

Trial of the King – Part II
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John 18:28-40, John 19:1-16
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Amen. You've blessed us with some wonderful music today. Turn with me in your Bibles to John 18, we are looking at the same passage we did last week, John 18:28 through John 19:16. These 29 verses, from John 18:28 through John 19:16, present to us the trial of the King. That is the title of the message again this morning, 'The Trial of the King' last week. We had that same title, so it is 'The Trial of the King – Part II'.

Today the focus of our message will be upon Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor who is trying our King, the Lord Jesus Christ. This governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, is one of the most tragic figures in all of Scripture, and indeed is one of the most tragic figures in all of history. We see, as the text unfolds for us, that Pilate is an unwilling participant. He doesn't want to be where he is. He doesn't want to be in the place that he stands. He stands as judge in a trial he would rather, in any way possible, avoid, but the fact is he can't avoid it. The reality is that, I think there is a sense in which John is presenting to us a picture in this account, that presents to us, and to every person who reads it, the very real and inescapable reality that every one of us must stand in judgment of Jesus Christ. Because what we find out is that the trial of the King is your own trial. That when you judge Jesus Christ, when you make your judgment about Jesus Christ, you are in fact being judged by Jesus Christ. That is what we see happen here.

Pilate is forced to examine Jesus, and make a verdict, and take action upon the outcome of the trial. And the question is: *What will he do with Jesus?* And what we're going to see is that he examines Jesus, and he actually comes to the right verdict, but he takes the wrong action. There is the possibility, the very real possibility, that we can do the same thing. There will be many people who, on the judgement day, in a sense will have rendered the right verdict, but never took the right action, and are thus sent away from God forever. So this is a very instructive passage for us to consider. What will I do with Jesus?

I want to read the entire passage this morning. We worked through it last week in sequence. I want to read it, and we're going to talk about it in a little more general way as we examine Pilate's role. But Verse 28 of John 18.



*John 18:28-40 ~ Then they *led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. 29 Therefore Pilate went out to them and *said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" 30 They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you." 31 So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," 32 to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.*

*33 Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" 35 Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests 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 be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." 37 Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify 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 guilt in Him. 39 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?" 40 So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.*

*John 19:1-16 ~ Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; 3 and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face. 4 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." 5 Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate *said to them, "Behold, the Man!" 6 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." 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.”

*8 Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; 9 and he entered into the Praetorium again and *said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate *said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” 11 Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” 12 As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”*

13 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. 14 Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he *said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” 15 So they cried out, “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 but Caesar.” 16 So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

Let’s pray together.

Father, as we come to Your word, we are mindful of our great need of grace. We ask that You might, as we consider the awesome reality of the Son of God becoming a sacrifice for our sins, that You might open the eyes of our hearts, work in us, true repentance, genuine faith, for the glory of Your Son. We pray this in His name, Amen.

‘The Trial of the King’. We’ve noted, last time, and actually throughout John, that John, as he writes his Gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he is especially adept at presenting the truth in such a way that the irony is astonishing, and you see it in this passage a number of different ways. ‘The Trial of the King’, and in fact, I chose that title because there is a sense in which it captures a little bit of the irony, the genitive, ‘The Trial *of* the King’. How is that ‘*of*’, the preposition used? It appears that, in the straightforward reading of the text, and the reality of what is happening, that the King is on trial, so it is ‘The Trial of the King’. And yet, in another sense, what is happening is the King is the judge, and He is trying everyone else involved in the trial. In fact, it is interesting that John has said,

recorded for us, one of the sayings of Jesus that is recorded only in John's Gospel. In John 5:22, He says this:

John 5:22 ~ For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

The Son of God is the judge, and so the judge is being judged, but in being judged, the judge is judging. We saw this irony last time when we looked at Jesus versus the Jewish leaders. Just to remind you of that real quickly, to see how the roles are reversed as you read through the passage, the same thing happens today as we look at Pilate. The Jewish leaders are those who accuse Jesus. They are those who seek to condemn Jesus. But in the marvelous providence of God, the roles are reversed as we just read the flow of events. They make basically three charges against Jesus, and I didn't spell this out clearly enough at the end of last week. So let me just do it real quickly.

They made three charges. They said that Jesus is an evil-doer. They said that in Verse 33 when they say to Pilate, "We wouldn't have delivered Him to you if He wasn't an evil-doer." They say He is an evil-doer. They basically say He is a rebel, He is guilty of sedition, because Pilate says, "So You are the King of the Jews?" That is what they had told him, "He makes Himself out to be the King of the Jews." And he says it explicitly in Chapter 19, Verse 12, "Shall I release to you the King of the Jews?" So the charge was that He was a rebel. He is an evil-doer, He is a rebel, and thirdly, He is guilty of blasphemy. In Chapter 19, Verse 7, the Jews yell out, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." So they have three charges—He is just an evil-doer in general, He is a rebel, and He is a blasphemer. But in reality, as the text unfolds, what you see is the Jews are the evil-doers.

The Jews are the ones who are going against all Jewish canon law in the way they carry out trials. They are violating every rule, they are doing evil in everything they do, and they are the rebels. It is pictured in their asking Barabbas to be released, who was guilty of robbery and insurrection. I think John, writing in remember about 85 A.D., he is writing 15 years after the Jewish war ended. These same Jewish leaders, or their followers, would revolt against Rome in 66 A.D., about 35 years after the events here recorded. They would be guilty of revolt, they would be the rebels, and they would be violently put down in 70 A.D. with the temple being destroyed.

So they accused Jesus of being an evil-doer and a rebel, and they accuse Jesus of blasphemy, but they are the evil-doers, and the rebels, and they are the blasphemers. Because in Verse 15, when the chief priests, he doesn't say the Jews at this point, he says the chief priests, the men who are the leaders of the worship of God, when they say, "We have no king but Caesar," they are blaspheming. The Jews, that unfold in the Old Testament, the Jews' only true King is God. You see this in Judges and Samuel. I mean, yes there is an earthly king, but the King of Israel is God, and when they say, "We have no king but Caesar," they are blaspheming. So they actually, the accusers, who seek to condemn, become those who are condemned.

Now, we are going to see that the judge, who seeks to judge actually is judged—Pilate. This role-reversal happens. We see, as we look back at the passage a little bit, that he is the one in the position of authority, clearly. The Jews can't do anything, they go to him and ask him for a death sentence, and Pilate claims to have authority in Chapter 19, Verse 10. After he takes Jesus back in to have a second interview with Him, and he says:

John 19:9-10 ~ "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 So Pilate *said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?"

See the emphatic nature of that statement? "I have authority to do this, and I have authority to do that!" Jesus doesn't disagree with him. He says:

John 19:11 ~ "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above;

"Yes, you do have authority, but the authority you have has been granted to you." So Pilate is in the position of authority and Pilate is also the one who stands as judge, in Verse 13, or sits on the judgement seat. John is careful to tell us that as it comes to a conclusion in Chapter 19:13. We have, "Anybody who makes himself out to be king opposes Caesar."

John 19:13 ~ Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat...

Pilate sits down on the judgment seat. So he is the one in authority, he has a position of supreme authority, he has the position of supreme power, it appears.

That's where we start. The two outline points are the same ones we've been using lately, *Observe the Action*, and then *Consider the Implications*. So now we are going to *Observe the Action*. We're going to see how the roles are reversed, and how God turns the tables.

1) Observe the Action:

A) Pilate Examines Jesus:

There are basically four sub-points under this first major point to observe what happens in the story. *Observe the Action*, first *Pilate Examines Jesus*, Verses 33-38, Chapter 18:33-38. Pilate enters the Praetorium and summoned Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" and he asked Him questions. But right away, Jesus then asked him a question, in Verse 34:

John 18:34 ~ ..."Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

Jesus basically knows that Pilate has been told that He is the King of the Jews, because Jesus knows everything, but He asks Pilate, this is why Jesus asked questions. When He asks a question, it is for the benefit of the person being questioned. That is really power, when you know the right answer to something in a situation, you know, you say you know what your kids should do? It is a lot of times very helpful, rather than just make a declaration, to ask a question. "What do you think you should do?" And to get them thinking, first of all, they then realize, "I don't know what to do. I'm ready now for some help." Maybe, maybe not, but they are closer than they were before you asked the question. So He asked the question to get the person to think about themselves, so what He is doing here, is He is actually turning the tables here right now. Jesus is being questioned, but then Jesus questions him, "The real question is what you think about Me. That's a question for you, that matters most for your own soul."

So Pilate continues the examination all the way through Verse 38, Jesus talking about His Kingdom not being of this world. Pilate says, "So You are a king?" and then Jesus reveals to him a sense of His plan. "Yes, I'm a King. For this I've been born. For this I've come into the world." Here He is speaking truth to Pilate. "I have come from outside of the world. My Kingdom is not in this world. I've come from Heaven. I am the King but My Kingdom is not a physical Kingdom, it is a spiritual Kingdom." He is inviting Pilate to consider the implications of this, and everyone who practices, He says, "Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

Then Pilate's first sad response is, "What is truth?" Disrespectful, ignorant, in a sense, blasphemous himself. He says, "What is truth?" in the face of the one who is truth, the God of Truth, who said, "I am the truth." "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," and Pilate says, "What is truth?"

He sounds very modern actually, doesn't he? Or post-modern I should say, very relevant. Pilate would be a hip guy today. Isn't that amazing? Two thousand years ago, he believed what so many people believe today, and think they are so hip to believe it. That, "What is truth? Is there really such a thing as truth? No, there is no absolute truth." This is what people believe. This is what our culture really thrives on. There is no one right answer about how you find God. There is no one right authority about truth. It is just whatever is truth to you. Pilate said the same thing, but there is only one truth, and there is only one God of Truth, and there is only one true King. But *Pilate Examines Jesus*, that is the first step in *Observe the Action*, Verses 33-38. He examines Jesus and all of us are called to do the same thing, to examine Jesus.

B) Pilate Reaches the Verdict:

Secondly, *Pilate Reaches the Verdict*. After he examines Jesus, after he says, "What is truth?" that disrespectful, basically blasphemous thing, he still reaches the right verdict.

John 18:38 ~ And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and *said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.

He reaches the right verdict. Jesus has done nothing worthy of the charges which have been made against Him. He is not guilty. In fact, He is going to repeat that verdict two more times, Verse 4 and Verse 6. "I find no guilt in Him." That is the wording every time. "I find no guilt in Him." In fact, the first and the last of those two, "I find no guilt in Him," have the extra pronoun, 'ego', e-g-o. We would say 'ee-goh', but the Greek was actually pronounced 'eh-goh'. It is the pronoun 'I', and so it is additional. Remember, if you've been with us you know that Greek already has the person and number in the verb, so you don't need the pronoun to tell you who did it. It is already he, she, you, you plural, is already in the verb, I. So the adding of the pronoun makes it more emphatic. So he is basically saying in Verse 38, "I myself find no guilt in Him," and he says the same thing in Verse 6, "I myself find no guilt in Him." So he says it three times, and it is bookended with that emphatic pronoun. He reaches the right verdict. And the force of the flow of

the story, he has questioned Jesus, he has examined Jesus, he has heard the charges, he has examined the evidence, and he has reached the right verdict.

C) Pilate Considers the Right Response:

Now the third point in *Observing the Action. Pilate Examines Jesus*, was first. *Pilate Reaches the Right Verdict*, is second. Number 3, *Pilate Considers the Right Response*. What you have here is the conflict in Pilate's heart. You have a double-minded man on display, who has looked at Jesus, has examined Jesus, and has come to the right conclusion intellectually about Jesus. "There is no guilt in Him," now he doesn't fully have the bigger picture, but just what he has, what does he do with it? That's what we want to see. He considers the right response. What is the right response? The right response is to release Him. I mean, He is innocent.

We have to step back, and I say this a lot of times, it is so important to, when you know a story so well, you lose sometimes the dynamic of what you should see. This story is appalling, and to be appalled by it, you have to kind of forget a little bit, read it like you've never read it before. And if you are reading an account of someone who is clearly innocent, who is examined, and tried, and found innocent, and then is condemned, there is a sense of indignation that rises up. And that is what happens, but Pilate, he doesn't make this, he doesn't make the wrong response quickly, he wavers for a while. So this third point, *Pilate Considers the Right Response*, what he should do, the right response is to release Jesus.

Now we know the sovereignty of God is at work here, and that God has ordained that Jesus is to be crucified. We understand that this is not an accident. We also understand that Pilate is guilty of his sin. He is guilty of condemning an innocent man. Jesus said as much in Chapter 19, Verse 11, when He said to him:

John 19:11 ~ ...“You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

He doesn't say Pilate has no sin, He says, "You have a lesser sin than the people who delivered Me to you, but you still have a sin." This is where we come in contact with the complimentary nature of the sovereignty of God, and the responsibility of man. The Bible is saying here, as it says consistently from Genesis to Revelation, that God is absolutely sovereign, and yet man is absolutely responsible. And there are places where we have trouble understanding that, but the reality is that is what God says, and that is what is true. And the reality of it,

Pilate is, at every step of this unfolding drama, he has a free will, and he is doing what his own heart wants to do. And what he ends up doing is incredibly heinous evil, and God is not making him do that because the Scripture is clear, James 1, God tempts no man. God is not the author of any evil and yet, the Lord is sovereign, He controls the circumstances, He controls where people are, and so He ordained that Pilate would be in this place, yes, but He is not making Pilate do evil. What Pilate is doing, the evil that he is doing is of his own heart, and his own accord, and he will answer for it.

And yet, the sovereignty of God is so great that Joseph could say to his brothers, remember in Genesis 50:21, “You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. You were doing evil, Satan was involved, your sin nature was involved, you were trying to murder me.” Remember when they threw him in the pit, they were going to kill him, and then they sold him into slavery? “You meant all of that for evil. You had nothing good in what you were doing, and in all those areas you were violating the command of God again, and again, and again.” God’s command—love your brother. God’s command—be kind, show kindness, show mercy. All of those things and yet God still did His perfect will, and that is what is happening here. God is sovereignly doing His perfect will even though the man is also doing his own will.

Pilate Considers the Right Response. There are basically three times I think in the passage that you can see where Pilate is trying to release Jesus. He wants to release Him. You see this especially in Luke’s presentation of it as well, Luke’s account of this event, but you see it here in our passage. In 18:38, when he goes out and he says, “I find no guilt in Him,” he then comes up with a creative alternative. He tries to bypass the religious leaders, and he thinks that, “Listen, I know these guys. These guys are full of envy and they are bad people, the Jewish leaders, and they mistreat the people. So I’m going to go straight to the people, and ask the people, ‘Would you like me to release Jesus?’ Surely they’ll want me to release Him and it will be done, and I’ll be the good guy with the people, and I will have dealt an insulting blow to the religious leaders too.” But he is basically not taking responsibility.

So he goes out and he says, “You have a custom, I release someone for Passover. Would you like me to release for you the King of the Jews?” They cry out, “Not this man, Barabbas.” The Jewish leaders had already anticipated this, and they were ready. They had a name, and they started yelling it out, and they stirred up the crowd to yell it out too. So he is foiled in his first attempt to release Jesus. I think he genuinely wanted to be rid of this, he wanted to release Him. Then, he decides



to take another course of action. He decides, “If the crowd is stirred up like this against the King of the Jews, I’m going to have to do something,” and he scourges Jesus. Just incredibly heinous evil. I mean, it is an innocent man being scourged in this most violent Roman scourging that was designed to humiliate, to inflict maximum pain, cause great loss of blood to weaken the person dramatically. And clearly, as Satan is at work in this, the Roman soldiers are animated in their own evil hatred to the one that somehow they recognize as the Son of God. There is still no explanation for their extra violence—slapping Him in the face, mocking Him. But Pilate, I think, is still intent on releasing Him, even when he brings Him out in Verses 4-6. Pilate came out again and said to them, this is his second attempt to release Him. He considers the right response, we are in that third sub-point. I think three different times he tries to release Him. The second one:

John 19:4 ~ 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.”

He reiterates, “My verdict is I find no guilt in Him.”

John 19:5 ~ Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate *said to them, “Behold, the Man!”

I think what is happening here is he is looking for, “Look, I’ve taught Him a lesson,” he is hoping for some sense of mercy among the people. “Surely there will be compassion. They will now want Him to be released.”

John 19:6 ~ 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, (And he reiterates his verdict again.) for I find no guilt in Him.”

“I don’t want to have any part in crucifying Him.” He knows the man is innocent. Then they say something that stirs his heart in a deeper way. They say, “He made Himself out to be the Son of God,” in Verse 7, and Pilate hears this and he is even more afraid. He questions Jesus, “Where are You from?” Somebody in the Greco-Roman world, they certainly were superstitious. They had belief about the Roman gods, the Greek gods, a god-man, a Hercules kind of figure. “What’s happening here? I don’t want to be guilty of doing something.” So he questions Him, and then it says in Verse 12, as a result of questioning Him:

John 19:12 ~ As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him,...

He is determined to release Him you would think, but the Jews then come up against him again.

John 19:12 ~ ...“If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

These Jews and the Jewish leaders are so manipulative, the evil is so insidious. They know exactly what buttons to push for this weak, fearful, Roman leader. And so we see, Pilate considers the right response. He wants to release, he wants to release, he wants to release, but he doesn't. That brings us to the fourth point. We said, *Pilate Examines Jesus* first. And second we said *Pilate Reaches the Right Verdict, Pilate Considers the Right Response, Pilate Does the Unthinkable*.

D) Pilate Does the Unthinkable:

Scourging Him was bad enough, but then he turns Him over to be crucified. There is a sense in which this should be astonishing and breathtaking that he condemns an innocent man. He knowingly condemns an innocent man. Why? He felt the cost was too great to do anything otherwise. He has evaluated Jesus, he has considered the evidence for Jesus, he knows what he ought to do, but he doesn't do it. Why? Because the cost is too great. So in that, he makes a judgment upon Jesus and judges himself. Let's *Consider the Implications*, the second major point now.

2) Consider the Implications:

Basically the implication is this, every person who encounters Jesus Christ is in the place of Pilate at some point. Every person who has Christ preached to them, every person who reads the Scriptures, and looks at the claims of Jesus, or has someone press upon them a witness that they would rather not hear, you may be unwilling, you may not have wanted to hear about Jesus, but if you have, you are in the place of Pilate. You are called to render a verdict, and you are not called to merely render the right verdict, but you are called to make the right response. So the question for us, and I think the question John is asking his readers is: *What is your verdict? What is your response?*

When you think about the larger structure of John's Gospel, we've talked about this before, but let me just remind you of it real quickly. The purpose of John's Gospel is made clear in John 20:31, where John says:

John 20:30-31 ~ Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

“Everything that I have written down in this book is intended to be evidence to convince you, to bring you to the right verdict, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.” It is amazing, his language, when you carefully examine it, one of the key words in the book of John, in the Gospel of John, is the word ‘testify’, and the other word ‘testimony’. Those are legal and forensic terms. In fact, it is used more in John than any other book in the New Testament. The word ‘testify’ is used 35 times. The word ‘testimony’ is used 14. See what John is doing is he is saying, “Look, you the reader are the judge, and the question is: What do you say about Jesus? That is the question.” And what he does is he presents his case in his Gospel. He calls witnesses to testify. In fact, at the very beginning of the book, you see how this unfolds. John 1:6, he says:

John 1:6 ~ There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.

Now remember, John is writing the Gospel, but here is another John, John the Baptist.

John 1:6-8 ~ There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.

John the Baptist’s purpose was to bear testimony. In the same way that someone appears as a witness in court, what are they doing? They are testifying, they are swearing to what they have seen or heard, what they know to be true, and the purpose is so that a verdict might be rendered in a legal matter. So John the Baptist is the first witness that John the apostle calls, in a sense, to the stand. “Let me tell you what John the Baptist’s testimony was.” And you follow on down, in Verse 15 of Chapter 1, he says of John the Baptist:

John 1:15 ~ John *testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”

And then you have in Chapter 1, Verse 32, again, speaking of John the Baptist:

John 1:32-33 ~ John testified saying, “I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not recognize Him,...

I love that. Remember they are basically cousins, probably like second cousins, and so apparently they didn't have many family reunions, and he hadn't seen Jesus until he saw Him when the Spirit came and revealed Him. Remember He did meet Him one time before in the womb, and he recognized Him then, but apparently he did not see Jesus again with his eyes until the day he was baptizing, when Jesus came down to the water, and he saw the Spirit descend and remain on Him. That is what he says.

John 1:33 ~ ...but He who sent me to baptize in water said to me, ‘He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the One who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.’

And then John the Baptist says:

John 1:34 ~ I myself have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God.”

And what you find after that is Andrew and Philip meet Jesus, and Andrew goes to Peter, and you have John recording Andrew's words, “We have found the Messiah.” It is like another witness. You know how you watch a courtroom, we get to do this now. We have had Perry Mason and all of those things in the past, but now you can watch real court happening. Isn't that amazing? I don't think it is such a great idea, but anyway, you can see somebody come up, and they bring one witness up, he is an expert witness, and he testifies for two hours. They bring another guy up who just testifies two sentences, that's it. Well, that is what is happening here. He brings up Andrew, and Andrew says, “We have found the Messiah,” and he tells that to Peter. Then Philip goes to Nathanael in Chapter 1, Verse 45, it says Philip found Nathanael, and he says this, bring up the witness.

John 1:45 ~ “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

So Philip testifies, and then Nathanael, the skeptic, says:

John 1:46 ~ ...“Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

“Really, Nazareth?” That is like Loganville. Forgive me if you live in Loganville. Just pass it on, somewhere farther east. But then Jesus, when Nathanael walks up, says:

John 1:47-48 ~ ... “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” 48 Nathanael *said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

I love that because He said, “I saw you when you were under the fig tree, when he called you. I heard what you said about Nazareth.” And Nathanael says in Verse 49, he offers testimony.

John 1:49 ~ “Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.”

And then Jesus says:

John 1:50 ~ ...“Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”

“There is a lot more evidence coming to say who I am.” The woman at the well is going to testify. She goes and testifies to the whole village and says, “I met a man who told me everything about myself. He is the Christ.” Then they come, and they say, Jesus stays there a few more days and they say, “Now we don’t believe because of what you said, we ourselves know this is the Savior who has come into the world,” and John the apostle puts the Samaritans on the stand. Again, and again, and again he calls the witnesses. You have all these human witnesses, especially after Lazarus’ resurrection. They went to Jerusalem *testifying*, and that is one of the reasons that the Jews wanted to kill Him, because it was getting out of hand. Remember? That is what happened. It is when Caiaphas said, “Look, if we don’t stop this, everyone is going to believe in Him,” Chapter 11. But it is not just the testimony of man, it is the testimony of God, God the Father testifies. Jesus says this in Chapter 5:33, He says, “They are asking you who I am, what authority I have to heal this man on the Sabbath?” He says in Verse 33:

John 5:33 ~ You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth.

“He told you who I am,” but Jesus says:

John 5:34 ~ But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved.

Then in Verse 36 He says:

John 5:36-37 ~ But the testimony which I have is greater than the testimony of John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish—the very works that I do—testify about Me, that the Father has sent Me.

37 And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me.

“The Father testifies about Me. He testifies about Me in the works that I do. The Spirit testifies about Me,” in John 15:26. And Jesus Himself has been testifying and testifying, and testifying, all throughout the Gospel. All of the ‘I AM’ sayings, in fact, in John 8:12, He says, “I am the light of the world.” Remember when He was saying ‘I AM’? He is saying, “I am God.” Read in light of Exodus 3:14, and Isaiah 42-46, the ‘I AM’ sayings through there. He is claiming to be no less than Yahweh Himself, but He says:

John 8:12 ~ “I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.

“Listen, I am God, and I am the light. There is no other light. You are all in darkness. I am the light.” That is an audacious claim. That is the testimony of Jesus. The Pharisees in Verse 13 said to Him:

John 8:13-14 ~ “You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true.” 14 Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

And then He goes on to say, “And the Father testifies about Me too.” He said, “I’m the bread of life, I am the light of the world, I am the door, the only door. I am the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me.” Jesus claims to be the exclusive and only way to God because He is the Son of God. “I am the true vine.” Then all of His works testify to Him, which John has laid out for us, all these signs—turning the water into wine, healing the nobleman’s son with a word from a distance away, healing the lame man who had been lame

for more than 30 years. Feeding 5,000 men, plus women and children, with five loaves and two fish. Walking on water. Healing the man born blind. When He said, “I am the light of the world,” then He went and healed a man born blind. Then He raised Lazarus from the dead, and then He raised Himself from the dead. That is the testimony that you have in the book of John, and the question is: *What is your verdict?*

There is the danger of being like Pilate, and reaching the right verdict, and then not following through with the right response. You can believe that Jesus is God, and yet end up in hell. That is what James says when he says, “You believe in God, you do well, the demons also believe and tremble.” What is the right response? The right response for Pilate is the right response for us. The right response for Pilate is to count the costs and realize that he must do what he must do because it is the only thing that he can do. If Jesus is who He says He is, then we must count the costs and surrender everything to Him. There is no middle ground. Jesus doesn’t invite you to make Him a part of your life, to give Him a token area of your affections. He demands absolute loyalty, absolute commitment, absolute surrender. And on the basis of the evidence, is there any other choice? The right verdict is He is who He says He is, and the problem is, we struggle with being ready to surrender to Him, to give ourselves to Him.

Today is the day of salvation, the warning that we have here is echoed in other places. When you see, when the light of God is given, it is important that you repent, and you believe. To repent means to turn, to turn to God even in your resistance, like that man who said, “I believe, help my unbelief.” The beauty of that is he said it to Jesus. He didn’t try to fix himself, because we can’t do anything, but we are supposed to surrender. He said, “I want to surrender, but there is still some unbelief in me. Help my unbelief.” When you come to Jesus like that, and go, “Whatever You want, I’m yours.” That is repentance, and faith is believing, and trusting in Him, and His perfect sufficiency. And when you come in repentance and faith, when God grants you true repentance and faith, then salvation comes. That right verdict becomes a right response, a life of surrender, and a life of joy, and freedom, and love. May God help us to do just that.

Let’s go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the way that You have reached out to us, in the darkness of our own sin. Lord, we were dead in trespasses, and sins, and there are some who still are in the room today. There is nothing in us that commends ourselves to You, and yet You, because You are rich in mercy, because of the great love with



which You loved us, You make us alive in Christ. We pray that You might grant new life, even today, by the power of Your Spirit, with the glorious power of the Gospel, granting submission—true, full submission to Jesus, and trust in His perfect love. Lord if You are a God who would leave the glory of Heaven and experience the agony of living in a sin-filled world, experiencing all of the hatred, and humiliation You experienced, the agony of the cross, becoming sin, bearing the wrath of Your Father, if that is the character of Your heart, how could we not trust You? Lord, grant Your grace, and help those who belong to you already to more fully, and joyfully, surrender every day of our lives, rejoicing in the freedom that is ours in being the slave of Jesus Christ. And we pray this in His Name, Amen.

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