



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Jesus' Kingdom Versus the 'Christian Nation' Myth

Bible Reading: John 18:28-40

28 Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They did not enter the headquarters themselves; otherwise they would be defiled and unable to eat the Passover.

29 So Pilate came out to them and said, "What charge do you bring against this man?"

30 They answered him, "If this man weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have handed him over to you."

31 Pilate told them, "You take him and judge him according to your law."

"It's not legal for us to put anyone to death," the Jews declared. 32 They said this so that Jesus's words might be fulfilled indicating what kind of death he was going to die.

33 Then Pilate went back into the headquarters, summoned Jesus, and said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

34 Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?"

35 "I'm not a Jew, am I?" Pilate replied. "Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

36 "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus. "If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight, so that I wouldn't be handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."

37 "You are a king then?" Pilate asked.

"You say that I'm a king," Jesus replied. "I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

38 "What is truth?" said Pilate.

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no grounds for charging him. 39 You have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So, do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?"

40 They shouted back, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary.

I. Historical Pilate & Historical Process

A. Historical Pilate

1. Under emperor Tiberius, governor/prefect of Judea (26-36 CE)

- a. His role: military leader (more like military police) maintaining order, head of the judicial system, able to sentence people to death, collect taxes.
- b. Might have appointed the high priest, Caiaphas who may have been an ally of Pilate.
- 2. How is he viewed
 - a. Philo of Alexandria (c. 20-50 CE) a Jewish philosopher described Pilate as "a man of inflexible, stubborn, and cruel disposition"
 - b. Other scholars consider him to be weak and compromising
- B. Historical Process
 - 1. Jesus is led by the Jerusalem religious elites to Pilate (18:28)
 - 2. Question from Pilate about Jesus as "King of the Jews"

II. The hypocrisy of the Jewish Leaders

- A. Not wanting to be defiled by being inside the Governors house while scheming to kill the Son of God – 18:28
- B. Not truthful about the legality of them putting Jesus to death
 - 1. Saying they have no authority to put someone to death. – 18:31
 - 2. Yet all along they have been trying to find a way to kill Jesus (5:18; 7:1,19,20,25; 8:37,40,59; 11:53)
 - 3. Later they do put Stephen to death by stoning without a proper trial. Acts 7:58
 - 4. Possibly trying to get on the good side of Pilate
- C. Using political means to achieve their goal
 - 1. Using politics to do their dirty work and to avoid the people's condemnation
 - 2. When Pilate suggests releasing Jesus, they ask for the release of Barabas – an insurrectionist
 - 3. Eventually denying their faith in God – 19:15
- D. According to Jesus' word he would be "lifted up" that is death by crucifixion – 3:14; 18:32
 - 1. Jesus would not die by stoning but by being lifted up
 - 2. According to God's sovereignty

III. Pilate's involvement

- A. Not a neutral judge /administrator
 - 1. Siding with the Jews
 - 2. Collaborating with the Jews by sending soldiers to help arrest Jesus in the garden – 18:3
- B. No charge is given against Jesus
- C. Realized eventually that Jesus was not a threat to him or to Rome
- D. Not finding anything wrong with Jesus but forced by Jews to sentence Jesus to death
 - 1. Pilate tries to find a way to secure Jesus' release – 18:39
 - 2. 'Forced' by the Jews to sanction his death
 - 3. Not caring for justice or righteousness
 - 4. Not wanting to get on the wrong side of the Jewish leaders
 - 5. Pilate was forced to make a decision about Jesus
 - 6. The writer attempts to force the reader to make a decision about Jesus

III. Jesus' kingdom is not of or from this world

- A. His kingdom is not earthly and hence not related to any earthly nation
 - 1. Jesus' kingdom is not a political or national entity.
 - 2. It transcends all geographical boundaries and nation states.
 - 3. Jesus has one kingdom. If there is a "Christian nation" it is worldwide.
 - 4. The idea of the kingdom of God being established or protected through political means is entirely foreign in the NT.
- B. Jesus was born to be a king
 - 1. His purpose: to testify or bear witness to the truth 18:37
 - a. Truth about God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, sin, salvation
 - 2. Those who are of the truth listen/respond to his voice
 - 3. Pilate doesn't get it, he is not interested in the truth
 - 4. They chose Barabas – an insurrectionist
- C. God's kingdom is outside the realm of politics
- D. Does not depend on politics or human manipulation
- E. From God not from man
- F. Having nothing to do with world of religion or politics

IV. What kingdom are we in?

A. Our citizenship is elsewhere – in the heavens -Phil. 1:27; 3:20

B. Beware of trying to change the world

1. Beware of Christian nationalism

2. Beware of trying to change the issues in society over which we have no control

3. Let's make sure that the kingdom of God has absolute control over our own life

C. We have been called to an eternal kingdom

2 Peter 1:10-11

D. Our worship (our allegiance) must be only toward God, not toward any earthly kingdom – Matt. 4:8-10

E. What will you do with Jesus? There is no neutrality.

• ***“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”***