 18:23.

And Jesus did not speak evil of the High Priest or the former High Priest, Annas. The end result, **“Then Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.”** John 18:24.

So we saw that there was a religious trial with Annas.

Then there was another with Caiaphas. And keep in mind that this one was not with the whole Sanhedrin, it was a hastily gathered assembly of the council recorded in Matthew 26:57-68.

Listen to what we are told of this, **“And those who had laid hold of Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. But Peter followed Him at a distance to the high priest's courtyard. And he went in and sat with the servants to see the end. Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, ‘This fellow said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days.’”** And the high priest arose and said to Him, **‘Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?’** But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, **‘I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son**

of God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’ They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death.’ Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, ‘Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?’”

Keep in mind that this was not a formal trial, not yet. But they are trying to come up with ways to find Jesus guilty so that they might bring Him before Pilate to be put to death.

But even their witnesses could not agree with what He said. And when they came up with the idea that Jesus was teaching that He was going to destroy the Temple, something He spoke of early on in His ministry. Keep in mind that He was not talking about the physical Temple there in Jerusalem, but His body. That on the third day He would be raised from the dead.

But it didn’t matter if what they accused Jesus of was true or not, they were just looking for evidence to put Him to death!

Then we come to the third trial by these religious leaders, and it is the final religious trial.

In Luke 22:66-71 we are told, **“As soon as it was day, the elders of the people, both chief priests and scribes, came together and led Him into their council, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, tell us.’ But He said to them, ‘If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.’ Then they all said, ‘Are You then the Son of God?’ So He said to them, ‘You rightly say that I am.’ And they said, ‘What further testimony do we need? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.’”**

This is the official trial before the Sanhedrin and there are no witnesses because in the trial at night, they contradicted each other.

And it is interesting that these Jewish religious leaders wanted the truth, at least that is what they said. **“If you are the Christ, tell us.”**

The problem was they were not interested in the truth.

For the past three years or so Jesus lived in the open for all to see that He is the fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets spoke of regarding the Messiah, and they rejected it.

So, their question was empty, the Sanhedrin already decided that Jesus was guilty! He was not the Messiah!

And we are no different today. Many say they want to know about Jesus, learn about Him until it goes against their beliefs, then they reject Him. May we be open to what God has for us and remember, what He is showing us is *ALWAYS* in accordance with His Word and not apart or instead of His Word!

And here is the thing that gets them angry. Jesus says, **“Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.”** Luke 22:69.

In other words, Jesus is claiming to be Almighty God! But these Jewish religious leaders refused to accept that Jesus was God, equal to the Father, even though their own Scriptures testify of this.

And please understand that I am not being hard on them, that is just the reality.

In Matthew 22:41-46 we are told, **“While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, ‘What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?’ They said to Him, ‘The Son of David.’ He said to them, ‘How then does David in the Spirit call Him ‘Lord,’ saying: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool’”? If David then calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his Son?’ And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.”**

You see, Jesus points to their foolishness of denying that the Son of God would be God and not just a man. They knew He would be the Son of David, but the problem comes when David calls Him **“lord”** for that is not kosher.

And, because they knew that the answer would prove them wrong, they did not answer the question Jesus had for them. They knew that if David called Him Lord, then He must be greater than David, and He is!

You see, the father would never call his son lord. That means He must be more than just the son of David, and, like I have said, He is! It is as Paul tells us, **“concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”** Romans 1:3-4.

You see, their minds were made up even though their own beliefs were contrary to the Scriptures. Thus, in their minds Jesus is guilty and He is going to be led to Pilate so he could put Him to death for them!

Now I have called this study – ***THE CIVIL TRIAL!***

The reason being is that is the focus, for the three religious trials are now over. And it is with the three civil trials ending, that Jesus will be lead away to be crucified!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following points.

They are,

THE RELIGIOUS TRIAL ENDS – JOHN 18:28

JESUS IS IN CONTROL – JOHN 18:29-32

PILATE QUESTIONED BY JESUS – JOHN 18:33-34

PILATE’S RESPONSE – JOHN 18:35

So with that as our introduction, and I know it was a little long, but we needed to understand that more took place than what John tells us here, let’s begin reading in John chapter 18 beginning in verse 28 and let’s see what the Lord has for us this morning as we study His Word and we look at this – ***CIVIL TRIAL!***

VERSE 28

John tells us that after this trial before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, Jesus was taken to the Praetorium or headquarters for Pilate there in Jerusalem.

His normal headquarters was in Caesarea, in the palace that Herod the Great had built for himself.

This Praetorium was most likely located in the Roman Fortress of Antonia. This is where Pilate held court and conducted public business.

We are also told that it was “**early morning**” when this took place. This is not an easy word to denote a specific time, but it probably refers to around 6:00 am since many Roman officials began their day very early and finished by 10:00 or 11:00 am.

We are also told that the Jews did not want to go into the Praetorium because they would defile themselves and they wanted to eat the Passover meal. You see, Jewish oral law gives evidence that a Jew who entered the dwelling places of Gentiles became ceremonially unclean.

That is the reason that they remained outside in the colonnade avoiding that pollution and being able to partake of the Passover meal.

Again, we need to deal with this Passover meal and then we will deal with the hypocrisy of these Jewish religious leaders and what they were doing.

We talked about Jesus and His men celebrating the Passover meal back in John chapter 13.

We also know that the Scriptures speak of Jesus being crucified on Passover and we clearly see here that these Jewish religious leaders did not want to defile themselves, they wanted to partake in the Passover meal.

In saying that, how can that be, two Passovers?

First of all, I do believe Jesus and His men did celebrate that Passover meal that night because in Mark 14:12, 17-18a we are told, “**Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, ‘Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?’ . . . ‘In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate . . .’**”

So, this seems to indicate that they did celebrate Passover the evening before His crucifixion.

The problem here is John seems to indicate that Passover was on the following night, how can that be?

Let me explain.

I think the Passover that Jesus and His men celebrated is the Passover that was observed by the Galileans and the Pharisees.

And the Passover that was celebrated when Jesus was crucified was the Passover that was celebrated by those in Judea and the Sadducees.

In knowing that, it would mean that Jesus celebrated Passover with His men, as we see Matthew, Mark, Luke and I believe John is telling us. But He was also crucified on Passover as well!

Not only that, but the Mishnah, which is a compilation of the writings of well-known Jewish scholars and was completed in the third century A. D., tells us that the Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed about the day of the week on which the Passover was celebrated.

The Pharisees believed it was celebrated the night that Jesus and His men celebrated it while the Sadducees celebrated it a day later.

Thus, here in John they were preparing for the Passover meal while the Pharisees already celebrated it.

Now here is the amazing thing for me, this religious hypocrisy that we see with these men who refused to be defiled by going into the place where Gentiles gathered but they are willing to put to death an innocent man on this feast!

Do you think they were straining out the gnat and swallowing a camel?

I do!

Let me show you what I mean that people today can pass themselves off as being men of God, but when you truly look at their life, you see the hypocrisy, the insincerity of what they claim to be!

We are told,

He made free use of Christian vocabulary.

He talked about the blessing of the Almighty and the Christian confessions which would become the pillars of the new government.

He assumed the earnestness of a man weighed down by historic responsibility.

He handed out pious stories to the press, especially to the church papers.

He showed his tattered Bible and declared that he drew the strength for his great work from it as scores of pious people welcomed him as a man sent from God.

[As you read that it would seem that the only conclusion you can come to is this. That this man is a very godly man. His life reflects that. Look at all that he was doing! But looks can be deceiving. Now, for the rest of the story . . .]

Indeed, Adolf Hitler was a master of outward religiosity - with no inward reality!

- Today in the Word, June 3, 1989

As shocking as that is, that was the same attitude of these religious men here in John. They put together false testimony to convict Jesus and even with that they could not get these witnesses to agree.

They were putting to death an innocent man because of envy, because they did not like what He was saying, and they were going to celebrate Passover because they are holy men of God! Are you kidding me?

No, I am not!

That is how this works. It was all for show, and like I have said, Jesus called them on it. They would put a cloth on a cup just in case a gnat was in the cup, and they would strain out that gnat, which was the smallest of the unclean animals.

Do you see how they took such meticulous measures to strain out a gnat and the other things, the bigger issues, it was like swallowing down a camel, the largest of the unclean animals!

One writer put it like this in regard to the hypocrisy of their actions. He wrote, *“Jewish oral law gives evidence that a Jew who entered the dwelling places of Gentiles became ceremonially unclean. Their remaining outside in the colonnade avoided that pollution. John loads this statement with great irony by noting the chief priests’ scrupulousness [carefulness] in the matter of ceremonial cleansing, when all the time they were incurring incomparably greater moral defilement by their proceedings against Jesus. Here they are, about to kill the Son of God, yet worrying about defiling themselves by stepping on Gentile territory.”*

And here they are, before Pilate, and they have to tell Pilate why they brought this man, Jesus, before him. Pilate was not a man who wanted his time wasted so they will have to come up with a reason, and the reality is, they had no reason to put Jesus to death!

Yes – ***THE RELIGIOUS TRIAL ENDS!***

And now, as Jesus is before Pilate, we are going to see that – ***JESUS IS IN CONTROL!***

But why did they bring Him before Pilate and not just put Jesus to death themselves?

One writer sums it up like this for us. He wrote,

Even with their illegal trial, the Sanhedrin could not legally sentence Jesus to death. Only a Roman official could do that. So they took Jesus to the Roman procurator, Pilate. Pilate interrogated Jesus briefly, and then swayed by an angry crowd, handed Jesus over to be crucified. He died and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

- Edward Hindson, James Borland, The Gospel of Matthew – The King is Coming, p. 235

VERSES 29-32

Now we move to the civil trials that Jesus will face, and, as I have said, there will be three of them. The first civil trial is with Pilate. The second civil trial is with Herod. And then then third and last civil trial is again with Pilate before He is sentenced to death.

What John is speaking of here is the first civil trial before Pilate, the governor.

And keep in mind that Jesus is taken into the Praetorium which was in the Antonia Fortress located on the northwest corner of the Temple Mount.

Just a little background on Pilate so you understand why he let the Jews push him around, and you will see what I mean as we continue on.

Pilate was the sixth Roman governor in this region, and he was not doing well.

He caused a riot with the Jews when He placed a picture of Caesar on the Temple Mount and of course, the Jews rioted, they only worshiped God! And many Jews were killed. And a letter to Rome was sent.

Strike one!

Then he took money from the Temple treasury to finance an aqueduct and again, more rioting. And once again, many Jews were killed. And another letter to Rome!

Strike two!

Thus, Pilate was warned by Rome that if he gets one more strike against him, he is out!

Keep that in mind as you see how he is working with the Jews, trying to appease them with their case against Jesus!

Remember, the Jews would not enter the Praetorium because they did not want to defile themselves before the Passover.

So John tells us that Pilate was going back and forth from Jesus to the crowds, finding no fault in Jesus and yet being persuaded by the crowds to do something with this King of the Jews!

And keep in mind that the Jewish religious leaders and this crowd of Jewish people that had gathered, were stirred, they were foaming at the mouth wanting Jesus dead, and yet, Jesus answered them not a word.

Why?

Because He did nothing wrong! And Pilate marveled at this, the contrast between the crowds and Jesus.

What we also see here is that Pilate doesn't want to deal with this, and he throws it back to the Jews to do something about it.

They in turn throw it right back to Pilate saying that Rome took away their right of capital punishment, they couldn't put anyone to death anymore, at least legally.

At this point Pilate didn't realize that Jesus had already been put through a religious trial at the house of Caiaphas the High Priest, where the leaders of Israel had met and determined that Jesus was a blasphemer who was worthy of death.

The problem was they didn't have the authority to carry out this death sentence, that is why they went to Pilate for they needed him to carry out this wicked deed.

Why couldn't they put Jesus to death, the Jews?

Well, according to the first-century Jewish historian Josephus, the right of capital punishment had been taken away from the nation of Israel by the Romans in 7 A. D. when Judea became a Roman province.

And what is interesting is that when that happened the High Priest tore his clothes, he put ashes on his head and went through the streets of Jerusalem weeping and wailing.

Why did they do that? Why were they mourning like that?

The reason they were mourning is because they felt what Jacob said on his deathbed, the prophecy that he had given, failed.

What was this prophecy?

We are told in Genesis 49:10, "**The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.**"

The Septuagint translates this verse, "**Until the things laid up in store come into his possession**" or, "*Until he comes to whom it belongs.*" It is a Messianic term!

This can be cross referenced with Ezekiel 21:27, which says, "**Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, Until He comes whose right it is, And I will give it to Him.**"

Both are speaking of Jesus Christ.

Even the Jewish Talmud, (The collection of ancient Rabbinic writings constituting the basis of religious authority for traditional Judaism), translate "*Shiloh*" as one of the names of the Messiah!

Now here is the problem!

Like I have said, around 7 A. D. the Roman government took away the right of capital punishment for the Jews. That is why we see here in John that the Jewish leaders presented Christ to the Romans for they wanted Him executed and they could not do it, not legally anyway!

And like I have said, during this time, around 7 A. D. the High Priest put on sackcloth and ashes for the scepter had departed from Israel and Shiloh had not come and they felt the Word of God had been broken.

Here was the problem for them. The Word of God did not fail. You see, some 70 miles to the north, in the town of Nazareth, there lived with His mother and stepfather a young Boy named Jesus. Shiloh had come before the scepter departed from Judah.

You see, Jesus was born around 4 B. C. before the death of Herod the Great.

And yes, there were times we saw them ignore what Rome took away, their right to capital punishment. We see this with Stephen when he was stoned to death for his faith in Christ in Acts.

Two points I would like to bring up here and the first one is that the Jews did not want anyone following Jesus after His death, like He was some martyr that died for a cause. Thus, stoning would not work.

I think the real reason is given to us in the Scriptures. You see, I think they wanted a curse upon Jesus to detract anyone from following Him after His death, at least any Jew.

In Deuteronomy 21:22-23 we are told, **“If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 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.”**

And Jesus was crucified; He did bear the curse of God upon Him as He bore the sins of the world.

Paul said in Galatians 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’).**”

That is what the Jews were thinking but I believe the real reason was Jesus said He would be crucified.

In John 3:14-15 Jesus tells us, “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**”

Jesus fulfilled the prophecies made of Him, not only in His life, but also in His death!

So as much as the Jews might have thought that they were in control.

As much as Pilate thought he was in control.

Neither were, and what we do see is that - ***JESUS IS IN CONTROL!***

If you doubt that just listen to what John 18:32 says, “**that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die.**”

You see, Pilate told the Jews that they can take care of this problem, it was their problem, not his.

And they told Pilate that they could not put Jesus to death because Rome took away that punishment from them. They could not execute capital punishment any longer.

If the Jews would have put Jesus to death, they would have stoned Him for blasphemy. But like I said, they wanted more than a stoning, they wanted Him hung on a tree, they wanted a curse upon Him so no one would follow His teachings after His death!

And so it was now up to Pilate and the way they put people to death was by crucifixion, just as Jesus said, just as Psalm 22 tells us.

And Psalm 22, written some 1,000 years before this happened to Jesus, gives us a picture of Jesus hanging on a cross. It is an amazing study!

In fact, Jesus had predicted His own death, as I have said!

Let me show you what I mean. In Mark 10:32-34 we are told, **“Now they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was going before them; and they were amazed. And as they followed they were afraid. Then He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them the things that would happen to Him: ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him to the Gentiles; and they will mock Him, and scourge Him, and spit on Him, and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again.’”**

Notice that the Jewish religious leaders will condemn Jesus and sign His death sentence, you might say. But, since they could not carry this out, they sent Jesus to Pilate to have Him do it for them.

And Jesus tells His men that they will mock Him, scourge Him, spit on Him and finally, they will put Him to death.

Now, something that they missed is Jesus also told them, **“... And the third day He will rise again.”**

Yes, they would put Jesus to death, but death could not hold Him for on that third day, as the Scriptures tell us, He rose from the grave!

And like we have seen, He not only predicted His death and resurrection, but He also predicted in what manner He would be put to death – **CRUCIFIXION!** And we saw that in John 3:14-15!

Make no mistake about it - **JESUS IS IN CONTROL!**

As we read on, and this is interesting to me, we will see **PILATE QUESTIONED BY JESUS!**

VERSES 33-34

Remember the question that Pilate asked the Jewish religious leaders back in John 18:29, **“... ‘What accusation do you bring against this man?’”**

That opened the first of the three civil trials, that question.

Let me share this with you to give you some insight into what was taking place. We are told, ***“The Jewish leaders had undoubtedly already communicated with him about this case [with Pilate], since Roman troops took part in Jesus’ arrest. They evidently expected him to rubber-stamp their judgment and sentence Jesus to death. Instead, exercising his prerogative as governor, he ordered a fresh hearing over which he would preside. But the last thing the Jewish leaders wanted was a trial (which they could potentially lose). They wanted a death sentence; they wanted Pilate to be an executioner, not a judge. They knew that their charge against Jesus, that He was guilty of blasphemy because He claimed to be God incarnate, would not stand up in a Roman court.”***

So here is the dilemma. They could not charge Jesus with blasphemy in this Roman trial because Pilate could care less about their Jewish practices. All he was interested in was if the person before him broke the Roman Law!

And that is why the Jewish religious leaders said this to Pilate in Luke 23:2, “**And they began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.’**”

Notice what they did here. To make this work for them, they accused Jesus of three things, which were serious charges, something Jesus could be put to death for. They knew Pilate would have to take them seriously here, at least that is what they were hoping for.

So, they manufactured three political charges against Him, and those charges are as follows.

- *He was a revolutionary who posed a threat to the Roman Empire!*
- *He urged people not to pay taxes, therefore undermining the prosperity of the Roman Empire.*
- *He claimed to be a King, therefore threatening the power and position of the Roman Emperor.*

And what we see Pilate do is he ignored the first two and focused on the last one, the third one, that Jesus claimed to be King.

Why did he choose that one?

Because that was the most serious charge that they leveled against Jesus!

Look at what we have here.

First of all, with the three religious’ trials, they were a joke. They had nothing to really accuse Jesus of, and they broke so many of their own laws in these trials! But they wanted Jesus dead and so they were willing to make things up to see that this would take place!

At this point, they were like sharks that smelled blood in the water. There was absolutely no reasoning with them on this matter.

As we will see, even Pilate tried to reason with them because he found no fault in Jesus, but they refused to give in.

Even when Pilate was going to release one of the prisoners, they chose Barabbas instead of Jesus. And just listen to what the Jewish religious leaders and the crowds had to say in John 19:12-16, **“From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, ‘If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.’ When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’ But they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’ Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.”**

Did you hear what they said!

“We have no king but Caesar!”

Really, what about the Lord?

They hated Jesus so much they were willing to condemn themselves before the Lord by saying the only King in their life is Caesar! And when you look at what they have done, I think that is the only conclusion to come to, that Caesar was their King and not the Lord!

And for Pilate, like I have said, he is focusing on this accusation that Jesus is claiming to be King and thus, Pilate’s question **“Are You the King of the Jews?”**

This question was in effect asking Jesus whether He was pleading guilty or not guilty to the charge of insurrection. He wants to know if Jesus is a person who is threatening to cause trouble for Rome!

Keep in mind that Pilate has to play this cool here. He does not want the Jews to be offended by his actions and send a letter to Rome, which would have been an end to his reign as governor of the area.

But he also knows that there is nothing to accuse Jesus of and he is worried. In fact, his wife will come in and tell him that she had a dream that this man is innocent, don't do anything to Him.

So Jesus hears this question and notice what He does to Pilate. He tells Pilate, “**... ‘Are you speaking for yourself on this, or did others tell you this about Me?’**” John 18:34.

Did you see what Jesus did here? Jesus turns the question back on him. He wants to know if these are things that Pilate just heard or is it something that he saw, something that he truly knows.

One writer summed it up like this, *“If Pilate asked it of himself, the question would have meant, ‘Art thou a political King, conspiring against Caesar’! If he had asked it of Caiaphas’ prompting, it would have meant, ‘Art Thou the Messianic King of Israel?’ The answer to the first question would have been ‘No’. The answer to the second question, ‘Yes.’”* (Pilcher, cited in Morris)

And listen to how Pilate responds to the question Jesus asked him.

VERSE 35

I want you to listen again to Pilate's response to the question Jesus gave to him. But first of all, remember the question that Pilate asked Jesus, "... 'Are You the King of the Jews.'" John 18:33.

And then the response by Jesus, "... 'Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?'" John 18:34.

And we don't get the tone of Pilate's voice here, but I think it is one of anger as he tells Jesus, "... 'Am I a Jew? ...'" John 8:35.

One writer put it like this, "*Pilate's sharp retort, 'I am not a Jew, am I?' reflects both his disdain for the Jewish people, and his growing exasperation with the frustrating, puzzling ethnic case set before him. His further elaboration, 'Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me', makes it clear that the governor was merely repeating the charge leveled against Jesus by the Jewish leaders; the accusation was theirs, not Rome's. Exactly why they had done so, still eluded Pilate. He knew perfectly well that the Jews would not have handed over to him someone hostile to Rome unless they stood to gain from doing so. Attempting once again to get to the bottom of things, Pilate asked the question that he should have asked at the outset: what have You done? . . . Pilate understood that the Jewish leaders had handed Jesus over to him because of envy (Matt. 27:18). What he still did not understand was what Jesus had done to provoke such vehement hostility from them and what, if any, crime He had committed.*"

Like I have said, Pilate could care less about the Jewish people or their religious faith or anything else about them. He just wanted them to stay in line, not to cause any trouble for him or really for Rome.

Now this question to Jesus, “**. . . What have you done**” is interesting to me. He wanted to know what Jesus did that would cause the Jewish religious leaders and now the Jewish people to be so irritated with Him, so mad at Him, that they wanted him dead!

Have you ever thought about that question that Pilate gave to Jesus?

It is an interesting one when you begin to look at all that Jesus did in His earthly ministry!

It would be interesting if Jesus answered that question completely, spoke of all that He had done. But He doesn't, He came to complete the work that God the Father sent Him to do!

But let's look at just a few things that made the Jewish religious leaders so mad that they wanted Jesus to be put to death. And when you look at these you will see how sad a picture that is painted in regard to these Jewish religious leaders as they allowed hatred to grow into murder!

- Jesus healed the leper!
- Jesus healed the lame!
- Jesus opened the ears of the deaf!
- Jesus opened the eyes of the blind!
- Jesus raised the dead!
- Jesus feed the hungry!
- Jesus calmed the storm!
- Jesus walked on water!
- Jesus forgave the sinner!
- Jesus was without sin!
- Jesus lived a life that honored God the Father!
- Jesus did no wrong towards God or man!

- Jesus delivered those who were demon possessed!
- Jesus taught the truth in such a way that the listeners were astonished!
- Jesus gave His life as an example of what a servant is all about!
- Jesus confronted those who were living contrary to God!

Harry Ironside, the Bible teacher, told of a visit to [Israel] years ago by a man named Joseph Flax. He had an opportunity to address a gathering of Jews and Arabs and took for the subject of his address the first Psalm.

He read it and then he asked the question: “Who is this blessed man of whom the Psalmist speaks? This man never walked in the counsel of the wicked or stood in the way of sinners or sat in the seat of mockers. He was an absolutely sinless man.”

Nobody spoke. So flax said: “Was he our great father Abraham?”

One old man said, “No, it cannot be Abraham. He denied his wife and told a lie about her.”

“Well, how about the lawgiver Moses?”

“No”, someone said. “It cannot be Moses. He killed a man, and he lost his temper by the waters of Meribah.”

Flax suggested David. It was not David.

There was silence for a long while.

Then an elderly Jew arose and said, “My brothers, I have a little book here; it is called the New Testament. I have been reading it; and if I could believe this book, if I could be sure that it is true, I would say that the man of the first Psalm was Jesus of Nazareth.”

- H. A. Ironside, Studies on Book One of the Psalms, pp. 9-10

Exactly! Jesus was perfect, without sin. He loved people, cared for them, ministered to them and now they are turning against the One who loves them so much.

And we can see that today! Look at how the world hates Jesus and not just the world I am sad to say.

Look at how many church goers hate Jesus so much that they have to make up a Jesus which is out of the imagination of their own heart. They don't like a Jesus who says that they are sinners! They don't like a Jesus that says unless they go through Him, they will never see God the Father! They don't like a Jesus that condemns sin or tells them how to live!

And we can go on, but the reality is, Jesus doesn't tell us these things to ruin our fun or to control our lives! No, Jesus tells us these things because they are true, and He loves us too much to let us continue down a path of death and destruction.

Yes, He will let you go down that path if you want, but He will do all that He can to stop you except to force you not to go! You do have a choice to make!

So Pilate wants to know why His own people are so upset with Him. He wants to know why they want Him dead. In fact, if He is the *King of the Jews* they should be rejoicing!

He couldn't understand their anger, their hatred over this one man, and it is hard for us to see it unless we look at them this way.

It was all about them and when Jesus said it wasn't, they wanted Him dead!

He upset their beliefs, their way of life and they wanted Him out of the picture before they lost their nation and their statues with Rome, their position!

And we will dig into this more next time as we focus on something Pilate said to Jesus –

WHAT IS TRUTH!

But as I begin to close, just listen to the answer Jesus gave to Pilate and again, we will dig into this more next time. Jesus told Pilate, “. . . **‘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.’**” John 18:36.

I think that the answer that Jesus gave probably surprised Pilate. He said that He was not some zealot, some political insurrectionist who was looking to overthrow Rome and establish His own Kingdom.

But make no mistake about it, Jesus is a King, but not a King whose power comes or originates from this world, but from heaven, from God the Father.

And yes, one day Jesus will rule and reign in Jerusalem but in His first coming Jesus came to set us free from our sins by going to the cross of Calvary and paying in full the debt of for our sin!

We have seen that – ***THE RELIGIOUS TRIAL ENDS*** and now Jesus is going to encounter three civil trials. One before Pilate. Then before Herod. And lastly, before Pilate again before He is crucified.

We have seen that – ***JESUS IS IN CONTROL***, and yes, Pilate was the governor and Jesus was the one on trial, but when you look at how this all plays out, Jesus is the One who is in control and things are happening just as God has said!

We have seen that – ***PILATE WAS QUESTIONED BY JESUS***, and yes, Jesus was the One on trial, but He is questioning Pilate!

And we have seen – ***PILATE’S RESPONSE!*** He just could not figure it out and things are going to get worse and worse for Pilate as he is going to be forced to do something he did not want to do, crucify Jesus!

Let me leave you with this to think about. It has to do with sin and what our Lord has done for us.

We are told,

Last summer I had an encounter with masked men bearing scalpels.

A surgeon operated on my foot, and my life was never in danger. Yet the horizontal recovery time did give me a chance to reflect on pain that we choose voluntarily, sometimes for our own good and sometimes to our peril.

While rehabilitating, I often did exercises that hurt because I knew that working through the soreness would allow my foot to regain its usefulness.

On the other hand, the surgeon warned against bicycling, mountain climbing, running, and other activities that might endanger the healing process.

Basically, anything that sounded fun, he vetoed.

On one visit I tried to talk him into granting me a premature golf match.

“Some friends get together once a year. It’s important to me. I’ve been practicing my swing, and if I use only my upper body and keep my legs and hips very still, could I join them?”

Without a flicker of hesitation, my doctor replied, “It would make me very unhappy if you played golf within the next two months.”

“I thought you were a golfer,” I said, appealing to his sympathies.

“I am. That’s how I know you can’t swing without rolling that foot inward and putting weight on the parts that are trying to heal.”

The point was obvious. My doctor has nothing against my playing golf; as a fellow golfer, he sympathizes with me. But he has my best interests at heart. It will indeed make him unhappy if I do something prematurely that might damage my long-term recovery. He wants me to play golf next year, and the next, and the rest of my life, and for that reason he could not sanction a match too soon after my surgery.

As we talked, I began to appreciate my doctor's odd choice of words. If he had issued an edict – "No golf!" - I might have stubbornly rebelled. He left me the free choice and expressed the consequences in a most personal way: Disobedience would grieve him, for his job was to restore my health.

The role of a doctor may be the most revealing image in thinking about God and sin.

What a doctor does for me physically - guides me toward health - God does for me spiritually.

I am learning to view sins not as an arbitrary list of rules drawn up by a cranky Judge, but rather as a list of dangers that must be avoided at all costs - for our own sakes.

- Philip Yancey, "Doctor's Orders," Christianity Today (12-6-99)

It is as Paul said in Romans 6:1-4, and this is from The Living Bible, **“Well then, shall we keep on sinning so that God can keep on showing us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Should we keep on sinning when we don't have to? For sin's power over us was broken when we became Christians and were baptized to become a part of Jesus Christ; through his death the power of your sinful nature was shattered. Your old sin-loving nature was buried with him by baptism when he died; and when God the Father, with glorious power, brought him back to life again, you were given his wonderful new life to enjoy.”**

Jesus Christ died for our sin; may we not go back to that old lifestyle that He has set us free from!