

I FIND NO FAULT

JOHN 18:28-40

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using ETB materials from LifeWay.)

1. What are some of your favorite “who done it” shows or westerns? (Law and Order; Blue Bloods; Gunsmoke; Matlock; JAG; NCIS; etc.)
2. What generally leads to the tension and drama of the show or movie? (An innocent person is accused of the crime.)

It is not uncommon for the accused person to be tried and not deemed innocent until right at the end of the show. Many times, they are accused by a false witness. Most of these movies or shows end with the hero revealing the guilty party.

Last week we saw Jesus being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives. He was taken to Annas, the former high priest, then to Caiaphas the current high priest and before the Sanhedrin, then to Pilate, the Roman Governor of the district, then to Herod and back to Pilate. Jesus’ trial before the Sanhedrin, given the speed by which it all transpired, we are safe to assume that all voted quickly, emotionally, and simultaneously.

Today in our study, we will examine the legal drama of Jesus. He underwent Jewish and Roman trials with no defense lawyer and no jury. A trial was never to be held at night, yet the first two were in Jesus’ case. As we examine the Scripture, reflect on how Jesus proved that He was sinless and guiltless in every way.

Read Luke 22:66-71

That brings us to the start of today’s text. Since the Jews needed the Romans to carry out a death sentence, they shipped Jesus off to the court of the Roman governor. Also, there is a relatively small window of time in history when the Romans used crucifixion as a means of capital punishment—it was a cruel way to die!

THE TRANSFER! Read John 18:28-32

1. What words or phrases stick out to you in these verses?
Remember, the Jews could not administer capital punishment even though they had found Jesus guilty of blasphemy, which carried the death penalty for the Jews.
2. Why were the Jewish leaders so eager to get rid of Jesus? (He was drawing more followers and they were losing power.)
3. How could a person justify their own religious traditions while falsely judging someone else? (There is only one answer: hypocrisy. They spoke out of both sides of their mouths. They were willing to do anything to destroy Jesus.)
4. How did the Jews answer Pilate’s question about the charges against Jesus? (They didn’t! They simply said, “If this man weren’t a criminal, we wouldn’t have handed Him over to you.”)
5. Why wouldn’t the Jews enter Pilate’s house? (They would be unclean and unable to participate in the Passover meal.)

They had rejected God’s Messiah and were seeking to put to death an innocent man, but they were worried about being ceremonially unclean!

THE TRIAL! Read John 18:33-38a

1. What questions did Pilate ask Jesus? (Are You the King of the Jews? I’m not a Jew, am I? What have you done? You are a king then? What is truth?)
2. What do you think Pilate’s tone was? (Pilate hated the Jews and had a reputation for treating them with cruelty.)

3. When Pilate asked Jesus if He was King of the Jews how did Jesus respond? (Jesus asked Pilate if he wanted to know the answer himself or if he were asking because his accusers put him up to it.)
4. What did Jesus say about His kingdom? (It is not of this world, or my followers would fight for me.)
5. Where is Jesus' kingdom? (It is in the hearts of believers.)
6. What tone of voice do you think Pilate used when he asked "what is truth? (Cynical and Skeptical that anyone knows what truth is.)

Pilate was saying how can you be truly certain of anything? What kind of knowledge do you think you have?

7. How did Jesus' response to Pilate point to His innocence? (It was obvious Jesus was no threat to the Roman government. The Jews didn't even have specific charges against Jesus to tell Pilate.)

Jesus' answers may have confounded Pilate, but he recognized that Jesus was no political threat. Still, Pilate wondered what Jesus had done to inflame the Jewish leaders.

8. Why do you think Pilate had adopted such a cynical attitude toward truth?

Toward the end of the Roman Empire, all religions were regarded by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and by the politicians as equally useful.

THE TRADE! Read John 18:38b-40

1. How should we characterize Pilate's attempt to release Jesus? (Despite his condescending attitude toward Jesus, Pilate still found no reason to declare Him guilty. He thought he just might have a way out of his dilemma.)
2. Why were the people so easily swayed to follow the Jewish leaders? (Stirred by the priests, the crowd rejected the release of Jesus. Instead, they called for Barabbas, an outlaw and murderer, to be set free.)

Remember the time, it is early in the morning and the 71 members of the Sanhedrin were there. They stirred up the crowd.

Even though the Romans and the Jews miscarried justice in Jesus' case, He still controlled the situation. Jesus knew everything He was about to experience was part of the Father's plan.

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

1. What application does this have for us?

Like the authorities, some people reject Jesus regardless of the facts. Acknowledging that He is the Son of God requires them to recognize their sin and their need for a Savior. What serves as a comfort to those who follow Jesus becomes a stumbling block to those who reject Him.

2. What are some ways people misrepresent facts about Jesus?
3. How can we help them see the truth?
4. With whom should you speak to and address the misinterpretations you hear most often?

Pray for courage and wisdom in confronting false beliefs.