



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

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

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

a. 'King of Israel' vs 'King of the Jews'

- 'King of Israel': "Nathaniel [a 'true Israelite' (1:47)] describes Jesus as 'King of Israel' in Jn. 1:49...The term 'King of Israel' expresses a messianic expectation. The depiction of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem [as 'King of Israel' (12:13)] in Jn. 12:12-15 shows the same expectation applied to Jesus both symbolically... and in terms of belief." [Tom Thatcher (ed.) *New Currents Through John*, pp. 91-92]
- 'King of the Jews': "The title 'King of the Jews' is only used in the NT by Gentiles, namely the Magi, Pontius Pilate, & the Roman soldiers. In contrast the Jewish leaders use the designation 'Messiah'." [Wikipedia]
- "The theme of Jesus' kingship pervades not only the whole passion account. Jesus is earlier hailed as 'King of Israel' by Nathaniel (1:49) ... & by the crowd upon entering Jerusalem (12:13) ... In contrast to these Jewish [characters], it's only natural...[for] Gentiles like Pilate to be using ['Jews'] where Jews employ the honorific title, ['Israel']." [Lars Kierspel, *Jews & the World in the 4th Gospel*, p. 70]

b. B. Jesus: "King of the Jews" — a dominant theme

- "During the Passion narrative, John repeatedly hammers home the point that Jesus is the king of Israel [or 'of the Jews']." —Matthew Levering
- "John has...picked out the key of the passion narrative in the kingship of Jesus, &... made its meaning clearer...that any other NT writer." —CK. Barrett
- Jesus' "trial with Pilate makes allusions to another kingdom [Jesus' 'my kingdom'] which... comes into special prominence during the Roman trial. When Pilate asks, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he... questions... the possibilities of a new kingdom... apart from the Roman imperial one & if Jesus is its king. Under the... [Empire] Rome is the sole power & Caesar is its ultimate leader. The question marks the beginning of the dominance of Jesus' kingship discourse in the trial & crucifixion. It's repeated over & over again... Jesus as 'king of the Jews' will be repeated 6 times." [M. Kgalemang, *Postcolonial Perspectives*, pp. 456-7]
- "Jesus is crucified as 'King of the Jews,' a title that was first employed by Pilate in his interrogation of Jesus (18:33) and in dialogue with the Jews (18:39). The Roman soldiers then used it mockingly (19:3) and the Jewish chief priests rejected it as a valid title (19:21). Nevertheless, Pilate has it written against their will as an inscription on the cross (19:19)." [Lars Kierspel, *Jews & the World in the 4th Gospel*, p. 69] B #59 Jesus vs the Empire Pilates Power-Play.pdf

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- e. "The inscription, mentioned already in Mark ('King of the Jews' Mk. 15:26) is obviously authentic, since Jesus' followers had no reason to invent it... [Here] Pilate unconsciously expresses the truth which he himself had queried (18:38): The inscription in 3 languages – Hebrew, Latin, & Greek – proclaims Jesus' messianic identity to the whole world. Hebrew is the language of the Scriptures, Latin of the Roman Empire, & Greek the lingua franca of the Mediterranean civilization. Jesus on the cross is paradoxically demonstrated as 'Savior of the world' (Jn. 4:24)." [James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Research...John*, p.]
- c. Pilate's sarcastic use of 'the King of the Jews'
- a. "When the governor... correctly verbalize[s] Jesus' identity, it's always unwittingly. Pilate sarcastically calls Jesus the 'king of the Jews,' but fails to realize that his statement is ironically true." –Arthur M. Wright
- b. "The irony of the narrative [19:3] is that it inverts [the soldiers'] own irony: [Jesus] is genuinely the person they sarcastically claim him to be [i.e., the King of the Jews]." –Craig Keener
- c. Pilate asks: "shoul d I release to you the king of the Jews?" (18:39) "On [Pilate's] part there's a definite tinge of sarcasm & contempt; he presented it as if he agreed with the title & thought that Jesus was an apt King... [Yet, for] John & his readers ... Jesus was indeed the 'King of the Jews'." [Philip Comfort, *John*, p. 266]
- d. John's use of Irony
- a. Irony: "The opponents of Jesus... mak[e] statements about him that are derogatory, sarcastic, incredulous, or, at least, inadequate in the sense...intend[ed]. However, by way of irony these statements are often true or more meaningful in a sense they don't realize. The evangelist ...[expects] his believing readers will see the deeper truth." [Raymond Brown, *John*, Vol. 1, p. 136]
- b. "The trial before Pilate spins this irony (that Jesus is the king of the Jews) into a fine & intricate tapestry." [R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the 4th Gospel*, p. 172]
- c. "John... [is] fo n d... of irony wherein protagonists often speak the truth total ly unbeknown to themselves. In this perspective, here [Jn. 19:19] is a sign that non – Judaic peoples will ultimately confess the kingship of Jesus." [Timothy H. Sherwood, *Preaching of... Fulton J. Sheen*, p. 83]
- ## 2. Major Characters – (2) Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor
- a. The Drama's Central Character
- a. "Pilate is the key figure. The narrative follows his movements. He initiates conversations with 'the Jews' & with Jesus. Even [Jesus'] whipping...[is] ascribing...to Pilate [19:1]." [Warren Carter, *Pontius Pilate*, p. 138]
- b. "When... Pontius Pilate appears on the scene... his presence dominates the action... Jesus had been the primary focal point... I n 18:28 the narrative... begins to track Pilate's movement instead." –Arthur Wright
- b. Pilate—Extra – Biblical Jewish Accounts (Philo, Josephus)
- a. "What comes over most clearly from these [Jewish] stories is ... Pilate's expectation that he should be boss of his own province [Judea] and his determination to keep the peace, wherever the cost . The fact that he lasted a decade in [Judea]... is a testament to his efficiency." [Helen K. Bond, *Historical Jesus*, p.]
- b. Is John vs. History? "A historical Roman person... [- Pontius Pilate -] well known for his brutality is here [in John's Gospel] turned into a sensitive, inquisitive figure of ... indecision ..." –James Leggio
- c. Pilate—The Empire's power in Judea
- a. The Face of the Roman Empire
- a. "Pilate is a daunting character; he symbolizes the power of the Roman Empire ... [He] flaunts imperial power over ... Jesus and the Jews ..." [Sung Uk Lim, *Otherness & Identity in John*, p. 124]
- b. "Pilate is the only Roman with whom Jesus interacts in the Four th Gospel apart for the [arresting] Roman soldie r s ... The face of Rome... is the...face of the Prefect of Judea, Pontius Pilate ." –Arthur M. Wright
- b. Pilate's Enormous Power
- a. " The enormous power of the governor Pilate as the representative of the emperor ... Roman governors in Judea had the power to exercise capital punishment; hence, the Jerusalem elite brings Jesus for execution. This life – & – death power... serv[es] a governor's task to maintain the imperial status quo against any threats... The reality of such immense [governor's] power is foundational for understanding the Gospel scenes." [Warren Carter, " Jesus & Pilate ," in P. Anderson (ed.) *John, Jesus, & History*, V. 3 , p. 66] B #59 Jesus vs the Empire Pilates Power-Play.pdf 3
- c. Pilate's brutal Rule (Luke 13:1)
- a. "Some people came & reported to [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices ." (Luke 13:1) Pilate apparently put [these] people to death when they were...offer[ing] sacrifice.
- d. Pilate isn't 'a Wimp;' he's Strong & Shrewd
- a. Pilate—Weak or Strong?
- a. "Pilate has often been perceived as an ineffectual or even kindly governor who tries unsuccessfully to get Jesus released... But the reality was very different ." –Reta H. Finger

- b. “Extra – biblical sources suggest that Pilate was not a nice man. But here, in the encounter with Jesus, he appears to be sympathetic. He also appears to be a man who wants to discover the truth [...]” —Audrey West
- c. “John shows absolutely no sympathy at all for Pilate... His account shows with devastating clarity the true nature of Pilate as one who is opposed to all that Jesus stands for & all that is of God .” [CM. Tuckett, “Pilate in Jn. 18 – 19,” in GJ. Brooke (ed.) *Narrativity in Biblical... Texts* , p. 132]
- d. “Pontius Pilate, the anti – Semitic Roman Governor/procurator of Judea...” [Woman's Study Bible, p. 1435]
- e. To “the Jews [Jesus] is an evildoer, whereas from the perspective of Pilate, he's an innocent Jew [...]” – SU. Lim

b. Pilate's Power Play

- a. “John's Pilate is a strong, shrewd character who seizes Jesus' trial as an opportunity to assert Rome's authority ... [It becomes] a power play to assert Rome's sovereignty over the Jews.” [Gilberto Ruiz , “ Why is Pilate...Afraid?” in LR. Huber (ed.) *Narrative Mode & Theological Claim* , pp . 40 – 1]
- b. “Although... John...may appear to portray Pilate favorably in his ‘not guilty’ pronouncements... Pilate's role is that of a shrewd politician who ...plays Jesus off against the Jews .” [Willard M. Swartley, John, p.]

e. Pilate not an impartial judge; it's a ‘show trail,’ political theater

- a. “The trial before Pilate (18:28 – 19:16). That we have a trial is clear from the fact that we have accusers (‘the Jews’), an accused (Jesus) & a judge (Pilate) [...]” [M . Asiedu – Peprah , *Johannine Sabbath Conflicts* , p. 182]
- b. “The trial before Pilate... is not to be confused with the transcript of a legal proceeding . It has little to do with either Roman law or Jewish custom.” [Raymond E. Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, p.]
- c. A ‘Show Trail’ — political theater
 - a. “Jesus' appearance before Pilate was... a political show trail... [whose] aim was the public degradation and humiliation of an enemy of the state before his foreordained execution. ” –Arthur M. Wright
 - b. “Because the so – called ‘trail’ is conducted for the sake of political interests — and not to ensure a fair trial for Jesus – I prefer the designation ‘show trial’ or ... ‘Jesus' appearance before Pilate’.” –Arthur M. Wright
 - c. “The game [Pilate] plays is an attempt to fortify...his power viz – a – vis the Jerusalem elites ” – Matthew Skinner
- d. No independent, Impartial Judges
 - a. “The separation between military, governmental, administrative, judicial.... functions is largely a modern phenomenon... In the Roman Empire there's... no separate occupation of ‘judges.’ This function was exercised by the rulers... the Jewish authorities & the Roman governor negotiate...to establish ‘justice’... Justice was not their principal concern ... Pilate's concern as he questioned Jesus... [was] primarily to maintain order and protect Roman interests , rather than ascertain Jesus' guilt or innocence... Jesus' appearance before Pilate was... a political show trail... [whose] aim was the public degradation & humiliation of an enemy of the state before his foreordained execution .” [Arthur M. Wright, *Governor & the King* , pp. 66 – 8]

3. Major Characters – (3) Jewish Leaders, the Jerusalem Elite

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

- a. “If we let [Jesus] go on like this, everyone will believe in him, & the Romans will come & take away both our place & our nation.” 49 ... Caiaphas, the high priest... said “You know nothing at all! 50 [It is]... to your advantage that one man [Jesus] should die for the people rather than the whole nation perish.” (Jn 11:48-50)
- b. Scholars “ask why the Sanhedrin might have regarded Jesus as a threat. A hint... is... Jn. 11:45-53 [where] the Sanhedrin... initiates a plot against Jesus because they fear reprisals from Rome (11:48). In the decades before the Jewish War [66-70 AD] Palestine... [saw] repeated liberation movements, and Rome's repeated response was to kill both the leaders & their followers.” [JB. Green, *Dictionary of Jesus & Gospels*, p. 154]
- c. “From a political & military perspective... Jewish authorities [felt they] had little choice but to let the Romans handle the situation...[as] they always did in similar situations, through executing leaders & most...followers,& so save the [Jewish] people from destruction...John...11:50.” [Philip Esler (ed.)*Early Christian World*, p.]

b. Jesus handed over to Pilate by the Jerusalem Elites (18:28)

- a. “Notice... that the Jerusalem elite hands Jesus over to Pilate (18:28) ... [Note] the links between Pilate & the Jerusalem leaders... We [typically] think of them as ‘religious leaders.’ But that view is only partially correct... These figures have enormous socio-political power in Rome's imperial world & hold their elite positions of power in alliance with Pilate & Rome. It's crucial for us to understand that there's no separation of political & religious power in these stories...They are very political stories.” [Warren Carter, *Pilate*, p. 30]
- b. Warren Carter writes: “I judge this item (18:28) plausible in terms of imperial structures & dynamics.”

c. Jerusalem Elites & Pilate the Governor — A Contested Alliance

a. An Alliance of Adversaries

- a. Rome's “Judean authorities... relied to a large degree on alliances with the local authorities. Because they had the power to appoint [& remove] the Jewish high priests, [Rome's] Judean governors held sway over the political loyalties of the priests... The incumbent high priest, Caiaphas... remained in his position... for so long because he ... could be relied on the support Roman interests... Jewish aristocratic elites were allied with Rome and assisted in maintaining imperial order.” [Arthur M. Wright, *Governor & the King*, pp. 65, 78]

b. A Contested Alliance Preserving the Status Quo

- a. "The... imperial dynamic ... is that of the elite alliance between Rome (... the Roman governor) & the local Jerusalem leaders. Such alliances ... were a crucial strategy for imposing & negotiating Roman power ... Rome exercised its rule throughout the empire... through alliances with local elites who benefitted from maintaining the hierarchical societal structure. The Jerusalem leaders... [are] the leaders of Judea. As the local elite, they are not concerned only with 'religious' matters, but also exercise social, political, religious, & economic power in the interests of maintaining the status quo. And they do so in alliance with Rome, an alliance marked by partnership, contest, & submission. Roman control is exercised, for instance, through the appointment of chief priests... [&] the governor kept control of the high priestly garments, the symbol of the office & its power & status... Yet this subjugating & allying power was also contested as Roman representatives & local elites struggled with one another for domination or to restrict the other. Yet both Rome's representative & the local Jerusalem elite, while contesting the immense rewards of power, wealth, & status, are allied by the common desire to secure the status quo against any threat to their position & interests... This elite alliance... is assumed by & evident ... in Jesus' transfer from the Jerusalem leaders to Pilate [18:28]. If Jesus is perceived... a threat to the Jerusalem elite, he's also a threat to Pilate. The transfer signifies elite allies working together to maintain the status quo & remove the threat posed by Jesus." [Warren Carter, "Jesus & Pilate," Op. cit., pp. 66-8]

d. Pilate & Jewish elites motivated by self-interest

- a. "Pilate is... one who does not care much about the innocence or guilt of the one brought before him, but sees in Jesus an opportunity to ridicule Jewish aspirations for self-rule... John depicts the Jewish leadership in a similar light. They are concerned about their purity... yet they are willing to renounce their hopes for a king so that Pilate will... put Jesus to death... Both look after their own political interests before all else." [Gail O'Day, John, pp. 174-5]

e. Jewish leaders, Pilate, & the Cross — a "Three-headed Dog"

- a. The Jewish leaders are allies of Rome. "In [Tom] Thatcher's view, the 4th evangelist presents Roman imperial power... as a 'three-headed dog,' composed of [1.] Caiaphas & the Jewish authorities, [2.] the Roman governor Pilate, & [3.] the Roman cross." [Arthur M. Wright, *Governor & the King*, p. 15]
- b. Tom "Thatcher's use[s] the [mythical] Cerberus image (the 3-headed dog guarding the gates of Hades)... [is] an apt image... of [Roman] imperial powers: (1) the client Jewish high-priestly aristocracy, embodied by Caiaphas; (2) the Roman governor Pontius Pilate; (3) the horrendous & terrifying Roman killing machine, crucifixion. In the face of all 3 of these powers the Johannine Jesus remains sublimely and supremely in control of the entire drama." [Oscar Cole-Arnal, "Greater than Caesar," *Consensus*, V. 33, #2, Article 16]
- c. "The Jewish authorities function as a 'puppet-aristocracy that serves as the interface between [Pilate,] the Procurator & the [Jewish] masses &... attempt to maintain the imperial status quo." – Tom Thatcher

f. The Charge Against Jesus

- a. "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
- b. "The charge the Sanhedrin... against Jesus before Pilate is that he claimed to be the king of the Jews – from their perspective, a messianic pretender, & in Pilate's eyes... a rebel against Caesar." [DA Carson, Jr., p. 598]
- c. "Only Caesar can declare someone king. This is the accusation against Jesus: he has done something only Caesar can do. Jesus would appear to Rome as a usurper." [Blake Wassell, "John 18:28-19:22," pp. 13-14]

4. Jesus' Trial: John's Literary Structure – Drama in 7 Scenes

a. John's Literary Artistry

a. Not a straightforward report (court transcript)

- a. "Rather than presenting a straightforward report [like a court transcript, John provides a] 'masterpiece of ... narrative technique' [which] depicts Jesus' trial..." [GA. Ruiz, "Why is Pilate...Afraid?" Op. cit., p. 39]

b. The 'Script' of a Seven-Act Drama

- a. "There are often signs that a narrative was deliberately constructed for... performance... A fine example is... John 18:28-19:16a; Jesus' trial before Pilate." [FJ. Moloney, Sherri Brown, *Interpreting the NT*, pp.]
- b. "The trial before Pilate is the centerpiece & dramatic climax of the story of Jesus' hour. There's nothing parallel to it in scope or literary artistry in the trial narratives of the Synoptic Gospels. The trial is structured like a drama, with seven scenes demarcated by Pilate's movements in & out of his headquarters... In Jn. 18-19, the world tries to put Jesus on trial, but he is shown to be the true judge... Similarly, the trial will show that Jesus is not king according to the world's conventional expectations, but is nonetheless truly king in the events of his hour." [Gail O'Day, John, p. 174]
- c. "In the seven scenes of the trial narrative, Pilate is depicted as moving between Jesus & his Jewish accusers, trying to broker a deal. When his attempts fail, Pilate issues a death sentence & writes a title [inscription] to put on the cross." [Robert P. Vande Kappelle, *Truth Revealed: Message of...John*, p.]
- d. "Throughout the scenes 2 persons or groups are 'on stage'; there are clear entrances & exits" — B. ReichenbachJohn's Literary Artistry

b. Jesus' Trial Before Pilate – Seven Scenes Chiasmus

- a. A. Outside: Jewish Authorities Demand Jesus' Death (18:28-32)
- b. B. (Inside) Pilate Questions Jesus about his Kingship (18:35-38a)

- c. C. (Outside): Pilate Pronounces Jesus Innocent [Barabbas] (18:38b-40)
- d. D. (Inside): Roman Soldiers mock Coronation, Flog Jesus (19:1-3)
- e. C' (Outside): Pilate Again Pronounces Jesus Innocent (19:4-7)
- f. B' (Inside): Pilate Questions Jesus about his Origin (19:8-11)
- g. A' (Outside): Pilate Hands Jesus over for Execution (19:12-16)
- h. The Central Point – Jesus' Ironic Coronation
 - a. "The most significant feature, the... turning point of the structure, is Jesus' coronation. The center 'stanza' ['D'] is itself an inversion, telling us that, ironically, Jesus is crowned & arrayed in a purple robe, & while these men meant it as harm, on a deeper level Jesus is actually being acknowledged as king. The same motif appears on the cross. Pilate refuses to change the title on the cross, 'JESUS OF NAZERETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS' (19:19). Why? Because these events are (truly) linked to Jesus' coronation." [Gary Burge, Jn, p.]

5. The Trial Drama – Prelude plus Seven Acts

- a. Prelude:the 'Fox's Tail'–Pilate implicated in Jesus' Arrest(18:3, 12)
 - a. "Judas took a company of [Roman] soldiers & some officials from the chief priests & the Pharisees ...Then the company of soldiers, the [Roman] commander, & the Jewish officials arrested Jesus & tied him up." (18:3, 12)
 - b. "Both Roman soldiers & [Temple] police arrested Jesus ... Roman troops couldn't have been deployed without Pilate's command. It seems... previously...Pilate heard the Jerusalem elite's concern about Jesus as a major threat... The presence of Roman troops ... expresses Pilate's consent to remove Jesus." [Carter, Pilate, p. 140]
 - c. "The presence of Roman soldiers suggests prior collaboration between Roman & Jewish officials" – M. Skinner
 - d. "Pilate's committal of troops to Jesus' arrest establishes his awareness of Jesus' threat." – Warren Carter
 - e. Note "the evident presence of Rome in Jesus' arrest ... Unlike the...Synoptic Gospels, the speira – a cohort of Roman troops, commonly consisting of 600 soldiers, under the authority of a [Roman] triune occupy the garden [Gethsemane] in which Jesus is arrested (18:3, 12). Although Pilate is viewed as a weak character ...the prefect perfectly embodies Rome." [JY. Choi, "John's Writings & Empire," RS. Sugirtharajah (ed.) Oxford Handbook of Post-colonial Biblical Criticism, p. 167]
- b. Act One: 'The Jews' Hand Jesus Over to Pilate (18:28-32)
 - a. "They led Jesus from Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters [HQ]... Pilate came out to them & said, "What charge do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man weren't a criminal, we wouldn't have handed him over to you." Pilate told them, "You take him & judge him according to your law." "It's not legal for us to put anyone to death," the Jews declared." (18:28-31)
 - b. "What charge do you bring...?" – Pilate
 - a. "The Jerusalem elite express surprise, even offense, at having to justify [Jesus] arrest [18:30]... [Their] evasive & offended tone & impatient animosity toward Pilate...may stem from [their] previous discussions with him about Jesus [related to his arrest.] ... But Pilate doesn't like their offended & hostile tone...So he puts them in their place... Deal with Jesus [your]selves [18:31] ... He humiliates them." [Carter, Pilate, p. 140]
 - b. "Two factors [make] Jesus' death...certain at the outset. The involvement of Pilate's troops...in Jesus' arrest attests to their common commitment to remove Jesus. The elite's impatient response... assumes such an agreement ... Pilate has already signed off on it." [Warren Carter, Pilate, p. 141]
- c. Pilate's Power-Play against 'the Jews'
 - a. "It is not entirely unreasonable... given the often tens[e] relationship that existed among elite allies [the Roman governor & Jewish elites], that the governor would manipulate his local allies ['the Jews'] into a subordinate position where they have to admit their dependency on the governor to carry out the execution [of Jesus] (18:31)." [W. Carter, "Jesus & Pilate," Op. cit., p. 74]
 - b. "Pilate's instruction ('You take him and judge him according to your law.' 18:31) is often misinterpreted as Pilate's disinterest or affirmation of Jesus' innocence. It is neither. Pilate's committal of troops to Jesus' arrest (18:3, 12) establishes his awareness of Jesus' threat. Rather, Pilate's response is part of the contested negotiation of power involving the Roman governor & local allied elites. Neither can maintain position & power without the other, but neither will forego an opportunity to assert dominance, albeit temporary, over the other. Pilate forces their acknowledgment of his upper hand, humiliating them by publicly securing their dependence on him, while momentarily hiding his dependence on them... This spat among allies underscores the antithetical [conflicted] interaction of this alliance comprising Roman and Judean provincial power... against Jesus." [Warren Carter, "Jesus as Prototype & Pontius Pilate (John...)," in JB. Tucker (ed.) T&T Clark Handbook to Social Identity in the NT, p. 242]
- c. Act Two: Pilate Meets Jesus (18:33-38a) "Are you the king of the Jews?"
 - a. "Pilate went back into the headquarters [HQ], summoned Jesus, & said to him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Are you asking this on your own, or have others told you about me?" (18:33-34)
 - b. Pilate's Key Question
 - a. Pilate's question, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'... utilizes knowledge gained from previous discussions ...This is a political charge of insurrection in Rome's imperial world... Josephus mentions ... figures who, claiming to be kings, led revolts that

were harshly crushed. Pilate's question is... 'Are you the leader of a revolt?' ...While Jesus' kingship doesn't present a military threat to Rome, it's ...a very political challenge." [W. Carter, p. 141]

c. Is Jesus a threat or Not?

- a. "This conversation [18:34-7] convinced Pilate...Jesus was not a dangerous revolutionary."—Warren Wiersby
- b. "The Roman governor never believed that Jesus posed a serious political threat."—John MacArthur
- c. "Legitimate kingship required Rome's sanction.To claim kingship without Rome's sanction was considered subversive... Claiming kingship without Rome's legitimation provoked retaliation. [Rome crucified many kingly claimants] ...It would be impossible to think of many of these kingly claimants as posing any serious ornamentalist threat to Roman power, but what matters is that they challenged imperial authority & order at all.The charge against Jesus suggests that his actions (e.g. the entry to Jerusalem & incident in the Temple)were seen as disruptive & challenging of imperial authority.Jesus was clearly not regarded as harmless."[Warren Carter, "Jesus & Pilate,"Op. cit.,p. 70]

d. Jesus' Counter-Question

- a. "Jesus questions Pilate about the source of his knowledge [which] draws attention to Pilate's alliance with the Jerusalem leaders. Pilate feigns ignorance... but the [text] has already uncovered it." [Carter,Pilate,p. 142]
- b. Pilate's reply, "do I look like a Jew?..."is an insult to the Jewish people...Jesus & the Jews outside."—CD. Land
- c. "Pilate is...an efficient & powerful governor who protects the [Roman & Jewish] elite's interests in removing Jesus...The involvement of Roman troops in Jesus' arrest suggests, Pilate has already decided on Jesus' fate.He confirms quickly that Jesus does treasonously claim to be a king [18:37]." [W. Carter,Op. cit.,p. 154]

e. Pilate deaf to Jesus' voice

- a. "Pilate is given a chance to hear & respond to [Jesus'] voice.Inside,[Jesus speaks and] revelation occurs;outside Jesus speaks not a word. Inside, Jesus offers revelation: truth, his kingdom, his authority, but Pilate is deaf... The first interrogation ends with Pilate asking, 'What is truth?'[18:37], which Francis Bacon regards as [hypocritical]; 'jesting Pilate...wouldn't stay for an answer'." [James L. Resseguie,Strange Gospel,p. 74]

d. Act Three: Pilate & 'the Jews' (18:38b-40) Jesus or Barabbas?

- a. Pilate "went out to the Jews again & told them, "I find no grounds for charging him. 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?" They shouted back, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a revolutionary." (18:38b-40)
- b. "To publicly mock the Jews ...is almost certainly ...the intention behind Pilate's title ...'the king of the Jews' ... The strategy of Pilate forced the Jews to be confronted with Jesus as 'their king'." [EW. Klink, John, p. 768]
- c. "The context suggests that Pilate is not making serious suggestions. Rather, [since] the Jerusalem elite admit that they depend on him to remove Jesus (18:31), Pilate taunts them, provoking another expression of their subservience to & dependence on him... They 'beg' for Jesus' death by rejecting his release." [Carter, p. 144]

e. Act Four: Pilate has Jesus Whipped/Flogged (19:1-3)"Hail, king of the Jews!"

a. "Then Pilate flogged Jesus" (19:1 Lit.)

- a. "Then Pilate took Jesus & had him flogged. The soldiers also twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, & clothed him in a purple robe. And they kept coming up to him & saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" & were slapping his face." (19:1-3)
- b. "John reports...Pilate made a determined effort to have Jesus pardoned & goes so far as to have Jesus flogged & presented to the people in an attempt to win their sympathy. [??]" [Berard L. Marthaler, Creed,p. 149]
- c. "Pilate had Jesus flogged (19:1). Such flogging is degrading & usually preceded crucifixion. Some argue that this...is intended to placate the Jerusalem leaders...but, [they] wanted him dead!... Rather,Pilate...is preparing to put Jesus to death. Yet, while Pilate honors his agreement with the Jerusalem elite... he continues to reinforce their inferiority. Flogging demonstrates the futility of... aspirations for independence from Rome. It asserts Pilate's control over [Rome's] subjects." [Warren Carter,Pilate,p. 145]

b. Jesus' Mock Coronation

- a. Pilate's soldiers mock Jesus with a fake coronation... as king... A leader of the Jewish revolt against Rome in70CE., Simon son of Gioras, surrendered to Rome in a purple cloak& was executed in [general] Vespasian's triumph in Rome. But...in calling Jesus 'king' [they] speak more truly than they know." [W. Carter, p. 145]

c. Seeing beyond the Outward

- a. "John...encourages... [readers] to see beyond the surface mockery to the reality that Jesus truly is King of the Jews.John's major alteration ...is the placement of this scene... at the central point in the trial narrative leading to an overwhelming air of mockery... Pilate can now take Jesus outside... still dressed in royal regalia, with the words 'Here is the man'... [John's] relocation of the soldiers' mockery [is] so that Jesus' acclamation as king takes place while wearing his mock regalia [royal attire]." [Helen K. Bond,"Triumph of the King," in John's transformation of Mark, pp. 264, 266]
- b. "The crowning & homage of Jesus as king is the central scene...show[ing] Jesus' kingship with irony, when Jesus is dressed in mocking fashion as emperor by the soldiers. It's probable...readers notice that Jesus actually is the King of the Jews, despite all appearances. John reveals Jesus' kingship through the irony of the soldiers' taunting remark, 'Hail the King of the Jews,' because only this Gospel has the soldiers use the definite article in addressing Jesus as 'the king'." [Sehyun Kim,Kingship of Jesus in... John, p. 155]

f. Act Five:Pilate & 'the Jews' (19:4-7)"Behold the Man!"

- a. "Pilate went outside... & said, "I'm bringing him out... [so] you know I find no grounds for charging him."⁵ Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns & the purple robe. Pilate said, "Here is the man!"⁶... They shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!" Pilate responded, "Take him & crucify him yourselves, since I find no grounds for charging him."⁷ "We have a law," the Jews replied, "and according to that law he ought to die..." (19:4-7)
- b. "Behold the Man! ... Behold your King!" (19:5, 14)
- a. "Pilate introduces Jesus, '(Behold) Here is the man! ... In 19:14 ... Pilate says, '(Behold) Here is your king!' This significant change of words ... Pilate's mockery... employs the words used of Israel's very first king [Saul] (1Sam. 9:17) & thereby reinforces Jesus' true identity as 'King of the Jews.' ... 'Behold the man' ... anticipates Pilate's... 'Behold your king' in 19:14 as a coronation." [Sehyun Kim, Kingship of Jesus in... John, pp. 151-2]
- c. "I find no grounds..."—Pilate taunts 'the Jews'
- a. "Pilate's words (19:6b) echo his earlier statement... 'I find no case against him' (19:4). Pilate's words and actions do not proclaim Jesus' innocence, but set the scene for him to taunt further the religious authorities with their 'king.'" [Gail O'Day, John, p. 179]
- b. "Pilate's repeated comment that he finds no case against Jesus' [19:4, 6] again can hardly be serious, given his involvement in Jesus' arrest, previous humiliations of the elite and the whipping of Jesus. Rather, Pilate continues to display his power... to mock the subjugated... Jewish leaders and bully... this kingly pretender [Jesus], and to reinforce their dependence on him." [Warren Carter, Pilate, p. 146]
- c. "Pilate's taunt again forces the Jerusalem leaders... to recognize Pilate's superior power and their own dependence on him. Dutifully they shout (beg?) for Jesus' crucifixion (19:6)." [W. Carter, Pilate, p. 146]
- g. Act Six: Pilate & Jesus (19:8-12) "You... have no authority over me"—Jesus
- a. Pilate "went back into the HQ & asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave... no answer.¹⁰ So Pilate said, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you know that I've the authority to release you &... to crucify you?"¹¹ "You would have no authority over me at all," Jesus answered, "if it hadn't been given you from above..."¹² From that moment Pilate kept trying to release him. But the Jews shouted, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!" (19:9-12)
- b. "In this trial, Pilate attempts to exercise his power and authority over Jesus, but... Pilate never achieves mastery... [He] stands powerless in the face of true power, authority, and life... [which] lie in Jesus, not in Rome and its agents." [Gail O'Day, Revelation in 4th Gospel, p. 112]
- c. "From that moment Pilate kept trying to release him. But the Jews shouted..." (19:12a) "Pilate resolves to set the prisoner free, if he can. His resolution, however, lasts only 2 or 3 lines of his dialogue."—James Leggio
- d. Pilate is "a clever political schemer... He finds the claims of Jesus absurd (19:10), but he plays along in order to demand a high toll from the Jews." [JMC. Scott, Eerdmans Commentary on Bible: John, p. 1205]
- e. "Pilate responds to Jesus' words by trying... to release him (19:12). What motivates this... is not stated. But it has to be understood in relation to his previous commitment to arrest Jesus and in whipping him, to crucify him. He has no intention of releasing Jesus, but continues to taunt the Jerusalem leaders with reminders of their subservient status. Each time his taunts bring... expressions of dependency." [W. Carter, Pilate, p. 149]
- h. Act Seven: Pilate Pronounces Sentence (19:13-16a) "We have no king but Caesar!"
- a. "When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside... [&] sat down on the judge's seat ... He told the Jews, "Here is your king!"¹⁵ They shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" Pilate said, "Should I crucify your king?" "We have no king but Caesar!" the chief priests answered.¹⁶ Then he handed him over to be crucified." (19:13-16a)
- b. "Behold, your King!"
- a. "Pilate thinks himself superior to 'the Jews' simply because he's a Roman. He imagines that he will mock 'the Jews' by crowning Jesus... [He] fails to see that his authority come 'from above.'" [CD. Land, Op cit., p. 249]
- b. "Pilate's words... express mock surprise: 'Shall I crucify your king?' Pilate is... baiting them." (CH. Gablin) "Pilate maintains the focus on... Jesus as 'your king.' He again taunts the Jerusalem leaders... The elite ... distances itself from Jesus by shouting for his crucifixion (19:15). The shout rejects God's agent & embraces Rome's sovereignty. Pilate further secures their loyalty by asking again if he should crucify 'your king.' Again they reject... Jesus by choosing Rome: 'We have no king but Caesar!'" [Warren Carter, Pilate, p. 150]
- c. Pilate 'plays the Card once too often'
- a. "The [Pilate-Jewish elite] alliance continues to be contested, even while it reinforces its unifying opposition... to Jesus. Pilate's whipping [flogging] of Jesus (19:1) & his soldiers' mocking of Jesus (19:2-3) show Pilate's protestations of 'finding no crime' in him are empty. These acts increase ['the Jews'] dependence on Pilate (19:4-6). But Pilate 'plays the card once too often' in 'seeking' Jesus' release (19:12). They counter effectively: 'If you release this man, you're not Caesar's friend. Anyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar!' (19:12) The retort identifies Jesus as an imperial opponent [of Rome] & requires Pilate to display his loyalty to the emperor against Jesus." [Warren Carter, "Jesus as Prototype & Pontius Pilate (John...)," Op. cit., p. 242]
- d. "You're not a Friend of Caesar"—'the Jews'
- a. "Friend of Caesar' (19:12) was a technical term meaning 'loyal to Caesar,' and it referred to people who had distinguished themselves in imperial service. It was the guarantee of a good career. [The Jews imply that] Pilate must choose between this

new king[Jesus]and Caesar. In [his] two discourses, Jesus described the dangerous temptation to regard secular acclaim above divine approval.” [Gary M. Burge, John, p.]

e. “Behold your King!”—Pilate’s Response

a. “In response, Pilate acts as a ‘friend of the emperor,’ rather than as a friend of Jesus. He parades Jesus and taunts [‘the Jews’—‘Behold your king’], recalling their subjugation while also warning them what happens to those who resist Roman control: ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ (19:13-15). The chief priests distance themselves from Jesus... & embrace... Rome’s sovereignty: ‘We have no king but the emperor’ (19:15).” [Warren Carter, “Jesus as Prototype & Pontius Pilate (John...),” *Op. cit.*, p. 242]

f. “We have no king but Caesar!”

- a. “Pilate has gained an amazing declaration... The Jerusalem leaders repudiate... God as Israel’s king (1 Sam.8:7) ...Having drawn ... this amazing statement of loyalty to Rome & renunciation of their heritage, Pilate hands Jesus over to be crucified. (19:16). The same verb... describes the actions of Judas, the Jerusalem elite,& now Pilate... allies... [in] rejection of God’s purposes.” [Warren Carter, *Pilate*, pp. 150-1]
- b. “Pilate is the one character...who emerges victorious... He’s not a weak character... but... strong, calculating,& cold. Pilate is indifferent to the fate of Jesus...contemptuous of the Jews, & uses this show trial not to as certain Jesus’ innocence or guilt, but to humiliate the Jews. He mocks the Jewish authorities throughout... disgraces them by evoking their declaration of faith in the Roman emperor. This stunning statement...finally satisfies Pilate...& [he] sends [Jesus] to be executed.” [Arthur M. Wright, *Governor& the King*, p. 11]
- c. “Jesus’ trail ‘involves a struggle for power between Pilate & the Jewish religious leaders... In the power struggle... the latter get their way by... suggesting to Pilate that by releasing Jesus he could well be seen as disloyal to the emperor (19:12). But Pilate gets his way by not handing Jesus over to be crucified until he has extracted from the religious leaders a confession of complete allegiance to the emperor... that amounts to a betrayal of their supposed allegiance to God as their one King (19:15). This is such a major concession...that at the level of the play for power the narrative portrays Pilate as having kept the upper hand.” [Andrew T. Lincoln, “Power, Judgment...,” in C. Bartholomew (ed.) *Royal Priesthood?* V. 3, p. 156]

g. Postscript: Pilate’s Final Action(19:19-20) ‘JESUS...THE KING OF THE JEWS’

- a. “Pilate...had a sign made&put on the cross. It said: ‘JESUS OF NAZERETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS’20Many...Jews read this sign, because the place...was near the city...written in Aramaic, Latin,&Greek.” (19:19-20)
- b. “Pilate ...declar[es]...Jesus’ identity ...as ‘King of the Jews’. He places a notice on Jesus’ cross... in three languages (19:19-22). Pilate intends the notice as an insult to the Jews & as a warning to all, of what Rome does to those who rebel against Rome’s rule & claim power without Rome’s authorization. But without Pilate knowing it, the notice proclaims in three common languages for those ‘in the know’ that Jesus is a kingly figure who manifests God’s sovereign & just purposes among people... Pilate intends to signal [Jesus’] defeat. In reality, his notice proclaims that God’s...purposes are manifested precisely in the midst of oppression, suffering, & death.” [Warren Carter, *John*, p. 121]

6. Who’s Your King? Is it Jesus? Or is it some ‘Caesar’?(mutually exclusive options)

- a. The Jewish leaders pledge allegiance to the Roman Emperor as their only King, thereby repudiating God as their King, apostatizing from Israel’s God. They forsake God in order to get rid of Jesus (whom they reject asking), thereby preserving their power, position, prestige vested in the status quo under Roman domination.
- b. Pilate’s Allegiance to Caesar Tiberius as his King
- a. Pilate “does not embrace Jesus as his king, nor does he in any way become a believer.”—Martinus De Boer
- b. Certainly, Pilate’s allegiance is to Caesar Tiberius as his King. Pilate owes his power, position, etc. to his loyal service of the Roman Emperor & Empire; he has ‘bought into’ Rome’s imperial ideology. Pilate ‘eliminates’ Jesus by crucifixion, after using him as a ‘pawn’ to subjugate the Jewish leaders & so remain the ‘top dog.’
- c. “On the historical level...the ultimate legal responsibility lay with Pilate... This is suggested by the mode of execution (crucifixion) & the charge (‘King of the Jews’) ... It is fair to say that Pontius Pilate...was ultimately responsible for Jesus’ death.” [Daniel J. Harrington, *Historical Dictionary of Jesus*, p. 163]
- d. “Pilate...clearly chooses loyalty to the emperor (who gave him his [governor’s] job) rather than openness to God’s purposes that he cannot see [but Jesus offers & embodies before him].” [W. Carter, *Pilate*, p. 152]
- e. “Pilate perceives only his own power... & fails to see that he must declare Jesus ‘King of the Jews.’... Pilate regards Jesus as a pathetic captive whose very life he holds in his hands ... Jesus’ [words (19:11)] remind... readers that heavenly powers supervene over earthly powers... Pilate is... a self-important figure who fails to perceive the true heavenly authority of Jesus.” [CD. Land, “Jesus Before Pilate... Jn. 18:33-38,” in SE. Porter (ed.) *Modeling Biblical Language*, pp. 247-8]
- c. Future Reversal—Jesus will Judge Pilate (Phil. 2:10-11)
- a. One day Pilate & the Jewish leaders (Caiaphas & co.) will face Jesus as King & judge on his judgment throne!
- b. “Jesus... will share with God in judging & ruling the world, including Pilate... How might Pilate give account for himself? What defense... might he employ? He could plead that he was only doing his job... And so he was. As governor he was obligated to protect & further Roman elite interests. That means removing perceived trouble-makers [like Jesus]. And... he was very good at it: manipulating ... leaders into... affirmations of loyalty, cooperating with... [&] intimidating his local allies.” [Warren Carter, *Pilate*, p. 154]
- d. Pilate as a Pattern

- a. "The nation, the corporation, the form, the...cause can swallow up the individual in...allegiance... Pilate can be seen as a classic model of one whose person... is overwhelmed by his commitment to larger system. There's always a price to be paid for committing oneself to such a system. And Pilate... seems very willing to pay...Of course,the Roman empire is gone...But ...empires are very much part of our contemporary scene. They come in different shapes & sizes: the nation state, the capitalist system... multinationals, the firm, religious groups, educational institutions, personal circles... Pilate's issues become questions for us about our loyalties& commitments..."[Warren Carter,Pontius Pilate, p.155]