

Jesus Appears Before Pilate, Part 3

Scripture: John 18:25–19:7

Code: 43-105

John 18 and 19 is our text, John 18 and 19. As you are reconnecting with this section that we've been looking at, I want to just remind you that we are in a narrative section of Scripture, but that is almost everywhere true. Even in sections of Scripture that are full of theological arguments they are in a context of real history, real people, and narrative. That is because the Bible is a book of history – real people, real events. The Bible is a history book. From Genesis to Revelation it is history. It is past, present, and future, but it is history.

And mark this down; all its theology is drawn from history. There's so much confusion about where theological truth comes from. Many religions, and people who have sort of an amorphous religion, think that spiritual truth is drawn down by some intuition, some emotion, some induced mentality of some heightened, elevated sensibility. All theological truth is drawn from history. It is all outside of you and outside of me, not inside of us. It is not drawn out of your experience, my experience, or anybody else's experience. Theology is drawn from God acting in history, and the Bible is the record that God has inspired of His acting in history.

All that we know about God is because God has acted in history to reveal Himself. The revelation of Himself is disclosed in actual historical events with real people, written down by real people who were given perfect recall, perfect understanding of what they wrote by the Holy Spirit. So when we talk about the Bible we're talking about a book of history. This is absolutely critical.

Genesis 1, 2, 3 – history. Not poetry, not fantasy, not analogy, not parable – history, revelation, history yet to come. It's about history. And nowhere in the history of Scripture is the setting more dramatic than around the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why you have four historical books on the life of Christ – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – and they all agree, perfect agreement. They tell the story of God coming down in human flesh – the Lord Jesus Christ.

The four gospels then really are the high point of biblical history; and if you look into the four gospels, the most compelling part of the history of our Lord is the part that we're looking at now, leading up to the cross and the resurrection. So we return to the history of our Lord as He approaches His cross as recorded by the gospel of John. Let's turn to John 18 and 19.

Now it is the year 30 A.D. as best we can calculate it. We are in a real place in Jerusalem with real people. The country is Israel; southern part of Israel is Judea. There are many players, many actors in the events around the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There are the disciples, and there are the Jewish leaders, and there is the Jewish crowd, and there are the high priests, and the Sadducees, and the Pharisees – and those are sects of Judaism. And then there are the Romans, the Roman soldiers, the Roman executions. There is the Roman Governor, Pilate. All of these are real people, actual historical events recorded for us, and out of them comes our understanding of God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ.

Now we've been working our way through the gospel of John, and therefore the history of our Lord. Finally when we get to chapter 18 we arrive at Friday of Passion Week. This is the day He will be crucified. Friday He will be crucified. We have gone through a lengthy part of the gospel of John that occurred on Thursday night, chapters 13 through 16 when He was meeting with His disciples in the upper room and giving them all kinds of promises and all kinds of warnings.

Late that Thursday night they left the upper room. Judas went by himself to launch the betrayal later in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus with the eleven walk through the darkness of Jerusalem, continued to teach, prayed a great high priestly prayer along the way in John 17; and finally sometime after midnight, deep in the darkness of Friday morning, arrived at the familiar garden of Gethsemane with His disciples. And there He spends some time in prayer while they sleep. Eventually, they are collected together, and we pick up the scene when we see Judas walking into the garden leading an entourage of hundreds of people in the darkness with weapons and torches. They are composed of the Jewish leaders, the temple police, the Roman soldiers, and other assorted folks.

It is a large, large contingent. Why? Because they have come to arrest Jesus. They want to do it in the middle of the night when there's no one around because they fear the crowds, because the crowds a few days before had hailed Jesus as Messiah. They want to get Him in the middle of the night. They want to know exactly who He is among the disciples, so they have paid Judas well, the price of a slave, to identify Him.

As Judas leads the entourage into the garden, you know the story. Judas comes up to Jesus and repeatedly kisses Him, and therefore as the betrayer, identifies Him. He is immediately arrested by the force of Jewish leaders, temple police, and Roman soldiers. He is bound and He is taken away to the house of Annas. Annas was the previous high priest, but really the reigning power behind the office. Annas holds what is a mock hearing to find a way to execute Jesus.

They hate Him. He has confronted their hypocrisy. He has basically said they are of their father, the devil. He has condemned their religion as apostate. He has told the people that very week that they are leading them astray. He has identified them in every possible term as evil leaders that belong to Satan. He has the affection of the crowds. They are jealous; they are envious. They are frightened of Him. He's tearing into their power and their influence. They have to come up with a way to kill Him. But there is no crime.

The hearing before Annas really goes nowhere, except they decide that they must kill Him, and they must have the Romans do it, because of the people. They're afraid to do it themselves. They weren't afraid to stone Stephen. But they're afraid to stone Jesus because of the people. So they want to force the Romans to execute Him, but they have trouble coming up with a crime.

It doesn't happen in the hearing before Annas, so Annas sends Jesus bound to his son-in-law who is the acting high priest, a man by the name of Caiaphas; and at Caiaphas' home, the Sanhedrin comes together. That's 71 men, including the high priest, who constitute the supreme court of Israel. They have another mock hearing, travesty of justice. No crime, no true witnesses, no evidence. But in the middle of the night, they decide He is guilty and sentence Him to death. It is illegal; it is unjust. No court was allowed to convene at night.

Now in order to legitimize this, the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas meet again at the crack of dawn and they make their verdict known in the daylight. The Sanhedrin is corrupt to the core. It is full of Sadducees, in fact, dominated by Sadducees who were the religious liberals who didn't believe in the supernatural at all, and whose only goal in life was to solicit favor from Rome, because they wanted to maintain their power and their position. They are much more concerned about what Rome thinks than they are what God thinks. Well the Sanhedrin is corrupt.

Night trials being forbidden, they had to give the appearance of legality, so on Friday morning at the crack of dawn, they reconvene and they say He is guilty, and they banged Jesus again, and they march Him off to the Roman governor who is in a place called the Praetorium, the place where the praetor or the governor lives. This is not his normal place. He normally lived down by the sea at Caesarea. But during Passover, more troops and the governor himself came in order to assure the peace. They take Him to the Praetorium and they hand Him over to Pilate's men.

Why are they doing this? They want Pilate to execute Him. There's some legal basis for it, because the Romans had taken away the death penalty from the Jews, and only the Romans had the right to execute on criminal charges. Any criminal charge the Jews might bring would be subject to Pilate's approval or vetoed.

And, again, why did they insist on this when they were happy to stone Stephen to death a little while after this? Why did they insist on this? Because they feared the people and how they felt about Jesus. But more importantly, they were fulfilling prophecy. Jesus said He would be crucified, He would be lifted up. The Jews threw people down and stoned them. They didn't know it, but they were simply doing this from the divine side to fulfill prophecy.

Now as we approach our text at the end of chapter 18 and 19, Jesus is brought to Pilate early Friday morning. Let me pick it up in verse 28 of chapter 18. "Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium. It was early. They themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled." That is by being in a Gentile house, they would be ceremonially defiled they thought at a Passover time. They would therefore not be able to eat the Passover, so they stayed outside.

"Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this Man?' They answered and said to him, 'If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you.'" They don't have any crime; they accused Pilate of not trusting them.

"They answered and said to him, 'If this Man were not an evildoer, He wouldn't be here.' So Pilate said to them, 'Take Him yourselves and judge Him according to your law.'" This is an exemption from the Roman law of execution: "You can kill Him yourself. Go kill Him yourself. Go kill Him; I give you permission to do it. Whatever your law says, go do it."

The Jews answered, verse 31, "We're not permitted to put anyone to death." Why did they say that? To fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

Again, unwittingly, they were fulfilling prophecy. Jesus had said this; it's recorded back in Matthew 20, verse 17: "As Jesus was about to go up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside by themselves, and on the way He said to them, 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death,

and hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock and scourge and crucify, and on the third day He'll be raised up.” He predicted a Gentile crucifixion, and that was going to happen, and the Jews were operating within the sovereign purposes of God for the fulfillment of prophecy.

“Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’ Pilate answered, ‘I’m not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?’ 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.’ Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So You are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say correctly that I am a king. For this is I have been born, and for this I come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’” Then with post-modern cynicism, “Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, ‘I find no guilt in Him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?’ So they cried out again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but Barabbas.’ Now Barabbas was a robber.

“Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they began to come up to Him and say, ‘Hail, King of the Jew!’ and give Him slaps in the face. Pilate came out again and said to them, ‘Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.’ Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the Man!’ So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, ‘Crucify, crucify!’ Pilate said to them, ‘Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.’ The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.’” What a dramatic scene at daybreak on Friday.

Now Pilate was ruthless. According to the 13th chapter of Luke, there were some Galilean Jews worshipping at the temple, and he went in and basically assassinated them all in the middle of their worship. He was ruthless. But he also was a judge, appointed by Rome, and Rome had law; and he was required as a judge to punish when there was a legitimate trial that had brought overwhelming evidence of a crime. In this case, there was no evidence, no crime, no true witnesses. So in verse 28 he says, “I find no fault in Him.” That’s a “not guilty” verdict.

By then, on the outside of the Praetorium, the crowd is growing larger and larger and larger as people are circulating after daybreak, and the word is out that the Sanhedrin is gathered at the Praetorium of Pilate, and Jesus has been arrested and is on the inside. The Sanhedrin then begins to take advantage of the gathering crowd. They’re all out there, the 71 and the Sanhedrin are there, or certainly the majority of them, and they begin to poison the well of public opinion by spreading lies about Jesus, and Luke 23:5 says they were the more fierce. It was a fierce denunciation of Jesus coming from the elite judges of the nation of Israel. They hated Jesus Christ and they begun to poison the crowd.

Now Pilate is feeling the pressure to do what they want him to do, even though he knows it’s unjust. Why does he feel the pressure? I told you about that a couple of weeks ago. He was already on very thin ice with Tiberius Caesar who was his boss because he had so many times needlessly and stupidly provoked the Jews and fomented rebellion and riot, and Caesar didn’t want to hear anymore about his incompetence as a governor. He knew one more riot from the Jews and he would lose his

position and maybe his life, because Tiberius was as cruel as he was. So he is trying to maintain his job as a judge and a governor. He is trying to appease the Jews to keep them from rioting again, and the word going back to Rome and him losing his job.

At the same time, he's trying to hold onto some kind of a clear conscience about justice. Verse 38 he says, "I find no guilt in him." And between verse 38 and 39 he sends Jesus to Herod the Idumean king who is a petty tyrant in the area, as if he could pass Jesus off to Herod and have him deal with Him. Herod received Jesus and thinks that the whole thing is a joke, and Herod and those with him mock Jesus and then send Him back to Pilate.

So we pick it up in verse 39 and Pilate has Jesus back, and from 18:39 down to chapter 19, verse 7, we see Pilate's failing proposals. He has already said in verse 31: "Do what you want. Take Him and kill Him. Take Him and kill Him." He says it again in chapter 19, verse 6: "Take Him. If you want to crucify Him, crucify Him yourselves."

He wants them to do it. They're not going to do that, he's going to try something else. So in verses 39 and 40 he says, "You have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover, a prisoner. Do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" So they cried out again saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

Pilate thought he had a proposal that might work, because Jesus was not a robber, Jesus was a miracle worker, Jesus was a healer, Jesus raised dead people, Jesus fed people. "Wouldn't you rather have Him than an insurrectionist rebel who was in prison for murder?" He was a murderer, the Scripture says, as well as a robber.

Matthew 27 gives us a little more insight into the scene. Verse 18 says, "Pilate knew that because of envy they had handed Jesus over. While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message saying, 'Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.' But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and put Jesus to death. But the governor said to them, 'Which of the two do you want me to release for you?' And they said, 'Barabbas.' Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said, 'Crucify Him!' And he said, 'What evil has he done?' But they kept shouting all the more saying, 'Crucify Him!' When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd saying, 'I am innocent of the Man's blood; see to that yourselves.'"

And again he says, "Go do what you want." He says it three times. "And all the people said, 'His blood be on us and on our children!' Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified." He released Barabbas. They screamed, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," motivated by the Sanhedrin itself.

"What do I do with Jesus called the Christ?" "Crucify, crucify!" Pilate is sinking below the waterline, being blackmailed in a violation of justice and a raping of his own conscience by people he despises. He releases Barabbas, and that doesn't satisfy anybody. They keep screaming, "Crucify, crucify!"

Pilate has one more possibility, verse 1 of chapter 19. And we already read about it in Matthew 27: "Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him." Why? He already said He's not guilty of anything, no

crime. This is unjust, this is illegal, but this is a desperate effort to do something short of execution to satisfy the bloodlust of this crowd.

According to Luke 23:16, Luke says, "Pilate said, 'I will punish Him and release Him.'" Punish Him for what? What a coward. There was nothing punishable, so Pilate plunges deeper into the abyss of injustice and cowardice and decides to torture Jesus through scourging. This is hideous. This is a hideous kind of act.

It'd be hard for us to conceive of the pain of this. The Roman scourge basically consisted of a short wooden handle like about half of a baseball bat, to which several leather thongs were attached, and the ends of the thongs were fitted with sharpened pieces of lead, sharpened pieces of brass, sharpened pieces of bone. And the body was then stretched on a flat table – that was one way they did it – or tied by the wrists to a post, or suspended from a ceiling so that the body was taut and the feet didn't touch the ground. Whatever the posture chosen, the person was then lashed until his body was ripped and shredded, not just in the back, but anywhere and everywhere the lictor to lay a blow.

Now we know that in Deuteronomy 25, verse 3, the Jews were given the right to inflict stripes on someone for certain crimes, but they were limited to 40 stripes. That's not true in the Roman world; there was no such limitation. We don't know how many blows they gave to the Lord. But the body would be torn and shredded and lacerated in a deep way so that veins and arteries were affected; sometimes organs began to be exposed, squeezing through the torn flesh. Such flogging, by the way, was against the law when you were a Roman citizen. Roman citizens were exempted from that according to Acts 22; and it often resulted in death because of massive blood loss, as well as severe injury.

Why was Pilate doing this? He wanted Jesus off his hands. He did not want to kill Jesus for his own conscience's sake and his own sense of justice, and because he hated to do what the Jews wanted him to do because he hated them. But he is trapped. If they riot, he's finished. Maybe this would satisfy them. This kind of a torture of a pure and innocent man ripped raw might be a compromise they could accept.

To make it worse, the soldiers, in verses two and three, twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on His head, crushed it down on His skull. Put a purple robe on Him, some kind of a faded red Roman robe that was now purple because it had faded in the sun – a soldier's tunic no doubt, or cloak – and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face.

The soldiers often played games in the Praetorium. I remember being on the floor years ago of Fort Antonia in Jerusalem and the curator of the museum there wanted me to see that there were drawn in the stones on the floor grooves and signs, and that these were all related to games the Roman soldiers played. In the monotony and the boredom of sitting around as soldiers, they concocted all manner of forms of entertainment, and their victims would often become the centerpiece of that entertainment; and one of the things they liked to play was to play a kind of mocking game that makes a fool into a king. In fact, some historians tell us – Philo for one – that young boys played this game with idiots, making them into fools kings and mocking them.

The soldiers are treating Jesus like He was an idiot, a ribald mob mocking the so-called king. It's a kind of fiendish cruelty, but it's the kind of games that soldiers played. And so they put a royal robe

on Him and a crown on His head, and they pressed the crown down causing rivulets of blood to run down the front and back and sides of His face and His neck. And they wanted to torture Him, they wanted to mock Him. They threw Him around, bounced Him around, punched Him around, slapped Him, gave Him a scepter, a reed, and then took it out of His hand and beat Him in the head with it.

It was all a comedy; and some of you will remember that some years ago I did a series on the comedy of Calvary. All of it was a comedy to the Romans. It was all a joke. It was all a farce. And then Scripture says they kept marching up to Him and bowing as if He was their king. They would mock Him by saluting Him, kneeling before Him, and then standing up and spitting in His face.

And the irony of all ironies is they were doing this to the King of Kings. And if you ask why: “Why do people do this? Why do they do this?” well, the answer is maybe four-fold. Number One: Because He was God, and the carnal mind is enmity against God, Romans 8:7 says. The human heart is anti-God. But the human heart is not only anti-God, it is pro-Satan because it belongs to the kingdom of darkness; and unless you restrain people, this is how they will act. They were not only not restrained, they were permitted to do this.

Paul describes human depravity with these words in Romans 3: “Their throat is an open sepulchre, open grave. With their tongues they have used deceit, whose mouth is full of curing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their way.” That’s human depravity. And if it’s not restrained, it is deadly. And then if it’s not only not restrained but given permission, it is cruelly deadly.

Jesus actually said this was Satan’s hour. “This is your hour and the power of darkness – ” He said in Luke 22:53. This is the hour for the serpent to bruise the Savior’s heel, and he is not at it. So why did they do this? Because they’re anti-God, because they’re unrestrained sinners, because this is Satan’s hour; but fourthly and most importantly, because God permitted it as Jesus began bearing punishment for our sins.

Pilate took Jesus at this point and got ready to show Him to the crowd in hopes that this would be enough. So in verse 4, “Pilate came out again and said to them, ‘Behold, I’m bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.’” He keeps reiterating the “not guilty” verdict, but he wants the people to see Jesus in this pathetic condition, covered with gashing wounds all over His shoulders and arms and back and legs, torso; blood streaking down His face in streams that totally disfigured His appearance.

Isaiah says His appearance would be disfigured. More blood flowing down to the ground around where He stood. And there Jesus stands silently as Pilate makes the proposal, verse 5: “Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them”—the famous Latin phrase—*‘ecce homo*, behold the Man!’”

“Here’s your king. Here’s your threat. Here’s the dangerous rebel. Here’s the one that Rome should fear. Here’s the one that you should fear. This is absurd, ridiculous. He is helpless; He is pitiful; He is powerless; He is beaten; He is pathetic. Look at Him. Isn’t that enough? He has no one beside Him; no force, no army has come to His aid. Isn’t this enough?”

He thinks by mocking Jesus and showing Him as a pathetic, bloody, beaten piece of human flesh,

they will be satisfied. And once again, verse 6, the response is the same: “So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him – ” that’s the chief priests and the temple police; it’s the authorities again “ – they cried out saying, ‘Crucify, crucify!’” They are, of course, leading the entire mob in this cry: “Crucify, crucify!”

“Pilate said to them again, ‘Take Him yourselves, crucify Him. I find no guilt in Him.’” The most hardened individuals are the chief priests and those who protect them, the temple police. Pilate really misgauges their contempt, misjudges the volatility of their hatred. It is a monotonous venom of hate that just keeps flowing out of their mouths in the word, “Crucify, crucify, crucify!”

They’re like beasts of prey who have tasted blood and thirst for more. They are, in the language of Romans 1, past feeling. They hounded Him to His death, and they hounded Pilate to his own self-destruction. A mob turns their hosannas into, “Crucify, crucify, crucify!”

Pilate, for the fifth time says, “I find no guilt in Him.” And before he’s done he’ll say it a sixth time: “I can’t crucify an innocent man.”

But he’s a desperate coward. He is a desperate coward and the Jews know it. So they press the issue, verse 7: “The Jews answered him, ‘We have a law.’” “We have a law? What’s that law? Oh, that law is the capital punishment for a blasphemer,”

Leviticus 24:16, basically straightforward, not at all hard to understand. Let me read it to you: “The one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall utterly be put to death.” Says it again: “When he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.”

A blasphemer is to be put to death. That same verse says, “He is to be stoned.” That was the Jewish way. “We have a law and our law says a blasphemer must die.” They have finally come up with a crime, and the crime is blasphemy.

That sort of found its way into their minds, as recorded by Matthew in Matthew, chapter 26; listen to verse 63. Jesus is in front of the high priest and He’s saying nothing. “Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, ‘I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, ‘He has blasphemed! What further need to we have of witnesses? Behold, you have heard the blasphemy; what do you think?’ They answered, ‘He deserves death!’ And they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him.” Took them a long time to get to that indictment.

There are seven separate indictments in the gospel accounts that they tried. First, Matthew 26, they said, “He threatened to destroy the temple.” That’s His crime. Then John 18:30, they said, “He’s an evildoer,” just sort of generic. Then in Luke 23 it’s recorded they said, “He’s perverting the nation.” Also in Luke 23 they said, “He’s forbidding tax tribute to Caesar.” They also said in Luke 23, it’s recorded, “He’s stirring up the people.” And they also said in that same chapter, “He is presenting Himself as a king.”

But those first six basic indictments had no evidence, so they come to Number Seven: “He’s making

Himself out to be the Son of God. That's blasphemy." Son of God is deity. Son of God has the nature of God. Son of God is God, as you've read in Hebrews, the exact representation of God and His nature. They understood that.

But how fascinating is that, that they end up with an indictment that is actually true. It is actually true. He is the Son of God, so they kill Him for the truth. It came to that and they said, "Put His blood on our hands and the hands of our children." They paid a price. Jerusalem was destroyed, and it's been one prolonged Holocaust through the centuries for the Jewish people.

Someday Israel will be saved, the nation, but now they're still under divine judgment. Someday they will look on the one they pierced and mourn for Him as an only son, Zechariah 12. And when they finally look and say, "Wait a minute; He was the Son of God, He was the Messiah – " and that day will come " – all Israel will be saved," Romans 11.

When they finally look on the one they've pierced and mourn for Him as the Son of God, they will then say Isaiah 53. They will say, "Oh, He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, He was chastened for our peace; by His stripes we are healed." But for now, the nation continues the rejection. Still a Jewish nation of crucifiers. Oh, in the church, many Jews have come to Christ individually, but national salvation for Israel is yet in the future.

I said this at the end last time and I'll say it again. I'm sure, even if you don't confess Jesus as Lord, you're saying to yourself, "What they did is horrible. How did it happen? I would never let that happen. That's not possible." You might be saying Jesus is a good teacher, a great religious leader, a man who gives a life example of kindness and sacrifice. But Hebrews 6 says this: "If you reject Him, you crucify the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame."

I've got news for you: there's no middle ground. You either confess Him as Lord or you stand with the crucifiers. You either say, "He is Lord," or, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." And if you say, "I will not have that Man to reign over my life," you have taken your place with the crucifiers; and unless you repent and embrace Him as Lord, you'll be with them forever in hell; there's no middle ground.

Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is – " what? " – against Me." No safe middle moral ground. I can't imagine that you would stand with the crucifiers, when by confessing Jesus as Lord you'll receive eternal life. You are rescued out of the kingdom of darkness and placed into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Receive the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life.

All of Pilate's proposals failed. Pilate was a disaster. Soon after this, by another stupid act, he was removed back to Rome and disappears, and the only record in history is that he killed himself. Tragic end to a man who had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. But that's the same tragic end to any person who meets Christ and walks away.

Father, we thank You again for Your Word. We thank You for powerful history that's recorded in Scripture, particularly that of our Lord. I ask that You would speak to the hearts of all who are here. Father, I ask that there would be no person here who would walk away from Christ who would take his place or her place with the crucifiers and put Him again to open shame, crucifying the Son of God afresh; but that all would confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father, and to their own

eternal blessing and salvation. Do that work in every heart we pray. Amen.

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