

I Find No Fault
May 7, 2023
Allen Power

John 18:28-40

Who loves a good courtroom drama on TV or in a movie? What makes them interesting to you? What is the big question that keeps us guessing?

The suspense in any good courtroom drama comes down to the question: “guilty or not guilty?” Will the accused go free or suffer the penalty? Our text in John 18 is a historic courtroom drama. Not the trial of the century but a trial for the ages.

The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead but they had no idea they were simply players in a drama orchestrated by God the Father. Their evil plot intersected with God’s perfect plan for our salvation as they brought Jesus before a pagan politician.

Guilty or not guilty? Even a pagan gentile could see what the religious establishment refused to admit: Jesus was guiltless --- there was no fault in Him. Though not guilty, Jesus volunteered to become sin so mankind could be saved.

- It was sunrise on the day of Christ’s crucifixion. After a night of abusing Jesus, His accusers dragged Him to the front door of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate seeking a government-sanctioned crucifixion.
- Pilate was irritated and skeptical about their scheme.
- He pushed back, “*What is your charge against this man?*”
- “*We wouldn’t have handed him over to you if he weren’t a criminal!*”
- “*Then take him away and judge him by your own law,*”
- Verse 31: Why was it necessary to bring Jesus before the Roman governor for sentencing? Verse 32: Why must it be crucifixion?
- Biblical prophecy required, that the execution couldn’t be stoning because no bones could be broken (Ex. 12:46.) There had to be piercing (Zech. 12:10). For our spiritual healing He had to be lifted up like the healing symbol of the serpent in Exodus (John 3:14). He had to hang on a tree (Deut. 21:23.) It had to be crucifixion and only the Romans could do it.
- One commentator writes, “*...the Jewish leaders were eliminating one enemy (Jesus) and framing another for the death (the Roman empire.)*”ⁱ
- Pilate wasn’t buying their scheme but he had to interrogate the accused.

33 Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. “Are you the king of the Jews?” he asked him. **34** Jesus replied, “Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?” **35** “Am I a Jew?” Pilate retorted. “Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?” **36** Jesus answered, “My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being

handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.” **37** Pilate said, “So you are a king?” Jesus responded, “You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.” **38** “What is truth?” Pilate asked.

- Pilate’s question wasn’t a sincere desire to learn truth just a rhetorical question revealing his cynical belief that there was no such thing as truth.
- Truth itself was standing right in front of him, but Pilate didn’t get it.
- Even a pagan like Pilate could see there was no evidence of wrongdoing.
- This put Pilate in a tough spot. He didn’t need an uprising that would damage his political career. He started looking for a loophole.

...After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him. **39** But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” **40** They cried out again, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a robber.

- We know how the story ended. Pilate would try to pawn the problem off to Herod the ruler of Galilee. The bizarre Herod wouldn’t take the bait.
- Jesus was sent back to Pilate and the Jews played their trump card. *“This man claims to be king but there is no king but Caesar. If you don’t execute him you are no friend of Caesar!”*
- Pilate’s wife had a bad dream and warned him to have no part in this but the threat of political trouble pushed him over the edge. **John 19:16 (ESV)** — says, *“...he delivered him over to them to be crucified.”*
- Beyond the historical account of this event, what can this text teach us about God’s plan to sacrifice His perfect Son to pay the price for our sin?
- Pilate asked Jesus, *“Are you really a king?”* When someone hears the gospel they may also ask, *“Is Jesus Who He claims to be?”*
- Jesus said, *“My Kingdom is not an earthly Kingdom.”* Jesus made it plain that He is the Son of God and King of Kings.
- Question: When Jesus was on earth many people witnessed His miracles and believed in Him. Why weren’t the religious leaders persuaded?
- Salvation and eternal life require confessing Jesus as Lord and King.
- Why do some hesitate confessing Jesus as Lord of their life?
- Pilate proclaimed Jesus as “king of the Jews” to irritate the religious leaders. There is no indication that he personally accepted Christ as King.
- The Roman governor refused to acknowledge what the Roman centurion at the foot of cross declared: *“Truly this man was the Son of God!”*ⁱⁱ
- Pilate also asked, *“What is truth?”*
- Jesus responded in verse 37: *“You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”*ⁱⁱⁱ
- **John 8:47 (ESV)** — Jesus said, *Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.”*

- In **John 10:27 (ESV)** — He said, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”
- Why do many people resist accepting the truth of scripture?
- To paraphrase Jack Nicholson, they “can’t handle the truth!”
- Salvation and eternal life require accepting Jesus as the Truth and believing the truth of His word.
- The final question we should toil with comes from Matthew’s account of Jesus’ trial before Pilate.
- Pilate tried his best to avoid dealing with Jesus, but he couldn’t.
- In Matthew 22:27, Pilate said to the mob: “...*what shall I do with Jesus?*”^{iv}
- That is a question every human being must confront.
- When the Holy Spirit convicts an unsaved person of their need for a Savior, they must decide what to do with Jesus.
- The only answer that leads to eternal life are the words of **Romans 10:9 (ESV)** — **9** ...if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
- “*What shall I do with Jesus?*” Say, with Thomas, “*My Lord and my God!*”^v
- Even if we have trusted Christ as Savior and Lord, every day we face the question: “*What shall I do with Jesus?*” Let’s ponder that.
 - Is Jesus just my “Sunday friend” or my daily source?
 - If, I say I believe in the truth of His word, do I read it and obey it?
 - Do I live daily to please Him and point others to Him, or like Pilate, do I focus on myself and advancement in the world’s system?
 - Am I proud to profess Jesus as Lord, or like Pilate, am I swayed by what the crowd thinks instead?
- Every morning we should ask the question: “*What shall I do with Jesus?*”

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- Guilty or not guilty? Who was really the guilty party that day?
- Even a pagan politician like Pilate could find no fault in Jesus, yet because of the pressure of the mob he released a robber named Barabbas and crucified Christ.
- Guilty Barabbas went free and the sinless Son of God went to the cross.
- That’s a picture of what we call the substitutionary atonement of Jesus dying on the cross to pay the price for all the sins of mankind.
- Who is the guilty party? It’s you and me.
- As the old song says:

*“I should have been crucified,
I should have suffered and died,
I should have hung on the cross in disgrace
But Jesus, God’s Son, took my place.”*^{vi}
- When we really look at the sinless Son of God, we can’t avoid Pilate’s question: “*What shall I do with Jesus?*”

ⁱ Life Application Bible Commentary – John – The Livingstone Corp. 1993

ⁱⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mk 15:39). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱⁱ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 18:37). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{iv} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Mt 27:22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^v [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 20:28). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vi} Source: LyricFind Songwriters: Gordon Jensen - I Should Have Been Crucified lyrics © Capitol Christian Music Group, Capitol CMG Publishing