

111. God on trials – Part 3

February 18, 2018

Last 2 Sundays, we witnessed 5 kangaroo court proceedings. Jesus had one more trial – by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who had the authority to stop this nonsense altogether. But instead of doing what is right, he did what pleased the people. We have so much to learn from this portion of Scripture. Let's jump right in.

A. MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

John 18:33-36 Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered him, "Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have 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, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

This question of v34 from Jesus caught Pilate completely off guard. Jesus here declares the great and permanent difference between God's kingdom and the kingdoms of this world. Earthly kingdoms are based upon force, pride, the love of human praise, the desire for domination, and self interest. But the heavenly kingdom, exemplified by Jesus and the cross, is based on love, sacrifice, humility, and righteousness – and is to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Gentiles foolishness.

Yet it is important to note that the first-century Christians made no attempts to conquer paganism by reacting blow by blow. Instead, they outthought, outprayed, and outlived the unbelievers. Their weapons were positive, not negative. They prayed, preached, and proclaimed the message of the Gospel of Jesus.

As a result, these Christians dramatically impacted their world. In the end, they prevailed. In retrospect, where is the Roman Empire today? It is no longer a world power. Do we remember all the names of the great emperors of Rome? For the most part, no.

There have been numerous attempts throughout history to destroy the Christian faith. But they will always fail for one simple reason: Christianity is in Christ. He will prevail in the end and establish His kingdom. And because He includes us, we will win in the end, too.

B. WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

John 18:37-38 Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." 38 Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "I find no fault in Him at all."

Please note how Jesus answered Pilate in v37. Jesus used the word "born" to show Himself as His 'humanity', but at the same time, "this cause I have come into the world" to explain His 'deity.' Jesus not only told Pilate of His origin, but also He explained His ministry by telling him: "I should bear witness to the truth."

Yes, Jesus admitted that He is a King, but His kingdom does not come from the authority of this world, rather from God the Father in heaven. His kingdom is spiritual, He does not depend on worldly or fleshly means to advance His cause.

Jesus never said that He had no kingdom in this world. He does have a kingdom in this world wherever there are people who have trusted Him and yielded to His sovereignty.

Please pay close attention on the last phrase of v37:

John 18:37c Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.

Remember what I taught you guys? What is the best way to interpret the Bible?

Using the Bible. Jesus declared Himself as the truth in John chapter 14:

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

And He also told us that those who are in Him know His voice:

John 10:14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.

By combining these two verses, we can understand what we read in v37. Everyone who is in Jesus Christ hears His voice because He speaks the truth.

I don't believe that Pilate was a dummy, but he sure acted like one when he asked a question, "What is the truth?" but he didn't want to find out the truth like the majority of people in the 21st Century. Many born-again Christians would seek the truth as long as the truth does not infringe on their carnal lifestyle and ways.

Pontius Pilate who asked, "What is the truth?" and walked away, though the truth was standing right in front of his face.

Yes, there are absolute moral and biblical truths no matter what people want to think about it. You can face it or ignore it. Ladies and gentlemen, some of you might have the same problem as Pilate. You have been seeking the truth. You just heard the truth about Jesus through the Word of God. What are you going to do with it? Walk away from it like Pilate, or step into the truth of God and be obedient to Him?

C. BARABBAS

Mark 15:6-15 Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. 7 And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. 8 Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" 10 For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. 12 Pilate answered and said to them again, "What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?" 13 So they cried out again, "Crucify Him!" 14 Then Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they cried out all the more, "Crucify Him!" 15 So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

Since Pilate couldn't get his way, he offered a choice to the people – Jesus of Nazareth, or Barabbas, the murderer and insurrectionist. It is more than comparing Billy Graham vs. Osama Bin Laden. The name "Barabbas" or "Bar Abba" means "son of the father." He was despicable, brutal, and hated by the people. Pilate must have thought that surely the Jews would want Jesus instead – the true Son of God the Father.

If anyone should be able to say, "Jesus died for me," it should be Barabbas. He knew what it was to have Jesus die on his behalf, the innocent in the place of the guilty. Jesus represented the law of God, while Barabbas presented lawlessness. The people chose lawlessness over the law, and people really haven't changed much over the years.

Speaking of taking one's place, we see a beautiful illustration of a sacrificial ritual from the Book of Leviticus that explains what our Lord Jesus did for us:

Leviticus 14:1-7 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 2 "This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest. 3 And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine him; and indeed, if the leprosy is healed in the leper, 4 then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living and clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop. 5 And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water. 6 As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water. 7 And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

There is no known cure for leprosy to this day. Then we have a question regarding chapter 14. Why do we have a ritual for cleansing a healed leper? This ritual was never used until Jesus healed lepers during His earthly ministry – like healing ten lepers all at one time. He told them to go and show themselves to the priest. I am sure that the priests had to refer to this Book to do the ritual correctly.

1) Since the unclean leper wasn't permitted to enter the camp, the priest had to go outside the camp to minister to him or her.

Since we couldn't go to God, Jesus came to us. The Greatest Physician, our God, makes house calls to each sinner right where they are.

Luke 19:10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

2) Birds don't belong to earthen vessels, they belong to the heavens.

Jesus came down from heaven and became a man.

3) Cedar wood is extremely resistant to tree disease and rot and it represents sinless Jesus as a man as well as a symbolic reference to the wood of the cross.

4) Scarlet is the sign of faith in the blood of Jesus.

Scarlet should be translated as a scarlet thread or yarn. It also reminds us that Rahab was instructed to put out a scarlet cord as an evidence of her faith.

5) Hyssop represents the faith of the individual.

It is the application of the redemption in Christ. The Israelites used hyssop to apply the blood of the lamb over their door post right before the first Passover, so the death angel would not kill them.

6) One of the birds that was killed in an earthen vessel, of course, represents the physical body of Jesus Christ on the cross.

7) Overrunning water represents the Holy Spirit.

Note that it is not the water that sits, rather running water – fresh and living water.

8) The living bird that was dipped in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water and is released in an open field represents the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

If Jesus was killed for our sins and stayed in the tomb, we have nothing other than a dead Messiah wannabe. But our Savior's tomb is empty and He is risen. That gives us hope for our own resurrection and new life in heaven.

9) The priest shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy.

Without shedding of the blood, there is no remission. Of course, the blood of Jesus is perfect to save souls of men.

10) The priest shall pronounce him clean.

How did the one who had leprosy know that he was clean? The priest told him so. How do believers today know that God has saved us? He tells us so in His Word. No matter how the leper felt or what he looked like, God said he was clean, and that settled it.

D. THE MOB

A savage chant began to surge through the crowd: "*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*" These were the same people who cried out "*Hosanna! Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!*" on Palm Sunday, only four days ago. They were controlled by the religious leaders and followed them without knowing the truth.

Today, every person must also answer the question that Pilate asked the crowd, "*What do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?*" This is the universal question that every person must face. This question is as relevant for us as it was for Pilate.

What will you do with Jesus? You have to make the decision. Will you receive Him or reject Him? Will you submit to Him or rebel against Him? It is the ultimate question of everyone's life.

E. HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS JUST MAN

Matt 27:19 While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him."

Claudia Procula, the daughter of Augustus, had married Pontius Pilate. History not only tells us she had converted to Judaism while they were in Israel, but also that, following this event, she became a follower of Jesus Christ.

F. HIS BLOOD BE ON US

Matt 27:24-25 When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children."

Pilate could never wash his hands of this. It was a responsibility that could not be avoided, and his guilt is echoed throughout the centuries. Hidden in Pilate's attempt at self-justification is a declaration of Jesus' innocence. Yet, he didn't do what is right.

The Jewish leaders said, "*His blood be on us and on our children.*" They were so blinded to kill Jesus, they were calling down God's wrath on themselves.

G. APPLICATIONS

1) Absolute moral and biblical truths exist absolutely in spite of anyone's objection. Anytime we stand against them, we are taking the side of untruth and embracing deceit that comes from satan.

2) Ask yourself this question: What do I do with Jesus?

Is Jesus your Savior and Lord and do you do what He say? Or do you pretend you didn't hear Him? Whichever you choose, you choose the consequence to follow.

3) Do what is right in the sight of God. Do not be concerned about other people's opinions.

Yes, that means you are not going to be popular. Yes, that means you are going to be ridiculed. Yes, that means you are going to be called weird. But God smiles at you, if you do all that in love.