



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

John Sermon Series

Supports Session 10: I Find No Fault

Sermon Title: "The Sinless Savior" (John 18:28-40)

Connection to Session 10

Unable to charge Jesus with any crimes, Pilate offered the crowd a choice. They could release a known murderer, Barabbas, or Jesus. They chose to release Barabbas. Jesus was without sin, yet He was handed over to be crucified.

Introduction/Opening

A phrase was coined, likely in the 19th century, to describe high profile court cases: "the trial of the century." *Britannica.com* identifies the following such trials: the trial of Socrates, the trial of Galileo, the Salem witch trials, the trial of Lizzie Borden, the Black Sox Scandal, the Scopes Monkey Trial, the Sacco-Vanzetti Case, the Charles Manson trial, the trial of O. J. Simpson, and the impeachment and trial of President Bill Clinton.¹ In John 18:28-40, we read about what could easily be the most consequential trial in all of history. Jesus faced a series of trials: He faced the religious leaders three times (Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin); He stood before Pilate twice; and finally He stood once before Herod.

Outline

1. The Religious Leaders Passed Jesus to Pilate (vv. 28-32)
 - a. The religious leaders brought Jesus to Pilate but would not themselves enter the governor's headquarters. Entering a Gentile residence would render them ceremonially unclean and then unable to continue the celebration of Passover. How blind was their religiosity. They did not want to be "unclean" and at the same time desired to murder the Son of Man.
 - b. Pilate's question further exposed their hypocrisy. Pilate wanted to know what crime Jesus had committed. They gave no direct answer, only that He was a criminal.
 - c. The conversation between Pilate and the religious leaders confirmed the fulfillment of prophecy. The chief priests and members of the Sanhedrin noted there was no authority for them to put Jesus to death. To fulfill prophecy, He had to die by crucifixion. On more than one occasion in the Gospels, Jesus indicated that He must go to Jerusalem and be crucified and rise again on the third day (Matthew 16:21, Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22).

1. Michael Ray, "Order in the Court: 10 'Trials of the Century,'" in *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/list/order-in-the-court-10-trials-of-the-century>.

2. Pilate Questioned Jesus, and Jesus Questioned Pilate (vv. 33-38)
 - a. Question #1: Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (v. 33). This was stated in such a way that Pilate was making a mockery of the idea that Jesus was a king. In Pilate’s mind no man could be a king without an army and regalia.
 - b. Question #2: Jesus asked Pilate, “Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?” (v. 34). Jesus confronted Pilate, questioning the source of his inquiry.
 - c. Question #3: Pilate asked, “I’m not a Jew, am I?” (v. 35). Pilate declared it was the Jews who brought Jesus before him. The second part of the question, “What have you done?” (v. 35) shows that Pilate wanted to know why the religious leaders were demanding Jesus’s death.
 - d. Question #4: Pilate then asked, “You are a king then?” (v. 37). Pilate is still trying to determine just who this Jesus is. The only kings Pilate knew about were physical kings who sat on thrones and commanded armies.
 - e. Jesus had earlier responded to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (v. 36) The Kingdom over which Jesus ruled and rules is not from or out of this world. If the Kingdom was based in this world, His servants would fight. Jesus added that His purpose in coming was to testify to the truth. Those who are of the truth listen to His voice.
 - f. Question #5: Finally, Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (v. 38). This was Pilate’s final question for Jesus.

3. Pilate Sought to Appease the Religious Crowd (vv. 38-40)
 - a. Pilate, having no legal reason to charge Jesus with a crime, presented an option to the crowd. Since it was custom to release one prisoner at Passover, they could choose to release either Jesus or Barabbas. There was a stark contrast between Jesus and Barabbas. Jesus was a healer who loved His own. Barabbas, already imprisoned for his crimes, had committed murder while engaged in a rebellion. The people made a choice—they released Barabbas and rejected Jesus.

Conclusion

The questions from Pilate are still important for everyone today. Is Jesus a king? Is He the embodiment of truth? How we answer those questions is of eternal consequence. Albert B. Simpson wrote and published these words in 1905:

Jesus is standing in Pilate’s hall--
 Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all;
 Harken! what meaneth the sudden call!
 What will you do with Jesus?
 Chorus:
 What will you do with Jesus?
 Neutral you cannot be;
 Someday your heart will be asking,
 “What will He do with me?”²

2. Albert B. Simpson, “What Will You Do with Jesus?” Hymnary.org, 2022, https://hymnary.org/text/jesus_is_standing_in_pilates_hall_friend.

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