

John 18:28-19:16a**"Pilate"**

Imago Dei Church | 4/14/19 | 3 Services

INTRODUCTION**(ILL) Kid's Say the Darndest Things**

In this text Pilate says some of the darndest things:

"you are a king"

"I find no guilt in him"

"What is truth?"

Pilate is the most consistent figure in these verses, but not the central one. Jesus is.

Pilate drives the narrative in which Jesus is held in relation to 5 different groups of people.

Main Idea: Jesus went to the cross as a sovereign king.

1. WILL WE RECEIVE HIS SACRIFICE?**(18:28-32)**

Specifically the Jewish *leaders*.

Last week we read about Jesus' interrogation by Annas, the godfather-like former high priest. Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas and the full Sanhedrin body (Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22).

The Jews' had two main concerns: religious and political. (explain political)

But their main concern was religious. In his claims to be the Christ, Jesus had made himself equal with God—**“Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61 ESV)**. When Jesus answered in the affirmative, they tore their clothes and cried “blasphemy!”

This was the final straw for them. What else did they need? The OT punishment for blasphemy was death.

But they had a problem. As we read in v.31, the Jewish ruling body under Roman law did not have the authority to put people to death. Only the Romans did.

So they needed to get the local governor, **Pilate** on board. This was an unholy and uneasy union. We can see that they aren’t on the same side by the fact that they won’t even go into Pilate’s house—he’s unclean [28].

But Pilate—surprise, surprise—was not likely going to be swayed by their religious concerns to kill this guy.

By all accounts, Pilate was a cruel and insecure leader. He shows little backbone and a great tendency to flaunt his own power and authority over his subjects. And he doesn’t much care who blasphemes the Jews’ God.

So when talking to Pilate **they lean more into the political (not religious) angle**—Jesus is a threat to peace. This would have gotten Pilate’s attention, since

he has a simple job as governor of the region: keep the peace.

Now, it's more than likely the case that the Jewish leaders had already struck some kind of deal with Pilate before they come to him with Jesus in handcuffs. We know this because there were Roman guards there to help arrest Jesus. Pilate was already in on this thing.

That explains why the Jews seems so frustrated when Pilate asks, [29] "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They respond: [30] "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you."

They thought they had everything set up so that if they brought Jesus to Pilate he would take care of the crucifixion. But they're caught off guard by the fact that Pilate wants to flex his muscles. He wants to show them who's in charge and open his own investigation.

They basically say "trust us—he's a bad dude." And Pilate's like, "No."

Since they don't want to get specific, **he just tells them to do the trial themselves**, knowing that they don't have the authority to do what they want (kill him, v.31). **He's taunting them.**

But this is one of those points in this passage where Pilate slips into a kind of prophecy.

"Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." — that's actually pretty good advice. John the Gospel writer is winking at us in these moments, showing us that the Jewish leaders' motives were not so sincere as they might seem.

Sure, they seem concerned for ritual purity and the future of the Jewish people, but they're theological insight is thin.

If they judged this man according to God's law in the OT, they would find not only that he isn't violating it, but that it POINTS TO HIM.

And conversely, if they were to be subjected to examination by their law, they would fall short.

John is inviting a kind of comparison between Jesus and the Jewish leaders and in so doing giving us a **glimpse of gospel truth**:

Jesus, innocent according to God's Law is judged under the Law and sentenced to death. How could this be? For who's sin does Jesus suffer and die? It cannot be his own, since he had no sin. It was for you and for me.

He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Cal'ry,
And suffered, and died alone.

Well, the Jewish council is trying to get Pilate to deliver on his side of the deal and have him crucified under Roman law, and John reminds us in v.32 that Jesus predicted back in John 12:32-33 that he would be lifted up to die.

But it's not settled yet. Pilate wants to continue his investigation.

2. WILL WE RECEIVE HIS TRUTH? (18:33-38A)

Pilate asks Jesus directly, [33] **"Are you the King of the Jews?"** This was the political framing of the Jewish leaders. If Jesus was claiming to be a king, then Pilate had to take notice.

Jesus asks Pilate if this is a sincere inquiry, or if he's just parroting the Sanhedrin's talking points [34]. Embedded in this question is a deeper question to Pilate: **what do YOU believe?** The one on trial turns the tables and puts Pilate on the hot seat.

That's why Pilate scoffs: [35] **Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?"**

'If you're the king of the Jews, Jesus, (1) you're not MY king because I'm not a Jew. And (2) you're not very good at it because your own people turned you over. So...'

Jesus' response is simple: [36] "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."

Jesus' response is **truthful and brilliant**. One the one hand he truthfully admits that he is a king. BUT, he does so in such a way that shows Pilate he is no threat of political upheaval. Why? Because his kingdom is not of this world. He's not trying to fight Rome or the Jews.

In fact, he says in the next verse that his purpose is "to bear witness of to the truth."

Here Jesus gets to have his cake and eat it too. He shows Pilate that he is not the socio-political threat that the Jews are making him out to be, but neither is he inconsequential to the world.

He comes not by military might, but he does invade the world with the truth of who God is and will and ways in the world. **That has implications in this life.**
(APP)

Pilate gathered as much. When Jesus says that "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice" he hints for Pilate, once again, to consider his claims.

Pilate balks: **"What is truth?"** Either dismissing the category altogether or, more likely, refusing to consider its validity.

Still, Pilate is convinced that Jesus isn't the man the Jews made him out to be.

3. WILL WE RECEIVE HIS REVELATION? (18:38B-19:6)

After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. [39] But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" [40] They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

Once again, Pilate turns into a prophet: **"I find no guilt in him."**

So he tries to get Jesus released by this customary act of goodwill from the Romans to the Jews. They can have Jesus back, or Barabbas.

Now the text tells us Barabbas was a robber—but we know from elsewhere and even from this description that he wasn't a petty thief. He was a radical. An insurrectionist. A rebel. He was the embodiment of what the Jews were trying to make Jesus look like.

But they choose Barabbas, again **showing the hatred that the Jewish leaders had for Jesus.**

Pilate thought he had found a way out of this, but they called his bluff. They wanted blood, so he gave it to

them. They flogged Jesus, they gave him a crown of thorns, they mocked him, and they beat him [vv.1-3].

Hoping this would be enough, [4] Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him."

Pilate is trying to get them to reconsider. When he brings Jesus out to them, beaten, looking ridiculous in his purple robe, Pilate taunts them [5]: "Is THIS the guy you're all worked up about?!"

In doing so, Pilate once again speak more than he realizes: "Behold the man."

John's been trying to tell us that Jesus is the Son of God, in human flesh. He is the true human, the perfect human, and the perfect Imago Dei. If you want to see God in man, look at Christ. Behold the man!

But they will not be placated. [6] "Crucify him, crucify him!" And in disgust, Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him."

Pilate knew that they couldn't, but his frustration with the Jews and his insistence on flaunting his own authority leads to another private conversation with Jesus.

4. WILL WE SUBMIT TO HIS AUTHORITY?

(19:7-11)

[7] The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God." [8] When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.

Pilate's becomes afraid not because he all the sudden believes that Jesus is the Messiah, but he seems to have a vague category for a holy man—and this gives him some pause.

[9] He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?"

When Jesus doesn't answer, Pilate tries to intimidate him:

[10] Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?" [11] Jesus answered him, "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin."

Jesus' response to Pilate is simple and gets right to the heart of what John has been trying to show us in this trial—**Jesus went to the cross as a sovereign king.**

Pilate took great joy in his own authority, even to the extent that he was willing to toy with the Jews in order to taunt them. But Jesus is not impressed. Pilate's authority is granted to him. It is a derived authority.

Even his role in the drama is somewhat passive. That's why the one who handed him over has the greater sin. This is probably referring to **Caiaphas**, who orchestrated

this whole thing. Both men are guilty, make no mistake. **Their sins are great and their responsibility is real, but none of it was outside the sovereign plan of God to send Christ to the cross to die for the sins of the world.**

Well, despite Jesus calling Pilate's authority into question, Pilate decidedly wants to release Jesus now.

But there's a problem: Caesar

5. WILL WE WORSHIP HIM ONLY? (19:12-16A)

[12] From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."

The Jews now go all in. This is a not-so-veiled threat, and it does force Pilate's hand.

[13] So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. [14] Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, "Behold your King!" [15] 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." [16] So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

V.15 is haunting. Once again Pilate gets to prophecy: Yes, he will crucify their king.

And the Jewish leaders and the mob they have built up embrace the very apostasy they accuse Jesus of. Instead of recognizing and worshiping at the feet of their true

king, their selfish ambition and blind hatred drive them to pledge allegiance to Israel's great enemy.

Their descent is complete. They have sold their soul so that they can crucify the Son of God.