

THE SIX TRIALS OF CHRIST

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Chapter 10

THE FIRST TRIAL BEFORE PILATE

We now come to the civil trials which were three in number. CHRIST was first tried before Pilate and pronounced innocent. He was then sent to Herod who made a mockery of the whole thing, a signifying the Lord's innocence. Finally He came back to Pilate who tried the case for a final time.

The time of day "**was early**" (John 18:28) which is an expression that signifies the fourth watch of the night. The sun had not risen as yet. The Sanhedrin had met in their hall for their condemnation of JESUS just as it was light. Matthew and Mark mention only that it was morning, and Luke, "**as soon as it was day**" (Luke 22:66). This trial would not have lasted over five minutes at the most. Since it becomes light an hour before sunrise, the Sanhedrin may have been before Pilate by 5 or 5:15 A.M. His first trial before Pilate could easily have been limited to five minutes after which time He was sent off to Herod. There before Herod CHRIST answered nothing. He was mocked and sent back to Pilate. All this could have taken place within a half hour, making it 5:45 A.M. Pilate could have said to them "**Behold your King**", which John says was "**about the sixth hour**" (John 19:14). John in all his Gospel, living among the Gentiles, reckons time according to the Roman method which begins the new day at midnight, rather than the Jewish method of naming the hours from sunrise. Thus all the events of the trials may be harmonized together as far as time is concerned, and with the fact that CHRIST was crucified at 9 A.M. in the morning which was the third hour as reckoned by the Jews (Mark 15:25).

WHY PILATE?

Why was it that the Sanhedrin took JESUS to Pilate? Why did they not execute Him themselves even as they stoned Stephen to death (Acts 7:57-60), and as they would have killed Paul had he not been rescued by the Romans (Acts 22:22; 23:10)?

The stoning of Stephen was a mob action, and it was illegal.

Judea was a conquered country, and, while the Romans sought to work with the existing governments of their conquered states, the right of the sword remained in their sole control. The Jews could try a man according to their own law, but they could not

legally put a man to death. This they acknowledge before Pilate when they are seeking him to pass the death penalty upon CHRIST (John 18:31).

John records that this was in actuality fulfilling our Lord's own prediction that He was not going to be the victim of mob rule, but was to be delivered by his own nation to the Gentiles: **"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again"** (Matthew 20:18-19), and receive, not stoning, but death by crucifixion: **"That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die"** (John 18:32). Krummacher observes: "For the second time they hand over their brother Joseph to the uncircumcised and to strangers. By this transfer they typified, at the same time, their own fate. The world's salvation, intended for them in the first instance, was by them most ungratefully given up to the Gentiles; while they themselves were thenceforward left to languish in darkness and the shadow of death."

Pilate was Procurator of Palestine, and was thus the representative of Caesar in Judea. To him was delegated authority from the Roman Governor of Syria the condemning to death of any person. The right of the sword was Rome's, not Israel's; and they knew this. Even though the Jews had tried a man, he was retried all over again in a Roman court by Roman law before the death sentence could be passed against him. The procedure to this point had been private, or nearly so, but it was the very essence of proceedings at Roman law that they were public.

While the private proceedings worked to the detriment of truth and righteousness, the public proceedings will also work to the same end. It is not the method that is wrong or right in either case; it is the heart of man that is defiled.

WHO IS PONTIUS PILATE?

Before looking at the trial itself before Pilate, we need to take a look at this man who is the Procurator at this time. Palestine was a district under the authority of the Roman Governor of Syria. Pilate was Procurator from A.D. 26 to 36. He had been appointed by the Roman Senate, and made his residence in Caesarea -- a Roman name meaning "Caesar's town" -- which was a Roman or Gentile city, a small imitation of Rome with its theatres, baths, games, etc. On special Jewish feast days he would go up to Jerusalem with a large band of soldiers in order to keep order. While in Jerusalem he would make his residence in what had formerly been the royal palace built by Herod the Great. It was situated on the hill southwest of the one on which the Temple stood. It is said to have been a magnificent building, rivaling the Temple itself in appearance, and large enough to be capable of containing a small army. It consisted of the main building with two wings on either side. In between the two wings and in front of the main building was a broad pavement. It was on this pavement in the open air where the trial before Pilate occurs.

Pilate had been born in Seville, Spain. He hated the Jews and was detested equally by them. The former Procurators had ordered the removal of the image of the Emperor

from the standards of the Roman soldiers before marching them into Jerusalem, in order to avoid the appearance of the worship of the Caesars, and so offend the Jews. Pontius Pilate did no such thing. He forced this hated emblem on them even though later he retracted. Also during his time as Procurator, he had robbed the Temple treasury and used the money to build an aqueduct to bring water into the city of Jerusalem. A number of revolts had arisen in Palestine against his regime. Each time there was a revolt, he would kill a number of Jews, and so use this tactic to suppress further revolts.

One such revolt is spoken of in Luke 13:1-3. Josephus does not even mention this particular incident which indicates something of it being a rather commonplace occurrence. Most Bible scholars feel this is a reference to "the followers of Judas of Galilee, who . . . taught that Jews should not pay tribute to the Romans, and of whom we learn, from Acts 5:37, that he drew after him a multitude of followers, who, on his being slain, were all dispersed. About this time that party would be at its height, and if Pilate caused this detachment of them to be waylaid and put to death, as they were offering their sacrifices at one of the festivals, that would be 'mingling their blood with their sacrifice'" (Jamison, Faucett, Brown Commentary).

Even among Roman leaders, Pilate was known for his inhuman cruelty. His discharge of his office in Judea had been brought to the attention of the Roman senate. It seems that at this precise time the Roman senate was investigating Pilate's running of his office. There had been so many revolts that they feel he cannot be a good administrator. Caligula does banish Pilate from his job subsequent to this time. Caligula himself was known for his inhumanity, but even he could not stand for Pilate's inhumanity. He banished Pilate to Gaul. It was while in Gaul that Pilate committed suicide. Thus you can see what kind of a man Pilate was.

With this background in mind of the Sanhedrin's hatred for Pilate and for Rome itself, think of the irony of their statement that they will make. While their hatred for Rome was great; their hatred of JESUS CHRIST was greater. They will, therefore, take the part of Rome and Rome's interests until finally they exclaim: **"We have no king but Caesar"** (John 19:15).

The passages that bear upon this trial are:

"And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" (Matthew 27:11-14)

"And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate. And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused him of many things: but he answered nothing. And Pilate asked him

again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled" (Mark 15:1-5)

"And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man. And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilaean" (Luke 23:1-6)

"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover. Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, 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: That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done? 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. 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. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all" (John 18:28-38)

"I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (I Timothy 6:13).

Let us now move through the events that occur.

JOHN 18:28:

"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover"

Pilate was sitting in the Judgment Hall when they arrived with JESUS. The reason he was seated here is that someone had come ahead and notified him that the Sanhedrin were coming. He was prepared for their arrival.

But then they came, the Jews would not enter into the Judgment Hall **"lest they should be defiled."** This was to them a very important principle. Once again we see how meticulous they were to seek to keep the minute details of the law but **"omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith"** (Matthew 23:23). They **"strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."** CHRIST went in and He was not defiled. They stayed out and were defiled with His blood upon their hands.

John says they would not enter in **"lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."** Here is given to us both the negative and the positive reason for their action. Now the Jews who led JESUS to this hall, but would not enter themselves, are not condemned for this action of their not entering in any more than of tithing mint and anise and cummin. The Lord said **"these ought to be done, and not leave the other undone"** (Matthew 23:23). Here before Pilate their error was bringing their MESSIAH to Rome asking His death.

We want to make one further comment before leaving John 18:28. The Lord's whole purpose in the laws of defilement and separation from leaven for the nation of Israel was to teach them truth. The Lord emphasizes this in Matthew 16:6 and 12 where He says to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees which was their doctrine. Paul also uses leaven as figurative of malice and wickedness (I Corinthians 5:8) which is to be separated from the believer. Israel had kept the action but not the meaning.

She was going through the ritual without the reality. She had the ceremony without its significance. But, beloved, this is our danger too. Israel had made the law into a religion where acts or things defiled and other acts made you holy. This was totally wrong. Holiness is a matter of the heart and defilement is a matter of the heart. The Lord's disciples were criticized for eating with unwashed hands, i.e., hands that had not been ceremonially washed according to the traditions of the elders after that person had walked in the market place and may have come into contact with something common or unclean. Our Lord's answer was that defilement was not an external thing, but a heart condition: **"Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man"** (Matthew 15:17-20). Let us never forget it.

Just because someone doesn't do everything just like we do it is no sign they are carnal and we are more spiritual. In fact, the moment we criticize another brother unjustly, even in our heart, we are the ones who are defiled.

Israel here was defiled because their hearts defiled them. CHRIST was pure, righteous

and undefiled because His heart was right: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26). **"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"** (Proverbs 4:23). The issues of life are heart issues, not church traditions or personal standards.

JOHN 18:29:

"Pilate then went out unto them, and said, what accusation bring ye against this man?"

Because the leaders would not come to Pilate, he was forced to yield to their scruples lest his failure to do so resulted in uncontrollable mob action and tumult for which he would be called into question. Even though Pilate yields to their whims, the subsequent language reveals there is no love for these people in his heart either. Here is the Judge rising from his judicial bench and going out to the mob to try the case.

What does Pilate know about JESUS even before he steps out to speak to the crowd? Matthew will tell us later on that Pilate **"knew that for envy they had delivered"** JESUS to him (Matthew 27:18). His wife also will send word to him later that morning saying: **"Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him"** (Matthew 27:19). Pilate certainly knew something of what was going on in the area and in all probability he and his wife had even spoken about JESUS CHRIST. Pilate displays, through the entire proceedings, a real interest in JESUS and a genuine respect, so that he must have had some previous knowledge of Him and knew that the Sanhedrin had for envy delivered JESUS over to him. Pilate's wife had, moreover, dreamed about the Lord this very night, and it was a vivid nightmare. Since Pilate had risen early this morning, he was not around when his wife, Precula (as tradition calls her) arose. She was so terror stricken by her experience that she felt compelled to send word to her husband.

"What accusation bring ye against this man?"

For Pilate to try the case there must first be an accusation presented to him. Mark it well. Pilate is not asking them for the verdict they have reached in their trial with a view to merely carrying out the sentence they have passed. He begins from the beginning to try the case himself according to Roman law.

This puts the Sanhedrin in an embarrassing position. You will remember that their charge against Him, for which they had tried JESUS, was blasphemy. He was found guilty by them, and the penalty was death. But blasphemy was not a capital crime according to Roman law. Consequently, the leaders never once mention the true charge for they knew if they once did the case would have been thrown out of court. For example, consider Acts 18:14-16: **"And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat."**

But there is another reason why they do not dare mention blasphemy as their true cause for condemning CHRIST. Blasphemy in the Jewish sense was a man claiming to be GOD. But for a man to claim to be a god was true to a Roman. The Roman Caesar was god, and all were to worship him. "You mean you Jews do not accept Caesar as god?" Pilate would have asked them, and then they would have been on trial, not JESUS.

Their first approach is to side-step the issue. They put up a smoke screen seeking to evade the question and hoping this will suffice.

JOHN 18:30:

"They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee."

By this haughtiness of speech they hope to cover up the weakness of their case. They are asking Pilate to forego any trial and merely pass sentence since they only bring malefactors to him, i.e., the worst of criminals, and if he were not one they would not have bother Pilate with Him.

JOHN 18:31:

"Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law."

Pilate is not about to yield. Rome was known the world around at this time for its legal justice and for its court system.

This was the Roman's pride even as the philosophies were the pride of the Greeks. Roman law demanded that criminal proceedings could be entered into only on definite accusations. Pilate is being investigated by the Roman senate at this very time, so he is forced to be very careful. He demands legal charges -- a civil and not a religious accusation -- against this prisoner. If the Sanhedrin does not wish to comply with Roman law, then they will have to try the case themselves according to their own law.

The Sanhedrin is losing the situation fast and they know it. Their indirect approach has backfired on them. In desperation they yell out the bitter and painful fact that they are subject to Rome.

"The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

Their stoning of Stephen, not too far distant, was an unlawful action on the part of the Sanhedrin. The power of life and death among the conquered peoples of Rome resided in the authority of Rome alone. While lesser powers might be given to the governments of the conquered nations, Rome never relinquished the right of the sword.

JOHN 18:32:

"That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die"

John adds one of his characteristic footnotes that what is happening is merely the fulfillment of what CHRIST predicted. Had the Sanhedrin taken things into their own hands as they did with Stephen, JESUS CHRIST would have been stoned and not have died by crucifixion (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32-33).

Since the Sanhedrin has sought the death penalty from Pilate, they are forced to yield and submit their articles of accusation. John does not record them because Dr. Luke already has given these to us and John is content to record events not covered by the other Gospels.

"And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king" (Luke 23:2)

Think of this. They have tried the Lord JESUS CHRIST and convicted him on one charge and now they present an entirely new charge before Rome. Many have thought this charge was a three-fold one; others, a two-fold. I personally feel it was all one charge and is so understood as such and treated by Pilate. In essence, "This One we found perverting the nation, even (namely) forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying He Himself is CHRIST king." The way they claimed JESUS was perverting the nation was forbidding to give tribute to Caesar saying He was Himself MESSIAH-KING.

Notice that the Sanhedrin here takes the position of Rome and stands up for Rome's interests. They accuse JESUS CHRIST of treason, not against His nation, but against Rome. When the nation went after idols, the Lord sent them to Babylon, the center of idolatry, where Jeremiah said, "**They are made upon their idols**" (50:38). It was there that the nation got its fill and was cured of idolatry. Now the nation is going after Rome, and is mad after Rome, so that they will cry out: "**We have no king but Caesar**" (John 19:15). The Lord will yet bring judgment upon them, for their false Messiah will make a covenant with the head of the revived Roman Empire which will be a covenant with death and sheol (Isaiah 28:15). Israel will learn, but only through great trial. GOD will give them up to their own heart. They want Caesar to be their king and they will have it until they acknowledge their offense and cry out, "**Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.**"

How truthful is this accusation? Was it true that JESUS was perverting the nation? The answer depends upon how you look at the situation, and this is the point. It was a half truth, but was made to Pilate with the intent to deceive him in taking it the wrong way. According to the Sanhedrin, JESUS CHRIST was rejecting the nation, not against Rome, but against themselves. This was the true issue, and this is why the Sanhedrin felt forced to act to get rid of JESUS CHRIST (John 11:48), "**If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him . . .**" But the leaders used this as if CHRIST was perverting the nation against Rome. This was not so. In reality, they were the ones who had perverted the nation and the law through their traditions. They were the ones getting rich through religion. They were the ones also who were seeking a MESSIAH

who would overthrow the Roman yoke. They rejected JESUS as their MESSIAH because He was not such a MESSIAH as they wanted (John 10:22ff).

Their proof offered that JESUS was perverting the nation is an absolute falsehood. CHRIST never forbid to give tribute to Caesar. The Sanhedrin had sent certain ones to catch Him in this very thing, but He refused to be caught (Matthew 22:15-22). He had said, "**Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's,**" when shown a Roman coin. This charge was a deliberate lie. Yet we know from history that the chief priests and the crowd there were the ones who were trying every scheme there was to get around paying taxes to Rome. A person on the spot will always accuse someone else of the very thing of which he himself is guilty. The thought is that if I am guilty of this, he must be also. The Sanhedrin are on the spot, and so having told a lie they must cover it with truth. CHRIST had said they He Himself is CHRIST-KING. In this they were right, he had claimed to be their MESSIAH, and had authenticated those claims with signs. The Sanhedrin had rejected the claims saying His power was satanic power not Holy power. They know His claim. They now seek to use it for their advantage. They speak the truth, but they say it in a way to deceive. They know Pilate would understand this in a political sense and so try the case. The charge has been made. Pilate must now act. He has the accusation, and he knows that if he dismisses this charge without investigation he will sure enough be in "hot water" with the senate which could pronounce him guilty of malfeasance in office. He now leaves the crowd and goes into the Praetorium to talk to JESUS (John 18:33). Remember that it was the very essence of proceedings under Roman law that they were conducted in public. But the Jews themselves would not enter into the Praetorium, thus making this talk between Pilate and JESUS private. At this point all four Gospels record certain aspects of the proceedings.

Matthew 27:11-14

Mark 15:2

Luke 23:3

John 18:33-38a

Right at this point in John's Gospel is the most complete, so we will follow the trial in John.

JOHN 18:33:

"Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus."

As Pilate went back into the Praetorium and sat upon the judgment seat, he then had the prisoner brought before him. The Lord had not been outside listening to what had transpired, but was inside the Praetorium while Pilate had secured from the Sanhedrin their accusations against JESUS.

Here Pilate comes face to face with JESUS CHRIST, and, whether he realizes it or not, he, and through him the Roman Empire, are on trial. The true JUDGE is JESUS CHRIST and the prison on trial is Pilate. The very secrets of his heart are going to be

exposed. The very same thing is true of Paul and Agrippa in Acts 26. No man comes near the light without having the light expose what he, in truth, really is.

"And said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?"

Because of the situation and the circumstances as they have developed, Pilate is endeavoring to make the prisoner incriminate Himself contrary to Roman law. He asks a question which is a true question and it stands in contrast to verse 37 where the question is asked with the expected answer to be given is yes. There the question in the English might be, "Thou art a King then?" Here the English is correct: **"Art Thou the King of the Jews?"**

This title **"King of the Jews"** will remain before Pilate and he will place it over the cross to the gall of the Sanhedrin. In this he will not change. The term "Jew" is the way the heathen had of designating all twelve tribes of Israel, and it was so used from the time of Esther (Cf. Acts 2:26; 21:20-21; 26:7). CHRIST is a KING not of just the one tribe of Judah, but of the entire nation and of the whole world.

JOHN 18:34:

"Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?"

The Lord answers first with a question: "Why are you asking this of me. Is it because of actions that have been reported to you by your soldiers that either I or my disciples have acted in insurrection against Rome, or are you asking this because others of the same as I am -- Jews -- have told this of me?"

CHRIST wants to know, is Pilate asking this as Commander of soldiers that have told him about the incident of insurrection in the Garden that very morning, or is he asking this as Governor because the Jews have told him that this was His claim. The reason it was asked is because it makes a great difference in the Lord's reply.

This questioning of Pilate nettles him since he does not realize its significance. He thus has not been told about the incident in the garden.

JOHN 18:35:

"Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests delivered thee unto me: What hast thou done?"

Pilate knew nothing expect what the Jewish leaders had just told him. Moreover, he was not a Jew himself so as to know the significance of being the CHRIST nor to judge whether this One standing before him was or was not the CHRIST-KING. "You are accused by the Jews: therefore what have You done?" This is what Pilate wanted to know. CHRIST than proceeds.

JOHN 18:36:

"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."

Every word is carefully selected by Him who is the Truth. The question cannot be answered yes or no, but takes explanation. CHRIST three times says, "**My kingdom.**" He has a kingdom.

It is not of this world. It is not a temporal kingdom that is a political threat to Caesar nor usurps any power given to Caesar. If this had been the case then My servants, CHRIST says (literally "officers"; same word used in verses 3, 12, 18 and 22), would fight that I should not have been delivered to the Jews and by them to the Romans. The very fact that I am a prisoner shows I am not politically motivated. "**Now my kingdom is not from hence.**"

Oh how significant is this word "now." There will come the day when He will be against Rome and against Rome's Caesar whom He "**shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming**" (II Thessalonians 2:8). But that is another day and another hour. Not now is My kingdom of force and power against Rome.

JOHN 18:37:

"Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then?"

This is logical in light of the fact that three times CHRIST spoke of His kingdom. "You are 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."

The other three Gospels merely record "**Thou sayest**" -- an idiom for "Yes, I am." John gives the enlarged, the complete, the emphatic answer. A king is born a king, and I was so born. And not only born, but I came into the world. I was in existence before my appearance in flesh. I came to bear witness unto the truth. My kingdom is not a Jewish kingdom, it is a universal kingdom. It is for all men everywhere. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

The Lord is seeking the soul of this man and is approaching him on his own ground. Would he be truthful? If he would, he would thereby manifest that he belonged to the Lord's kingdom. Or would he play politics? Politics it had been for Pilate and politics it was to be.

Here was the difference between Rome and CHRIST. The kingdom of Rome was governed by expediency. The kingdom of CHRIST was governed by truth. The one was temporal and passing; the other, eternal and abiding. The one governed the

bodies of men who were its citizens; the other, the hearts and souls of its citizens. The one was physical, the other spiritual. Just as Rome had extended its influence out beyond its borders; so CHRIST's kingdom was more than Jewish. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. Therefore, as many as received Him, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, whether they be paupers or kings, to them He gave authority to become the sons of GOD. (John 1:11-12).

Now the JUDGE has spoken. Would the prisoner, Pilate, play politics and do that which was expedient, or would he abide by the truth regardless of the outcome? Pilate is on trial. CHRIST had come to bear witness of the truth. The truth already existed, but CHRIST only bore witness of it. As such He is PROPHET as well as KING.

To this invitation by CHRIST to Pilate for him to be His disciple of truth, "**Pilate said unto Him**" cynically.

JOHN 18:38:

"What is truth?"

Even though he asked the question, he wasn't honestly seeking its answer. With the asking of the question, he leaves the Praetorium and goes out once again to the Jews. His whole background is that truth is relative, not absolute. His question was not a question at all, but rather a declarative statement.

"What is truth" was his question, but he never waited to be instructed by the One who was Truth, but went out to act on his own. Here the Eternal Truth will be batted around and finally Pilate will succumb to the pressures of the moment.

CHRIST has spoken to Pilate, but will now be silent. During the remaining trials CHRIST will utter but one more word. Why? Is it because He has changed? Not at all. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He changes not. But Pilate has rejected truth, and he will be given no more truth until he acts on what he knows. The only revelation is that of sin and judgment to follow.

Thus the Lord deals with all in the same way, being the unchangeable and eternal GOD. He who spurns truth will receive no more truth to trample under foot, and it makes no difference whether he is an unbeliever or a believer. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, not naturally discerned. **"No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomever the Son will reveal him"** (Matthew 11:27). Unless you are in right relation to the SON you will never know the Father, nor will you ever know the SON. **"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God . . . But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"** (I Corinthians 2:12, 14).

Whenever you or I feel like the heavens are as brass when we pray and that we are not getting through, just remember that GOD hasn't changed. Whenever this Book

becomes closed to new truth and it becomes dry and monotonous so that we complain as Israel, "**all there is to eat is this light bread and we loath it,**" look out. The problem is with us, not GOD. The problem is sin, a wrong heart attitude and rejection of truth already revealed. The only revelation that will be given us is judgment.

As Pilate leaves the Praetorium this time, he has the One who was handed over to him escorted out of the Praetorium with him, all prepared to release Him. We know this from the subsequent things that happen.

PILATE'S VERDICT

"And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in him no fault at all." Dr. Luke records the same words: "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4).

The trial is officially over.

The charge was treason against Rome.

The verdict of acquittal was given.

The legal order to discharge the defendant was all that remained.

But it never came. For the Sanhedrin had not come for the verdict of acquittal. They had come for His death, not His release, and they were prepared to pay any price to accomplish it.

"And they were the more fierce . . ." (Luke 23:5). The announcement of His innocence sent them to more urgent pressure upon Pilate, and he was no match for them.

Josephus records for us in his "*Antiquities of the Jews*," XVIII, 3, 1 what happened when Pilate tried to force Caesar's image upon the people of Jerusalem that were on the standards of the soldiers. Pilate was the first to bring these images into Jerusalem and he did it secretly at night. When the Sanhedrin knew it they went to Caesarea in multitudes and interceded with Pilate for five days. On the sixth day Pilate had his fill and ordered his soldiers to have their weapons concealed and he would appear on his judgment-seat with the army concealed ready for action. When the Jews petitioned him once again, he gave the signal and his soldiers surrounded the Jews, and Pilate threatened them with immediate death unless they would leave off disturbing him, and go home. At this they threw themselves to the ground and laid their necks bare, saying they would take their deaths very willingly rather than have their laws transgressed and their city defiled. When Pilate saw their fanatical devotion to keep their laws inviolable, he gave the order to bring the images back from Jerusalem to Caesarea.

It was to these same people Pilate had condescended to leave the Praetorium and go out to them because of their cause when it was fixed and immovable. In this case it was the death of JESUS CHRIST.

Here came a barrage of fresh accusations, with the Sanhedrin being more vocal than

before. At this point we must integrate the accounts of Matthew and Mark together in order to acquire the complete picture.

"And the chief priests accused him of many things" (Mark 15:3).

"And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" (Matthew 27:12-13).

"And Pilate asked him again, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled" (Mark 15:4-5).

Or as Matthew states, **"And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly" Matthew 27:14)**

He would not give any more truth to Pilate. He would not speak in His own defense. His resurrection from among the dead would be His vindication. Now He was as the lamb led to the slaughter. **"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).**

Everyone was excited and disturbed in the entire gathering but JESUS CHRIST. This was their hour to do what they wished and He was completely surrendered to the will of the Father. He had complete calmness, and why not? His heart alone was right of all that were there. Pilate marvelled and well he might for others would have sought witnesses and sought to vindicate themselves. But "Jesus appealed to no one, either in Heaven or on earth."

In the new group of charges someone was heard saying: **"He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place" (Luke 23:5).** Galilee had been a hot bed of insurrection against Rome and the mention of it was for the purpose of inciting guilt by association of place. But the charge was not sedition -- "the excitement of discontent against the government." With the mention of Galilee, Pilate feels there may be a way out of the dilemma in which he finds himself. **"When Pilate heard of Galilee, he asked whether the man were a Galilean. And as soon as he knew that he belonged unto Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who himself also was at Jerusalem at that time" (Luke 23:6-7).**

It was not an unusual procedure in Roman law to transfer a prisoner from the territory where he had been arrested to his place of origin to be tried. Herod was then governor of Galilee, while Pilate was of Judea. As a Galilean, CHRIST came under Herod's jurisdiction. CHRIST, in place of being released after the verdict of acquittal, is bound now once again and is conducted to Herod's residence to be tried by him.

~ end of chapter 10 ~
