

“What Is Truth?”

John 18:28-40

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July 24, 2022

Teaching Aim: To explore the three civil trials of Jesus examining the outcome of each. To understand in all three cases Jesus was found, *“not guilty.”* To recognize the Jews refused to accept the verdict each time. To realize Pontius Pilate tried again and again to have Jesus released but the Jews would have none of it, they wanted Jesus crucified. In the end, Pilate was more concerned about his own well-being and standing before Rome than he was about doing what was right.

DIGGING DEEPER INTO GOD’S WORD (BIBLE STUDY)

Part I: The first civil trial before Pontius Pilate (John 18:28-38)

1. In the first half of the Gospel of John, Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane and taken to the true high priest, Annas, for his initial religious trial. After Annas interrogated Jesus, He was taken to his son-in-law, the Roman appointed high priest Caiaphas for a second trial. (See **Matt. 26:57-68**) What charge did Caiaphas find Jesus guilty of? How had the words of Jesus been twisted by false witnesses from what He said in **John 2:18-21**?

2. What final religious trial did Jesus go through early Friday morning to make everything seem official? (See **Matt. 27:1-2**) What was the Jewish Sanhedrin? (See Commentaries.)

3. As high priest, Caiaphas presided over the Sanhedrin as they came to a *“guilty verdict”* and took Jesus to Pilate at his Praetorium (**vs. 28**). What was the Praetorium. Was this Pilate’s normal headquarters or was this his headquarters in Jerusalem during special occasions? What city in Israel did Pilate have his main headquarters located at? (See Commentaries)

4. Why did the Jewish religious leaders refuse to enter the Praetorium, making Pilate come out (**vs. 28**)? Do you find it hypocritical that at the very moment they were plotting the murder of Jesus that they claimed they needed to keep themselves ceremonially pure? What are some ways that Christians act hypocritically today? Are you ever guilty?

5. Many of the most brutal murderers in history have been so-called religious men. We see this during the Inquisition, the Crusades, and in many Muslim countries today. Why is it important for us to remember that not everyone who says they are a believer really is? How can we know the true Christian from the counterfeit? (See **Matt. 7:15-20**)

6. Pilate was probably not happy to have these angry Jewish religious leaders and their followers at his doorstep at 6:00am in the morning. What question did Pilate ask the religious leaders (**vs. 29**)? How do you see the arrogance of the Jews in **verse 30**? Were they paying Pontius Pilate the respect that he was due as Governor? How did Pilate respond to their snide remarks (**vs. 31**)? What can we learn about the Jewish religious leaders from their objection? Were they interested in a fair trial or just killing of Jesus?

7. Pilate had no interest in becoming a judge over Jewish religious matters. It is important to realize that he was already in hot water with Caesar for how he had handled another Jewish religious matter. This seemed like a no-win situation for him. Pilate told the Jews, *"You take Him and judge Him according to your law"* (**vs. 31**). How did the Jews respond (**vs. 32**)? What can we learn about past teachings of Jesus from **verse 32**? (See **Matt. 20:17-19**)

8. In order to fulfill Biblical prophecy, it was necessary for Jesus to be crucified and hung upon a tree, and not stoned? Why? (See **Deut. 21:22-23; Gal. 3:13**) Jesus bore our curse when He died on the cross for our sins, He took our place. (See **2 Cor. 5:21**) Why did He do this?

9. Scripture teaches us that Jesus was in the Praetorium, and the Jewish religious leaders were on the outside. As a result, Pilate made several trips in and out to address both parties. What question did Pilate ask Jesus in **verse 33**? Why were the Jews hoping that Pilate would see this as a civil matter?

10. How did Jesus respond to Pilate when he asked Him if He was the King of the Jews (**vs. 34**)? Note: It is almost as if Jesus turned the table on Pilate putting him on trial. In the end, Pilate would have to make a decision on who Jesus was; we still do today! In **verse 35**, Pilate in effect says, *"I am not a Jew, so I try to not get involved in Jewish religious matters. Why are you here and what have you done?"* How did Jesus indirectly acknowledge that He was a King in **verse 36**? What kind of Kingdom did Jesus have? (See Commentaries)
11. In **verse 37**, Jesus acknowledged that Pilate was right in calling Him *"a King."* What else can we learn about Jesus from **verse 37**? What did Jesus mean when He said, *"Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."* Why do you think so many people today are unwilling to hear the truth that Jesus taught? (See **John 1:17; John 3:3**)?
12. What famous question do we find Pilate asking in **verse 38**? How do you see our nation moving from belief in the objective truth of the Bible to truth becoming whatever fallen men and women want it to be? Merriam-Webster's online dictionary now defines the word *"Girl"* as *"a person whose gender identity is female."* The example that follows talks about a young transgender girl and her struggles in Middle School. How do you feel about the culture we live in and what it is doing to the mindset of the younger generations?
13. What can we learn from the following statistics in George Barna's book *"GEN Z"*? Only 34% of those in Generation Z think that lying is morally wrong. Only 21% think that Christians should not use marijuana recreationally. Only 29% think abortion is wrong. Only 38% think marriage should be a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. Only 21% think sex before marriage is morally wrong. Only 20% believe homosexual behavior is morally wrong. Do you think the younger generation is being brainwashed? If so, how?
14. World population is increasing by a staggering 218,360 people per day. How can the church be more effective at reaching the younger generations? Are most churches growing or shrinking? What are some ways that we can effectively evangelize youth today?

15. Pilate had no idea Truth Incarnate was standing right in front of him. Jesus not only taught the truth, He is the truth. (See **John 14:6**) Why do you think Pilate was oblivious to the fact? (See **John 3:3**) Does this blindness still affect most of the world population today? Why?

16. What troubling message did Pilate's wife send him? (See **Matt. 27:18-19**)? Satisfied that Jesus was no threat to the Roman Empire and alarmed at the warning from his wife, Pontius Pilate declared Jesus innocent of all charges. (See **Ex. 12:5a**) What did Pilate do once he heard Herod was in Jerusalem? (See **Luke 23:4-7**) Why was Jesus like a hot potato?

Part II: The second civil trial before Herod (Luke 23:8-17)

1. How did Herod respond emotionally when he finally got to see Jesus with his own eyes? What was Herod hoping for? Do many people today still only want Jesus for the miraculous? In most cases, what does this say about their faith?

2. What did Herod do once his soldiers had Jesus (**vs. 9**). How did Jesus respond? What had Herod done to Jesus' cousin John the Baptist? Do you think Jesus remembered this? What did the chief priests and scribes do once they had Herod's ear? How did Herod respond to the silence of Jesus and the charges from the Jews (**vs. 11**)?

3. What unexpected reconciliation took place on that day (**vs. 12**)? What brought these two snakes together? In **verses 13-15**, we find out that Pilate found no fault in Jesus and declared Him "*innocent.*" What verdict did Herod have after his trial with Jesus (**vs. 15**)? How do you think the Jewish religious leaders responded to these verdicts? What did Pilate do in an attempt to appease the Jews so that they would feel sorry for Jesus and let Him go (**vs. 16-17**)?

Part III: The third civil trial before Pontius Pilate (John 18:39-40)

1. What did Pilate try as one final attempt to release Jesus (See **John 18:39**)? Do you think Pilate assumed the multitudes would choose to release Jesus over Barabbas? Whose influence persuaded the people to go for Barabbas? (See **Matt. 27:20-25**)

2. The original Passover was celebrated just before the Hebrews left Egypt and headed towards the Promised Land. The Jews were now living under Roman oppression and wanted deliverance. Nationalism was at a fever pitch during the Passover Festival and the Romans were on full alert for insurrection. The Jews wanted the heavy hand of Rome to be taken off them. Apparently, the insurrectionist and murderer Barabbas had taken on Rome and had become a national hero by doing so. Jesus came peacefully offering a different kind of deliverance, deliverance from sin and death. Those who were not born again did not understand this. (See **2 Cor. 4:3-4**) In light of this understanding, does it surprise you that the Jewish people chose to free Barabbas instead of Jesus?

3. Interestingly, the name Barabbas means, *“son of the father.”* *“The son of the father”* (Barabbas) was released, but the real, *“Son of the Father”* (Jesus) was crucified. Through his indecisiveness and lack of courage, Pontius Pilate has earned his place in infamy. How do we see Pilate remembered in the Apostle’s Creed? *“He [Jesus] was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried...”*

MINER’S CORNER ~ *Manna to live by!*

- Following the three religious’ trials before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Jewish Sanhedrin, Jesus was taken to the Praetorium (the Roman Governor’s headquarters) for His first civil trial.
- Pilate was not happy to have this commotion happening in Jerusalem during the Passover.
- Pilate was already in hot water with Rome and susceptible to intimidation by the Jews.
- Pilate declared Jesus *“not guilty”* on at least three occasions, the Jews would have none of it.
- Herod also tried Jesus and found Him *“innocent,”* however Herod mocked Jesus and allowed his troops to mistreat Him.
- Pilate asked his famous question to Jesus in **verse 38**, *“What is truth?”* This is a question many people who reject the Bible are still asking today with no objective answer.
- Jesus not only taught about the truth, *“He is The Truth,”*; belief in Christ is the only way men, women, boys, and girls can find salvation today.