

# Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 63

## CHRIST BEFORE PILATE

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### Transcript

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John 18:28-40

The following is an Analysis of the closing section of John 18:— 1. Christ brought to Pilate's court, verse 28. 2. Pilate demanding a formal charge, verses 29, 30. 3. Pilate seeking to shelve his responsibility, verses 31, 32 4. Pilate examining Christ, verses 33-37. 5. Pilate affirms Christ's innocence, verse 38. 6. Pilate's attempt at compromise, verse 39. 7. Pilate's attempt fails, verse 39. In our last chapter we contemplated the Lord Jesus in the presence of Annas, the real high priest of Israel: in the portion of Scripture which is for our present consideration we behold the Savior arraigned before Pilate. Much that occurred between these two things is omitted by John. In John 18:24 we read, "Now Annas sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest," and following the account of Peter's second and third denials we are told, "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment" (John 18:28). This fourth Gospel tells us nothing about what transpired when our Lord appeared before Caiaphas, the legal high priest (by Roman appointment), of Israel. For this we have to compare Matthew 26:57-68; 27:1, 2; Mark 14:53 to 15:2; Luke 22:54 to 23:1. Let us briefly summarize the contents of these passages. As was pointed out in our last, sentence of death had been passed upon Christ before He was brought to trial at all (John 18:14); the examination before Caiaphas was, therefore, nothing more than a horrible farce. The Savior was tried before what ought to have been the holiest judicature on earth, but was condemned by the most fearful perversion of justice and abuse of its forms that is recorded anywhere in history. The amazing contrasts presented are intensely affecting. The Friend of sinners was shackled by handcuffs and leg-irons. The Judge of all the earth was arraigned before a fallen son of Adam. The Lord of glory was treated with the foulest scorn. The Holy One was condemned as a blasphemer. Liars bore witness against the Truth. He who is the Resurrection and the Life was doomed to die. With Caiaphas were assembled the "scribes and elders" (Matthew 26:57): in addition to these were the "chief priests and all the council" (Matthew 26:59). At this decisive crisis, when Israel's rejection of their Messiah took its final and official form, all the leaders of the nation were solemnly convened. Their first act was to summon witnesses against the Lord, and the unprincipled character of the Sanhedrin, their utter unrighteousness, is glaringly apparent in that they

"SOUGHT false witnesses against Jesus" (Matthew 26:59). The Sanhedrin had not the power to execute the death-penalty, therefore, some charge must be preferred against Him when they brought Him before Pilate—hence the seeking of the false witnesses. There were thousands who could have testified to the genuineness of His miracles; their own agents had acknowledged that never did man speak as He did; but such testimony as this was not what they wanted. Something must be devised which would give a semblance of justice in clamoring for His execution. For a time their iniquitous quest was fruitless: "though many false witnesses came, yet found they none"—none who could supply what they wanted. But "at the last came two false witnesses"—the minimum number required by the Mosaic law, just as Jezebel obtained two false witnesses to testify against Naboth (1 Kings 21:18). They affirmed that Christ had said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." In obedient submission to His Father's Word, the Savior had stood by in silence while these children of the father of lies had perjured themselves. Evidently dissatisfied at the flimsiness of such a charge, and uneasy at Christ's calm dignity, the high priest arose "and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? What is it which these witness against thee?" But Jesus held His peace. Alarmed, most probably at the dignified demeanor of his Prisoner, and fearful perhaps that His bearing might move the hearts of some in the Council, Caiaphas said, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63). "This was the method among the Israelites of proffering and accepting the oath; the appeal to God (and the formula of curse as the penalty of lying—which, however, was not ventured on now) was made on the one side, and the answer made thereupon was received, without any repetition of the oath being regarded as necessary on the part of the respondent. I adjure Thee by the living God (in whose office I stand, under whose power we all are, before whom Thou also standest, who knowest the truth, and judgeth between us and Thee) that Thou tell us, this holy Sanhedrin now here as before God, the truth. Thus does he avow, bearing testimony against himself in this most awful abuse of the name of God, that he knows this God as a living God who will not be mocked! He testifies of His truth, even while he is aiming to get the victory by a lie; of His power and majesty, while he is pushing his opposition to the uttermost? (Stier). Now, for the first time, Christ spoke before Caiaphas. He penetrates the meaning of His questioner, recognizes all the consequences of His affirmation, but hesitates not to answer. As an obedient Israelite, it was His duty to respond to the adjuration of the ruling power (Lev. 5:1; 1 Kings 22:16). Made "under the law" (Gal. 4:4), He was submissive to the last, even when it was perverted against Him. The Savior not only replied to His judge, but, maintaining His dignity to the last, added, "Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64):—"Sitting" in contrast from Me now standing before you, while you sit in judgment upon Me; "power" in contrast from His then weakness (i.e., refusing to exercise His might); "Coming in the clouds of heaven" in contrast from going to the Cross! Caiaphas' response was to rend his official robes—instead of putting them off before the majesty of the great High Priest. In this act Caiaphas did, unknown to himself, but intimate that God had rent asunder the Aaronic priesthood!—a garment is only torn to pieces by its owner when he has no more use for it. Following the rending of his robes, Caiaphas said, "What further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now we have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?" He was the blasphemer. "What further need have we of witnesses?" betrayed his uneasy conscience; "Behold, now ye have heard him" was the signal that the mock trial was over. The answer he wanted was promptly given: "He is guilty of death." Elated at their fancied triumph, "then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote with the palms of their hands, saying, Prophecy unto us thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?" Thus did Israel condemn their Messiah, rebellious man his God. "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor" (Matthew 27:1, 2), thus fulfilling our Lord's prediction,

"The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him" (Mark 10:33, 34). This brings us to the first point touched upon by John, whose narrative we shall now follow. "Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early" (John 18:28). "Then," following the decision of the Council, recorded in Matthew 27:1; "led they"; still unresisting, He went as a lamb to the slaughter. Mark tells us (Mark 15:1) they "bound" Him; "unto the hall of judgment," Pilate's court-room. "And it was early": the disciples could not watch with Him one hour; His enemies had acted against Him all through that night! Alas, man has more zeal and energy, because more heart, for that which is evil than for that which is good. The same people who will listen, untired, half a day to a political discussion, or sit three hours through an opera, complain that the preacher is long-winded if he spends the whole hour in expounding the Word of God! "It was early": their one object now was to obtain from Pilate, as swiftly as possible, his confirmation of the death-sentence. "And they themselves went not into the judgment-hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover" (John 18:28). The judgment-hall was Gentile property and to have entered it the Jews would be ceremonially defiled, and from that there was not time to be cleansed ere the passover feast arrived. Anxious to partake of the passover, they therefore went no further than the entrance to the praetorium. They would not enter Pilate's hall, though they were ready to use him to further their own wickedness! What a proof was this of the worthlessness of religion where it has failed to influence the heart. Fully did they merit those awful words of Christ: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:27, 28). These very men were here engaged in the vilest act ever perpetrated on earth, and yet they spoke of being "defiled"! They hesitated not to deliver their Messiah to the Gentiles, yet were scrupulous lest they be disqualified from eating the passover. So to-day there are some who are more concerned about the right form of baptism than they are of a scriptural walk; more punctilious about observing the Lord's supper than to bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father. Let us beware lest we also "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel." "These 'rulers of the Jews' and the multitude that followed them were thorough Ritualists. It was their ritualism that urged them on to crucify the Son of God. Christ and ritualism are opposed to each other as light is to darkness. The true Cross in which Paul gloried and the cross in which modern ceremonialists glory, have no resemblance to each other. The Cross and the crucifix cannot agree. Either ritualism will banish Christ or Christ will banish ritualism." (Mr. H. Bonar.) "Pilate then went out unto them" (John 18:29). That the whole Sanhedrin (Mark 15:1, 2), accompanied by a large crowd (Luke 23:1), should visit him at such a time (the passover feast), was sufficient to convince Pilate that some important matter required his attention; therefore, early morning though it were, he went out to them. That he was not taken by surprise we know, for only the previous night they had secured a cohort of Roman soldiers, which could not have been obtained without his permission. It was clear to him, then, that here was some culprit whom the Jews wished executed before the Feast began. "And said, What accusation bring ye against this man?" (John 18:29). Pilate's question here confirms what we have just said above. He did not ask them what was the object of their visit, but simply inquired what charge they preferred against their prisoner. This was in accord with the Roman law which required three things: the making of a specific indictment, the bringing of the accusers before the accused, and the liberty granted to the latter to answer for himself (Acts 25:16). Pilate therefore acted honorably in demanding to know the nature of the crime charged against the Lord Jesus. God saw to it that out of their own mouths they should be condemned. "They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee" (John 18:30), The Jews were piqued at Pilate's question. They were not

anxious to prefer a charge, knowing full well that they had no evidence by which they could establish it. It is clear that they hoped that Pilate would take their word for it—especially as they had obtained the soldiers from him so easily—and condemn their Prisoner unheard. With characteristic hypocrisy they now assumed an injured air: they posed as righteous men; they would have Pilate believe that they would never have arrested an innocent man. Their "if he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee" was tantamount to saying: "See who is before you—we are none other than the sacred Sanhedrin: we have already tried the case, and our judgment is beyond question: we only ask you now to give the necessary Roman sanction that He may be put to death." Their hands were forced by Pilate, for Luke tells us "they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king" (Luke 23:2). "Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him, according to your law" (John 18:31). The whole responsibility now rested on Pilate. He was too well acquainted with the Jews' expectations to suppose that the Sanhedrin would hate and persecute one who would free them from the Roman yoke. Their simulation of good citizenship was too shallow to deceive him. But he did not relish the task before him, and sought to evade it. The real character of the man comes out plainly here—timid, vacillating, temporizing, unprincipled. Pilate wished to have nothing to do with the case; he was anxious for the Jews to shoulder the full onus of Christ's death. What cared he for justice, so long as he could get out of an unpleasant situation! He was anxious not to displease the Jews, therefore did he say, "judge him (sentence Him to death) according to your law." "The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death" (John 18:31). This reply completely thwarted the wretched Pilate's attempt to avoid the necessity of judging our Lord. They pressed upon the Roman governor that the legal power of passing the death sentence was no longer in their hands, therefore it was impossible for them to do as he desired. They here warned Pilate that nothing but the execution of Christ would satisfy them. But a Higher Power was overruling: "Of a truth against thy Holy servant Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:27,28). "The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Though they were unaware of it, this was a remarkable confession. It was their own acknowledgment that Genesis 49:10 was now fulfilled—"The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come." The heads of Israel here owned that they were no longer the rulers of their own nation, but were under the dominion of a foreign power. He that has the right to condemn a prisoner to death is the governor of a country. "It is not lawful" they said; you, the Roman governor, alone can do it. By their consent they no longer had a law-administrator of their own stock, therefore the "scepter" had departed, and this was proof positive that Shiloh (the Messiah) had come! How unaware wicked men are when they fulfill prophecy! "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die" (John 18:32). Here again prediction was being fulfilled, all unconsciously by themselves. The refusal of Israel to take matters into their own hands, when Pilate put it there, only worked for the accomplishment of Christ's own words: "and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify" (Matthew 20:19). Moreover, had the Jews still possessed the power of inflicting capital punishment for such crimes as they alleged against the Lord Jesus, the mode of execution would have been by stoning. By delivering Him to Pilate this ensured the Roman form of punishment, crucifixion, and thus did the saying of Christ come to pass: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14); and again, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me. This He said, signifying what death he should die" (John 12:32, 33). "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33). Here we have another glaring example of the gross injustice which was meted out to

the Savior. First Annas, then Caiaphas, now Pilate, displayed the fearful enmity of the carnal mind against God—here manifest in flesh. Roman law required that the accused and the accusers should be brought face to face, and that the former should have an opportunity of replying to the charge laid against him (Acts 23:28), but this Pilate denied Christ. But what was far worse, Pilate examined Christ as the enemy of Caesar and the Jews were His only accusers! If the Lord Jesus were really opposing the authority and rights of the Emperor, why had not the Roman power taken the initiative? Where were the Gentile witnesses against Him? Were all the Roman officers indifferent to their master's interests! Pilate knew that it was for envy (Matthew 27:18) the Sanhedrin had delivered Him up. He knew full well that the Savior was no malefactor: he could not have been ignorant of His public life—His deeds of mercy, His words of grace and truth; yet did he refuse Him a fair trial. The fact that Pilate's objection (John 18:31) was so easily silenced, revealed the pitiable weakness of his character. Sent to be the Governor of these Jews, they, nevertheless, compelled him to be their slave, the executioner of their wrath. "Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the king of the Jews?" What lay behind this question? what was the state of Pilate's mind when he asked it? With Bishop Ryle we are inclined to say, "On the whole, the question seems a mixture of curiosity and contempt." The humble attire and lowly appearance of our Lord cannot fail to have struck the Governor. The entire absence of any signs which the world associates with One possessing a kingdom must have puzzled him. Yet tidings of His "triumphal entrance" into Jerusalem only a few days before had doubtless reached his ears. Who, then, was this strange character who attracted the multitudes, but was hated by their leaders? who had power to heal the sick, yet had not where to lay His head? who was able to raise the dead, yet here stood bound before him? "Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" (John 18:34). Our Lord was addressing Himself to Pilate's conscience. Do you really desire to act justly? Is it information you are in quest of? or are you going to be the tool of those who delivered Me to thee? He would point out to him the injustice of any suspicions he might entertain. If you have reason to think I am a "king" in the sense in which you employ the term, then where are the Roman witnesses? If you are influenced only by what you have heard from the Sanhedrin, beware of heeding the word of those who are plainly My enemies. Christ was pressing upon him his individual responsibility of coming to some definite conviction concerning Himself. But why not have answered with a plain Yes or No? Because that, under the circumstances, was impossible? Pilate used the word "king" as a rival of Caesar, as a rebel against Rome. To have replied Yes, would have misled Pilate; to have said No, without qualification, would have been to deny "the hope of Israel." The Lord therefore presses Pilate for a definition of this ambiguous term. Admire His consummate wisdom. "Sayest thou this of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" "Our Lord, by this, would learn whether His claims to be king of the Jews was challenged by Pilate as protector of the Emperor's rights in Judea, or merely upon a charge of the Jews. Upon this hung, I may say, everything in the present juncture; and the wisdom and purpose of the Lord in giving the inquiry. this direction are manifest. Should Pilate say that he had become apprehensive of the Roman interests, the Lord could at once have referred him to the whole course of His life and ministry, to prove that, touching the king, innocency had been found in Him. He had taught the rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's. He had withdrawn Himself, departing into a mountain alone, when He perceived that the multitude would have taken Him by force to make Him a king (John 6:15). His controversy was not with Rome... and Pilate would have had His answer according to all this had the challenge proceeded from himself as representative of the Roman power. But it did not" (Mr. J. G. Bellett). "Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?" (John 18:35). Here Pilate betrayed his insincerity. He evaded Christ's penetrating question. He denied any personal interest in the matter. I am no Jew—I am not concerned about points of religious controversy. "What hast thou

done?"—let us deal with practical matters. We doubt not that Pilate uttered his first question sneeringly—Am I a Jew! You forget that I, a noble Roman, can have no patience with visions and dreams. It was the haughty and contemptuous language of a prominent man of affairs. "Thine own nation and the chief priests" are the ones who are interested in ceremonial rites and recondite prophecies, and they have "delivered thee to me"! What is it that they have against you? Here he speaks as the judge: let us come to the business in hand. "Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?" "This answer of Pilate conveyed the full proof of the guilt of Israel. In the mouth of him who represented the power of the world at that time, the thing was established, that Israel had disclaimed their King and sold themselves into the hand of another. This, for the present, was everything with Jesus—this at once carried Him beyond the earth, and out of the world. Israel had rejected Him, and His kingdom was, therefore, not from hence: for Zion is the appointed place for the King of the whole earth to sit and rule; and the unbelief of the daughter of Zion must keep the king of the earth away. The Lord, then, as the rejected King, listening to this testimony from the lips of the Roman, could only recognize the present loss of His throne" (Mr. Bellett). Hence Christ's next words. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). First, observe that He did not say "My kingdom is not in this world," but "My kingdom is not of this world." Believers are not "of" this world (John 17:16), yet they are "in" it! Second, observe His own qualifying and yet amplifying words at the dose of the verse: "but now is my kingdom not from hence." The "now" is explained by Pilate's declaration in the previous verse—re-read Mr. Bellett's comments thereon. This was not said by Christ until after His final and official rejection by Israel! Third, observe His explanatory "if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight"—to deliver their king. Our Lord was graciously explaining to Pilate the character of that kingdom over which He will yet preside. Unlike all the kingdoms which have preceded it, My kingdom will not originate with man, but be received from God (Dan. 7:13, 14; Luke 19:12); unlike the kingdoms of man, which have been dependent upon the powers of the world, Mine will be an absolute theocracy; unlike theirs, which have been propagated by the world's arms, Mine will be regulated by heavenly principles; unlike theirs, which have been characterized by injustice and tyranny, Mine will be marked by righteousness and peace. In answering Pilate as He did we cannot but admire the wondrous grace and patience of our blessed Lord. The contemptuous "Am I a Jew?" of Pilate annulled his right to any further notice; his "what hast thou done?" gave the One before him the full right to maintain silence. But ignoring the insult, Christ continued to address Himself to his conscience. "My kingdom is not of this world" warned Pilate that there was another world, to which He belonged! "My kingdom," which will not be brought in by "fighting," was to assure him there was a Power superior to the boasted might of Rome, which then dominated the earth. "Now is my kingdom not from hence" intimated that His kingdom would be far otherwise than those in which violence and injustice had ever held sway, and where, after all, there was nothing obtained but the semblance of right and truth. Thus instead of furnishing a positive reply to Pilate's "What hast thou done?" He gave a negative answer which, however, plainly showed that He was guilty of no political evil and had done nothing against Caesar. Some have wondered why Christ did not appeal to His wondrous and benevolent works of mercy when Pilate asked Him, "What hast thou done?" But those were a part of His Messianic credentials (Matthew 11:3-5, etc.), and therefore only for Israel. Others have wondered why Pilate did not refer to the smiting of Malchus in the garden, when the Lord affirmed "then would my servants fight." Why had not the Sanhedrin informed Pilate of Peter's temerity? Malchus was a servant of the high priest and nothing was more natural than that he should clamor for redress. The seeming difficulty is at once removed by a reference to Luke 22:51, where we are told that the Savior "touched his ear and healed him." "The miracle satisfactorily explains the suppression of the charge—to have advanced it would have naturally led to an investigation that would have more than frustrated the malicious purpose it

was meant to serve. It would have proved too much. It would have manifested His own compassionate nature, His submission to the law, and His extraordinary powers" (Mr. J. Blount). "Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then?" (John 18:37). The Governor was puzzled. The quiet and dignified bearing of the One before him, the threefold reference to His kingdom, the declaration that it was not of this world, the calm assertion that though in bonds He was possessed of "servants," plus a strong hint that His dominion would yet be firmly established, though not by the sword, was more than Pilate could grasp. Pilate's change from "Art thou the king of the Jews?" in John 18:33 to "Art thou a king then?" intimated he was satisfied there was nothing to fear politically, yet that Christ had made a claim which was incomprehensible to his mind. We believe that he had dropped his scornful tone and asked this last question half earnestly, half curiously. That He was "king" our Lord would not deny, but boldly acknowledged "to this end was I born," knowing full well what would be the cost of His affirmation. It is to this the Holy Spirit refers, "who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession" (1 Tim. 6:13). Though Israel received Him not, yet He was their king (Matthew 2:2). Though the husbandmen were casting Him out, yet He was the heir of the vineyard. Though His citizens were saying they would not have Him to reign over them, yet He had been anointed to the throne in Zion. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18:37). Note how the Savior here linked together His kingdom and His bearing witness unto the truth. Truth is authoritative, imperial, majestic. This was a further word for Pilate's conscience, if only his heart were open to receive it. Christ informs him that He possessed a higher glory than His title to David's throne, even that of Deity, for it was as the Only-begotten of the Father that He was "full of grace and truth," and His "came I into the world"—distinguished from His being "born" in the previous clause—was a direct hint that He was from Heaven! Moreover, the Lord would have it known that there had been no failure in His mission. The great design before Him at His first advent was not to wield the royal scepter, but to bear witness unto the truth; that He had faithfully done, yea, was doing, at that very moment. This was His answer, to Pilate's "What hast thou done?" (John 18:35)—I have witnessed unto, not simply "truth" but, the truth; it was as "the word" He again spoke! "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). He that is "of the truth" means, first, he that is true, honest and sincere; in its deeper meaning, he who is of God: compare John 8:47. It is only the one who has a heart for the truth who really hears Christ's voice, for the Author of the truth is also the Teacher, the Interpreter of it. What a word was this for Pilate's conscience. If you are really seeking the Truth, which I came into the world to bear witness unto, you will listen unto Me! "Would any one ask how he can know that he is 'of the truth'? The Sacred Word supplies a direct answer, leaving none in doubt. 'Let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth' (1 John 3:18, 19). Whoever shows himself to be a partaker of the Divine nature, evidenced by loving in deed and in truth, is of the truth, hears Christ's voice, and will be found in His train among the armies of heaven, when He comes forth to deal with the apostate power on earth" (Mr. C. E. Stuart). "Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out" (John 18:38). There has been wide difference of opinion as to the spirit in which he asked this question. Clearly it was not that of an earnest inquirer, as his at once leaving Christ without waiting for an answer shows—only an awakened conscience is really desirous of knowing what is Truth. Many have thought it was more a wail of despair: What is truth?: "I have investigated many a system, examined various philosophers, but have found no satisfaction in them." But apart from the fact that everything revealed about his character conflicts with an earnest, persevering quest after light, would he not rather have said, "Truth! there is no truth!" had that been his state of mind? Personally, we regard Pilate's words here as an expression of scorn, ending them not with a question mark but an exclamation, the emphasis on the final word "What is truth?" It was the Light now manifesting the darkness. This expressed the settled conviction of a

conscienceless politician. "Truth"!—is it for that you are sacrificing your life? We think his words in John 18:39 bear this out. "And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and said unto them, I find in him no fault" (John 18:38). Pilate was uneasy. The words of Christ had impressed him more deeply than he would care to admit. That He was innocent was clear; that Pilate was now guilty of the grossest injustice is equally patent. If the Roman governor found "no fault" in Christ he ought to have promptly released Him. But instead of yielding to the voice of conscience he proceeded to confer with those who thirsted for the Savior's blood. Much is omitted by John at this point which is found in the Synoptics—the chief priest's remonstrance (Mark 15:3-12); Pilate sending Him to Herod; and the brutal treatment which He received at the hands of his soldiers, followed by Herod sending Him back to Pilate (Luke 23:5-18). "But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the king of the Jews?" (John 18:39). The nature of such a proposal at once reveals the unscrupulous character of him who made it. Pilate feared to offend the Jews (feared because an uprising at that time would have brought him into disfavour with Caesar, who had his hands full elsewhere) and so sought an expedient which he hoped would please them, and yet enable him to discharge the Lord Jesus. Remembering the custom which obtained at the passover of releasing a prisoner—a most striking custom it was, grace, deliverance, connected with the passover!—he suggests that Christ be the one to go free. It was as though he said, Let us suppose that Jesus is guilty; I am willing to declare Him a criminal worthy of death, providing He be freed. Luke tells us that he went so far as to offer to "chastise" Christ before he released Him (Luke 23:16). Little did he recognize the type of men he was dealing with, still less the One above who was directing all things. "Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber" (John 18:40). The Jews revealed themselves as worse than Pilate and demanded what he least expected. Thirsting for the blood of their victim, impatient or him to yield up to them their prey, they all "cried (the Greek signifies 'shouted') not this man, but Barabbas." Pilate's compromise not only showed plainly that he was not "of the truth" but only drew out the extent of their enmity. "Barabbas was a robber," better "bandit"—one who used force; Luke says he was a murderer, How very striking: the Jews chose Barabbas, and plunders and blood-shedders have ruled over them ever since!! In this their history is without a parallel. "We have noticed elsewhere how strangely yet significantly this name Barabbas, 'son of the father,' comes in here. It was the Son of the Father—just as that—whom they were refusing now; but of what father was this lawless one the son? A shadow it is, surely, of the awful apostasy to come, when they will receive him who comes in his own name (the Antichrist, A.W.P.), true child of the rebel and 'murderer from the beginning.' Yet there is a Gospel side to this also. How good to see that here it is the question, Shall the Savior or the sinner suffer? and to remember that under the law, the unclean animal might be redeemed with a Lamb (Ex. 13), but the lamb could not be redeemed. Impossible for the Savior to be released in this way. But the sinner may" (Mr. F. W. Grant). The following questions are to aid the student on John 19:1-11:— 1. Why did God allow Christ to wear "a crown of thorns," verse 2? 2. Why "a purple robe," verse 2? 3. How many times in the four Gospels "I find no fault," verse 4? 4. What was Pilate's aim in "Behold the man"! verse 5? 5. What is the meaning of verse 6 in the light of John 18:31? 6. What made Pilate "the more afraid," verse 8? 7. Why did Jesus make no answer, verse 9?

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