



JESUS' DEITY REVEALED • JESUS' TRIALS • JOHN 18-19 •

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## MAIN POINT

Jesus faced injustice and persecution on His path to the cross, modeling the proper response to such experiences for His disciples.

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## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Have you ever been summoned to court for a moving violation or other similar misdemeanor? Were you innocent or guilty? Were you given the opportunity to defend your case? What was the end result of your hearing?**

**What lessons did you learn from your experience? How did it impact the way you lived in the days, weeks, and months that followed?**

Hearings or trials before governing authorities for even the most minor offenses can still be nerve-racking, if not life-altering. The experience of being held accountable for our actions by those who have power over us serves as a test of our character. Similarly, Jesus' character and commitment to the will of God was tested through His intense trials before the high priest and Pilate. Through injustice and persecution, Jesus remained humble and steadfast in His obedience to the will of the Father.

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## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:19-24.

**What specific questions might Annas have had for Jesus regarding His teachings? His disciples?**

**Why do you think Jesus responded the way that He did? What did His answer accomplish? What does Jesus' response reveal about His understanding of Annas's authority over Him?**

The issue of primary concern for Annas is the content of Jesus' teaching. Jesus' response to the high priest's questioning is not really to answer the high priest's question. Rather, He reminds the high priest that he had plenty of opportunity to gather the information he wanted because Jesus was a very public figure and spoke openly. Indeed, Jesus had taught in both synagogue and the Temple itself, the special domain of the high priests. When this statement of Jesus is read in the context of Annas's definitive show of authority, it comes across clearly as a verbal challenge to the high priest by Jesus. There is here no sense that Jesus is threatened by this human authority figure.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:28-32.

**Do you recognize anything ironic in verse 28? Identify and explain.**

## **What specific charges did the Jews levy against Jesus before Pilate? Was Pilate eager to get involved? Why or why not?**

John provides an ironic contrast between the Jews who were seeking Jesus' death and their unwillingness to enter the praetorium for fear of defiling themselves lest they would not be able to eat the Passover. In desiring to participate in the Passover feast, they were handing over the true Passover Lamb.

**|** HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 18:33-40.

The direct examination of Jesus by the Roman governor focuses attention on one of the major themes of Jesus' trial and crucifixion in John: the fact that Jesus is the King of the Jews. John's rendition of Jesus' final hours brings together the two ideas of this King of Jews eventually dying as the Lamb of God.

## **Did Jesus answer Pilate's question? Explain your answer.**

## **What does it mean that Jesus' kingdom is not from this world? What implications does this have for the nature and impact of His kingdom on this world?**

The fundamental attribute of Jesus' kingdom is that it is not derived from or out of this world. Although this kingdom does not have its source in the world, it is nonetheless active in the world. Since it is related to God, it draws its power from a source external to the world.

## **What are the implications in our world of Jesus' words, "Everyone on the side of truth listens to me"?**

## **How do you answer Pilate's question, "What is truth?"**

For politically motivated people, truth is frequently sacrificed on the altar of expediency. Many politically oriented people pretend they are interested in truth. But Pilate summarizes his politically oriented life pattern with the haunting question: "What is truth?" The implications of that question are exceedingly far reaching for any person. Pilate found

Jesus innocent. Instead of simply dismissing the case as a good judge interested in integrity should have done following his verdict of innocence, Pilate devised a scheme using Barabbas to deal with any potential fallout he thought might occur as a result. Pilate's scheme involved giving the people a predetermined choice he thought they could not refuse. He was clearly wrong.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 19:1-16.

**Why would the Father allow Jesus to go through so much humiliation and pain even before the cross, as described in verses 1-5?**

**What new charge did the Jews levy against Jesus at this point? What effect did this have on Pilate?**

**What crime did Pilate eventually convict Jesus of?**

Though Pilate found no guilt in Jesus, the Jews would not have such a verdict. Therefore, they revealed their true concern regarding Jesus: They refused to accept the fact that Jesus claimed to have a direct relationship with God, and therefore they interpreted his statements as though he "made" himself the Son of God. This was an idea that deeply disturbed Pilate, and led him to further review the case. The verdict of Pilate was obviously "treason," namely here the treasonous rising of an opposition king to Caesar. Moreover, the sentence must have been death by crucifixion.

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## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Jesus' trial ends with Pilate granting the religious leaders' request to sentence Jesus and let Him be crucified. With that verdict, Jesus in His innocence was delivered over to death, as God had planned.

**How did Jesus accomplish this ministry of reconciliation? What impact does this have on our relationship with God? with others?**

**How does the example Jesus set in His trial change the way you will live this week?**

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## PRAY

Praise God for His reconciling work through Christ that brought you to Him at the right time when you were hostile and helpless. Pray that the people in your group would understand their need for a Savior and trust fully in Christ because of the price He paid for them.

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## COMMENTARY

JOHN 18:19-40

18:19-21. Jesus was taken to Annas, the godfather and power behind the high priestly throne. His residence was close to the wall on the south side of Jerusalem. He had served as high priest from a.d. 6 to 15, and then in predominant nepotism watched four sons and a son-in-law (Caiaphas) hold the office. John remembered one good point about Caiaphas: he predicted the substitutionary atonement of Jesus (11:49–50). Although John does not mention blasphemy in this paragraph, Annas tried to establish subversion and revolution on the part of Jesus. But Jesus emphasized the openness of his ministry.

18:22-24. Jewish law prohibited self-incrimination (a precursor to the Fifth Amendment). If Annas wanted to find out what Jesus had been teaching, hundreds of people could verify his message. For his defense, Jesus received a blow on the face. Whether this was

ordered by Annas or not we do not know. The Lord called for the appropriate application of Jewish law (calling defense witnesses first), and asked the second question, Why do you strike me?

18:28-32. By now it was approximately 7:00 or 8:00 in the morning. Pilate had no intention of meddling in Jewish religious affairs, though we should hardly consider him a gentle fellow. On five occasions Pilate slaughtered Jews, earning such a violent reputation in Jerusalem that the emperor Tiberias finally yanked him back to Rome. All the events in this passage happened early Friday morning, with the beginning of the Passover less than twelve hours away. But Pilate could not get a Roman handle on the charges. It must have been a confusing situation. And this dialogue regarding who should carry out the execution seems like political buck-passing between the Romans and the Jews until we read John's comment in verse 32. Had the Jews taken him, he would have been stoned. But repeatedly he had talked about being lifted up to die—an exclusively Roman execution.

18:33-37. The incredulous Pilate could not imagine this broken and beaten man before him was the king of the Jews. But Jesus would not give him the satisfaction of claiming or disclaiming such an office. All this turned Pilate's disdain for the Jews up another notch in verse 35. He characterized this entire trial as petty religious bickering among these Jews whom he was authorized to control. Verses 36–37 offer poignant truth from the lips of the Lord. All earthly kingdoms find their source with sinful humanity, but Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. It needs no human defense. Jesus was not referring to the ultimate millennial kingdom; his spiritual kingdom of truth represents the lordship of the King over the lives of his people. Who forms this kingdom? Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice, said Jesus. Once again Jesus set truth as the dividing standard for right and wrong. But if truth was all he cared about, he posed no threat to Rome. Pilate would have to weasel out of this situation in some other way.

18:38-40. In effect, Pilate declared Jesus innocent. Nevertheless, to appease the Jews, he let them select a prisoner of choice for release at the Passover. In this chapter we see intelligent and religious people warped by hate. We also see a fascinating play on the name Bar-Abbas, which means "son of the father." One son of a father was released, and the other, Son of the Father, went to death row.

## JOHN 19:1-16

19:1 After the Jewish phase of the trial and Jesus' interrogation by Pilate, the sentencing stage of His trial began. The flogging weakened Jesus so much that He could not carry His crossbeam very far.

19:2 The crown of thorns represented a mock crown ridiculing Jesus' messiahship. The thorns would sink into His skull, bloodying and distorting His face. The purple robe (cp. Mt 27:28; Mk 15:17) represented a mock royal robe. Purple was the imperial color.

19:3 Hail, King of the Jews mimicked the "Ave Caesar" ("Hail, Caesar!") extended to the Roman emperor. Roman soldiers customarily played "mock king" games during the Saturnalia festival.

19:5 Here is the man (Lat ecce homo) conveys a sense of, "Look at the poor fellow!" In His mock regal clothes, Jesus made a heartrending sight. In the context of John's Gospel, the statement may also highlight Jesus' humanity and invoke messianic passages such as Zech 6:12.

19:6 Pilate used sarcasm, being fully aware that the Jews did not have the authority to impose the death penalty.

19:7 The Jews' comment may refer to Lv 24:16: "Whoever blasphemes the name of Yahweh is to be put to death."

19:8 Pilate was more afraid than ever. Earlier that morning his wife's dream had disturbed him (Mt 27:19).

19:9 Jesus' origin was frequently an issue with His opponents (7:27-28; 8:14; 9:29-30). For John, there were clear spiritual overtones to Pilate's question, Where are You from? (cp. 18:36-37). Jesus' silence before Pilate is reminiscent of Isa 53:7; cp. Mk 14:61; 15:5; 1Pe 2:22-23).

19:10-11 In typical Jewish fashion, Jesus used from above to refer to God.

19:12 Unconvinced of Jesus' guilt, Pilate sentenced Him to die only after intense Jewish pressure (vv. 13-16). Caesar, originally the surname of Gaius Julius Caesar (d. 44 b.c.),

became the title of subsequent Roman emperors (cp. v. 15; Mt 22:17,21). Caesar's friend was a semiformal status indicating a person favored by the emperor. Pilate feared losing this status.

19:13 The judge's bench served as the platform for the judge's formal verdict (Ac 25:6,17). The kind of Stone Pavement mentioned here has been excavated on the lower level of the Fortress of Antonia, one of the two possible sites for the governor's residence.

19:14 The preparation day for the Passover may refer to the day before the Sabbath of Passover week (Mt 27:62; Mk 15:42; Lk 23:54; see note at Jn 18:28). If so, all four Gospels concur that Jesus' Last Supper was a Passover meal eaten on Thursday evening (which, by Jewish reckoning, was the beginning of Friday).

19:15 By professing to acknowledge Caesar alone as their king, the Jewish leaders betrayed their national heritage and denied their own messianic expectations based on the promises of Scripture.

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## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

John 18:15-18, 25-27; John 21:15-19