

Christ Before Pilate
John 18:28-19:16
Part Two

There are two primary voices in the world today. There is the voice of Christ and the voice of Satan. Those who listen to the voice of Christ will reap the blessings of that decision, both in this life and the life to come. And those who choose to listen to the voice of Satan will suffer the consequences of that decision, both in this life and the life to come.

This morning I would hope, in the message that you will hear, that this truth will come alive for you. Having said this we are now ready to once again continue our study of the Gospel of John and more specifically our examination of John's record of Pontius Pilate's various interactions with Christ during the course of His civil trial

So, what have we already looked in terms of the various interactions that Pilate had with Christ during the course of His trial? The first thing we looked at was: Pilate meets with Christ's accusers (18:28-32). Let me read this passage for you just by way of reminder. **"Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. (29) Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this Man?' (30) They answered and said to him, 'If this Man were not an evil doer, we would not have delivered Him to you.' (31) So Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.' The Jews said to him, 'We are not permitted to put anyone to death,' (32) to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die."**

Now it would appear that this was the end of the exchange between Pilate and Christ's accusers, but it wasn't. After the Jewish leaders recognized that Pilate was not going to rubber stamp the execution of Jesus and that they actually would have to bring formal charges against Him, they did in fact do that. They did that while they were still standing before Pilate. This is not apparent in **John 18** but it is clear from **Luke 23**.

In fact, **Luke 23:2** gives us a list of those charges. So let me read this verse for you. **“And they [in other words, the Jewish leaders after their interaction with Pilate and knowing that Pilate would not entertain a civil trial of Jesus without formal charges being brought against Jesus] began to accuse Him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.’”** So these were, in fact, the charges that the Jewish leaders brought against Jesus before Pilate according to **Luke 23:2**.

So what happened next? Once these charges were made against Christ by the Jewish leadership, Pilate had no other choice but to initiate the trial. This brings us back to **John 18** and more specifically to **John 18:33-38** which records for us Pilate’s initial examination of Christ (John 18:33-38).

Let me read these verses for you. **“Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ (34) Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’ (35) Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?’ (36) Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.’ (37) Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king. 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.” (38) Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’”** So, what are these verses all about? These verses are John’s record of Pilate’s initial examination of Christ inside the Praetorium immediately after the Jewish leaders had brought their trumped up charges against Jesus to him.

My hope for this message, as we examine Pilate’s examination of Christ, is that we might once again be reminded that in this world today there are two primary voices that are speaking: The voice of Satan and the voice of Christ. And why is it so important that we understand this? It is important for us to understand this because those who choose to listen to the voice of Satan and who base their lives on his lies will suffer all the consequences of that, both in this life and in the life to come; but for those who choose to listen to the

voice of Christ and who choose to build their lives on His truth will reap all the blessings of that, both in this life and the life to come.

So how does **John 18:33** begin? **“Therefore** [in light of the charges that had been brought against Christ by the Jewish leaders] **Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus.”**

Apparently up to that time Jesus had remained in the company of His accusers and in the custody of the temple police just outside of the Praetorium. However once the charges against Jesus were brought to Pilate, Pilate returned back inside the Praetorium, or back inside his official residence.

Once inside, Pilate then summoned Jesus. Jesus was therefore transferred from the custody of the temple police into the custody of Roman soldiers and led into the Praetorium in order to begin His trial before Pilate who was now seated on his judgment seat.

So, what happened next? Let us once again go back and read **verse 33** but this time we will read the entire verse. **“Therefore** [in light of the charges that had been brought against Jesus by the Jewish leaders] **Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’”** So how did Pilate begin Christ’s trial? Pilate began Christ’s trial with what might seem to be a very simple question, but it wasn’t nearly as simple as it might seem.

First of all, when Pilate asked Jesus if He was the King of the Jews, he was asking Jesus if He was their king in a political sense. And because he was asking Jesus if he was the king of the Jews in a political sense, it affected the way that he asked the question. So, what do I mean by this?

When Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews,” he was not so much asking a question as much as he was expressing disbelief. In other words, when we are reading Pilate’s question to Christ, we should read it this way: **“Are YOU? the king of the Jews?”** This is how we should read it. But how do we know this?

The **“you”** in **John 18:33** is grammatically in the Greek emphatic. In fact, the **“you”** is emphatic in every other parallel Gospel account (**Matthew**

27:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3). This is why Pilate's question to Christ should be read with a tone of disbelief.

Pilate had been led to believe by the Jewish leaders that this man was a revolutionary, a man of importance, who in proclaiming Himself a king, a political king, posed a threat to Rome.

But this is clearly not what Pilate saw as Jesus stood before Him. Rather than seeing a man that in any way fit his image of what a king, a political king, might look like, he saw only a rather unimpressive man without any trappings of regal authority or power. Where were His regal clothes? Where was His scepter? Where was His crown? Where were His followers? Jesus did not at all fit Pilate's image of what a king, a political king, should look like. And that impacted the way Pilate asked his question. So how will Jesus respond to Pilate's question that was tinged with such a strong sense of disbelief?

What we will discover is this: Christ used Pilate's initial question of disbelief to seize control of the trial by asking Pilate a question of His own in John 18:34. So let me read this verse for you and consider the question that Christ now asked Pilate. **“Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?”**

Christ knows that Pilate believes that there is no way that He could possibly be a political king and therefore a threat to Rome. Christ knows that he believes that the charge against Him is absurd. But He wants Pilates to totally disassociate himself from the charge and to state it clearly. And was Christ successful in getting Pilate to actually do this by the question that He asked? Absolutely!

Let me now read for you **John 18:35.** **“Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and chief priests delivered You to me.’”** Pilate in response to Christ's question became indignant. He became indignant because of Christ's inference that he, based on His own observations and reflections could consider Jesus, apart from the Jewish accusations, to be a political king and a threat to Rome. That inference was in every possible way totally unacceptable to Pilate. The very thought of it offended him. And that indignation caused Pilate to change the whole course of the trial.

So let us now continue to read **John 18:35** and see if this is not so. And what does it say? It says this, **“Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and chief priests delivered You to Me [Now what does he say? He says this]; what have you done?’”** In other words, Pilate is saying, “I have had it with the mockery of this trial. I know these charges that have been brought against you are absurd, but you must have done something to incur the wrath of the Jewish leaders, so tell me what you have done.”

Christ is now fully in charge of this trial. When Pilate, in response to Christ’s question, chose to abandon the examination of the Jewish charges in John 18:35 by asking Christ “What have you done,” it provided the opportunity for Christ to explain the true nature of His kingship.

So, what will He do with this opportunity? Christ begins by explaining what His kingdom was not (John 18:36). Let me now read for you the very first words of **John 18:36**. **“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world.’”**

So, what did Jesus mean when He said this His kingdom was not of this world? When Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world, He meant that His kingdom did not originate in this world nor did it belong this world. In other words, His kingdom was totally different than any other kingdom that Pilate might have been familiar with, including the kingdom of Caesar.

And how does He support His statement that His kingdom was not of this world? Let us once again read **John 18:36** but this time we will read the entire verse. **“Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews.’”**

Would this statement by Christ clearly communicate to Pilate, the Roman military governor of Palestine, the marked difference that Christ was trying to establish between His kingdom, which was not of this world, and all other kingdoms, which were a part of this world? Absolutely! And had this distinction been demonstrated? Certainly! This is why Jesus soundly rebuked Peter’s swordsmanship in the garden and swiftly healed the severed ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, after Peter had severed it. Peter’s action was inconsistent with Christ’s kingdom.

This statement by Christ, explaining what His kingdom was not, caught Pilate's attention causing him to ask another question of Christ. Let us now read **John 18:37**. **“Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’”** When Pilate responded to what Christ had said about what His kingdom was not with the words, “So you are a king,” Pilate was inviting Jesus to expand on the nature of His kingdom.

So how did Christ respond to this invitation for further explanation? Christ responded to Pilate's invitation to expand further on what He had already shared, first of all, by confirming that He was a king. Let us continue to read **John 18:37** and see if this is not so.

“Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’” And now listen to Jesus confirmation. **“You say correctly that I am a king.”** So clearly, Christ in this statement was confirming for Pilate that He was, in fact, a king but in doing this He felt that He needed to immediately go on to expand further on the nature of His kingdom.

So let us continue to read **John 18:37** but this time we will read just a little bit further in the verse. **“Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world.’”** So, what do we learn about Christ's kingdom from this portion of John 18:37?

We learn that Christ's kingdom originated from above (John 18:37). Isn't this clearly inferred when Jesus told Pilate that He was born and had come into this world in order to be the king over this very special and unique kingdom?

Jesus had eternally co-existed with His Father in glory. But He, according to His Father's eternal redemptive plan, had to leave glory in order that He might rule over this very special and unique kingdom that had not come into existence through the will of man, but rather through the will of God.

So what else do we learn from **John 18:37** about what Christ's kingdom was? Let us continue to read **John 18:37** but this time we will read even a little bit further. **“Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have**

been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth.” So, what do we learn from this portion of **John 18:37**?

We learn that Christ’s kingdom is based on truth as revealed in and through Christ (John 18:37). Isn’t this clearly inferred when Christ told Pilate that His entrance into this world from above, in order to be a king over this very special and unique kingdom, was for the purpose of testifying to the truth?

This world with all of its kingdoms and kings are based on lies, the lies of Satan who is the ruler of this world according to **John 12:31**. But this is not true of Christ’s kingdom. It is based on truth as He Himself has revealed it.

If you want to know where truth is, just look at Jesus. What did Jesus tell His disciples in **John 14:6**? **“I am the way, the truth, and the life.”**

So, what else do we learn about Christ’s kingdom? Let us continue to read **John 18:37** but this time we will read even further into the verse. **“Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. 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.’”** So, what do we learn from this portion of **John 18:37**?

We learn that Christ’s true disciples are identified by the way they respond to the truth as Christ Himself has revealed it (John 18:37).

What did Jesus tell those who had believed in Him in **John 8:31-32**? **“If you continue in My word, then, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”** Free from what? Free from the kingdom of darkness and from the rule of Satan who is the father of lies. This is what we are freed from as we respond to the truth as revealed to us through Christ.

This process of hearing and responding to truth as revealed by Christ begins with us being obedience to the gospel of Christ when we by a simple act of faith transfer our trust from ourselves to Jesus Christ alone for salvation. And this is the process in the life of every true disciple of Christ, as they continue to seek to build their lives on the sure foundation of Christ’s Word, which is the Bible.

Are you a citizen in Christ's kingdom? Or are you not a citizen of Christ's kingdom?

So Christ has revealed a great deal about His kingdom to Pilate in **John 18:37**. He had told Pilate that His kingdom was from above. He had told Pilate that His kingdom was based in truth. And He told Pilate that His true disciples could be identified by the way they responded to that truth or by the way they responded to what? His voice.

So now we come to a very critical moment in the life of Pontius Pilate. Will He respond to the voice of Christ? Let me now read for you **John 18:38**. **“Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’”**

It was as if he was saying, “I’ve been looking for truth all my all my life. There is no truth.” This response is right out of the pit. Pontius Pilate rather than responding to the voice of Christ, chose to remain in Satan’s web thus guaranteeing that over time, no matter how stubbornly he might resist, he would ultimately be devoured by Satan’s lies.

When Pontius Pilate chose to not listen to the voice of Christ, he in effect chose to remain a loyal subject of Satan, the ruler of this world, and to remain a citizen of his kingdom. May we not make the same mistake.

Today Christ, the ruler of the kingdom of light and of truth, is speaking to us through His Word. But He is not the only one speaking. Satan, the ruler of this world and the world system, is also speaking to us. So who are we listening to?

May God give us the grace to live our lives in such a way that we know that we are citizens of Christ's kingdom rather than the kingdom of darkness.