



SERMON STUDY GUIDE

“JOHN 18:28-40”

WEEKLY QUESTIONS

- What stood out to you from the sermon?
- What stood out to you from the text?
- The main theme of John’s Gospel is that by believing in Jesus as God’s son we find life.
 1. How did you find life when reading this passage?
 2. Did you personally find life in a specific way from the sermon this week?
- How did the sermon or passage point you to Jesus?

DETAILS

Jesus’s trial before Pontus Pilate is retold in all four Gospels, but the story is remarkably longer in John (John 18:28–19:16) when compared with the other Gospels, which devote only a few verses to the encounter (Matt 27:11–14 // Mark 15:2–5 // Luke 23:2–5). Additionally, John does not retell the story of Jesus’s trial before Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders (see Matt 26:57–68 // Mark 14:53–65 // Luke 22:66–71). The John’s retelling of the story speeds through the trials by Jewish leaders and slows down to linger on Jesus’s trial before Pontius Pilate.

This week, we overhear the first part of the trial of Jesus before Pilate. Throughout the trial, the scene alternates between the Jewish leaders outside of Pilate’s residence, where the leaders remain to avoid impurity before the Passover (John 18:28), and the inside where Jesus answers Pilate’s questions.

1. OUTSIDE: JESUS BROUGHT TO PILATE (18:28–32)

The leaders in Jerusalem have wanted Jesus dead for quite some time (John 5:18; 7:1, 20; 8:59; 10:31; 11:8, 50), and they need to work with the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate to get the job done because they want Jesus crucified (18:32; see also John 3:14; 12:32–33; 21:19).

In John’s Gospel, the Jesus faces opposition from Jewish leaders for:

- Healing on the Sabbath (John 5:1–18; 9:14–16, 24)
- Claiming to be God (John 5:17–18; 8:58–59; 10:24–39; 19:7)
- Teaching (John 7:12, 45–49)
- Threat to the Jerusalem Temple (John 11:47–53; see also 2:18–22)

Pilate tries to avoid the controversy as an internal dispute (18:30), but the Jews are seeking to kill Jesus with Roman authority (18:31). Pilate is forced to take the case, because the Jewish leaders are intent on getting him crucified.

- Why do you think the Jerusalem leadership was so intent to get Jesus crucified?
- Crucifixion was a form of torture and shame that would have discredited Jesus as someone chosen by God (see 1 Cor 1:18; Gal 3:13–14)

Although the Roman governor of Judea typically lived in Caesarea Maritima (Acts 23:23–24; 25:1–13), the Jewish historian Josephus indicates that the Roman governor would bring a cohort of soldiers to Jerusalem for festivals and preside over judicial issues (Wars of the Jews 2.224; Antiquities of the Jews 18.55; 20.106). Pilate was the governor of Judea for 11 years (26/27–37 AD), a relatively long tenure for a region that usually saw new governors every two years.

Pilate is mentioned in the Gospels as well as by ancient historians, including the Jewish authors (Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus) as well as the Roman historian Tacitus (Annals 15.44). Philo and Josephus describe a leader who was openly contemptuous of the Jewish people and their devotion to the one God of Israel. In one case, Pilate brought military standards to Jerusalem with images honoring the Roman Emperor



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as divine. Unsurprisingly, the residents of Jerusalem protested (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18.55–59, Jewish Wars 2.169–174). Pilate also stole funds from the Jerusalem temple to construct an aqueduct (Antiquities of the Jews 18.60–62; Jewish Wars 2.175–176). Although effective enough to hold his post, Pilate was no friend to the Jewish populace that he governed. His main concern was to please his superiors by maintaining control in Judea. If he had to rob and humiliate the Jewish population to accomplish that aim, he was happy to do so.

When his patron, Sejanus, was executed for suspicion of sedition in 31 AD, Pilate made a public spectacle of honoring the emperor Tiberius with golden shields decorating the Jewish Temple. Jewish leaders protested and Tiberius ordered the shields removed (Philo, Embassy to Gaius, 299–305). Because of Sejanus, Pilate would have been especially sensitive to any accusation of failing to sufficiently support the Roman Emperor.

- Have you ever worked with or for someone who had their personal success as the highest priority regardless of the effects it had on others?

2. INSIDE: FIRST QUESTION IS JESUS A KING? (18:33–38A)

All four Gospels describe the charge against Jesus when on trial with Pilate as whether he claims to be the “King of the Jews” (John 18:33, 39; 19:3, 14, 15; see also Matt 27:11 // Mark 15:2 // Luke 23:2–3). Additionally, each of the four Gospels records the title “King of the Jews” inscribed as the charge against Jesus written on the titulus above Jesus’s head on the cross (John 19:19 // Matt 27:37 // Mark 15:26 // Luke 23:38). In the dialogue with Pilate, Jesus defines his kingdom as “otherworldly” in two specific ways. First, his kingdom is not advanced through violence (John 18:36). Second, Jesus testifies to truth from heaven (John 18:37; see also John 3:31; 8:23; 16:28). Jesus is the king whose reign is not enforced at the edge of a sword or perpetuated by lies and deception.

- How can Christians seriously honor the kingdom of God as their priority?
 1. Think about the Lord’s prayer (Matt 6:10).
 2. Think about the citizenship of Christians (Phil 3:20–21)
 3. On the rulers of this world see also John 12:31; 1 Cor 2:8; Eph 2:2–3.
- Have you ever seen Christians confuse earthly kingdoms with their highest priority?
- Have you seen people confuse their agendas with God’s kingdom?
- What does the kingdom of God look like in our lives?

RESPOND

- How does this passage encourage you, challenge you, or change you in your efforts to become more like Jesus?
- What is one thing you learned about yourself from God’s Word? How will you respond in obedience this week?
- Who is someone you can have a conversation with about what Jesus is doing in your life or invite to join you at a CU Church gathering.

PRAY

... for each other and spend time praising God. Pray that he will show you how to better love God and love people.