



## World Christian Fellowship

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### John 19:8-16

### Who is your friend?

**John 19:8-16**, *Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,<sup>9</sup> and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.<sup>10</sup> Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"<sup>11</sup> Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."<sup>12</sup> From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."<sup>13</sup> When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.<sup>14</sup> Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"<sup>15</sup> But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"<sup>16</sup> Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.*

## **Historical background:**

There were two trials:

1. Before the Jewish religious authorities
2. Before the Roman civil authorities.

Both trials had three phases, and both were filled with illegalities.

### **1. Before the Jewish Religious authorities**

#### **a) Annas**

The Jewish trial began with an initial arraignment before Annas, who tried unsuccessfully to get Jesus to incriminate Himself.

#### **b) Caiaphas**

He then sent Jesus to Caiaphas, who illegally in the middle of the night brought false witnesses who contradicted one another (**Matthew 26:57-68**).

In desperation, Caiaphas intervened and got Jesus to state openly that He was the Christ, the Son of God, resulting in the Jewish leaders declaring Him guilty of blasphemy (Matthew 26:63-66).

#### **c) Sanhedrin**

Then in the early morning, Jesus stood before the full Sanhedrin, which formally condemned Him to death (Matthew 27:1-2). (John 18:24 is John's only reference to the second and third Jewish phase of the trial.)

Since the Jews did not have the right of capital punishment, they had to get the Roman authorities to convict Jesus on charges of insurrection.

## **2. Before Roman Civil authorities**

### **a) Pilate**

Jewish religious leaders sent Him to Pilate (John 18:28-38a).

### **b) Herod**

When Pilate heard that Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Him to Herod, the Tetrarch over Galilee, who was in Jerusalem at the time (Luke 23:6-12).

### **c) Pilate**

Jesus remained silent before Herod, who sent Him back to Pilate for the final verdict (John 18:38b-19:16).

The Bible is not about you and me.

The Bible is about Jesus Christ.

He is the theme of Scripture.

He even said that the Law and the prophets and the holy writings were about Him. He said to the Jews, "Search the Scriptures, you will find Me there."

This is a biography of God, God revealing Himself in the Old Testament and fully revealing Himself in the New Testament in human form in the person of Christ.

Jesus came into the city and they hailed Him as the King of the Jews.

They cried out "Hosanna" to Him, gave Him praise, declared Him to be the Messiah and their King, the promised Son of David.

Jesus turned His focus against the religious leaders of Israel and against their religion and against their destruction, as it were, of the temple of His Father, everything began to turn against Him.

### **Pilate a coward:**

Jews refused to come into Praetorium he was forced to go out.  
**John 18:28-29.**

Pilate offered them to go and do the judgement according the Jewish law, but they would not listen to him. Three times!

## **Proposal:1**

Putting Jesus and Barabbas, robber so Pilate thought they will choose Jesus but failed.

## **Proposal:2**

Pilate made soldiers to flock Jesus and punished Him so badly. Presented Jesus as a helpless blood shedding and badly wounded so that they he can let Him go but the Jews wanted Jesus to be crucified.

*V 8, Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid,*

### **What statement?**

Jesus made Himself out to be the Son of God.

More afraid than of Caesar?

More afraid than of the Jews?

More afraid than of his wife?

More afraid than of his guilty conscience?

*'Phobe'* is the Greek word translated as "afraid", from which we get "phobic" or "phobia."

It means "terrified, to terrify."

It sometimes is translated "to put to flight, to cause somebody to flee in sheer panic."

Why does he panic over this statement about Jesus being the Son of God?

Because every Roman believed in a panoply of gods.

Greek gods, Roman gods dominated the Mediterranean world, and they all knew all the stories of the gods who came down into the life of men.

They all knew that the gods had offspring and that the offspring of the gods came down as men in human form.

Pagan mythology as the background. Pilate is realizing that this man who is very hard for me to define.

He is from Galilee.

He is not a military king.

He is a miracle worker.

He is called the Son of God. Maybe He is one of the gods or a child of the gods who's come down to earth to confront me.

**Acts 14:11-13**, *Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"<sup>12</sup> And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.<sup>13</sup> Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.*

It is all mythology, but they believed it as if it were true as gods had come down in the past. There are many stories in Roman mythology about the gods coming down. Some of them are on the background of other parts of the book of Acts as well.

When Paul was bitten by the snake when he landed on Malta, he shook the snake off.

**Acts 28:6**, *However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.*

Pilate is thinking that this could be worse than just the Jews, worse than just Caesar. The gods may have come down and come after me.

Pilate is panicking.

Add to that, the warning from his wife came because his wife had a weird dream.

**Matthew 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."*

**What did it all mean?**

He was a superstitious man who believed in the gods of his own heritage.

**V 9**, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.

Jesus gave him no answer.

### **Two things:**

There were about 6000 people minimum crucified by the Romans in a year around that time.

Pilate would have seen certainly many of them crying for mercy and pardon, but Jesus didn't.

Here Jesus did not answer.

Jesus pulled the switch, the light's out!

Pilate has past the point of no return.

Pilate had heard Jesus say, “I am a king, I have a spiritual kingdom.” It didn't register.

### **Why was He silent?**

When Jesus has nothing more to say to someone, that's a fulfillment of **Genesis 6:3**, “*My Spirit will not always strive with man.*”

God drowned the entire world. Grace has its limits.

Jesus knew Pilate's heart!

Pilate was like Pharaoh.

Pharaoh hardened his heart to a point that God hardened His heart.

Pilate hardened his heart to a point that God hardened His heart, gave him no answer.

In that moment Pilate passed into eternal night. It was still morning in Jerusalem, but it was eternal night in his soul. It was hell. Jesus said nothing to him.

**V 10**, *Then Pilate said to Him, "Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?"*

The truth of the matter is he didn't have that authority and he knew it.

Not because he knew God had that authority alone, but because he couldn't get past the Jews.

They were the ones that were going to decide whether Jesus lived or died, not him. It really wasn't his decision to make, it was taken out of his hands completely.

**V 11**, *Jesus answered, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin."*

Pilate was being blackmailed by the Jews and terrified by this man that might be a god in his presence.

Pilate doesn't know about the true God.

Pagan mythology something's going on here that is terrifying. All pagan gods terrified people. There were no gods of grace.

In the Roman pantheon or in the Greek pantheon, there are no gods of grace, mercy, and they are all vengeful.

Pilate wasn't off the hook!

This was sin to reject Christ for anybody. But someone had the greater sin.

It's not Judas. Judas did not deliver Jesus to Pilate, Annas, former high priest, Caiaphas, the high priest did and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court. They had the greater guilt.

**Does Pilate have guilt?**

Yes.

**Do the Roman executioners have guilt?**

Yes.

But the greater guilt is to the leaders of Israel.

There is guilt and there is greater guilt.

Eternally there is punishment, and greater punishment.

Not all crimes are the same.

Pilate is guilty, but his guilt doesn't ascend to the level of those who handed Him over to Pilate.

Jesus is talking strange language. He is from above; the authority is from above. He is the Son of God. He has a kingdom that's not of this world. Pilate is terrified.

**V 12**, *From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."*

We don't know what those efforts were made.

It's too late.

The Jews have him by the throat. All the efforts went to nothing.

The Jews said the crime was that He is saying that HE the Son of God. That had no bearing on Pilate.

But they twist it to say that, "This is a man who claims to be a king. He is a rival to Caesar. He threatens Caesar."

Just manipulation. "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar."

What Pilate was thinking?

If I let this Man go, there is going to be a riot. That riot is going to be so big they are going to send word back to Caesar. My career is finished.

An act of pagan self-protection, he is going to have to give in.

**V 13**, *When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha.*

Pilate brings out Jesus to the raised pavement.

**V 14**, *Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"*

The day of preparation for the Passover.

Passover doesn't start until night at sundown.

So, it's the day of preparation for the Passover for the Judean Jews.

The Galilean Jews had it the night before.

It's about the sixth hour. It's still around 6:00 in the morning.

All this has happened. All this has been crammed and jammed into a brief time in the early morning.

Before Pilate can say anything about a verdict, he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"

Earlier Pilate he said, "Behold, the Man!"

Now he says, "Behold, your King!"

“This is your King.” Mockery, scorn, ridicule, sarcasm.

**V 15,** *But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”*

Pilate renders no verdict!

The people do that.

Now you know who is in charge.

He has set up his tribunal, set up the platform, the judgment seat. But they pronounce the verdict.

“They cried out, ‘Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!’

Pilate now full of scorn, sarcasm, said to them, ‘Shall I crucify your King?’

The chief priests answered in a shocking statement, ‘We have no king but Caesar.’”

### **What amazing blasphemy?**

That was the true blasphemy.

When Jesus said He was the Son of God, that was true.

When they said, “We have no king but Caesar,” that was a lie.

They would be blasphemers to kill the Son of God. They knew who their king was.

**Isaiah 33:22**, *“For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king.”*

They knew that.

That’s repeated many places in the Old Testament.

**Psalms 47:7**,

**Psalms 22:28**,

**Psalms 98:6**,

The guilt is massive. Pilate doesn’t pronounce the sentence.

They do, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!”

They said, “We have no king but Caesar.”

What blasphemers.

They also said, “Let His blood be on us and on our children. We will take full responsibility.”

**V 16**, *Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.*

That was the end for Pilate!

Pilate came on the scene in the most dramatic fashion and he goes off the scene, as next to Judas, the greatest tragedy in the New Testament.

## **1. Friendship with Caesar results in compromising your integrity**

Pilate had sent soldiers into the temple area with shields bearing images of Caesar. The Jews saw this as blasphemy and staged a major protest. Pilate threatened to slaughter them, but they didn't back down. Politically, he couldn't murder that many Jews so early in his term as governor, so he had to back down.

Pilate built an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem, which was good. But he used temple funds to pay for the project. The Jews rioted and this time, Pilate did kill some of them.

So, by the time the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate for judgment, they held the advantage.

If he believed that Jesus was innocent, he should have let Him go. But he was afraid of the Jews. If they sent another bad report to Caesar, Pilate's career as governor and perhaps his life would be over.

So, to save his career and his neck, he compromised his integrity.

How about you?

Do you compromise your integrity in the fear of Men?

## **2. Friendship with Caesar brings contempt for people who spoil your plan.**

Pilate viewed the Jews as spoiling his career goals. They had already caused him some major headaches because of their religion and their complaints to Caesar about his heavy-handed leadership.

Because of their religious self-righteousness, the Jews wouldn't even set foot in his residence, so that they wouldn't defile themselves during their religious festival (John 18:28)!

It's easy to see why Pilate felt nothing but contempt for the Jews!

If you have ever been around people who make you feel like they are "holier-than-thou" because of their religion, it doesn't exactly warm your heart toward them!

The tragedy is that God intended for the Jews to be a light to the Gentiles. Instead, all they did was make Pilate feel beneath them, so that in turn he felt contempt for them.

Pilate's focus was to please Caesar so that he could advance his career, and the Jews were hindering his career. Those who are friends with Caesar use people to further their own aims. If people get in their way, they feel contempt for them.

### **3. Friendship with Caesar puts you in bondage to fear and anxiety**

Pilate was living in fear of the threat that the Jews would report something else to Rome, so he had to be careful not to offend or anger them, even though he despised them.

Therefore, he didn't just release Jesus, even though he knew that He was innocent. He was afraid of the Jews.

Also, when the Jews tell Pilate that Jesus should die "because He made Himself out to be the Son of God," Pilate "was even more afraid" (**John 19:7-8**).

Since there is not any mention of Pilate already being afraid, some commentators translate it, "he was very much afraid." As I just explained, this was probably due to his Roman mythological beliefs, compounded by the warning from his wife not to have anything to do with "that righteous Man."

Pilate had just had Jesus scourged, even though he knew that He was innocent. That creates a guilty conscience, which always results in fear.

What if Caesar finds out what he had done?

What if Jesus really was a "god" who had come to earth?

So, when you're living to please everyone and you violate your conscience so that you can get ahead, you are always fearful.

What if you offended that person?

What if word gets back to the boss about how you lost that key client?

What did that person think about what you said?

friends of Christ, those who have put their trust in Him as Savior and Lord, don't need to fear people or God's judgment. David, who had many enemies seeking his life.

**Psalms 56:11**, *In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?*

**Psalms 118:6**, *The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*

#### **4. Friendship with Caesar results in skepticism toward truth**

As for as Pilate was concerned, he did whatever right at that moment which will advance his career.

Sure, it was unfortunate that an innocent man got scourged and crucified, but sometimes you have got to do some unpleasant things to take care of business. He just wanted to be done with this messy trial and get on with his day.

Besides, he could have rationalized, “if executing Jesus is right for the Jews, maybe it’s okay. That many Jews can’t all be wrong, can they?”

Pilate not only had relative moral standards; he also was cynical about knowing the truth about spiritual matters.

Some people found that allegiance to one of the Roman gods worked for them, whereas others found help through following another god.

When Jesus said about truth.

**John 18:37**, *“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,”*

Pilate scoffed, “What is truth?” and walked away.

## **5. Friendship with Caesar offers no hope for eternity**

Pilate decided to be the friend of Caesar and the Jews rather than the friend of this mocked, despised Galilean Jew. It was a bad choice!

In AD 36, a Samaritan man claimed that he knew where Moses hid the golden objects from the tabernacle on Mt. Gerizim. Moses had never crossed the Jordan, so no one should have believed him.

But he gained a following of armed people and tried to find the treasure. Pilate viewed it as a rebellion and sent troops to slaughter the Samaritans.

The survivors complained to Pilate's superior, who deposed him and ordered him to Rome to stand trial before Caesar. Fortunately for Pilate, Caesar died before he got there.

The historical record beyond that is unclear, but probably he was banished to Gaul where he eventually committed suicide.

**Mark 8:36**, *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?*

If Pilate had chosen Jesus over Caesar, he would have gained a faithful friend, who promises never to leave or forsake those who follow Him.

## **Question yourself?**

What ways on the job or at school have you been tempted to compromise your integrity as a Christian? How can you be prepared to resist these temptations?

Where is the balance (if there is one) between pleasing people and pleasing God?