

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 321

Series: St. John's Passion - Gospel of John chapters 12-21

Verses: John 18:33-38

Topic: Pilate: I Find No Fault In Him

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Write To The Author: John Edmiston – johned@aibi.ph

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John 18:33-38 MKJV Then Pilate entered into the praetorium again and called Jesus and said to him, Are you the king of the Jews? (34) Jesus answered him, Do you say this thing of yourself, or did others say it to you about Me? (35) Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have 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 fight so that I might not be delivered to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here. (37) Pilate then said to Him, Are you a king then? Jesus answered, You say *it* that I am a king. To this *end* I was born, and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice. (38) 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 fault in him.

Pilate clearly knew that Jesus was innocent and after his questioning reports “I find no fault in Him”. This is an extraordinary statement from someone like Pilate who was fond of crucifying Jews and generally detested them. Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea between 27-37AD and is mentioned in all the gospels. His role in Christ's death is put together by the ISBE thus:

(begin ISBE quote)

The parts may be fitted together thus: Jesus is brought to Pilate (Mat 27:2; Mar 15:1; Luk 23:1; Joh 18:28). Pilate asks for a specific accusation (Joh 18:29-32). Pilate enters the praetorium, questions Jesus about His alleged kingship, and receives the answer that He rules over the kingdom of truth, and over the hearts of men who acknowledge the truth. Pilate asks: “What is truth?” (reported briefly in Mat 27:11; Mar 15:2; Luk 23:3, and with more detail Joh 18:33-38). Pilate brings Him forth (this is the only detail that needs to be supplied in order to make the harmony complete, and in itself it is probable enough), and many accusations are made against Him, to which, to Pilate's surprise, He makes no reply (Mat 27:12-14; Mar 15:3-5). Pilate affirms His innocence, but the charges are repeated (Luk 23:4 f). Pilate sends Him to Herod, who in mockery clothes Him in shining raiment, and sends Him back (Luk 23:6-12). Pilate declares that neither Herod or himself can find any fault in Him, and offers to scourge Him and let Him go (Luk 23:13-16; Joh 18:38). Pilate offers to release Jesus in accordance with an ancient custom (Mat 27:15-18; Mar 15:6-10; Joh 18:39). Pilate's wife sends him a message warning him not to harm Jesus because she has suffered many things in a dream because of Him (Mat 27:19). The people, persuaded thereto by the chief priests and elders, choose Barabbas, and, in spite of the repeated protests of Pilate, demand that Jesus shall be crucified (Mat 27:20-23; Mar 15:11-14; Luk 23:18-23; Joh 18:40). Pilate washes his hands before the people, and they take the guilt of the deed upon themselves and their children (Mat 27:24 f). Pilate releases

Barabbas and orders Jesus to be scourged (Mat_27:26; Mar_15:15; Luk_23:24 f). Jesus is scourged and mocked, buffeted and spit upon (Mat_27:27-31; Mar_15:16-20; Joh_19:1-3). Pilate again declares the innocence of Jesus, brings Him out, and says: "Behold the man!" The chief priests and officers cry out: "Crucify him!" They accuse Him of making Himself the Son of God. Pilate, becoming more afraid at this saying, once more interviews the prisoner in the praetorium. He again tries to release Him, but is accused of treachery to the emperor. Overborne by this, Pilate sits on the judgment seat, and says: "Behold your King!" Again the cry goes up: "Away with him, crucify him!" Pilate says: "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered with a final renunciation of all that God had given them, saying: "We have no king but Caesar" (Joh_19:4-15). Pilate sentences Jesus and gives Him up to be crucified, and He is led away (Mat_27:31; Mar_15:20; Luk_23:26; Joh_19:16). Pilate writes a title for the cross, and refuses to alter it (Joh_19:19-22). The Jews ask of Pilate that the legs of the three who were crucified might be broken (Joh_19:31). Joseph of Arimathea begs the body of Jesus from Pilate (Mat_27:57, Mat_27:58; Mar_15:42 f; Luk_23:50-52; Joh_19:38). Pilate is surprised that Jesus has died so soon, and questions the centurion (Mar_15:44). He gives up to Joseph the body of Jesus (Mat_27:58; Mar_15:45; Joh_19:38). The chief priests and the Pharisees obtain permission from Pilate to take precautions against any theft of the body of Jesus (Mat_27:62-66).
(end ISBE quote)

These passages declare the innocence of Jesus and the guilt of the Jews who forced Pilate's hand in His death. Pilate obviously wants nothing to do with this case. Finally faced with a ravaging mob Pilate washes his hands: Matthew 27:24-25 MKJV But when Pilate saw that it gained nothing, but rather *that* a tumult was made, he took water and washed *his* hands before the crowd, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person. You see to it. (25) Then all the people answered and said, Let His blood *be* on us and on our children.

Jesus was a completely innocent man crucified by jealous Temple officials and bloodthirsty Pharisees. No normal court of justice would have found Jesus guilty of anything. Hebrews declares Him to be "without sin". (Hebrews 4:15)

Also Jesus was no threat to Caesar because His Kingdom was "not of this world" and so His servants were not going to fight for it. (John 18:36) We need to remember that God's Kingdom is independent of all earthly political systems and that we should not take up violent cudgels for such causes.

Jesus was innocent because He lived totally for the Truth. "To this end I was born, and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice." Truth is rare in politics, which is why Pilate answers "What is truth?" Christians should be independent-minded people of truth and reason not adherents of partisanship and propaganda. We must stand for the truth even if it is unpopular and unfashionable. Pilate was swayed by vociferous public opinion, but Jesus always stood firm for the truth.

Blessings,
John Edmiston

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