

I Find No Fault

Jesus was without guilt and sinless in every way.

JOHN 18:28-40



...ou,
...ved

...at ye are
...another.

...nim, Lord,
...answered him,
...follow me now;
...afterwards.

...Lord, why cannot
...all "lay down my life

...d him, Wilt thou lay down
...? Verily, verily, I say unto
...shall not crow, till thou hast
...rice.

...OF MANY MANSIONS

...et 'not your heart be troubled: ye
...believe in God, believe also in me.

...in my Father's house are many man-
...sions: if *it were* not so, I would have told
...you. "I go to prepare a place for you.

...And if I go and prepare a place for you, "I
...will come again, and receive you unto my-
...self; that ³where I am, *there* ye may be also.

...d to
...uld be

...east saith

...s, to whom I
...e dipped *it*. And
...sop, he gave *it* to
...of Simon.

...p Satan entered into
...s unto him, That thou

...at the table knew for what
...e this unto him.

...e of them thought, because

...JESUS IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND
...THE LIFE

...Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know
...not whither thou goest; and how can we
...know the way?

...Jesus saith unto him, I am ²the way,
...the truth, and "the life: ³no man cometh
...unto the Father, but by me.

...If ye had known me, ye should have
...known my Father also: and from henceforth
...ye know him, and have seen him.

...Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the



What factors intrigue you the most when watching a legal drama or reading a book about legal proceedings?

“We the jury find the defendant . . .” Most of us are intrigued about the factors that swayed a jury to decide one way or the other. The appeal of whodunit stories highlight our desire to piece together the evidence so we can develop our own verdict. Pilate interviewed Jesus and found Him not guilty. Yet, he ignored his own conclusion and handed Jesus over for crucifixion.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

By torchlight, an armed mob seized Jesus and brought Him bound before Annas. A former high priest, Annas retained considerable power and lived in the palace of his son-in-law, Caiaphas, the current high priest. In this hearing, Jesus was falsely accused and cruelly treated. When He challenged His assailants to testify of any wrongdoing, He was met with silence since they had no real evidence. Subsequently, Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas for further examination.

These hearings, held at night against lawful procedures, took place while Simon Peter waited in the palace courtyard. Peter had followed John into the compound to see what would happen to Jesus. Already frightened by the events in the garden, Peter responded defensively when questioned about his association with Jesus. Three times various people accused him of associating with Jesus, and three times Peter denied knowing Him. Following his third denial, a rooster crowed for the second time. Reminded of Jesus’s predictions, Peter fled the palace in tears.

Shortly after daybreak, knowing they lacked authority to execute Jesus, the Jewish leaders took Him to the Roman governor. At first, Pilate refused to hear the case. Finally, he yielded to their insistence and questioned Jesus. He focused his interrogation on whether Jesus claimed to be a king. Such an assertion would be treasonous in an empire ruled by Caesar.

After further examination, Pilate declared he found no fault in Jesus. He recognized the false testimony of conflicting witnesses to be a set-up by the Jewish authorities. Several times, Pilate sought to release Jesus. Instead, the Jews cried out for the governor to release a criminal named Barabbas. As the crowd became increasingly unruly, Pilate gave Jesus over to be scourged and crucified.

JOHN 18:28-40

28 Then they led Jesus from **Caiaphas**^A to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They **did not enter**^B the headquarters themselves; otherwise they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover. **29** So **Pilate**^C came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?" **30** They answered him, "If this man weren't a **criminal**,^D we wouldn't have handed him over to you." **31** Pilate told them, "You take him and judge him according to your law." "It's **not legal**^E for us to put anyone to death," the Jews declared. **32** They said this so that Jesus's words might be fulfilled indicating what kind of death he was going to die. **33** Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the **king of the Jews?**"^F **34** Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?" **35** "I'm not a Jew, am I?" Pilate replied. "Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?" **36** "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus. "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." **37** "You are a king then?" Pilate asked. "You say that I'm a king," Jesus replied. "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." **38** "What is truth?" said Pilate. After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no grounds for charging him. **39** You have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So, do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" **40** They shouted back, "Not this man, but **Barabbas!**"^G Now Barabbas was a **revolutionary**.^H

Key Words

- A. Jewish high priest from AD 18-36/37.
- B. Jews considered Gentiles unclean. Entering a Gentile's home would have left them ceremonially unclean for the Passover celebration.
- C. Pontius Pilate served as the Roman governor of Judea from AD 26-36/37. In general, his rule was marked by violent anti-Semitism. He was later recalled to Rome to answer for his weak leadership.
- D. The term literally referred to an evildoer.
- E. "Have no right" (NIV); "not lawful" (KJV; ESV). The Jews were limited in their ability to carry out capital punishment, so they appealed to the Romans.
- F. Pilate only cared if Jesus was leading a Jewish rebellion or threatening the Roman Empire.
- G. "Son of the father." In contrast to Barabbas, Jesus is the true Son of the Father.
- H. A zealot engaged in guerrilla warfare against the Romans.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Transfer

(John 18:28-32)

Followers of Jesus should expect false accusations to be made against them.

How might a person justify being careful in not violating his or her religious traditions while at the same time bringing false accusations against someone?

Why would the Jewish leaders be so eager to get rid of Jesus?

2. The Trial

(John 18:33-38a)

Believers can confidently proclaim Jesus is without guilt.

How did Jesus's response to Pilate point to His innocence?

3. The Trade

(John 18:38b-40)

Some people reject Jesus regardless of the facts.

How should we characterize Pilate's attempt to release Jesus?

Why were the people so easily swayed to follow the Jewish leaders?

APPLY THE TEXT

Discuss with the group principles for engaging others who are unsure of or hostile toward the truth of Jesus.

What communication practices did Jesus demonstrate when dialoguing with Pilate?

How can the group help each other follow the example set by Jesus when encountering questions about Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son

Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. (See Isaiah 53:9; 1 John 3:5.)

BIBLE SKILL: Compare similar situations.

Compare Jesus's interaction with Pilate to Paul's interaction with the Athenians (Acts 17:16-34). What issues are similar in the two exchanges? How do the key points made in both settings compare? Write a short statement expressing how you might respond to someone who denies the truth of Christ and His gospel.

TALK IT OUT

Focus on John 18:36. What is the key phrase in the verse?

The religious leaders agreed Jesus was worthy of death but didn't have authority to execute anyone. So they took Jesus to someone who did: Pilate, the Roman governor. It's worth noting that when Jesus was before the religious leaders, the charge was blasphemy (Matthew 26:64-65). But when they brought Him to Pilate, they accused Him of treason (Luke 23:2). They knew Jesus claiming to be God wouldn't get Pilate's attention. But claiming to be a king was a threat to Rome.

How is the kingdom of God different from the kingdoms of this world?

Make this personal: If Jesus's kingdom is not of this world, then what does that say about us as His subjects? Paul said our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20). So our values and priorities should reflect God's kingdom. This is what Jesus was getting at in Matthew 6:33 when He taught that we are to seek first God's kingdom.

How can we seek God's kingdom first this week?

Agree to text John 18:36 to each other over the next few days as a reminder to make God's kingdom your priority this week.

Prayer Requests



DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: John 18:28

Note why the Jewish leaders did not enter the Roman governor's headquarters.

The Sanhedrin, the highest ruling Jewish body of the first century, heard accusations against Jesus—though the testimonies were contradictory (Mark 14:56). Two accusers stepped forward and recalled how Jesus stated He could rebuild the temple in three days. The high priest accused Jesus of blasphemy, a charge that called for the death penalty (Leviticus 24:16). But the Sanhedrin did not have authority to put anyone to death. For that to happen, Jesus would need to appear before the Roman authorities.

The Jewish leaders led Jesus to the Roman governor's headquarters. Jewish law was passed down orally through the generations. Eventually these laws and traditions were put into a written document known as the Mishnah. This text claimed Gentile homes were unclean; entering resulted in a defilement requiring a seven-day purification period. The Jewish leaders who led Jesus to the governor's headquarters thus stayed outside in the courtyard. Doing otherwise meant they would have been unable to eat the Passover. In the scenes that follow, Pilate entered and exited the residence as he talked with Jesus inside and the Jewish leaders outside.

What do you find ironic about the Jewish leaders' carefulness not to violate their religious traditions while at the same time bringing false accusations against Jesus?

Day 2: John 18:29-32

Contemplate the implications of verse 32.

Pilate saw through the Jewish leaders' scheme and wanted no part of their plot. His saying, "you take him and judge him according to your law," forced the Jews to admit they were powerless to execute Jesus. If Jesus's alleged crimes were against Roman law, Pilate would have exercised quick and severe justice. Since the priests were accusing Jesus of violating their religious rules, Pilate initially refused to play the game. The Jews thought they had the power to order Jesus to be executed. Pilate felt certain the decision was his. Both were wrong. All the details about the death of Jesus had been orchestrated long before this mock trial. (See John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32.)

Unknowingly, the Jews' conspiracy fulfilled Jesus's prophecy about the kind of death He was going to die (see Matthew 20:19; John 3:14; 12:32). Crucifixion was an exclusively Roman form of execution. All along, Jesus knew the price of human salvation and willingly went to the cross. No one took His life; He gave it for our sakes.

Reflect on Jesus's willingness to die on the cross for you.

Day 3: John 18:33-35

Pay attention to the question Jesus asked of Pilate.

Nothing about Jesus's appearance indicated He was a threat. No army stood ready to protect Him. He had no royal robes, crown, or jewelry. One can almost hear the disbelief in Pilate's voice. In the Greek text the "you" is emphatic: You? Are you the king of the Jews?

Before answering Pilate's question, Jesus asked for clarification. If Pilate was asking this on his own, it meant he was concerned Jesus was trying to establish Himself as a political king. If this were the case, Jesus would have been guilty of insurrection and would have been a threat to Rome. The answer to this question would have been "No." If the question, though, had come from something the religious leaders had reported, then the question was religious in nature: "Are you the Messianic King of Israel?" The answer to this question would have been "Yes."

Pilate responded with contempt. Not being a Jew, Pilate had no interest in the charges this religious mob was hurling at Jesus. He clearly saw that Jesus was not a political threat. Jesus must have done something, though, to draw these people's ire and cause them to hand Jesus over to him—hence, the question, "What have you done?"

What is something in your life that is rightfully threatened by acknowledging Jesus as your King?

Day 4: John 18:36-38a

Identify those who are "of the truth."

Jesus's kingdom was not of this world and posed no threat to Rome. His kingship was "not from here." Therefore, it would not have to be defended like other earthly kingdoms. Evidently the only word that caught Pilate's ear was "kingdom." Not having fully grasped what Jesus was saying, he pressed further: "You are a king then?" Jesus did not deny He was a king. Having said what His kingdom was not, Jesus next explained the nature of what His kingdom was. He stated He was born to be a king. He connected His coming to earth with His mission—"to testify to the truth." He came to reveal the truth about God's nature, about salvation, and grace.

Those who are of the truth are those who listen to His voice (v. 37). Implied in what Jesus said to Pilate was a call to self-examination: "Pilate, are you listening to my voice? Are you part of the truth?" Pilate responded with a cynical philosophical question, "What is truth?" He revealed that he had no concept of what truth really is.

What are the implications for you of Jesus's statement, "everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice"?

Day 5: John 18:38b-40

Underline Pilate's verdict.

Pilate reported to the Jews that he found no grounds for charging Jesus. Implied in his report was the possibility that although he found nothing to charge Jesus with, the Jews might still have grounds for an indictment—an offense that would allow them to judge Jesus according to their law (see v. 31). Pilate thus offered to release Jesus to them. During the intertestamental period, the Jews had begun this practice of releasing a prisoner at Passover. The Romans continued the practice as a gesture of goodwill.

Mark explained that “the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he [Pilate] would release Barabbas to them” (Mark 15:11). John referred to Barabbas as a revolutionary. The Greek word can refer to a robber, outlaw, or revolutionary. The crowd, having been worked up into a frenzy, demanded Barabbas to be released rather than Jesus. Barabbas could say, “This man Jesus died the death I should have died. He died in my place.” We who are followers of Jesus know this truth equally applies to us as well.

Why do people today so quickly reject Jesus regardless of the facts?

APPLY THE TEXT

List ways people today commonly misinterpret or misrepresent facts about Jesus. What can you point to from this study that counters the items you listed? With whom should you speak to and address the misinterpretations that you hear most often?

