

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus Before Pilate

Scripture: John 18:28-38

Code: 1572

For our study this morning I'd like to ask you to turn in your Bible to the eighteenth chapter of John and we'll just continue our study of the gospel of John as we have been moving through in this marvelous gospel and studying the person of Jesus Christ. We have learned that a very obvious recurring thing happens in every paragraph in John and that is that John incessantly relentlessly presents the majesty of Jesus Christ, particularly in reference to His deity. John is not nearly as concerned with the humanity of Jesus, and He was 100 percent man, as he is with the deity of Christ, the fact that He was indeed God in human flesh. So, John at every point in his gospel is concerned with the deity of Christ ... letting it be known that Jesus is God. Not that He's a god, one of many gods, subgod, a creature of God or any other such thing, but that He is in fact God, equal in nature to Jehovah God.

And so, John constantly magnifies Christ. And as we have begun to study the most humiliating time of Christ's life, we find that even in these humiliating events John manages to glorify Christ as God again.

And so, this morning we come to the beginning of the trial before Pilate which really extends through 15 verses in chapter 19. But none of us is so foolish as to believe we would ever hope to get that far in one message. And so we will attempt only to take the first part and do the best we can with that.

Now, John in verses 28 to 38 introduces us to the trial before Pilate, phase one. And it had three phases as did the religious trial prior to it. And in this, which is a very humiliating thing, Jesus taken like a common criminal before His wouldbe executioners, and yet in even a situation like this, the magnificence of Jesus Christ becomes very, very radiant, very, very obvious. And we see Him as God and instead of seeing Jesus on trial before Pilate we see Pilate on trial before Jesus.

Now the power of this particular portion of Scripture, as all of the narrative of John's gospel, lies in the interplay of personalities involved. The main character being Jesus and then Pilate and then the Jewish leaders. Now when we use the term "Jews" as John uses it, we're not referring to the Jewish populace whom would be in reference, for example, on Palm Sunday, as we call it, shouting "Hosanna" and acknowledging, Jesus to be King, but to the Jewish leaders. John uses the term "Jews" in reference to the angry, hostile, antiChrist Jewish leaders, made up predominantly of the Pharisees and the chief priests. And so keep that in mind. In John's mind, the term "Jews" then is primarily reserved for the Hebrews who are hostile to Christ. Whereas there were many of them who

were not hostile to Him.

And to begin with, in order to understand the scene we must understand the Jews. And by that, again I say I mean those leaders. To give you a little bit of a picture in the background so that you'll understand why they're bringing Jesus to Pilate, let me say this. During the Jewish period of history in which Jesus lived the Jews happened to be, including all of the people of Israel, under the bondage of Rome. The Jewish leaders chafed, to say the least, under this bondage. And although Rome was wise and the Roman kind of peace which they had set apart ... set out in the world called "Pax Romana" was a very, very wise kind of peace in that it allowed a certain degree of selfgovernment for the subjects, still restricted the right of execution for Rome. And so, although the people of Israel were autonomous in the sense that they could operate in their own courts to a certain degree, they could not execute. That is they could not bring about capital punishment.

Now the Old Testament had allowed capital punishment, had been designed by God as a punishment for sin to be a deterrent to sin and crime. And here the Jews had been taken away ... from them had been taken away the right to capital punishment and so consequently they were at the mercy of Rome, at least in the very legal sense, for the execution of Jesus.

Now the Jewish leaders had long ago plotted to kill Jesus. That had been a plot that had been brewing in the minds of the leaders for quite a while. Caiaphas had made the statement several chapters back that it was expedient that one man should die, and that being Jesus. So the death of Jesus Christ was a plot. The religious trial was purely a mockery to carry out the plot. There were no accusations. The indictment before Annas was no indictment at all. They had nothing they could bring against Jesus. The trial in the middle of the night before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin was a joke. It was a farce. It had not the slightest taint of justice connected with it. But they're stuck on the fact that they cannot execute Jesus, legally. And so they must bring Jesus to Rome because the ius gladii, or "the right of the sword" belonged only to the Romans.

And it's a very interesting thing to realize that this didn't really come about in Israel till many years after Roman domination had already begun. It wasn't until 40 years, the Talmud says, before the destruction of the temple that judgment in matters of death was taken away from the people of Israel. In other words, if the temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. it wasn't until 30 A.D., stay with me on this one, it wasn't until 30 A.D. that Israel lost the right of execution. That would be right around the time of the execution of Jesus Christ. God had actually moved history in order that when it came time for Christ to die, He would die at Gentile hands. Though it was a Jewish plot, it was a Gentile execution. And God was designing this in view of prophecy. Jesus Christ was to be hanged on a tree. Jesus Christ was to be lifted up. All the pictures and types of Christ of the Old Testament had crucifixion in view, even particularly Psalm 22 which gives us a detailed view of crucifixion, and had Jesus been crucified anytime prior to that Roman rule, which took away the right of execution, Jesus would then have been stoned because Leviticus 24:16 says that for blasphemy a man was to be stoned, and consequently

would have been unfulfilling in the sense of fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies, all of the Old Testament would have been wrong. The whole thing would have been a fraud and you could have thrown away your Bible. But God moved history so that just prior to the time of the crucifixion of Jesus, the law changed, the right of execution passed into the hands of the Romans and thus Jesus was to die at the hands of the Gentiles, making His death, in a sense, a conglomerate decision on the part of Jew and Gentile. And not only that, being assured that He would then die on a tree, as Paul said, "Cursed is everyone," quoting Galatians 3:13, Paul said: "Christ would die on a tree because cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."

And so, fulfilling accurate prophecy, God moved history in order that it might be changed. That the Romans would have the right of the sword just in time for the death of Jesus.

Now because they were under this Roman domination Caesar had, of course, granted to his governors, or procurators, or praetors or commanders, whatever you want to call them, all the same thing, the right of life and death. The first particular governor that Caesar had placed in there by the name of Coponius had that first right. And eventually, as I say, by the time of 30 A.D. the right had totally become Rome's.

Now it's an interesting thing to compare with this, for example, the death of Stephen, because there were occasions in Jewish anger when they executed but it was not a formal execution, it was a riotous, mobtype reaction. But they had no such right legally. And so they know this that legally if Jesus is to die, the Romans must do it. And so even though they've carried out their mock trial, come to the conclusion that He has to die because He's a blasphemer, He claims to be equal with God, they never considered the fact that that was a true claim. So they now seek Pilate because they have to have the Roman execution. And it's an interesting thing as you trace the hatred of these Jewish leaders to Jesus Christ, of course they were apostates, had they been true Jews as Paul says in Romans 2, inwardly, they never would have responded to their own Messiah like this, they were apostates. First of all, Jesus was ignored by them, then He irritated them. Then finally He became the object of their envy and jealousy and then they hated Him and then they plotted His murder. By the time you come to this passage in John 18, they hate Him with a passion that borders on hysteria. They hate Him. They hate Him so bad that they're plotting and carrying on all these activities in the middle of the night to get rid of Him in the morning before the crowd surges out and they have complications. They want to deliver Him to the Romans as fast as they can, get the thing over, with before anybody can change the decision. And by the time you come to the end of Jesus Christ's life, by the time you even come into chapter 19 before Pilate, the last time, you find them in a shrieking kind of madness like wolves standing and screaming at the top of their voices: Crucify Him, Crucify Him, Crucify Him.

And so, in the end they reach an insanity of hatred that causes them to lose all reason, all mercy and all humanity. But hatred does that.

So, the Jews then are prominent in this drama because they are the ones who bring Jesus to Pilate. Now as I said, the death has already been planned. I mean, that's just a matter of form. Jesus must die. They must get rid of Jesus 'cause He keeps stepping on their ecclesiastical toes. He keeps confronting them at the issues where they hurt. And they're not willing to accept His doctrine of sin and judgment. And so, they bring Him to Pilate.

And you know, it's such a confusion to see this picture because here was Jesus in total magnificence in total deity presenting Himself to people who should have known Him, if they'd really known their own Scripture, and their judgment was absolutely the direct opposite of the truth. He was from God they concluded He was from Satan. The friend of sinners was shackled by the hate of sinners. The judge of all the earth was arraigned before a fallen son of Adam. The Lord of glory was treated like a vile criminal. The Holy One was condemned as a blasphemer. Liars gave false witness against the living truth. And He who was the resurrection and the life was killed at the hands of men.

Now you say, "Well why does John take so much pains to point all this out? Isn't it kind of humiliating for Jesus? Sure, to be rejected by His own people, to have such abuse and such ridicule, why would John portray this if John wants to portray His exaltation?" Very simple reason. Because from the beginning of the trial before Pilate until the end of the trial before Pilate, you know what dominates the scene? The innocence of Jesus. Did you get that? The innocence of Jesus. Pilate starts out by saying - I don't know what the accusation is. He ends up by saying - There's no fault in this man. What is this all about? And all the way through Pilate keeps trying to get out of the deal because he knows Jesus is innocent. And he doesn't want the blood of this just man on his hands. It's almost, as I said, as if Jesus isn't even on trial, Pilate is. Pilate turns out to be the one on trial to see whether he'll do what's right or not. And so naturally, John wanting to exalt Jesus picks the area of the trial which shows the innocence of Jesus and splashes it clear across his gospel and that's what you have here. And by the time you've gone through the whole trial of Pilate, all you've done is seen the magnificence of Jesus Christ and the stupidity of Pilate. Jesus is in total control.

Now let's lead up to verse 28. The religious trial has already happened. The trial ... the little indictment before Annas which turned out to be a fiasco as Jesus handled Annas and left him speechless, has then moved to the kind of middleofthenight operation before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin as they got together in the middle of the night, sometime around three in the morning and decided Jesus must die. From three in the morning until the break of dawn, which wouldn't be too long, I remember last summer we were in Israel, we were swimming in the Sea of Galilee by five in the morning and the sun was well up in the sky. It gets light very early at that ... at particular points of time in the year. And even at other times it would be light as early as six o'clock at the very latest. And so, early in the morning they hold another mock trial before the religious leaders to try to legalize what was illegal because it was held at night. Having done that, they are ready now to take their prisoner and deliver Him to Pilate because they've got to get this execution going and they want to get there as early as

they can.

Now Roman court opened at sunrise and closed at sunset. So we can't commend Pilate for being up early in the morning, that was part of his job.

They got Him over there as soon as they could and the Bible tells us in verse 28 very simply, they led Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment, or the praetorium, which was the place where the Roman garrison was kept, likely it was in Fort Antonious which butts up against the temple in Jerusalem. "And they took Jesus to the hall of judgment and it was early."

Now, the Holy Spirit puts that in there for a very important reason. That is to remind us that this was a hurryup operation. They wanted to get it over with and get Him in the hands of the Romans for execution before the people would ever find out what was going on because many of the people were enamored with the person of Jesus Christ. They had one desire, that was to get Jesus into Roman hands that He might die. So the whole mob arrives at the hall of judgment just as the dawn is breaking and it's getting ready for the time for the court to open and they're ready to hand Jesus over for trial. The only thing is, they're ready ... they're really not ready for a trial; they're only ready for a judgment on execution.

Now as an interesting insight in this verse because you see in verse 28 after they brought Him, and it was early, these words: "And they themselves went not into the judgment hall (or the praetorium, listen to this, here's hypocrisy in a classic illustration) they went not in lest they should be defiled but that they might eat the Passover." Now I'm not going to go into a great long discussion about the technicalities of this passage because there are some very interesting technicalities here that we could talk about in terms of when the Passover was and where were they in time and what were they trying to avoid and how long was the defilement going to last, etc., etc. Let me just give you the point. The point is they were hypocrites. Here they were coming and they were not willing to enter the Gentile house lest they should be defiled. At the same time they're ready to execute the Messiah. They had it a little backwards.

Now, I don't know where they got ... there's a very difference in commentators and historians as to where they got the idea that you'd be defiled by going into the house of a Gentile and you couldn't eat the Passover. There's no such law in the Old Testament. However, in Numbers 19:14 there is a law, an indication of defilement that comes from contact with a dead body. Such defilement would last seven days whereas many lesser defilements would last only till evening, could be washed and then it would be cleansed away. And this kind of a spiritual or religious defilement of seven days would be by contacting a body, a dead body. Leon Morris submits to us, and he is no small scholar in terms of biblical understanding, he says this: "The reason that the Gentile houses were regarded as conveying uncleanness was that the Gentiles were thought to throw abortions down the drain. It was thus the defilement connected with the dead and hence a seven-day defilement that the homes of Gentiles

conveyed."

Now, this came about from the Mishna because in the Mishna it said the homes of Gentiles are unclean. Now when it's talking here about abortions in Morris' quote, he's not of course referring to medical abortions but the fact that in those days without the facilities for childbirth, many more children were aborted. And it was a common Gentile custom to put those abortions down some drain system and consequently the Jews got the belief that therefore to go into a Gentile house would be to come in contact with a dead body even though it was an aborted child and thus contact the seven-day type of defilement. If that is true, and perhaps it is, that's where the rule came from. I don't know. But anyway, they had by this time made a rule of some sorts that it was defiling to go into a Gentile house, perhaps based on that premise, therefore wouldn't go in there lest they gain uncleanness and not be able to eat the Passover which was at this particular time.

And here you get a classic illustration of hypocrisy. Here you get a magnificent picture of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Here is a classic illustration of whitened sepulchers on the outside and inside full of dead men's bones, Matthew 23:27 and 28, Jesus said when He talked about the Pharisees. 'They are so careful not to break the little tiny nitpicky legalistic meaningless rule that they have made while they're willing to murder their own Messiah. But it's an old story about legalism, my friends. Legalism is that way. It always exalts the traditions of men over the commandments of God ... do you see? It always exalts the ritual over the reality, inevitably it does that. You find anybody in any kind of a legalistic thing and it is a person who is locked into a system rather than a reality, you see. And so, they keep the letter of the Passover law and murder the One who came to fulfill it. And the law that they have made over Passover isn't even biblical. So they were legalists.

John Calvin said this: "These hypocrites, though they are so full of malice, ambition, fraud, cruelty and avarice that they almost infect heaven and earth with their abominable smell, are only afraid of external pollution."

Now you see, a legalist loves laws, you know that? Because the more little laws he can keep the more pious he looks. So if they had twenty laws, they'd make twenty more so they could even be more sanctimonious. And then they live by those laws and thus exalt themselves over the people. You remember what Paul said to Titus? He said to the defiled, all things are ... what? ... are defiled, for even their conscience and their mind is defiled, even their legalism is defiled.

And so, here they come in an intolerable kind of mockery, they expect to please God by legalism while they murder God's Son. But you see, that's how it is with hypocrisy. They think uncleanness is confined in Pilate's house. Pilate was unclean. But I'm sure he would have been defiled if they'd have come in there. So they keep the ritual and kill the reality. It's a shocking thing.

Then, beginning in verse 29 John introduces to us seven magnificent characteristics of Christ and weaves them through the narrative. Now you see, just a footnote here, in Scripture you have theological portions of Scripture which we call doctrinal or instructional, directly so such as Paul's letter, such as Hebrews which we're studying at night. You also have historical narrative but don't you ever think for a minute that historical narrative doesn't have a lot of spiritual doctrine in it because it does. Historical narrative is loaded with truth. In a very glorious way the Spirit of God weaves into historical narrative great doctrines. And so here we meet the doctrine of the deity of Christ and we see seven magnificent perfections of Christ ... all woven into this encounter with Pilate.

The seven that we see, we see Christ exalted in seven ways: the perfect man, the prophetic God, the preternatural King, the preincarnate one, the proclaimer of truth, the personal Savior and the proven faultless. And if you don't think I spent a lot of time on that, you're wrong. All these things exalt Christ. And all the way through what was going to be a humiliating situation, Christ is constantly exalted. John's done this every time, hasn't he? No different here.

All right, let's see majestic Jesus in Pilate's judgment hall. First of all presented as the perfect man. We see His perfections in verses 29 and 30. Verse 29: "Pilate then went out unto them and said," this is after he's already met Jesus inside, "What accusation bring ye against this man?"

Now here we meet Pilate. Now we must consider Pilate for a minute because he's a very, very interesting character. And as we'll go through the trial in weeks to come, we'll find out that Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. Well, Pilate was convinced of the innocence of Christ, completely and totally convinced. And then the question immediately arises: Well, if the guy was so convinced, and I mean, let's face it, he wasn't any kind of a dingaling, he must have been some kind of intelligent person or he never would have gotten that lofty a position in the Roman government. I mean, he had to have some kind of abilities and some kind of capacities or he would never have been placed in such a hot spot as Israel to be the ruler in Israel for Rome. And so Pilate was a pretty sharp guy. And why would Pilate act like he did as such a coward, such a mealy mouth such a knowwhat'sright and do it not.

There's a good answer to that. And I'll tell you what it is. Pilate was being blackmailed. Pilate was being blackmailed by the Jews. Now I'll show you how this happened. Let me lead up to it with some history. Here's some historical background.

In 4 B.C. Herod the Great was still the king in Palestine. Now Herod the Great died and left in his will that the kingdom be divided into three sections for his three sons. Their names were Antipas, Archelaus and Philip. I don't know how Philip got in there with Antipas and Archelaus, but he did. So you have these three who are the sons of Herod the Great: Philip the Tetrarch and Archelaus and Antipas. Now Antipas received Galilee and Perea, which is the northern area which you're familiar with. Philip received Batanea, Ararat, Trachinitus which is east of Galilee and it's kind of wild uninhabited country. Archelaus, the third son, got Samaria and Judea and also Idumea and he was

very young. I understand he was about 18 years old. Well, he turned out to be the worst of the three. Philip and Antipas did real well. They ruled quietly. They ruled fairly. Archelaus was a tyrant, an extortioner. He was awful. The people hated him and finally the Jews persuaded Rome to get rid of him. And so the Romans moved in and they took him out.

Well, in order to substitute for Archelaus they had to have somebody in there so they decided they would appoint a series of governors, or procurators or praetors or commanders, whatever you want to call it. And since Palestine was a troublesome spot, they decided they also needed Roman legions so whoever ruled would also have to be a pretty fair soldier and one who could lead the Roman legion. So they placed in Palestine a procurator or a governor. And these governors began about A.D. 6. And by the time you come to 26 A.D. history tells us Pilate arrives on the scene. Pilate lasted till 35 when he was sent home. He finally just didn't make it at all and Rome called him home. Some say he committed suicide on the way back. Some say he was killed by the Romans. Others say he just kind of faded away. But from 26 to 35 Pilate exercised this right of being governor or procurator over Palestine.

Now, he was a very important person in the fact that he could ... he could govern the people he could not, for example, raise taxes. He could not accept bribes. He was not to be a small god, he was not to be some kind of a demigod or some kind of a tyrant, he was to rule fairly and justly. And he was to rule for the Roman emperor. But to begin with, Pilate's term in Israel just didn't go right in the first place. Let me just give you some incidents that we find in history. First of all, in his first visit to Jerusalem, he's just arriving to kind of set up office. Now you know that the Roman seat of rule in Palestine was not in Jerusalem it was in Caesarea which is west to the sea, right on the sea. And the main fortress and garrison and the occupied place and Pilate's house was Caesarea. But when he came to Jerusalem, you know he came with all the baloney that the Romans came with, you know all the soldiers and the stuff and the standards and the flags and the whole shot, and on all the Roman standards there was a sculptured image of the emperor and you'll remember that the emperor was not only the ruler he was also god for the Romans believed in emperor worship, right? So what this really amounted to was their god on their standards.

Well, he came parading into Jerusalem and for all the years before that the Romans had not kept those standards, those images on their standards because they offended the Jews because the Jews were really strong on the idea they have no other gods ... no false idols, at least this point in their history. And so because of this they had had all the previous Roman governors remove these, but Pilate was hardnosed about it. And Pilate didn't want to remove them so he had them up there where everybody could see them; he came storming into Jerusalem with all of these idols on all the standards ... little pictures of the emperor who was god. So the Jews immediately went to Pilate and told him to remove them. And then they begged him to do it but he was adamant. So he finally finished his business in Jerusalem, took off for Caesarea and they all followed him, a whole mob of them. They followed him all the way to Caesarea and they kept bugging him for five days incessantly

to remove those standards and he was so furious that he finally ordered them all to meet him in the amphitheater.

So, he got them all in the amphitheater and immediately surrounded them with his soldiers. And he informed them all that if they didn't go back to Jerusalem and stop with the request that he would kill them all on the spot. And I guess they were a massive number, we don't know how many. So they all just bared their necks and said - Go ahead, kill us all.

Well, he was stuck. He had tried to scare them. He was not the kind of a man who would move in to begin his rule in the land by wiping out all the citizens. He knew that wouldn't set real well with Rome to begin with. And so he was stuck. He couldn't massacre defenseless men. He was beaten. He gave in and removed the image. And he started out his rule in Israel as a beaten man. They had him under the thumb at the very beginning.

Now to make things worse, Jerusalem at one occasion during the first years of his rule there needed more water and the water supply was inadequate. Pilate determined to build a new aqueduct but he didn't have any money so he robbed the temple treasury which didn't go over real big. Now there were millions of dollars evidently in the temple treasury so he found all that he needed but the people rioted. And they were surging through the streets and so Pilate infiltrated the people with plainclothed Roman soldiers and at a given signal clubbed or stabbed them to death and that way broke up the riot. And so the beginning was bad and the middle was worse.

But that wasn't all. Again, we got into the same conflict later in Pilate's career over these idols because Pilate eventually made a temporary dwelling place in Herod's palace in Jerusalem. And in Herod's palace he hung shields on the walls with the picture of Emperor Tiberius on them and the Jews began to complain about that because they said that's bringing false gods into our country. They asked him to remove them and he refused.

Now, Rome had built into the system, Pax Romana all over the world, the right of any subject people to appeal their case to the emperor. So when Pilate wouldn't go along with them they sent word to the emperor that Pilate wouldn't do it. And so the Emperor Tiberius sent back word that Pilate was to take all of his shields down and comply with the Jews' request. And again, Pilate was a beaten man.

They had Pilate right where they wanted him. They could report him and turn him into Rome and he would lose his job. He was on thin ice. Now do you see when they came to Pilate and presented to him their desire to have Jesus executed, they were blackmailing him? In effect, they were saying you better go along with us, Pilate, or we'll tell Caesar, see. Don't you remember what they said to him? Sure, 19:12, look at it, that's chapter 19 verse 12: "And from then on, Pilate sought to release Him but the Jews cried out, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend." Want to keep your job? They blackmailed him. And that was Pilate's problem. He had to decide whether it was more important to

him to be just or to hold his job and so he slew his soul to keep his physical prestige.

That's nothing new in history, that's nothing old. He wanted to do the right thing in one sense, but he wanted to keep his job. He loved it so he just decided to go ahead and kill Jesus. And he did. That was Pilate ... some man. Stands for all time as the prototype of cowards.

But in verse 29, back to that, he says: "What accusation bring ye against this man?" Now that's the first fair aspect to the trial of Jesus. At least somebody wants to know what He's been accused of. So he goes back outside and he says to the Jews: Now what's the accusation, I mean, we're going to have a court here what are we trying Him for?

Well, this blew a hole in their plan because they didn't want a trial they wanted an execution, see. They didn't want a Roman trial at all; all they wanted Pilate to do was say -- Execute Him. They wanted to put the pressure on Pilate to kill Jesus, not to try Him because they knew they didn't have a leg to stand on, they didn't have one single accusation that would ever stand up in a Roman court. So he says - What crime has He done? And this fouls up their strategy for a minute and they don't know what to do. They want Pilate to be an executioner, not a judge. They don't want justice for Jesus, they want execution. So they have a very subtle reply.

Verse 30: "They answered and said unto him, if He were not an evil doer would we not have delivered Him up unto thee?" Don't you get that? Why you don't think we'd bring you someone who wasn't a horrible criminal, do you? Which is skirting the issue. It doesn't even answer the question. Why? There was no answer. There was no accusation. So what they do is say - Pilate, are you impugning our righteousness? You see, the hypocrisy here is so thick it's almost disgusting, you know. They had no accusations.

Now you say, "What does this prove?" This proves that Jesus was the perfect man. Don't you know that they had scrutinized His life and they had examined everything He did to try to find something wrong? What did they find? Nothing. They couldn't find anything. They didn't have one single accusation to bring against Jesus. And you better believe they worked at finding one. They didn't find it. So they're in a tough spot. They don't have any charge that will hold up in a Roman court. Now their own charge is blasphemy. He claims to be God but the Romans aren't going to execute anybody for claiming to be God. That's not the issue in a Roman court. So they take refuge in their own character and they make a generality assuming that their character is enough to indicate that Jesus must be a vile criminal. The word "malefactor" means evil doer.

So, the only accusation they had really in their own minds was His claim to be equal with God but no civil court was going to deal with that issue, only a religious court would handle that. So they maintained - We are the judges we are the highest court -- now we've made the decision, all we want you to do is just kill Him, see.

But, very subtly in these two verses, John has woven into this the perfect Christ, hasn't he? No accusations. They don't have a thing to say the perfect man. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ... what? ... sin perfect man. Jesus never sinned. And when He died He didn't die for His own sin He died for ... whose? ... ours perfect man.

Secondly, He was not only perfect man, He was prophetic God. And here we see the deity of Christ really exploded before us in verses 31 and 32, and this is tremendous. Now going back just as a point of reference in Mark chapter 10 verse 32, it says - and they were on their way going up to Jerusalem, this is Jesus and His disciples, "And Jesus went before them," this is long before the account of John 18, "and they were amazed and as they followed they were afraid." I mean, what's He going to Jerusalem for? He knows what's going to happen when He gets there. They hate Him. It's hostile. "He took again the twelve and began to tell them what things should happen." Listen to what Jesus says: "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and here's what will happen, men, here's the prophecy of Jesus. The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and the scribes and they shall condemn Him to death." And that's exactly what's happened. He predicted it to the very letter. "And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles." Do you see that? Jesus predicted His execution would be a part ... would be on the part of the Gentiles. "And they shall mock Him and scourge Him and shall spit on Him and shall kill Him."

And so it was Jesus predicted clearly that He would be turned over to Gentile hands. Now with that in mind, look at verse 31: "Then said Pilate unto him, Take ye Him and judge Him according to your own law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Now isn't that interesting? Pilate here, I believe, had given the Jews a temporary right to kill Jesus. Did you get that? Pilate had given them the right of execution. Look at it again. He says - Take it and do it yourself. They said - It is not lawful for us to put any man to ... what? ... to death. So what had Pilate then given them? The right to kill. But they're saying - Oh no, that's against the law. And the hypocrisy of the thing, this is the same Jesus they tried to stone already on several occasions. And now they're not willing to kill Him. Why?

You say, "Man alive, they could have scooped up Jesus and taken Him out and stoned Him. Why in the world didn't they do it?"

Look at verse 32: "In order that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke signifying what death He should die."

Well, what statement was that? John 12:32, listen to this: "And I," Jesus says, "if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me. This He said signifying what death He should die." What kind of death would it be that lifts Him up? A death on what? The cross. He had been killed by the Jews, how would they had killed Him? Stoning Him on the ground. You know why they wouldn't take Him and execute Him? Because He had prophesied that He would die lifted up and you want to know

something? Those Jews were being moved around; they were victims of the prophetic word of Jesus. They had every reason to take Jesus out and stone Him on the spot and could have gotten away with it legally. Why wouldn't they do it? Because it's just one other way to show Jesus is God. Jesus could never have predicted that He would be executed by Gentiles had He not known everything in the future. Why the only normal thing for these Jews to do would have been to take Him out and stone Him on the spot. And you say - "They tried to stone Him before, why didn't they do it here?" Because God wanted to show us one more revelation that Jesus is God and that what He says comes to pass like He says it. And besides that, the Old Testament had predicted crucifixion and that's the way it was going to be. Little did they know in their cleverness and their wiliness and their hypocrisy that God was moving them around to fulfill a revelation that His Son was no less than God Himself who could predict the future. He prophesied crucifixion and that's how it's going to be so the Jews not even knowing probably why they're doing it said - Oh no, Pilate, you do it. Jesus had to die a Roman death, He had to be lifted up, I think also to impugn the whole world in His death so that ... People always say, "Well, the Jews crucified Jesus Christ." No, the Jews crucified Jesus Christ, the Romans crucified Jesus Christ and every soul that rejects Christ crucifies Him afresh and puts Him to an open shame. So the whole world is involved. And again we can see the principle that God uses the wrath of men to ... what? ... to praise Him. Jesus wasn't going to die by having His holy head crushed and mutilated; He was going to die by being lifted up and thus draw men to Himself.

And so, Jesus is not only perfect man, He's prophetic God. He predicts the future and it comes to pass exactly as He says, even though it crossgrains what is the most normal response. Third, He is the preternatural King. You say, "What in the world is that?" Preternatural is just another word for supernatural only it starts with a "P". He is the preternatural King in the sense that He's supernatural. And here John exalts Christ as supernatural King. Look at verse 33 to 37, and ... well, let me just back up here. What was the accusation? Now the Romans, they ... Pilate said - Now what are you going to accuse Him of? Well, the Jews finally came up with an accusation. They figured it all out and here we've got one that will stick, Luke 23:2 says what they said, this fits in. Right at the same time Luke is writing about the same scene. He says this: "And they began to accuse Him." Okay, here are the Jews accusing Jesus in front of Pilate. "We found this fellow perverting the nations." Lie! "Forbidding to give tribute to Caesar." Lie! He said, "Render to Caesar ... what? ... the things that are Caesar's." Thirdly, "And saying that He Himself is Christ the King."

What are they trying to say? They're trying to make Jesus look like a earthly revolutionary whose going to lead a rebellion and crown Himself king, see. They're trying to make Him look like an insurrectionist. They figure we'll get Him messed up there in that Roman trial because we'll make Him look like a an insurrectionist trying to lead the Jews to overthrow Rome, see. He won't let us give tribute to Caesar and He perverts the nation, we're all so committed to Rome. Later on they say - We have no king but Caesar, you know, which is lie upon lie upon lie. They hated Caesar. So now they say Jesus is an insurrectionist, He's trying to lead our people in rebellion against Rome.

Pilate wasn't stupid. In the back of his mind he must have said - Yeah, don't you wish? And so that's their accusation, that He's claiming to be an earthly king. They figured Rome might be a little bit upset if somebody came along and tried a revolution.

But in verse 33 it says: "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again." He goes back in to Jesus. "He called Jesus and said unto Him," and I want to give you the Greek, "You, are You the king of the Jews?" Do you get the implication? Is this a joke? You don't mean that they're accusing You of being a king? There's Jesus, meek, mild, silent, in the robes of a peasant, all alone, calm, His hands bound. He doesn't look a lot like a king. In, anyway, in terms of an earthly kingship He has no resemblance. And so, Pilate says - You, ridiculous! You, a king?

There's a touch of honesty in this, perhaps, because he may have known about the former Sunday when Jesus had ridden into the city with all of the "Hosannas" and so forth. But the key thing here is ridicule. This is unbelievable to Pilate. Are they kidding me? I mean, where's Your army? Where's Your whatever king's put on stuff? You don't look like a king.

Now, what's Jesus going to say? If He says - Yes, I'm a king - then Pilate's got a problem because Pilate's mind a king is only an earthly king and Pilate's thinking of a king leading the Jews in an insurrection. And if Jesus says - Yes, I'm a king - then he'll say - Aha, a king leading an insurrection, maybe we do have a case. If He says - No, I'm not a king - then He's denied His kingship. So He can't just say yes and He can't just say no, it can't be that unqualified. So Jesus very beautifully says this, verse 34: "Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this of thyself or did others tell it thee of Me?" Who you asking this for? In other words, let's just define the issue. Are you asking this as a Roman? Are you asking Me if I'm a political reactionary? Is this your own thing or did somebody report to you that I claim to be a king?

You see, He gets Pilate into the right spot and Pilate replies in verse 35: "Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?" I mean, I'm not claiming You to be a king. "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me, what hast Thou done?" Now these people would come along in all these books and all of these critical analyses and say: "The Romans killed Jesus for being a political reactionary." That's the biggest bunch of boloney there ever was. They never believed Him to be a political reactionary at all. Pilate says - This isn't our accusation; Rome isn't accusing You of this. Later on he says, "I find no fault in this man." He's no political reactionary. He says - This is your own nation, your own chief priests, your own people, they're the ones who brought You in here, not ... this isn't a Roman issue. What have You done?

And so, Pilate admits that Jesus is no reactionary. Pilate admits that Rome has no indictment of Jesus, no accusation at all, that Jesus has never done anything reactionary, Jesus has never set up any kind of a structure, Jesus has never caused a revolution, Jesus has never done one single thing

to stir the anger of Rome, at no time in no way. And you keep that in your mind because you're going to hear a lot of boloney coming out all the time about Jesus being executed for being a political reactionary. That is not true. Rome never had an accusation against Jesus ... never. He never led a rebellion. He never led a reaction. He never led a riot. He never did anything but deal with men's hearts. And so, Pilate acknowledges that Jesus never has been accused of anything by Rome and says the whole thing is Jewish, the whole thing's a religious issue with Your own people, they're the ones that dragged You in here, what have You done?

Now this is a wonderful thing. Jesus stands there and Pilate says - What have You done? Now we come against the same problem we saw two weeks ago. In the Jewish court and the Roman court the judge had no right to ask that question. Remember that? Under no circumstances was a man to be condemned at the word of his own testimony. It's like the Fifth Amendment. He could not be incriminated by His own testimony. So, Pilate is asking an illegal question and you will notice that Jesus does not answer it. What hast Thou done? Jesus doesn't answer that. Jesus just takes off in verse 36 and starts talking about His Kingdom. He never answers that.

Why? It's an illegal question. He did the same thing to Annas, the same thing to Caiaphas; He'll never capitulate to illegalities. And thus He indicts them because of those illegalities. And so rather than answer the question He just explains what kind of a King He is. Now Pilate understands that He is no political King so He says - Now I'll explain to you what kind of King I am. Verse 36, this is beautiful and we could do a year's study on the Kingdom, but we won't. Verse 36: "Jesus answered;" this is so good, "My Kingdom is not of this world." Boy, I like that. He says, "If My Kingdom," three times He calls it "My Kingdom," as opposed to everybody else's, "If My Kingdom were of this world then would My servants fight that I should not be delivered to the Jews but now is My Kingdom not from here." Isn't that good? And Pilate's going ... Ah huh! He doesn't understand this. He only knows earthly kings; he hasn't got the slightest idea what Jesus is talking about.

Jesus says No, I am a King, yes, but My Kingdom is not of this world. There are lots of earthly kings; I'm not one of them. An earthly king, his subjects appoint him as king Jesus is a King and He appoints His subjects. There's a difference. Jesus is a King in a class all Himself My Kingdom, My Kingdom, My Kingdom as opposed to all other kingdoms. Not of this world. What does He mean when He says: "My Kingdom is not of this world?" Some people say - "Well, that proves there will never be a Millennium. That proves there will never be a Kingdom. That proves that Jesus is never going to come back and give Israel a thousand year Kingdom." That doesn't prove that at all. "My Kingdom is not ekout of this world." That means it didn't grow out of the system. Did Jesus' Kingship grow because men elected Him King? No. Back in the sixth chapter of John they tried to make Him a King and He went out of their midst. He didn't want to be made a King by men, He was already a King. But His Kingdom was spiritual. And when it says He was ... He was ... His Kingdom was not out of this world, it doesn't mean it won't come into the world, we believe that there will be a literal Kingdom for Israel. There will be a literal millennial reign of Jesus on earth. He's not saying that isn't

true, He's simply saying My Kingdom does not have its origin in the system ... the human system.

Now, Pilate was right when he saw nothing in Jesus to resemble an earthly king, but he was wrong when he then concluded that Jesus wasn't a King. He was a King, indeed He was a King. And in Revelation 11 verse 15 it says that He shall reign and rule over every nation and that He shall be King of kings and Lord of lords.

And Jesus proved that He's not an earthly king by saying this: Verse 36: "If My Kingdom were of this world then would My servants fight" I mean, if I wanted a kingdom in this world I wouldn't be standing here with no, you know, recourse. Back in chapter 18 verse 10, Peter started the fight. Peter maybe thought the earthly Kingdom was supposed to come right now. Peter whipped out his little dagger, he shouldn't have been carrying it in the beginning, and started the fight and the Lord says - Put that away, Peter. Don't you realize that this all a part of the design? This is the cup which My Father has gave Me to drink, shall I not drink it? Jesus never tried to react. Why Pilate at the best only had three thousand troops at his disposal, Jesus could have gathered a multitude of Jews and knocked them off if He had wanted to. Jesus says - That's not the point. My Kingdom isn't out of this world, it doesn't come from here, if it was My servants would be fighting, instead they're fleeing.

And then the most interesting statement that He says: "They would have fought that I should not be delivered to the Jews." Isn't that strange? The Jews said He claims to be their king, Jesus says they're my enemy. He couldn't be the king of the Jews, they were His enemies. But He is a King.

You say, "What kind of a King is He? Pilate can't figure it out." Now Pilate knows one thing, he knows He's no earthly king. He's got that figured out. But in verse 37, after hearing what Jesus said about what kind of King He is, "Pilate therefore said unto Him, Are You a king then?" I mean, if You're not an earthly king, are you a king at all? What are You? All I understand about being a king is being a king like I know being a king. Well, what kind of a king are You, or are You one at all?

And I love what Jesus says. "Jesus answered; Thou sayest that I am a king." And the Greek goes this way. "Jesus answered, You say well that I am a king ... indeed I am a King." I love that. Watch this. "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world." Isn't that good? Jesus says - Indeed I am a King. Jesus then before Pilate claimed to be a King.

You say, "Well, that was the accusation, huh? Why didn't Pilate panic?" Because Pilate knew well that the Kingdom that Jesus was claiming was no threat to an earthly kingdom, right? Why in Romans you read the Apostle Paul says: "Be subject to the powers that be they reordained of God." Why Peter said: "Honor the king, serve your governors No, we're not in a physical insurrection, the Kingdom of Christ is a spiritual Kingdom. And so, Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:13: "I commend thee in the sight of God who maketh all things alive, and before Christ Jesus," listen to this, "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." What confession did Jesus make before

Pontius Pilate? "Which in His times He shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords." That's the confession Jesus made before Pilate. That He was indeed a King.

And so, we see the supernatural King. Not of this world, not of the natural world, but supernatural. And so John very carefully by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit presents to us the eternal King, Jesus. And so, Christ is seen as the perfect man, the prophetic God and the preternatural King. Now in verse 37, just a couple of quick things we'll point these others out and we'll just make mention of them.

Fourthly, He is the preincarnate One, and this is so powerful. In the middle of verse 37 it says: "... To this end was I born," that's His humanness, "for this cause came I into the world." Now listen to this, what does He mean when He says: "Came I into the world?" If He came into the world you had to be somewhere to come from, right? To be born is human but to come into the world indicates preexistence, right? What's He saying then? He's saying I was preexistent. You say, "Where was He?" John 17:5, He says: "Father, glorify Me with the glory that I had with Thee before the world began." "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was ... where? ... with God."

Listen, this is talking about God coming into human form. Jesus is claiming to be incarnate God. It's a powerful claim. I love the fact that John makes sure we know that He said: "I came into the world." Before the world began, He was there ... He was there. Jesus claims to have come into the world. Paul says in Philippians 2, "Christ thought it not something to hold onto to be equal with God, but let go of it, came into the world, humbled Himself, found in fashion as a man," right? God coming into the world. So, in a brief statement, Jesus claims eternal preexistence.

Then we see that He's not only the perfect man, prophetic God, preternatural King, preincarnate One, but fifthly, the proclaimer of truth. Why did He come into the world? Cause men needed to know the truth about God, didn't they? Desperately needed to know it, men have searched for truth and Jesus says: "For this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth." You want to know where truth is? Look at Jesus who said, "I am the Way ... what? ... the Truth and the Life."

Jesus said: "If you continue in My words, then are you My disciples indeed and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Free from what? Free from the search for truth. Jesus said, "I came into the world to bear witness to the truth." What truth? The truth about God, the truth about men, the truth about sin, the truth about judgment, the truth about love, the truth about holiness, the truth about life, death, the truth about everything. And when you know Jesus you know the truth ... because Jesus came to proclaim the truth.

And so, He is a King and His scepter is truth. What an offer that is to twentieth century man, you know? Who's looking for the truth? But Pilate was a good twentieth century man, he was cynical and at the beginning of verse 38 look what he says: "Pilate says unto Him, What is truth?" Can't you get that? Don't you get the cynicism in it? Truth, what is truth? As if to say I've been looking for truth all

my life, there's no truth. That's twentieth century man. There is no truth. So twentieth century man lives in the absurd because truth is so nonexistent. And so, Pilate responds in cynicism to the fact that Jesus came to bear the truth.

Sixthly, Jesus is the personal Savior and He gives a beautiful invitation to Pilate and to you this morning. Listen to it at the end of verse 37: "... Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice." A lot of people claim to know the truth, you know that? A lot of people claim to have answers. Everyone who really knows truth hears the voice of Jesus Christ. What does it mean "to hear?" The Greek word is to listen intently and obey. There's no such thing as knowing the truth unless you obey Jesus, for He is ... what? ... the truth. He is God revealed to men and there's no truth outside of Him.

So, He is the personal Savior and beautifully He gives Pilate an invitation. He says: "Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice." As if to say, "Pilate, you can know truth if you listen and obey Me." I love that in John 10 where Jesus says in regard to His sheep, He says: "My sheep hear My voice," and what do they do? "They follow Me." That's the evidence of a true believer. Jesus had a lot of people believing in Him in John 8. Many believed on His name but He said this: "If you continue in My Word then are you My disciples for real." The only way you'll ever know truth is to know Jesus Christ. And all who know truth know it in Him for outside of Him there is no truth.

And so, we see the marvelous Christ. Seventhly, the proven faultless. When it was all over, verse 38, "And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews and said unto them, I find in Him ... what? ... no fault at all." There's no accusation against Jesus, the proven faultless. No indictment at the beginning, no conviction at the end. The King of truth accused, maligned, hated but perfect and proven faultless.

So, we come full circle and Jesus is as pure at the end as He was at the beginning. There's nothing to hold against Him. He is the perfect man, the prophetic God, the preternatural King, the preincarnate One, the proclaimer of truth, the personal Savior and the proven faultless. I hope you see Him that way and I hope you respond to Him differently than Pilate did. Let's pray.

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