



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Jesus VS the Empire: Pilate's Power – Play

Bible Reading: John 18:28 - 19:16a

Major Characters — (1) Jesus, the 'King of the Jews'

Major Characters — (2) Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor

A. Pilate isn't 'a Wimp'; he's Strong & Shrewd

B. Pilate is not an impartial judge; it's a 'show trial,' political theater.

1. "The trial before Pilate... is not to be confused with the transcript of a legal proceeding." — Raymond Brown
2. "Jesus' appearance before Pilate was... a political show trial... [whose] aim was the public degradation and humiliation of an enemy of the state before his foreordained execution." — Arthur M. Wright

Major Characters — (3) Jewish Leaders, the Jerusalem Elite

A. Jewish Leaders see Jesus as a threat – they want him dead! (11:48 – 50)

B. Jerusalem Elites & Pilate the Governor — A Contested Alliance between Adversaries

1. Since "Jesus is...a threat to the Jerusalem elite, he's also a threat to Pilate. [His] transfer [to Pilate] signifies elite allies working together to maintain the status quo & remove the threat posed by Jesus." — W. Carter

C. The Charge Against Jesus

1. "Only Caesar can declare someone king. This is the accusation against Jesus: he's done something only Caesar can do. Jesus would appear to Rome as a usurper." — Blake Wassell
2. "The charge against Jesus suggests that his actions were seen as disruptive and challenging of imperial authority. Jesus was clearly not regarded as harmless." — Warren Carter

Jesus' Trail: John's Literary Structure – Drama in 7 Scenes

The Trail Drama – Prelude plus Seven Acts

- A. Prelude: the 'Fox's Tail' — Pilate implicated in Jesus' Arrest (18:3, 12)
- B. Act One: 'The Jews' Hand Jesus Over to Pilate (18:28 – 32)
- C. Act Two: Pilate Meets Jesus (18:33 – 38a) – “Are you the king of the Jews?”
- D. Act Three: Pilate & 'the Jews' (18:38b – 40) – Jesus or Barabbas?
- E. Act Four: Pilate has Jesus Whipped/Flogged (19:1 – 3) – “Hail, king of the Jews!”
- F. Act Five: Pilate & 'the Jews' (19:4 – 7) – “Behold the Man!”
- G. Act Six: Pilate & Jesus (19: 8 – 12) – “You...have no authority over me” — Jesus
- H. Act Seven: Pilate Pronounces Sentence (19:13 – 16a) – “We have no king but Caesar!” — ‘the Jews’
- I. Postscript: Pilate's Final Action (19:19 – 20) – ‘JESUS...THE KING OF THE JEWS’

“Who's Your King? Is it Jesus? Or is it some 'Caesar'? (mutually exclusive options)

- A. Pilate's Allegiance to Caesar Tiberius as his King
- B. Future Reversal – Jesus will Judge Pilate (Phil. 2:10 – 11)
- C. Pilate as a Pattern