

Pilate Before Jesus

John 18:28 - 19:16

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Last Wednesday night I gave you a simple outline of the gospel of John because we'd been away from it for a few weeks, and I want to just kind of remind you and then come up to where we're at in John's gospel. In chapters 1-12, we saw the signs of the Son of God, the seven miracles pointing to His deity. Remember that John wrote this gospel to point to the deity of Christ that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing have life through His name. In chapters 13-17, we looked at the secrets of the Son of God in the Upper Room Discourse as He taught His disciples, ending in chapter 17 with His High Priestly prayer. Last week, on Wednesday night, we began chapter 18, and went to verse 27, where we saw the sorrows of the Son of God. That will take us up then to the resurrection and the victory over the grave of the Son of God.

Tonight we begin what is known as the Roman trial or the Roman authorities trial before Pilate. We move from the Jewish trial before Caiaphas and Annas to the trial before Pontius Pilate the Roman governor, beginning in John 18:28. "Then led they," that is, the Jews and their authorities, "Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall," that "it was early," and we're going to see another time at the end of our session tonight, but it was somewhere between 3am-6am. I would say that's early. He had been arrested in the garden that night, tried before Annas and Caiaphas, and now it's somewhere in what would be called the fourth watch, somewhere between 3am-6am.

Everything that takes place in this trial is what we would call a kangaroo court—nothing is legal, nothing is right, they're just kind of pushing this through. It reminds me of some other people I know in the United States right now, and there are a lot of parallels in this passage between the Jewish leaders and Jewish authorities and a certain political party that we're all aware of and what's taking place right now. It's amazing to me.

Continuing in verse 28, "...and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall," known as the Praetorium, "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. 29 Pilate then went out unto them," let me stop right here for just a quick second. Notice that statement in verse 29, "Pilate then went out unto them," you're going to read in all that we cover tonight this statement, "Pilate went out," and then Pilate went back in; Pilate went out and then Pilate went back in; Pilate went out," and then, "Pilate went back in." The whole narrative is basically the civil trial before Pilate, but it's Pilate going in and dealing with Jesus, and coming out and speaking to the Jewish authorities. Altogether, there's about seven references to Pilate going in to Christ to try him, out to the Jews, in to Christ, and back out to the Jews. The first reference there is in verse 29. "Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man?" That's a legitimate question: You brought Him into my courtroom and you want me to judge Him? What are your accusations?

Notice in verse 30, "They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee." I told you there's a lot of parallels here. "If there wasn't a crime, we wouldn't have brought Him. Don't ask us questions. Don't get us confused with the facts right now. We just want Him sentenced, and we want Him to be crucified." They, in their pride, don't want to be questioned. "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law," another reference of Pilate going out unto them. Pilate says, "Then you take Him and judge Him according to your law." "The Jews therefore said unto him, it is not lawful for us to put any man to death," they already had sentenced Him. They didn't want a trial, they just wanted Him crucified. It was evident that what they wanted was Him to be put to death. Verse 32, "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die," referring to His death on the cross.

It's amazing to me, and I want to point this out, the hypocrisy of these religious Jews; and this kind of hypocrisy is not dead. They knew good and well that Jesus was innocent, but they wanted Him crucified or dead. The Romans had taken away the right of execution from the Jewish people, so the only way that they could kill Jesus was to have Him tried by the Romans, thus He would be crucified. Normally, under Jewish law, they're going to accuse Him of blasphemy, He would actually be taken outside the city and stoned to death. But we see the divine sovereign hand of God on this whole episode because the prophets had foretold that He would be crucified. Read Psalm 22. It clearly describes death by crucifixion. Read Isaiah 53, again, clearly describes death by crucifixion. Jesus couldn't be taken out by the Jews, as normally would be the case, and stoned to death; He must be pierced, He must be hung on a cross, and all of the prophecies thus would be fulfilled. No man can thwart or hinder the purpose and the plan of God, so we see the sovereign hand of God and the fulfillment of God's prophetic Word.

Notice the hypocrisy in verse 28. It says, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment...and they themselves went not into the judgment hall," why? "lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover." This is so sad. Here they were worried about ceremonial defilement. You say, "Well, what does that mean?" If they had gone into the judgment hall with the Roman soldiers there and Pilate, they would have been ceremonially defiled by the Gentiles and would not have been able to participate in the Passover feast. They have no qualms about crucifying an innocent Man and putting Him to death, but they want to keep their religious rites and rituals. This is no different today. We have hypocrisy just like this. Jesus described their hypocrisy in Matthew 23. He said it's like straining at a gnat, and swallowing a camel. By that He was actually referring to the fact that they couldn't eat certain animals, insects or bugs, and certain meat, so they would actually strain the liquids that they would drink so that no gnat would fly into their cup and actually drink it and be unclean. But all the time they were worrying about straining their beverage to get a gnat out, they were actually swallowing a camel.

By the way, I'm convinced that Jesus was using humor. From time to time it just kind of comes natural. I don't plan or design to use humor, but sometimes humor just comes out. Over the years I've had people quite offended or upset, and I've had people come to me, "How can you

be a preacher of the Word and crack jokes?" I sometimes tell them, "Jesus did." I remember one woman quite upset with me about my humor. I started telling her the humor that Jesus used, and she wasn't very humored. Jesus probably got a chuckle or a laugh in the crowd—they're straining at the gnat and the whole time they're swallowing a camel—what hypocrisy. He said, "You're like whitewashed graves." They would take the graves and whitewash them so they could see them because they wanted to avoid stepping on them lest they become defiled by a dead body. Jesus said, "You appear beautiful on the outside, but inside you're full of dead men's bones." Again, I'm sure He got a chuckle from the crowd. Jesus said, "You're like a cup that you wash the outside, but the inside is full of extortion and evil things."

How many times, even today, people will worry about going to church or giving their tithes or doing something religious or being baptized or confirmed or taking communion but then live like the devil during the week. It's possible to come to church, sing the songs, raise your hands, listen to the Bible study and then think nothing about going out and sinning or lying or stealing or cheating or doing evil things during the week. God wants integrity in our Christian lives. He wants sincerity. He doesn't want us to practice duplicity.

These were hypocrites of the first rate. They were so worried about their little petty laws and all the religions rules and regulations, but they forgot the weightier matters of the law—showing mercy, kindness, and forgiveness. Remember when David was hungry and went into the place where the showbread was and ate it, it was something that according to their law was not lawful but showed that God cared more about the human need than their little laws or regulations. When the disciples were eating wheat in the field and they were hiding behind the wheat and popped up and said, "Ah, they're laboring on the Sabbath day," Jesus told them the story about David and the showbread. Many times people are religious but have no reality. They were very religious, but they were lost; obviously, they were unregenerate and were not true believers in Messiah. What a paradox. The very Lamb of God who would fulfill the Passover Feast, in which they were so worried about keeping, was going to be crucified because of their lies; and they just missed the whole thing rather than worshipping Jesus as He is in truth, the Lamb of God and the Son of God.

Pilate asked them, "What is this Man accused of?" They said, "If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee." Then, Pilate, trying to run from this responsibility of judging Jesus said, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," and that's what they wanted. Jesus had spoken, verse 32, about His death by crucifixion. He made it plain, and it was a fulfillment thus of the prophecies. Man plans and plots, but God's purposes will be fulfilled. You see that all through Scripture, and I believe the same is even today. No matter what man plans or plots in his evil schemes in our world today, God's Kingdom will prevail. Amen? It will not hinder the work of what God is doing building His church.

Beginning in verses 33-40, we see, "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again," so there's another reference where he goes back from addressing the Jews into the judgment hall, "and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?" By this time, he's cynical,

angry, and doesn't appreciate what he's dealing with. He's caught kind of in a pickle trying to satisfy the Jews and doing what is right as a Roman governor. His place of residence was actually Caesarea along the coast, but he was in Jerusalem during the Passover because he was needed to keep the peace there among the Jews and the numbers of Jews that would increase during this time. Pilate is there and says to Jesus, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" The word "thou" or you in this question is emphatic in the Greek, and no doubt it's written with sarcasm and said cynically, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He said it with a tone of sarcasm and cynicism.

Verse 34, "Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" 35 Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 36 Jesus answered," now notice, this is one of the great references to Jesus' Kingdom, "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: 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 hence. 37 Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. 38 Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews," another reference to him going out of the Praetorium and back out to the Jews, "and saith unto them, I find in him not fault at all." 39 But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 40 Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber."

Jesus was asked by Pilate, "Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell thee of me," are you asking of your own accord or did someone else tell you this of Me? The title of my message tonight is not "Jesus Before Pilate," it's "Pilate Before Jesus." Pilate is the one on trial not Jesus Christ. Jesus is in complete control and command of the situation. Pilate is trying his best to get out of the situation, but he must make a decision on what he will do with Jesus Christ.

Jesus does finally answer in verse 36 and says, "My kingdom is not of his world," that's an important statement by Jesus Christ. He says, "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 hence." Jesus is making it very, very, very, very clear that His Kingdom is not of this world. I think this is very, very important for us to be reminded of at this crucial time in our American history that God's Kingdom isn't democratic or republican, that God's Kingdom isn't dependent upon your vote, it's not dependent upon human government, it's not dependent upon democratic government or whatever you might think. God's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom. It is an eternal Kingdom which will culminate in an earthly Kingdom, and that's what we look and long for—when the Kingdom of God comes to earth and Christ's theocratic reign on earth known as the Kingdom Age for one thousand years. But right now, Jesus is building His Kingdom by and through the church. When Jesus said in Matthew 16, "...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it..."

Let me make something very, very clear. When Jesus said the word “church,” yes He’s using the word ekklesia, and yes the word ekklesia is used of secular bodies or groups; but when Jesus used it in Matthew 16, He wasn’t talking about political arena or about human government. He was talking about the church, the body of Christ. The word in its etymology means called out assembly and that’s what the church is. The church are individuals called out by God’s grace, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, brought out of Adam into Christ, forming the body of Christ of which Christ is the living head and we are His members. It’s not a denomination or a certain affiliation. Anyone that has been born again has been called out of the world and unto Christ and is the church, the body of Christ; and that’s what God is doing in the world right now—Christ is building His church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

No matter what government restrictions, no matter what persecution, did not Jesus say, “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” He never promised that life would be easy and could not be difficult or hard. He did promise ultimate victory, and He will come back and sit upon the throne of David and will establish His Kingdom for one thousand years. Right now, “For the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” We need to keep that perspective. The thing that I have to remind myself of right now is that God’s Kingdom cannot be affected by man’s purposes or plans. It can’t be stopped. It can’t be thwarted. It can’t be hindered. Jesus Christ’s Kingdom will prevail. Amen? He came and conquered sin on the cross and death in His resurrection, He’s ascended back to heaven, He’s seated at the right hand of God the Father, He will return in power, in glory, and majesty to set up His Kingdom, and it will flow into the eternal state.

We’re going to get it on Sunday morning in our series through the book of Revelation, but I need to be reminded, and so do you, that God’s Kingdom is not of this world. Now, that’s not to conclude that we should pull out of the world and live in isolation from the world or that we shouldn’t have Christians in politics, or wouldn’t it be wonderful to have a genuine authentic born-again, loving Jesus President of the United States and have all of our government officials reading the Bible, praying, and seeking God, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people,” and I think in the next few years we’re going to get a pretty good taste of what that’s all about. Our hope is not in man, our hope is not in government, our hope is in Jesus Christ, and His Kingdom shall prevail. We are called out of the world, we’re called unto one another in Christian fellowship, and then we’re called to go back out into the world to be a testimony (we see it in this section of Scripture) to the truth, which Jesus was a messenger of the truth; and one day we’ll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and the Bible says, “...and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

Christ’s Kingdom is not of this world, and we, as Christians, need to remind ourselves that this world is not our home. Your true citizenship, and this comes before your American citizenship, is the Kingdom of heaven; so we follow our Lord in heaven, we live by His laws, and we speak His Word. Amen? Because that’s our real home. This world is not our home.

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a

king,” but He isn’t a king in the limited sense that Pilate was thinking of. Pilate was thinking politically. He was thinking socially and nationally. That isn’t the king that Jesus is referring to. Notice in verse 37, Jesus makes another astounding statement about His mission. “To this end was I born,” to come into the world as a King, “and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” Obviously, Pilate wasn’t hearing His voice. Today we try to share the truth with unbelievers, and the Bible says, “In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds,” so they cannot see and receive the truth. Only those who were illuminated by the Holy Spirit could see and understand this truth.

Pilate went out again to the Jews and said to them, “I find in him no fault at all.” I want you to mark these down. There will be three times in this trial before Pilate that Jesus will be declared innocent. This is actually his verdict there at the end of verse 38. Pilate the judge declares the verdict, “He is innocent, case closed.” He should be allowed to leave, but the Jews would have none of it.

Pilate says, “But ye have a custom,” now here’s Pilate’s proposal beginning in John 18:39-19:7. First, he proposes, “that I should release unto you one at the passover.” Pilate knew the religious customs of the Jews but didn’t know that Jesus was truly their Messiah or their King. He says, “But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews,” referring to Jesus. Notice the Jewish cry in verse 40, “Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.” Pilate is trying to weasel out of his responsibility. Whenever you share the gospel with somebody that’s not a Christian, they will try to get out of that situation and not respond to trusting Christ.

This is a reminder though, I think it is subtle but it’s clear, of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ. Barabbas was released and gone free, Jesus would be crucified. It’s interesting that he’s the only individual that literally Jesus was physically substituted for. Barabbas was going to go to the gallows but is set free, and Jesus is crucified. Now, some have a little theory that Barabbas, maybe from his prison cell, could hear his name being chanted or called by the crowds, “Barabbas, Barabbas, give us Barabbas,” and maybe a little hope swelled up in his heart, “Hey, that’s pretty good!” But then, in a moment, he would hear them saying, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” and he probably thought, Oh no! I’m history. It’s interesting that he physically, literally, was substituted for Jesus Christ. The most central and essential aspect of the cross of Jesus Christ is what’s called His substitutionary death. If you miss that, you miss the Bible’s teaching on the death of Christ in that Jesus took our place, He was substituted in our behalf. All of the lambs that were slain in the Old Testament were pictures or types of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

When Abraham took Isaac on the mountain, was raising the knife to plunge it into his son, and then God stopped him and pulled Isaac off the altar, a ram was caught in the bushes, and he substituted it in place of his son. All through the Bible, the cross is seen as a substitute, “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...and with his stripes we

are healed.” We should’ve been put to death, Jesus stepped in and paid the penalty for our sin. The gospel could actually be put into three phrases: I deserved hell, Jesus took my hell, I’m going to heaven. That’s the gospel—I was a sinner, I deserved hell, Jesus stepped in and took my hell, my sin, my judgment, my penalty; and now I have forgiveness, eternal life, and the hope of heaven. What a picture that is of the substitutionary death of Christ.

I want to quickly go back to verses 37-38. In verse 37 Jesus actually says, “To this end was I born,” but I also “came...that I should bear witness to the truth.” One of the reasons Jesus came into the world was to bear witness of the truth. What was the truth? John 14:6, He said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me,” so Jesus was the embodiment, the incarnation, of God’s truth. If you want to know what the truth is, the truth is Jesus Christ and that God became a Man in order to substitute Himself for man on the cross so that we can be forgiven. Jesus not only came to redeem us, but He also came to declare the truth that, “God so loved the world...that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” That’s the truth—God’s love and redemption in the Son Jesus Christ. Notice, Pilate cynically in verse 38 says, “What is truth?” Pilate was a Roman. He grew up in a Greco-Roman culture, but he had abandoned any concept of absolute truth. That is so like the culture today in which we live, and it started a long time ago with situation ethics, relativism, and pluralism.

A lot of times people don’t realize today why the world has gone so crazy and so bizarre and everything seems so strange is because we literally have bought—hook, line, and sinker—the lie in our culture today that there is no absolute truth, that no one knows the truth, no one has the truth, and there is no such thing as truth. I had a friend, that is an apologist, who did a little video one time where he went to several university campuses in the state of Texas and interviewed college students. He would just approach a college student on the quad and would say, “Do you believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth?” Every one of them said no. “No, there’s no such thing as absolute truth.” I love his simple answer. He says, “Are you absolutely sure?” You should have seen the look on their faces, “Well...well,” I mean, it was just like a bomb went off, “Well...maybe there’s one truth.” How convenient for you to have one truth—the one truth that there is no truth. It’s self-defeating. “There’s no such thing as truth.” “Are you absolutely sure there’s no such thing as truth? Is your statement true that there is no truth?” They’re not even reasoning right. When Romans says that they knew God but rejected the truth of God, literally in the Greek in Romans 1 it says they suppressed the truth. They end up actually rejecting the truth, suppressing the truth, they substitute the truth for a lie, and God turns them over to a reprobate mind. That’s a mind that doesn’t work.

I think about our culture today when you look at so many situations in our culture you think, This just doesn’t make sense, and that’s because we have bought this concept that there is no absolute truth. That’s why people so oppose Christians in our narrow absolute commitment to Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life, there’s only one way to heaven, all religions don’t get you to God, and there’s only one way to be saved. That just freaks people out. So many people in their philosophy classes seeking truth...you know, if you find truth then the class is over, you don’t need the class anymore. It’s a constant searching for truth, but they’ll never find

truth.

This is the same kind of frustration that Pilate had, and I think that he was probably just venting saying, "What is truth," very cynically and sarcastically when in reality Incarnate Truth was standing right there in front of him. Think of how insane this is, Pilate is talking to God in the flesh, the embodiment of truth, and he cynically just passes it off and says, "What is truth?"

The custom was that at the Passover they could release one of the prisoners, but they wanted Barabbas rather than Jesus. Barabbas was a known robber, an insurrectionist, and a murderer, but they wanted him in spite of Jesus. In John 19, "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him," this is his proposal continued. First he says, "Take ye him, and judge him according to your law," try Him in your own courts. Then, he goes on to say, "But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" No, we want Barabbas, not Jesus. In the other gospels, "What will I do with this Man they call the Christ?" and they said, "Crucify him, crucify him." Pilate then has his third proposal, "Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him." Now, remember he has already declared Him innocent, "...I find in him no fault at all." All through this record, God is preserving the holiness and the innocence of the Son of God. Jesus was the pure and holiest Lamb of God.

Pilate had Jesus scourged. Under Roman law, scourging was such a horrible, horrible thing that no Roman citizen could be scourged; no Roman citizen could be crucified on the cross. The scourging would involve taking the prisoner, tying his hands, stretching him over a log or a fence with his back exposed. Then, they would take a whip that had about nine straps on the whip. On the end of the whip there were little pieces of steel, and some say they had sharp pieces of bone. The back would be whipped until it was completely lacerated, and many times prisoners would die under this scourging—39 lashes, it was supposed to be 40 but they would stop at 39, lest they went too far. Jesus was scourged. Pilate is trying to satisfy the murderous, bloodthirsty appetite of the Jewish mob.

In John 19:2, "And the soldiers," mockingly, "platted a crown of thorns," here's Jesus the Savior of the world coming to wear a crown of thorns, thorns being a symbol of the sin and the curse, "and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, 3 And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands," that smiting with their hands in the Greek is they begin to smite Him with their hands indicating that it was a continual, ongoing buffeting of Jesus with their fists. "Pilate therefore went forth again," here's another episode of after He's scourged, he goes back out to the Jews, "and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him," this is the second statement of innocence. It's the second time he says, "I find no fault in him." Verse 5, "Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!" Jesus is a Man but He's also God. Pilate cries out, Ecce homo, "Behold the man!" and he thought that that would pacify them. Verse 6, "When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for," again, here's the third time, "I find no fault in him. 7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law

he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”

I want to point out in verse 2, Jesus wore the crown of thorns, and they mockingly put a purple robe on Him. What a contrast when Jesus Christ comes back in Revelation 19. When He comes back in Revelation 19, He's riding a white horse, His eyes are a flame of fire, His feet are like polished brass, out of His mouth comes a sharp two-edged sword, and He has a vesture dipped in blood with the name written KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. He's coming back in power and majesty and glory, but He came the first time in humility and meekness to suffer and die on the cross for our sins. I think it's interesting to contrast the first advent when Christ was crucified wearing the crown of thorns, bearing our sin on the cross, and the second advent when Christ comes in power and great glory.

They smote him, Pilate went forth and said, “I find no fault in Him.” Pilate's being a classic politician here, by the way. When I say “classic politician,” I mean he basically wants the whims of the people and does what they want rather than doing what he knew to be the right thing. Pilate says, “...I find no fault in him.” Verse 5, “Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man! 6 When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying,” no, we want Him crucified. Then, Pilate finally yields to their demands in verses 6-8. He says, “...for I find no fault in him. 7 The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die,” and here's the real reason finally exposed, end of verse 7, “because he made himself the Son of God.” At the end of verse 5, “Behold the man!,” but “...he made himself the Son of God.” Later Pilate would say, “Behold your King!”

We understand because we know what the Bible teaches that Jesus is both fully Man and fully God. If you deny those points, you do not have Christianity. Jesus is fully Man and fully God. Again, I do this all the time, but I want to make it very clear. In His humanity, the only thing minus His humanity from our humanity was He had no sin. We all have sinned. We've all fallen short of the glory of God. There's no one righteous, no not one. In that simple fact, there are many others—He's virgin born, He's eternal, and all that stuff—Jesus Christ is absolutely unique. He literally was perfectly completely sinless. I believe in what's called the impeccability of Christ, a theological term used for Christ was sinless and could not sin. It was impossible for Him. Oh, yes He had full humanity, Oh yes He was tempted in all points like we are, but He was the pure and holy and sinless Son of God.

Just a little footnote that I thought was interesting, and I noted that three times Pilate said, “I find no fault in Him.” In Isaiah, when Isaiah saw Jesus, the Lord, Jehovah Yahweh, “...high and lifted up,” and the angels cried, “Holy, holy, holy,” three times, and isn't our God triune—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—our thrice holy God, holy, holy, holy? Three times Pilate said, “I find no fault in Him.”

Now, Jesus is fully man, verse 5, but He is also God the Son, the Son of God. When the Bible refers to Jesus as the Son of God, it's talking about a unique sense. It's always the Son of God, never a Son of God. He's not a child of God. It would be blasphemy for you or me to say, “I am

the son of God,” but perfectly right for any one of us to say, “I am a child of God.” But Jesus is the Son of God in that He’s unique—there’s no one like Him. Jesus is the Son of Man, His humanity; Son of God, His full deity.

In John’s gospel, in the prologue, we saw the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, that’s the humanity; but Jesus actually was God manifest in the flesh, John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,” God was the Word. The Jews actually wanted Him to be put to death because of blasphemy because He claimed to be the Son of God. Write down John 20:31, that’s the theme of John’s gospel, “...that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”

Now, Pilate’s panic, verses 8-12. “When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid,” free translation, he’s totally freaked out, “Son of God?” Now, what’s not in this narrative but is in the other synoptics is Pilate had a wife. Pilate’s wife, during this whole trial, came to him and said, “Hey, don’t have anything to do with this Fella because I suffered a really bad dream about Him last night.” “Well, thank you very much, sweetheart, I needed the help and the encouragement.” He’s politically stuck here and doesn’t want to take a stand and do the right thing. He’s trying to vacillate, and his wife warns him, “I had a bad dream last night about this Guy, have nothing to do with Him.” Now, Pilate hears that Jesus has not just claimed to be a King, and His Kingdom is not of this world, but that He actually claimed to be the very Son of God; so Pilate is now in a panic, verse 8.

Verse 9, Pilate “...went out again into the judgment hall,” there’s another reference of him going back in to Jesus, “and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.” At this point Jesus is silent. One of the greatest judgments God could ever bring on an individual or on a nation is just to cut them off and let them go their own sinful way, and they don’t hear His voice. Jesus is now silent, “But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Then said Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not,” don’t You know, “that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” And I love it, “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” He’s probably referring to Caiaphas and the Jewish authorities. “And from thenceforth Pilate,” verse 12, “sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.” Jesus said in verse 11, and I love it, “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above,” again, God is sovereign, God sits on the throne, God is in control.

I believe the same truth could be applied to us here tonight. In all my years of walking with the Lord I’ve become absolutely convinced that nothing can happen to me but what God is in control. Now, there have been hard things happen to me. There have been things happen to me that I wish that God had not allowed at the time, but now looking back I see His wisdom, I see His purpose, I see His plan, so be patient. Don’t get discouraged. Don’t get angry. Don’t freak out. Don’t give up on God and say, “Okay, God, if that’s what You do with people who follow You, I’m going to give up. I’m going to check out. I’m not going to live for You anymore,”

because God has a perfect plan. He knows the end from the beginning. He knows what He's doing.

I think of Joni Eareckson Tada, the quadriplegic that as a teenager dove head first into Chesapeake Bay, broke her neck, and became a quadriplegic, still to this day is used so powerfully, so wonderfully, so amazingly by God. She was asked if she had her whole life to live over again, would she change anything? She said, "Absolutely, not." It's so wonderful to realize that nothing can happen to us but what it has to be filtered through our loving, heavenly Father. Now, I know that may be hard to discern or decipher or understand, but I'm convinced of that. You are His child. God loves you. God is in control of your life, especially if you're walking in humble obedience and dependence on Him. Maybe it's a diagnosis of cancer, a loved one who dies, a loss of a job or unfulfilled expectations. Maybe it's a desire that you have in your heart that God hasn't answered yet. God's ways are perfect. God's ways are beyond our ways, they are past our finding out.

Jesus stands with such boldness and such confidence and says, "Look, you have no power over Me unless it were given to you by My Father." I believe the same thing is true of you and me that God has our lives in His hands, and He's watching over us. There's an old gospel song, His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me. The Bible says that not one bird falls to the ground but what your Father knows that you're of more value than many sparrows, so rest in that. I know it's a bit stretching out of context, but in this historical narrative, I think we can apply principles out of the story that, like Jesus was resting in His Father's providential care, we can do the same. God is in control.

Verse 13, "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha," probably in the Antonia Fortress there in the northwest corner of the temple area. "And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour," John uses Roman time for his gospel because it's a universal gospel, so it's 6 a.m. in the morning, "and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!" He probably did this just to irritate them in anger because he didn't really believe Jesus was the King, but he calls Jesus their King. In verse 5, it had been, "Behold the man!"

Verse 15, "But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar," how sad is that. Here are these monotheistic Jews that were to worship God and no one else under the heel of the Roman government saying, "We have no king but Caesar," and the irony of it was their King was right there in their midst, and the Kingdom of God was right there in their midst. But even the rejection of Jesus by the Jewish nation was all part of God's master plan and God's master design that the Jewish nation would be temporarily and partially set apart or set aside so that God would actually start a new program called the church, and Gentiles could come to believe in Messiah and be saved. In the church there is Jew and Gentile, but we are all one. When the church is complete, it will be caught up to meet Christ as the bride in the air, and then God will begin to work with the nation of Israel once again, but the nation would be as

Romans says, "Blinded temporarily and partially set aside." It doesn't mean Jews don't come to Christ and aren't saved today, but certainly nationally God is not working with Israel as He was before Christ came.

Verse 16, "Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away." We're going to save the cross for next Wednesday night when we celebrate communion, but I want you to write down Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 which are only a couple Old Testament references that you should read which are one of the most graphic and detailed prophecies of the cross of Jesus Christ, so He's led away to be crucified. Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up...will draw all men unto me," so He would be lifted up on a cross and crucified—cursed is He who hangs upon a tree. Jesus came to die on the cross for man the creature's sin. Let's pray.