

Christ Before Pilate
John 19:8-16
Part 5

We are in the midst of a presidential election. And certainly, we as citizens of this country should feel a responsibility this November, by our vote, to support the candidate of our choice. I am planning to do this and I would certainly hope that you would commit yourself to do this as well.

But even as I am testifying to you, as an American citizen, that I am committed this November to cast my vote for a presidential candidate and encouraging you to do the same, I must also say to you that I do not have any confidence in them in respect to the promises that they have made. And why is this? They simply do not have the strength, the power or the resources in and of themselves to actually bring about the fulfillment of those promises.

But this is not true of Christ. It is not true of Christ because He, unlike other men, as God incarnate, has the strength and power to bring about everything that He has promised.

What does **Matthew 5:18** tell us concerning the promises of God as contained in the pages of this book? **“Not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”**

And certainly I hope that this truth is in the process of coming alive for us as we continue our study of the Gospel of John. We are now examining **John 18:28–19:16**. This is John’s account of Christ’s trial before Pilate.

In this passage we see a collision of wills. The will of Pilate, who in the course of the trial, had determined that he wanted to protect Christ from crucifixion, and Christ Himself who was just as determined to die by crucifixion in order to fulfill the promises that God had made to the nation of Israel in **Psalms 22** and that Christ had made to His disciples in **John 3:14**, **John 8:28**, as well as **John 12:32-33**.

So who is going to get their way? There is no doubt. It will be Christ. He promised that He would die by crucifixion, and it was a promise that would be kept just as every other promise that Christ has made will be kept. So now let us take a look at the various parts of this trial that we have already covered.

The first part of the trial was Pilate's initial meeting with Christ's accusers (John 18:28-32). This meeting was in a sense a preliminary hearing, which resulted in formal charges being brought against Christ, charges that would in fact have been sufficient, if proven correct, to have justified His crucifixion under Roman law. This preliminary hearing led to the second part of the trial.

The second part of the trial was Pilate's initial examination of Christ (John 18:33-38a). This initial examination of Christ ended with Pilate concluding that Christ was in fact innocent of all the charges that had been brought against Him by the Jews at His preliminary hearing.

But even though Pilate found Christ innocent and should have released Him, he did not do this because he felt he needed to protect his own political career.

This balancing act between what he believed to be right and what he believed would damage his political career led to the third part of Christ's trial before Pilate.

The third part of the trial was Pilate's first attempt to protect Christ from crucifixion by offering the Jews a choice between Barabbas and Christ (John 18:38b-40). And of course you all know how this ended. The Jewish multitude, rather than calling out for the release of Christ, called out for the release of Barabbas, a very notorious murderous opportunist.

This obviously was a setback for Pilate, but this setback did not stop Pilate from continuing his quest to protect Christ from crucifixion. This led to the fourth part of the trial.

The fourth part of the trial was Pilate's second attempt to protect Christ from crucifixion by having Him scourged, hoping that the severity of the

punishment might satisfy the Jews (John 19:1-7). And of course we know how this turned out.

After Christ had been scourged and brought out to the Jewish multitude so that they could see His mutilated body, they did not call out for His release. They rather once again called out for His crucifixion.

At this point in the trial there is clearly an impasse. The Jews are unrelenting in their quest to see Jesus crucified and Pilate has proven equally unwilling to yield to their demands. This impasse then led the Jews to revise their charges against Christ.

In other words, rather than simply charging Christ with crimes against Roman law, they now added an additional charge based on Jewish law. And what was this new charge? In essence, they charged Him with blasphemy for having made Himself out to be the Son of God.

And this is where we left off in our study of **John 18:28–19:16**. This morning we will now move on to the fifth part of the trial.

Again what is my hope for this message? My hope is this: that we by the grace of God might see the wisdom of placing our faith and trust in Christ alone for our salvation and building our lives on the promises of His Word. So what is the fifth part of the trial?

The fifth part of the trial was a second examination of Christ by Pilate (John 19:8-12). Let me now read these verses for you. **“Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; (9) and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer. (10) So Pilate said to Him ‘You do not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?’ (11) Jesus answered, ‘You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.’”** So now let us take a closer look at these verses. And we will begin with **verse 8**.

And what does it say? **“Therefore when Pilate heard this statement** [in other words, the statement that Christ had made Himself out to be the Son of God], **he was even more afraid.”**

So who exactly was he more fearful of? The Jews or Christ? It has to be that he became more fearful of Christ. Why would I say this? I would say this because Pilate did not **become “more afraid”** until he heard the statement that Christ had made Himself out to be the Son of God. Therefore his increasing fear had more to do with Christ than with the Jews.

In other words, Christ’s earlier words about the nature of His kingdom, His response to the scourging, combined with a warning from his wife recorded for us in **Matthew 27:19** had already made Pilate very uneasy about the person of Christ. But now having heard that He had made Himself out to be the Son of God, he became even more fearful.

Pilate, having heard that Christ had made Himself out to be the Son of God, became more fearful of Christ because he for a moment thought that perhaps he had scourged a divine person (John 19:8).

So what do we learn next? Let me now read for you **John 19:9**. **“And he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, ‘Where are You from?’ But Jesus gave him no answer.”**

When Pilate asked Christ where He was from, he was not asking Him what town He was from, but rather he was asking Him if He was in fact the son of a god (John 19:9). Or in other words, “Are you earthly or are you from up there where the gods are?” I would imagine that as Pilate asked this question he was looking into eyes of Christ and was very anxious to hear His response, but the only answer that Pilate got from Christ was silence.

How do we know this? We know this because **verse 9** tells us that Jesus gave Pilate **“no answer.”**

This is not the first time that a gospel writer chose to note Christ’s silence during the course of His trial. In fact, all four gospel writers record for us different occasions during the course of His trial where Christ chose to remain silent (Matt. 26:63; 27:14; Mark 14:60-61; 15:5; Luke 23:9; John 19:9). These various references where Christ, in the course of His trial, chose to remain silent serves as a fulfillment of **Isaiah 53:7**, which prophesied that when the Messiah would come and would be oppressed and afflicted, He would not open His mouth

So let me ask you a question. Why did Jesus at this point in His trial choose not to speak to Pilate especially in light of the fact that Christ had spoken to Pilate earlier during his first examination?

The reason why Christ did not answer Pilate in John 19:9 is because He had already given Pilate the answer to that question in John 18:33-38 and had been rebuffed by Pilate. Let me go back to those verses one more time and see if this is not so. Now remember that these verses that we are about to read record for us the earlier interaction between Pilate and Christ during his first examination and what do these verses say? **“Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ (34) Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’ (35) Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?’ (36) Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’ (37) Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.’ (38) Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’”**

Did Pilate hear what Christ was saying to him? No! He, by his lack of response to the words of Christ, demonstrated that he was not **“of the truth.”** Therefore there was no further need for Christ to once again repeat Himself or to even enlarge upon what He had already said to Pilate in **John 19:9** when Pilate asked Christ where He was from.

It is a very scary thing to realize that people can become so hardened against the words of Christ; in other words, against the truth that God stops talking to them. But that is exactly what happened here. Another example of this very thing was God’s interaction with Pharaoh. The Bible tells us repeatedly that Pharaoh hardened his heart (**Exodus 8:15,19**) and then it says, “And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh (**Exodus 9:12**).

If you are here this morning and you have repeatedly and willfully hardened your heart against the gospel of Christ, thinking perhaps that you will make that decision later, you could be sadly mistaken. In fact, today might be the

last time that you will ever hear the voice of Christ calling out to you to come to Him and receive the gift of life that He is prepared to give to you. In other words, don't be like Pilate. So how will Pilate respond to the silence of Christ?

Let me now read for you **John 19:10** **“So Pilate said to Him, ‘You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?’”** So how did Pilate respond to Christ's silence? Christ's silence caused Pilate's pride to overwhelm Pilate's fear of Christ (John 19:10).

We see the truth of what I just shared in the two questions that Pilate asked Christ in **John 19:10**.

So, what was his first question? His first question was **“You do not speak to me?”** The “me” is emphatic. He is angered that Jesus would treat him and his question with silence. And why would he be angered? He had a much higher view of himself than He should have had, which is revealed to us by his second question. And what was his second question? It was **“Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify you?”**

Was he correct? Yes, in a sense he was correct. He, as the Roman military governor, had the authority to release Christ or to crucify Christ. But the authority that he had did not originate with him, which will become very clear to us as we begin to read the next verse. And how does it begin? **(11) “Jesus answered, ‘You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above.’”**

People take themselves far too seriously. Certainly Pilate did. He thought He was in control but He wasn't.

Pilate was not in control. God was in control, and it was God who had given him the authority to release Christ or to crucify Christ (John 19:11).

And so it is with us. We are not in control and we need to acknowledge this just as Pilate needed to acknowledge this. And if we acknowledge this life will be much better for us?

Let me ask you this question. Do you believe that you are so fully in control of your marriage that you can make it work? Hopefully your answer is no! Do you believe that you are so fully in control of your parenting that you can make it work? Hopefully your answer is no! Do you believe that you are so fully in control of your career path that you can make it work? Hopefully your answer is no!

So if are not ultimately in control of these things, then who is in control? It is the Lord. And if it is the Lord who is truly and ultimately in control, then let us acknowledge this by yielding ourselves to Him, by striving to be the kind of husband or wife that He would want us to be, to be the kind of parent He would want us to be, to be the kind of employer or employee that He would want us to be and then leave the results with God.

Unfortunately for Pilate he understood none of this. He was all about serving himself and successfully pursuing his career path. This is what he was most concerned about. And it was this obsession with achieving this so-called personal success that ultimately led him to make to the sinful choice of not releasing Christ though he knew that Christ was innocent of all the charges that had been brought against Him.

But if there was any consolation for Pilate perhaps it could be found in the fact that his sin was not as great as the sin of those who had brought Christ to him for judgment.

So let us go back to **verse 11**. So let me read the last part of this verse for you. And what does it say? **“For this reason [in other words because the authority that you have been given has been given to you from above] he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”** Both the Jews who delivered Christ to Pilate and Pilate Himself were sinners and were the slave of sin, but they were not equally as guilty in respect to their conduct toward Christ in respect to this trial. Because Pilate had been given authority by God to exercise judgment, his sin was not considered as great a sin as the sin of those who brought Christ to Pilate for judgment (John 19:11).

So now what happens. How will Pilate respond to Christ’s accusations concerning his sin and the sin of the Jews? This leads us to the sixth and final part of the trial. And what was the sixth part of the trial?

The sixth part of the trial consisted of Pilate's third and most forceful but futile attempt to protect Christ from crucifixion (John 19:12-16). Let me now read for you the first part of **John 19:12.** **“As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him.”** Hadn't Pilate made efforts to release Christ earlier? Absolutely! But his earlier efforts were not propelled forward with the same energy as they were now being propelled forward.

Christ's words about his own personal accountability for all that Christ was presently suffering had struck home. And he was now in the process of trying to salve his conscience. But like in his earlier attempts to protect Christ from crucifixion he once again failed to persuade the Jews.

We see this clearly as we continue to read the rest of **John 19:12.** And what does it say? **“But the Jews cried out saying, ‘If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.’”** The Jews responded to Pilate's renewed conscience-driven effort to release Christ with a veiled threat of taking their case against Christ to Caesar (John 19:12).

This threat was the straw that broke the proverbial camel's back. Let me now read for you **John 19:13-16.** **“Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew Gabbatha. (14) Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold, your King!’ (15) So they cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’ [Taking one last final dig at the Jewish leadership and then] The chief priests answered, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’ (16) So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.”**

Pilate, having failed to persuade the Jews to drop their charges and to stop insisting that Christ be crucified, reluctantly but also selfishly acquiesced to their demands (John 19:13-16).

Pilate thought he was in control but he was in control of nothing. Rather it was God or in other words, Christ who was in control.

Nothing has changed? Christ and Christ alone is in charge. Therefore though I would hope that each of us as citizens of this great country would support

the candidate of our choice in the upcoming election, our hope for ourselves, our families and this church must rest in Christ and Christ alone.

May God give us the grace to place our faith and trust in Christ alone for our salvation and seek to build our lives on the promises of His Word.