**JOHN 18:28-19:16**

**PAIRS AND SPARES CLASS**

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WAYCROSS**

**MAY 7, 2023**

**INTRODUCTION**

The plan to kill Jesus began when He healed a crippled man on a Sabbath in Jerusalem. The Roman-appointed High Priest, Caiaphas, had told the Sanhedrin that one man had to die to save the Jewish people under Rome’s domination, so he planted in their minds the need to kill Jesus.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, He was arrested on the Mount of Olives and taken to Annas, the previous High Priest. Annas attempted to get Jesus to implicate Himself and His disciples as enemies of Rome, but Annas failed. He then sent Jesus to Caiaphas. While there, Jesus made it clear that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, so He was condemned in the middle of the night for blasphemy, for claiming to be God’s Son, a crime requiring the death penalty under Jewish law. But that same law prohibited trying and condemning a man of a capital crime in the dark of night. Caiaphas hastily called an early morning meeting of the Sanhedrin which subsequently affirmed the charge of blasphemy and the penalty of death.

But the Jewish religious leaders had no authority under the Roman occupation to execute anyone. To kill Jesus, they needed to manipulate the Roman government to execute Him for them.

So, Caiaphas took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor.

Pilate was shrewd, politically motivated, and not a fan of the Jews. Asking the questions needed to determine the truth of the charges against Jesus, he became convinced of the innocence of Jesus.

During the trial of Jesus, Pilate asked at least five questions which revealed what he needed to know:

1. “‘What charges are you bringing against this man?’”
2. “‘Are you the king of the Jews?’”
3. “‘Do you want me to release “the king of the Jews?” ’“
4. “‘Where do you come from?’”
5. “‘Here is your king. Do you want me to crucify your king?’”

**“‘WHAT CHARGES ARE YOU BRINGING AGAINST THIS MAN?’”** (John 18:28-32)

Early in the morning on the day the Jews would prepare to celebrate the Passover, the Jewish religious leaders took Jesus to the palace of Pilate in which he lived and governed when he was in Jerusalem. He had come to Jerusalem to be present during Passover in case there was civil unrest.

?But the Jews would not enter the building. Why? (If they entered the Gentile building, they would be ceremonially unclean, defiled, unable to celebrate Passover.)

These men had violated God’s Law by condemning an innocent man to death, but they were concerned that entering a Gentile building would make them unacceptable to God and prohibit them from celebrating Passover. They were more concerned about keeping the outward traditions of their religion than they were about obeying the real intent of God’s Law.

As a courtesy to the Jews, Pilate came outside and asked what any judge would: “‘What charges are you bringing against this man?’” (18:29b). What crime are you accusing this man of?

The Jews initially avoided his question, thus arousing the suspicions of the politician in Pilate.

Luke 23:2 lists three charges that were brought against Jesus: He led the nation to rebel against Rome; He opposed paying tribute to Caesar; and He claimed to be Messiah and the Jewish king. Neither of the first two charges was true. Jesus had never encouraged the Jews to rise up against Rome, and He had actually approved of the paying of taxes to Caesar.

However, Jesus had claimed to be Messiah, King of the Jews, even though the religious leaders would not accept His claim and even though His disciples didn’t fully understand His claim.

The Jewish religious leaders told Pilate that if Jesus were not guilty, they would not have brought Him to Pilate. Sensing that he was being manipulated, Pilate called their bluff, telling them to then handle this matter themselves without dragging him into it.

If Pilate had turned Jesus over to the Jews to be killed, they would have stoned Him. But that would not have satisfied the prophecies of Scripture. The Old Testament clearly foretold that Messiah would be hung on a tree, crucified. And Jesus had told His disciples that He would be crucified, not stoned.

God’s plan of salvation required a totally different solution than what the Jews envisioned.

**“‘ARE YOU THE KING OF THE JEWS?’”** (John 18:33-38a)

Pilate went inside the palace, taking Jesus with him. John presents a different perspective than the other Gospels, focusing on how Jesus led Pilate to come to terms with the false claims of the Jews and the truth about Who Jesus was.

Pilate’s questions centered on only one of the charges brought against Jesus: “‘Are you the king of the Jews?’” (18:33b). If He were a political king, Pilate would have cause to execute Him as a threat to Caesar.

?How did Jesus respond? (“‘Is that your own idea or did others talk to you about me?’” What have you heard? Do you suspect that I am a king leading a rebellion based on what your intelligence officers are telling you, or are you asking based on what someone else has told you?)

Responding with an unmistakable disdain for the Jews, Pilate reminded Jesus that it was not the Roman government that had arrested Him and brought Him to Pilate; it was His own people, the Jews.

But then Pilate got to the heart of the matter: “’What is it you have done?’” (18:35b). Why are you here? What did you do to infuriate these people so badly?

Jesus answered his question:

1. I am a king but a different kind of king.
2. My kingdom is not of this world but from a different place; if it were an earthly kingdom, my followers would have fought to protect Me.
3. My purpose is to testify to the truth and to rule a people who will follow the One Who is Truth.

**“‘DO YOU WANT ME TO RELEASE “THE KING OF THE JEWS”?’“** (John 18:38b-19:7)**\***

Pilate probably realized that Jesus was unlike anyone he had ever met. Pilate also knew Jesus was innocent and had done nothing to deserve the death penalty.

So Pilate went outside, stood before the crowd, referred to Jesus as “the king of the Jews,” and declared Jesus innocent of the charges: “‘I find no basis for a charge against him’” (John18:38b).

As a goodwill gesture to the Jewish people, Pilate traditionally released one Jewish prisoner each year during Passover. Confident that Jesus was innocent, Pilate looked for a solution that would save Jesus and satisfy the Jews. He offered to release Jesus: “‘Do you want me to release “the king of the Jews”?’”

To Pilate’s shock, the Chief Priests persuaded the crowd to demand the release of Barabbas: “‘No, not him! Give us Barabbas!’” (John 18:40). Barabbas was exactly what the Jews had claimed Jesus to be: an insurrectionist again Rome. He was also a murderer and a thief. A vote for Barabbas was not only a vote against Jesus, it was a vote against Rome.

So Pilate tried a different approach to free Jesus. He had Him flogged. The soldiers would take Jesus and humiliate Him by placing a crown of thorns on His head and a purple robe on Him, mocking Him by calling Him the king of the Jews and slapping Him in the face.

But worse, the soldiers also intentionally brutalized Jesus. They beat Him without mercy using a leather whip interlaced with pieces of metal and sharp bone to cause severe pain by ripping open the flesh on His back, buttocks, and legs. Eusebius, a third-century historian, described flogging as an act that would lay bare the prisoner’s veins, muscles, sinews, and bowels. Many prisoners died from the beating.

Pilate then brought the beaten, bloodied, nearly unrecognizable Jesus back out to the Jews, declaring publicly for the second time, “‘I find no basis for a charge against him’” (John 19:4b).

But instead of sympathizing over the plight of Jesus, the Chief Priests and Jewish officials began shouting repeatedly, “‘Crucify him!’” (John 19:6). What anger and hatred they displayed against Jesus!

For the third time, Pilate again declared that he found no basis for a charge against Jesus, telling the Jews to crucify Him themselves.

But the Jews interjected a new charge, shouting that they had a law that required anyone who claimed to be the Son of their God to be killed. This new charge must have sent a chill down Pilate’s spine. The challenge before Pilate had just reached a much more serious level. Apparently Jesus had claimed to be the Son of the God of the Jews.

**“‘WHERE DO YOU COME FROM’“?** (John 19:8-11)**\***

Pilate was now “even more afraid” than he had been. He took Jesus back inside the palace to question Him further.

Scrambling for a way out of the mess he was in, Pilate asked Jesus, “‘Where do you come from?’” (John 19:9a). Is there someone else who might have higher authority to try you, to judge you? [In fact, at some point Pilate did send Jesus to Herod who had authority over Galilee. Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate.] When Jesus would not answer Pilate’s question, Pilate reminded Jesus that Pilate had the power to set Him free or have Him crucified.

Then Jesus did answer: “‘You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above’” (John 19:11). The authority you have over Me is not from Caesar; it is from the God of the Jews, Who is My Father.

**“‘HERE IS YOUR KING. SHALL I CRUCIFY YOUR KING?’”** (John 19:12-16)\*

From that point on, Pilate kept trying to find a way to set Jesus free. But the Jews threatened Pilate, reminding him that if he freed Jesus, he would be failing to protect the interests of Caesar.

For Pilate, being loyal to the Emperor of Rome was more important than saving the life of an innocent Jew or serving the unseen, unknown God of the Jews.

So Pilate brought Jesus out, sat in the seat where judgements were decreed, and declared, “‘Here is your king’” (John 19:14b). “‘Shall I crucify your king?’” (John 19:15b).

The response from the Chief Priests and the Jewish people was clear and unmistakable: “‘We have no king but Caesar’” (John 19:15c).

Matthew records that Pilate “took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd “saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood…It is your responsibility!’” And “all the people answered, ‘Let His blood be on us and on our children’” (Matthew 27:24b-25).

Given one final opportunity to proclaim where their true loyalty lay, the Chief Priests and Jewish people chose Caesar over God, thus sealing the fate of Jesus and the fate of the entire Jewish nation.

And Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

**CONCLUSION**

The Jewish religious leaders were committed to killing Jesus, no matter what it might take.

Everyone thought that it was Jesus Who was on trial. But in reality, it was Pilate, the Jewish religious leaders, and the Jewish nation.

1. Pilate declared Jesus innocent three times and called Him the King of the Jews at least four times. He would place a notice on the cross of Jesus that proclaimed His crime: King of the Jews.
2. The Jewish religious leaders lied about what Jesus had done and about Who Jesus claimed to be. When given a choice, they denounced Jesus, denounced their God, and chose Caesar as their king.
3. The Jews in the crowd joined with their religious leaders in calling for the death of Jesus and brought God’s judgement against themselves, their children, and their nation.

From the beginning of His relationship with the Jews, God had told them that He was to be their only God. At this turning point in their lives, the Jewish religious leaders were faced with an opportunity to renew their commitment to God. Instead, they chose to side with the powers of darkness, to align themselves with the hated Romans, to proclaim Caesar as their king, not God.

God has called Believers to place Him and the cause of Christ above everything else in our lives. Like the Jews in the first century, we are facing our own turning point, our own time of choice: to Whom are we really loyal?

Jesus remained faithful to God and to God’s purpose for Him. Will we?

**ALTERNATIVE CONCLUSION**

1. Jesus was in every way the living embodiment of God Almighty.
2. The Jewish leaders rejected Jesus as Messiah and condemned Him to death for being the Messiah they did not want.
3. Pilate heard the facts and concluded that Jesus was innocent of the charges brought against Him, that Jesus did not deserve to die.
4. Given the choice of Jesus, King of the Jews, or Barabbas, the insurrectionist and murderer, the Jewish religious leaders and their followers chose Barabbas.
5. Given the choice of God or Caesar, the Jewish religious leaders and their followers chose Caesar.
6. Given these two decisions, the fate of Jesus, the fate of the Jewish religious leaders, the fate of the Jewish nation was sealed.
7. Each of us as Believers and as human beings has the same choice to make: To Whom are we truly, ultimately committed? The choice has eternal significance and consequences.