



**Not Guilty, But Death Anyhow?
The Problem with Leaning on Public Opinion for Anything
John 18:38-19:16**

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Some of what we will be examining today will be hard to hear and even harder to study without becoming emotionally involved. We are still examining the illegal trials of Jesus, but we will now also start seeing the results of the beatings and the suffering He endured for us.

Every time I study this, I fall more in love with the Savior as I see what He endured on my behalf realizing that he is paying my penalty for my sin.



We learn in the Bible that we are not to be part of this world system. The culture that we see around us today, is simply an extension of the fallen world system.

1 John 2:15–17

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” (NKJV)

What that means practically is that any effort to cater to the world, or the opinion of the world is one that is fraught with disaster. Starting a church and having it comply with the felt needs of a community are one of the ways to start a church, it is also one of the ways to grieve the Holy Spirit.

In the Bible, the classic example of a church that is into felt needs and busy making folks feel good about themselves is the church in Laodicea, which Jesus says nothing good about at all (Revelation 3:14-22).

When Jesus addresses that church, He is dictating the letter to John as part of His revelation to John of what will be taking place in the last days of planet earth.

Jesus is not in that church, He is outside of it knocking on the door and asking individuals in it to invite Him in. As you look around today, it is unfortunate that that is the case all over.

In other words, majority rule, since Laodicea is also an example of a church led by the people in it, is not exactly what the Bible portrays as being the most effective model for a church.

What we will see in John, is that Jesus will be subjected to a public opinion poll like what we see all around our culture today.

The voice of the majority, especially in this world system, is frequently wrong. Not right.

I have been told not to plant a church in Hobe Sound but instead, go elsewhere where there would be a ready audience. But God called us to Hobe Sound. I have been told that there are buildings which we “might” be able to rent elsewhere if we were interested, but God called us to Hobe Sound.

Nobody wants a new church in Hobe Sound, but God called us to plant one here. Why? I have no idea; I simply follow Him and His guidance. It is His church after all and it is His responsibility to grow the church, not mine or anyone else's.

But Ken, you need to conduct a survey of the area and find out what the needs of the community are so you can meet those needs. Again, why? I already know the need of every community on the face of the planet from the Bible, redemption. It is all about Jesus Christ and Him crucified and raised from the dead.

But public opinion could help grow Calvary Chapel. Really? How did public opinion work for Jesus? Statistics is a funny science. It is basically scientific opinion polling. I have worked as a statistician as well as with actuaries for most of the last 30 years or so. Sample size is important. So is bias. If your sample size is large enough but highly biased, you get really strange results. The same exists for the reverse too.

The magic sauce is finding just the right sample size and one that is large enough to deal with any potential bias in the results. For an actuary, the solution is simple, give me “all” the data from everyone all the time.



But again, there is that bias thing, even in the data. There are mathematical ways to deal with it, but it is still there.

What we will see here in John, is the typical 21st century political solution being exercised, “let’s do what the people want to do.”

But what happens if all the “people” are not all the people, and you have an extremely biased subset who block “all” the people from being heard? We are going to see the results of that.

Jesus and Pilate have been talking. Ostensibly it was an examination of Jesus by Pilate, but Jesus took command of the conversation. Making use of what Pilate stated about Him and His kingship.

If Jesus’ kingship is indistinguishable from his testimony to the truth, and if his followers are characterized by allegiance to his testimony rather than by violent upheaval, Pilate is forced to recognize that Jesus is the victim of a Sanhedrin plot. Moreover, there is an implicit invitation in Jesus’ words. The man in the dock invites his judge to be his follower, to align himself with those who are ‘of the truth’. Jesus is not dangerous; he may also be getting under Pilate’s skin. (Carson 1991, 595)

This is why the conversation ended abruptly with Pilate’s comment about truth. A question that is still asked by many today. But Pilate desperately wanted to be popular with the Jewish people because that would help him last a bit longer in the job he has.

He makes his comment about truth and then comes out to tell the Temple leadership and those who have started to gather, the results of his examination.

Jesus is no revolutionary. He represents no danger to the state.⁹³ He may safely be released, and indeed he ought in common justice to be released. Pilate accordingly sets himself to do this. He goes outside and speaks to the Jews. John does not refer to “the high priests” or the like. His words seem to mean that Pilate addresses himself to the crowd. He tells them that he has found no crime in Jesus. (Morris 1995, 682)

John 18:38

“Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And after saying this, he came out again to the Jews and said to them, “I find no grounds at all for charges in His case.” (NASB 2020)

There is more to this statement than what we see on the surface. On Palm Sunday, a little more than 3 ½ days ago, Jesus entered Jerusalem, not in fulfillment of the coming of the Kingdom, but He entered to fulfill Passover.

Christ’s entry into Jerusalem is now all about Passover.

Passover is coming, and this is one that is significant. Jesus knows that the final atonement for sin is about to be made. This day, predetermined by Daniel, is an important day when it comes to Passover.

“The date when this event occurred, insofar as the Jewish calendar is concerned, was the tenth of the Jewish month of Nisan. According to Exodus 12:3–6, it was on the tenth day of the month of Nisan that the lamb was to be set aside. Between the tenth and the fourteenth of the month, the lamb was to be inspected and tested to be sure that it was without spot and without blemish (Ex. 12:5). Beginning on the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, the Passover occurred. So the Triumphal Entry was not the time that Jesus was offering Himself as the King, that was nothing new, but rather, this was the day of the setting aside of the Lamb of God.” (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 4)



Jesus is not reoffering the Kingdom. That has already been rejected and is gone from the current generation, yet to be offered to a future remnant during the day of the Lord. He has now come so that the period of testing could take place to prove He was without blemish or spot.

The Lamb of God had been tested four different times by Sadducees, Pharisees, Herodians, elders and priests. He was attacked four times, and four times He responded. Indeed, He proved Himself to be without blemish and without spot. Even the Pharisees and the Sadducees were silenced by His response. The fact that He was now proved to be without blemish and without spot meant that He could proceed to the cross and become the final Passover sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7). (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 15)

And who declares Him to be without spot, Pilate does.

In John 1:29 He was identified as the Lamb of God by John the Baptist. Now, in what is the last official word about Jesus, a Gentile, a Roman, in opposition to the Sanhedrin who found nothing to charge Him with, declares Jesus is innocent. He is without blemish and worthy to be the Passover lamb for all of us. In fact, Pilate will say this three times (John 18:38, 19:4, 19:6), and that is significant since to a Jew, three is the number of completion.

We need to remember that Pilate really did not want to put Jesus to death, but He was blackmailed into it because of his own past.

John does not talk about the transfer to Herod Antipas and the ensuing trial there. But the conclusion did not change, innocent of all charges.

John 18:38–40

“Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?” And after saying this, he came out again to the Jews and said to them, “I find no grounds at all for charges in His case. However, you have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at the Passover; therefore do you wish that I release for you the King of the Jews?” So they shouted again, saying, “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” Now Barabbas was a rebel.” (NASB 2020)

Since the Jewish authorities had accused Jesus of sedition and demanded his execution, Pilate was not prepared simply to release Jesus. He realized that the Passover amnesty would be the ideal vehicle for Jesus’ release. The Jewish people celebrated Israel’s liberation from Egypt, which suggests the possibility of an amnesty at the Passover festival. According to John, this was a Jewish custom which, according to Mark and Matthew, was followed by Pilate. (Schnabel 2018, 288)

There is now a crowd there, one most likely invited by the Sanhedrin.

Seeing this, Pilate decided to use the avenue of public opinion, so he decided to offer amnesty under this umbrella and intentionally chose the options for the people, Jesus, who was completely innocent, or Barabbas who had been involved in rebellion in Jerusalem resulting in the deaths of Jews there in the city. He believed he was making a good political decision, and the forgone conclusion would be Jesus released and the rebel to be party number three of the crucifixion event for the day. But the crowd there in front of him had been packed by those the Sanhedrin had prebriefed. In other words, the environment had been rigged. Of course, that never happens today.

It happens all the time. The fallen world system hates the Lord, hates anything connected to Him and as a result also hates Christians who truly are following the Lord as well as the Jews. This hatred will be exemplified during the Tribulation as the Beast will engage in genocide against the Jews as well as against Tribulation believers.

Yes, the system is indeed rigged. It is the world being the world.



Pilate was naïve in thinking the Sanhedrin would select Jesus over a rebel. To his surprise, they all opted for Barabbas, a terrorist.

John 19:1–4

“So Pilate then took Jesus and had Him flogged. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and placed it on His head, and put a purple cloak on Him; and they repeatedly came up to Him and said, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and slapped Him in the face again and again. And then Pilate came out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing Him out to you so that you will know that I find no grounds at all for charges in His case.”” (NASB 2020)

This simple statement does not give us all the details regarding what has been happening to Jesus. Jesus has already been through several illegal trials and subjected to abuse by the Jewish leadership, Herod’s troops and now the Romans.

Jesus has been slapped, His beard has been pulled out, He has been struck by numerous people multiple times, and now He has also been flogged by the Romans.

So as Jesus is brought back out by Pilate, there would be a noticeable gasp among those who are in the crowd as they see Him. Maybe they did not expect to see what they see, but it would not change their opinion of what they wanted to have happen next. The Sanhedrin wants Jesus dead.

Isaiah gives us, in advance, the details.

Isaiah 52:13–14

“Look, my servant will succeed! He will be elevated, lifted high, and greatly exalted— (just as many were horrified by the sight of you) he was so disfigured he no longer looked like a man;” (NET 2nd ed.)

The text is clear, the Servant, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, was to be beaten so severely and the disfigurement so complete, that it will become difficult to determine if he is human. That is what has been happening bit by bit with the illegal trials but now comes down full bore because of the Romans engaging in their beatings. We see this clearly in Luke 22, about how the Temple police treated Him.

Luke 22:63–65

“Now the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, “Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?” And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.” (NKJV)

Their passions, indeed, intensified their bitterness, for they were fierce Jewish bigots. He was to die as a false prophet, and as such they treated Him, racking their ingenuity to invent insult and injury. Having blindfolded Him, some struck him violently on the head with their fists, or perhaps with the vine-stick which the Roman centurions and other officials carried as their sign of rank, and were wont to use on the face or head of the soldiers; for some of the captors of Jesus had such staves with them; others struck Him with their open hands, while still others, adding the greatest indignity an Oriental could offer, spat in His face; crying, as they insulted and tortured Him, Prophecy to us, Thou Messiah, who is it that did it? (Stout 1891, 30)

The ones who do the flogging for Rome are professionals who do this for a living. They are executioners and they used tools designed to torture those they intended to execute.

They would use a whip “made of several leather straps, to which were attached sharp, abrasive items, such as nails, glass, or rocks. Scourging resulted in severe laceration of the skin and damage to the flesh beneath.” (Evans 2008, 30)



It was not unusual for the results of the beating to cause death, so they had developed down to a fine art how far they could go. But still, the beating would have resulted in the back of Jesus being completely laid open.

Literally, His back would be flayed open with muscles, bone and possibly, internal organs all visible. Meanwhile His face was swollen due to the multiple beating He had received there, and chunks of beard were gone having been pulled out. His eyes were approaching the point of being swollen shut and His blood covered His face and entire body.

In addition, Jesus was mocked by the Roman soldiers, most of whom would have been recruited in the local area but were not Jewish.

Pilate foolishly hoped the scourging of Jesus would satisfy the crowd's desire to see Jesus suffer. After all, he may have thought, these are pilgrims seeking mercy for themselves from God; perhaps they will seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God. He naively thought that the Jewish audience would say Jesus had been punished enough and call for Pilate to set Him free. (Gilmore 2001, 100-101)

Recall the political position that Pilate found himself in. He needed desperately to appease the Sanhedrin and improve relations with Herod.

By ordering the scourging of Jesus, Pilate was signaling to the Sanhedrin, crucifixion is going to happen to this man. Scourging was always step one.

For the Roman soldier serving as executioners, they knew how long, and how much in order to have the one suffering the punishment die quickly rather than linger for days on the cross.

By ordering this now, Pilate created the impression he was fully in on the plot.

He had made mistakes and those mistakes had been complained about all the way to the Emperor. Then his major sponsor had gone and tried to kill the Emperor as well. He wants to free Jesus, but his past has come to haunt him, and the Sanhedrin has no problem blackmailing him into giving them what they want. Pilate may have even been actually relying on the now inhuman appearance of Jesus to move the crowd towards mercy. He was trying to play the emotion card on the crowd, but that would not work. The Sanhedrin had made sure they had enough of their sympathizers in the crowd and, knowing crowd dynamics, were relying on that dynamic to be used to lead to the decision they wanted, crucifixion.

John 19:4-7

“And then Pilate came out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing Him out to you so that you will know that I find no grounds at all for charges in His case.” Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold, the Man!” So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they shouted, saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him; for I find no grounds for charges in His case!” 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!”” (NASB 2020)

Pilate is playing the theatrics of this moment to the hilt since he wants to release Jesus, but he is convinced that the crowd must be the one demanding that. Then he could simply turn and be magnanimous and release Jesus giving the crowd what they want.

He did not count on the crowd being so filled with those who wanted to see Jesus dead. If you were to put together a crowd of people today, you would most likely find the same results. Most people today like their Jesus as a baby in the manger, not as a man demanding and expecting obedience to God, and much less that He Himself is God.



Pilate is trying to avoid accountability, but he is accountable. Jesus has already told him though that the one who delivered Him to Pilate is the one who is carry the heaviest load, that would be Caiaphas, the son in law of Annas.

Let's be real about who they are. Those involved in and seeking the death of Jesus are evil men, they are not misled men. They are under the control of diabolical intelligent evil in the person of Satan, and they put themselves into that position willingly.

As we examine events taking place all around us today, we tend to think the same, misguided people. But the Bible would say otherwise.

They are not misguided, they are evil wicked sinners against the Most High God and are doing the work of the one they are following, Satan. They are not Satan worshipers, but we learn in the scriptures that if you are not for the Lord, then you are against Him, there is no middle of the road.

“Our Lord emphasized in His conversation with Nicodemus that human nature is intentionally powerless to correct attitudes and behavior opposed to God. No one can self-correct himself or give himself rebirth.” (Gilmore 2001, 104) Without Jesus, we are doomed.

Romans 1:18–23

“What is revealed is God’s anger from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who in their wickedness keep suppressing the truth; because what is known about God is plain to them, since God has made it plain to them. For ever since the creation of the universe his invisible qualities—both his eternal power and his divine nature—have been clearly seen, because they can be understood from what he has made. Therefore, they have no excuse; because, although they know who God is, they do not glorify him as God or thank him. On the contrary, they have become futile in their thinking; and their undiscerning hearts have become darkened. Claiming to be wise, they have become fools! In fact, they have exchanged the glory of the immortal God for mere images, like a mortal human being, or like birds, animals or reptiles!” (CJB)

Those things we see in our culture today that are clearly and plainly evil, are due to those who have declined to follow the Lord.

Evil deeds point to evil hearts, and we struggle with that idea since at some point prior to coming to Jesus, that is where we were. But Jesus had been incredibly clear to Nicodemus.

John 3:19–21

““Now this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, but people loved the darkness rather than the light. Why? Because their actions were wicked. For everyone who does evil things hates the light and avoids it, so that his actions won’t be exposed. But everyone who does what is true comes to the light, so that all may see that his actions are accomplished through God.”” (CJB)

Examining the players, all evil, we see this:

- Caiaphas and Annas – Spiritually blind committed to the worship of money, position and power. Religious, but bitterly antichristian.
- Judas – Unbelief, theft, ambition and ultimately a murderer.
- Herod Antipas – Unbelief, murder, rejection of God, adultery, and on and on.
- Pilate – Unbelief, antisemitic, murderer, power hungry, oppressive, compromised.

Pilate hears what they say, crucify Him, and now he is frustrated. It seems that nothing he has tried so far, has worked. He was hoping they would see Him and want mercy for Him, not the result he got.



We must remember this, as believers, do not ever expect anything from the world or the world system other than persecution. Yes, we have been told no multiple times in attempts to rent a place for Calvary Chapel, the Lord will give us the place He wants us to have in His time. When that happens, it will be a miracle because right now, the world is acting like the world.

In his frustration, Pilate tells the Sanhedrin to do it yourself. They reply with the statement Jesus had made about Himself to them, they really did get it when He said it.

John 19:7

“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!”” (NASB 2020)

Now Pilate is scared to death. This is someone who says He is the Son of God. What if He is? What will the results be for me of committing deicide? Killing a god.

John 19:8–12

“Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; and he entered the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to Him, “Are you not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over Me at all, if it had not been given to you from above; for this reason the one who handed Me over to you has the greater sin.” As a result of this, Pilate made efforts to release Him; but the Jews shouted, saying, “If you release this Man, you are not a friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar!”” (NASB 2020)

The fear is what drove Pilate to talk to Jesus again. He takes Jesus into the praetorium to talk. Now you can hear the concern in his voice as he asks Jesus, “where are you from?” And God does not respond to him at first. He had heard all of the stories, and all about the miracles too. He had a general idea that Jesus may be divine, but now, upon hearing of the claim of deity, he is seriously concerned.

Pilate presses the point. He wants to know who it is he is talking to, and Jesus says nothing to him until he alleges to have authority over life and death. Jesus points out that he only has that because God gave it to him. Oh, and the Jewish leaders have greater sin than you.

It really doesn't matter now. The Sanhedrin had the expectation of crucifixion, Pilate telegraphed that it was coming. That is what they want and in order to get it, they start telegraphing the nature of the next Imperial complaint to go to Rome, this man said He is a King and only Caesar is King.

What a bunch of phonies. They would no more follow Caesar than the man in the moon. But it is enough to add to the overall escalating fear in Pilate.

At this point, there has been no official judgment from the Roman government, oh, and the trials have all been illegal.

The happy thought going through Pilate's mind at this point is that he has been backed into a corner by the religious leadership and now they are threatening me with treason if I do not go ahead and execute this man, this same man they tell me who has claimed to be the Son of God.

It is at this point we find out what his true character is, he is a coward. In the battle of mob bosses, he blinked. He indeed has the upper hand with troops, but he wants and craves the approval of Caesar, the approval of the people would be nice too and he seriously misjudged all of them.



John 19:13–16

“Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement—but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Look, your King!” So they shouted, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king except Caesar.” So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.” (NASB 2020)

Judgment would normally take place in the Praetorium where the Bema seat is, Pilate has the seat moved to the courtyard.

In the Greek, there are some questions that come up because of word for sit. “The Greek word ekathisen (19:13) can be taken either transitively (Pilate made Jesus to sit on the judgment seat) or intransitively (Pilate sat on the judgment seat).” (Kanagaraj 2013, 184)

This brings up an entirely different picture than what we have become used to, Jesus seated on the Bema seat, not Pilate.

It is highly possible, then, that he made Jesus sit on the judgment seat, not to mock at him, but to make a final attempt to exhibit Jesus as the King of the Jews, ironically as a suffering Man and as the judge of all humans (5:22, 27). This interpretation gives good sense to Pilate’s statement “Behold your King!” (19:14b) and to the cry of “the Jews” to lift up Jesus (apparently from the judgment seat) and crucify him (19:15). The theological motif is that by bringing Jesus to be judged “the Jews” were passing judgment upon themselves. Pilate’s demonstration of Jesus as King is at the sixth hour (noon) on the day of preparation of the Passover (Nisan 14, Thursday; 19:14a). The instigation to crucify Jesus comes from “the Jews,” who are altogether responsible for having crucified Jesus. (Kanagaraj 2013, 184-185)

As we see Jesus seated there, I am reminded what Isaiah says.

Isaiah 53:3–6

“He was despised and rejected— a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.” (NLT)

“The leadership of Israel claimed Caesar as their king and rejected the true King, Jesus the Messiah. Pilate’s final attempt to have Him released ended in failure.” But the reality is this, YAHWEH is the King of Israel (1 Samuel 8:7). (Fruchtenbaum, The Messianic Bible Study Collection 1983, 21)

And with that, then Pilate made his judgement condemning Jesus to death for sedition and releasing free, the one who had committed that crime, Barabbas. That alone is a picture of what Jesus is doing for each of us as He is going to the cross to pay for our sin.

The religious leadership decided in favor of Caesar, in favor of the world rather than in favor of Jesus, so did Pilate.

They had to decide, and the decision went on the record. Each of us must decide as well. We, all of us, must go on the record either in favor of Jesus or in favor of the world. We may not think what we are deciding in favor of is the world, but per the Bible, it is. We may think we are deciding in favor of choice, or



in favor of love, or in favor of work, or justice or whatever. But unless the decision is for Jesus, the decision is for the world and the world is under the rule of Satan.

Bottom line, Jesus or Satan, heaven or hell, pretty basic.

Deciding in favor of Jesus is not hard, there is nothing you must do except:

Admit you're are a sinner; Jesus died on the cross for all of us because we indeed are. Believe that He died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead. And acknowledge Him as Lord. That's it and everyone I know who has made that decision has never regretted it.

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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