

I have mentioned that chapters 18-19 describe for us the sufferings of our Savior. These sufferings largely take place in five stages: His arrest in the garden, His trial before the Jews, His trial before the Gentiles, His crucifixion, and His burial.

Having considered the first two (His arrest in the garden and trial before the Jews), we come this morning to – Jesus before the Gentiles. This passage has three basic scenes: Pilate and the Jews (vv28-32), Pilate and the King (vv33-37), and Pilate and the Jews (vv38-40).

- I. Pilate and the Jews (vv28-32)
- II. Pilate and the King (vv33-37)
- III. Pilate and the Jews (vv38-40)

- I. Pilate and the Jews (vv28-32)

1. I mentioned last week, John omits everything that took place before Caiaphas, and merely mentions—"they led Jesus from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, and it was early morning."
2. By "praetorium" is likely meant a "common hall" within the Governor's Palace, where trials were typically held.
3. It's for this reason, the KJV renders the word "the hall of judgement"—it was a large hall within the Governor's home.
4. By "early morning" is likely meant sometime between 3am and 6am, and now our Savior is sent from the Jews to the Romans.
5. V28—"But they themselves did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover."
6. According to Jewish custom, they were not allowed to enter the house of a Gentile before the celebrated a Feast.
7. This was never commanded by God in the OT, but was an added tradition, imposed upon the people by Jewish leadership.
8. V29—"Pilate then went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this Man?' They answered and said to him, 'If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.'"
9. In other words—because they had no substantial accusation to bring against Him, they responded in this general way.
10. It's as if they said—Look don't worry about the details, the simple fact that we bring Him to you, should be enough.
11. Now, we learn from Luke 23"1-2, that the Jews did finally provide an accusation against Christ that was false.
12. Lk.23:1-2—"Then the whole multitude of them arose and led Him to Pilate. And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.'"
13. Thus, I want to say a few brief things about this accusation, brought against Jesus by the Jews—(a) it was not true.
14. In fact, it's difficult to envision any descriptions of Christ and His teaching, more contrary to truth, than these.
15. (b) It was clever—that is, they chose these accusations for a reason—they would have been alarming to Pilate and the Romans.
16. If they Jews would have mentioned blasphemy, the actual crime the Jews found Jesus guilty of, Pilate likely would not have been as concerned.
17. But to accuse Jesus of being a self-proclaimed King, who taught His people to rebel against Rome, that would have been more alarming.
18. This is basically what the Jews accused Jesus of—they accused Him of establishing an earthly kingdom to rival Rome.

19. V31—"Then Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and judge Him according to your law,' Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death."
20. Now, of course the Jews had authority, according to the OT law, to put to death those who truly deserved to die.
21. Over the years, the Romans removed this right from the Jews, and made it unlawful for them to impose the death sentence.
22. Thus, when they say, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death," they mean—according to the law of Rome.
23. John again adds commentary in v32—"that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die."
24. In other words—the Jews gave Jesus to the Romans, so that He would be crucified, in fulfillment to His own prophecy.
25. Jn.12:32-33—"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. This He said, signifying by what death He would die."
26. That is, Christ foretold the fact that He would be lifted up from the earth on a Roman cross—He would be crucified.
27. Lesson 1—A gross display of religious hypocrisy—while the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate to be killed, they were afraid of ceremonial defilement.
28. In other words, they were willing to elevate their own traditions above the clear teaching of the holy law of God.
29. I suggest to you, dear brethren, this may be the greatest display of religious hypocrisy found anywhere in Scripture.
30. Because they wanted to keep the Passover, they were unwilling to enter a Gentile building, for fear of being defiled.
31. And yet, all the while, they were handing over the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of the world, to be killed.
32. J.C. Ryle—"The chief priests and their party made much ado about eating the Passover lamb and keeping the feast, at the very time when they were about to slay the true Lamb of God, of whom this Passover was a type! No wonder that Samuel says, 'To obey is better than sacrifice.'"
33. Now, it's possible that many of us find it difficult to understand, how a person can be guilty of such blatant hypocrisy.
34. But Christians must guard against hypocrisy on a lower level, of losing sight why we do what we do—just going through the motions.
35. This was at the root of their hypocrisy—they had lost sight of why they did what they did—what was the point of the OC purification laws?
36. The point of the OC purification laws was to point to their need of moral purity that they might worship God.
37. Brethren, these Jews elevated their outward actions, actions that were not even commanded, over what mattered most.
38. This is the very essence of hypocrisy—to be concerned with merely the externals of religion, while forgetting the heart.
39. Lesson 2—A gross violation of the 9th commandment, Ex.20:16—"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor."
40. The Scribes and Pharisees lied about Him, and they were far from the only ones—they sought out many false witnesses to testify against Him.
41. Thus, these lies are not only gross violations of the 9th commandment, but were a great source of sorrow for our Savior.
42. No person did more good than Him, and yet, He was described as an evildoer—when He went about doing evil.
43. Ps.35:11-12—"Fierce witnesses rise up; they ask Me things that I do not know (they ask so as to accuse). They reward Me evil for good, to the sorrow of My soul" (Mk.14:57-58).
44. Ps.120:1-2—"In My distress I cried to the LORD, and He heard me. Deliver My soul, O LORD, from lying lips and from a deceitful tongue" (Ps.109:1-5).

45. Lesson 3—A beautiful example of God's wise providence—from the very beginning, Scripture foretold Jesus' death as a crucifixion.
46. The Jews wanted Jesus to be crucified—not to fulfill Scripture—but because it was a painful and shameful death.
47. But, it was God who ultimately wanted Him to be given to the Gentles and be crucified, because it was foretold.
48. Matt.20:18-19—"Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

II. Pilate and the King (vv33-38)

1. V33—"Then Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?'"
2. We now understand why Pilate asked Jesus this question—because of the false accusations of the Jewish leadership.
3. The Jews claimed that Christ professed to be a king, with a growing kingdom, which opposed all earthly kingdoms.
4. It's for this reason, Pilate asked Jesus—"Are You the King of the Jews"—Are You gathering the Jews to revolt against the Romans.
5. Thus, within v33, we have Pilate's formal examination of Christ (the accused), and I want to consider His answers.
6. His answers in vv36-37, provide us with two great facts about our Savior and His heavenly kingdom (His kingdom is not of this world, and yet, His kingdom is within this world).
7. (1) His kingdom is not of this world, v36—"My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."
8. Here our Savior clarifies the nature of His kingdom—It is not of this world—it's not an earthly or worldly kingdom.
9. (a) It's not worldly in its origin—by this I mean, it's a heavenly kingdom, and that's because the King came from heaven.
10. V38—"You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world."
11. Our Savior's kingdom is not of this world, because He is not of this world—He came from above, from heaven.
12. (b) It's not worldly in its purpose—by this I mean, it's a spiritual kingdom, it's primarily concerned with spiritual things.
13. Now, this of course, doesn't deny that our Savior's kingdom has physical elements to it, as it's made up of people who have physical bodies.
14. But the point here is this—our Savior's kingdom, in the strictest sense, refers to His rule or reign within hearts.
15. Lk.17:20-21—"The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, See here! Or See there! For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."
16. The kingdom of God does not come visibly so as to be seen with the physical eye, but it comes within the heart.
17. It's for this reason, the warfare that Christ's kingdom engages in, isn't a physical war with physical weapons, but a spiritual war with spiritual weapons.
18. V36—"If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews."
19. Dear brethren, I trust we understand this point—the kingdom of God is not advanced by physical force or pressure.
20. Eph.6:12—"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

21. 2Cor.10:3-5—"For though we walk in the flesh (physically or bodily), we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."
22. (c) It's not worldly in its duration—by this I mean, it's an eternal kingdom, it's the only kingdom that will last forever.
23. Kings and kingdoms come and they go—every earthly kingdom, regardless how powerful, eventually falls (without exception).
24. And yet our Savior's kingdom continues to advance, and one day it will be the only kingdom on the new earth.
25. Isa.9:7—"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever."
26. (2) His kingdom is within this world, v37—"You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."
27. Although Christ's kingdom is not of this world, we must not mistake this to mean, it has nothing to do with this world.
28. (a) Christ's kingdom functions within the kingdoms of this world—Christ has citizens of His kingdom scattered throughout the kingdoms of this world.
29. And this of course is by way of design—though our Savior's kingdom is not of this world, it is within this world.
30. Perhaps I can put it this way—there is nothing inconsistent with being within both kingdoms at the same time.
31. Now, mind you, the Scripture does speak about two kingdoms that totally at odds with each—the kingdom of darkness and light.
32. No person can be in both of these kingdoms at the same time—we are all born into the one and reborn into the other.
33. But, the kingdom of Christ and the earthly kingdoms of this world, are designed to function alongside each other.
34. And here's why—both are ultimately ordained of God—both are created by God to serve specific goals or purposes.
35. Rom.13:1—"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God (Jn.19:11)."
36. Thus, in so far as earthly kings and governments, do not command us to sin against God, we must obey them.
37. They have been ordained of God to establish and maintain civil morality and orderliness, which are good things.
38. (b) Christ bears witness to the truth within the kingdoms of this world—"For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth."
39. In other words, His kingdom has an ideology, a philosophy or creed, and He describes this as "the truth"—not merely "a truth" (among many), but "the truth."
40. And thus, what does He mean by "the truth"—well, I suggest He simply refers to His word—His word is truth.
41. It's within the Holy Scriptures where we find the truth about God, man, creation, salvation, morality, and eternity.
42. Christ bore witness to these things personally in His ministry, then through His apostles, and now in the Scriptures.
43. And thus, brethren, when we as Christ's people bear witness of the truth, we should expect to be treated in a similar way.
44. Martin Luther—"If you want to bear witness to the truth, prepare yourself to be opposed by the devil with his angels, the world with its wisdom and lofty reason, yes, you will even be opposed by your parents, father, mother, and your best friends. There can be no other result."

45. (c) Christ rules over His citizens within the kingdoms of this world—"Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."
46. To be "of the truth" means you've been a partaker of that truth—you have been born of God by the word of truth.
47. The truth (or word) that our Savior refers to is powerful—it's the sword of the Spirit, sharper than a two-edged sword.
48. And so, by "everyone who is of the truth" is simple meant, those who have been born again by the Spirit and word.
49. This is a beautiful way to describe His citizens—they are of the truth, because they believe, love, and live the truth.
50. When our Savior says—"everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" He means, the truth and His voice are one.
51. And to hear His voice means—you hear it from the heart—you hear His voice through His holy and perfect word.
52. In other words, our Savior is saying—every citizen of His kingdom, pledges full and complete allegiance to Him.

III. Pilate and the Jews (vv38-40)

1. After cynically asking Jesus—"What is truth?"—he leaves the Praetorium, and returns to the porch to speak to the Jews.
2. It's possible that Pilate meant this question more sincerely, as if to say—"You speak of truth, but what is truth?"
3. But either
4. And thus, I want to finish our time together this morning, by summarizing vv38-40 with three words—coward, criminal, and crowd.
5. (1) Coward—here of course I am referring to Pilate, a total contradiction, a man who was uncertain what to do.
6. On the one hand, he knew Jesus was innocent of all charges, and yet on the other hand, he wanted to please the Jews.
7. At the bottom of it all was cowardliness—Pilate was a coward—he was too afraid to do what he knew was right.
8. V39—"But you have a custom that I should release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"
9. Seemingly, the Jews had developed a custom that every year at the Passover, a criminal was set from or released.
10. This likely reflected back upon their own liberation as a nation from Egypt—a yearly miniature exodus of sorts.
11. And Pilate thought this was the perfect opportunity to satisfy, both his conscience, and the angry mob of Jews.
12. Brethren, all through this passage, and we will see it again next week, we find in Pilate a man who knew what was right but lacked the moral backbone to do it.
13. (2) Criminal—apparently, there was another prisoner that morning, whose name was Barabbas. John simply says of him—"Barabbas was a robber."
14. We know from the other gospels that he was also a murderer and rebel—a man who actually deserved to die.
15. And so here we have two men—one of the innocent of all charges, the other one guilty and deserving of death.
16. And both of these men are placed before the crowd as options of choice—one of them will live and the other die.
17. As we shall see from v40, the Jews choose Barabbas to live and Jesus to die—the innocent dies for the guilty.

18. Dear friends, surely, we must understand, that in this scene before us, we have a graphic picture of the gospel message.
19. The sinless and innocent Lamb is treated as guilty, so that guilty Barabbas-like sinners, can be freed from death.
20. My young friends—you and I are here depicted in this account—Do you know where you and I are found? In Barabbas.
21. We are robbers—we've robbed God of His glory—we are rebels—we've rebelled against God's rule—we are murders—we've put Christ to death with our sins.
22. Thus, we must take our place along side Christ as Barabbas, and look to Him as our sinless and gracious substitute.
23. We are not told what happened to Barabbas (though books and movies have been made)—I wonder what he thought of all this.
24. I can only wonder what went through Barabbas mind as he sat there in his cell—looking at his hands and thinking about the nails that would soon pierce them.
25. And then the Romans bring him from his cell, but instead of carrying his cross to his death, he is brought before the crowd.
26. And perhaps Barabbas hears the crowd crying "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" And then becomes rather perplexed.
27. "What a minute! Who are they talking about?" And then he realizes they are not talking about him but another.
28. I don't know, but I wonder—if he had any sense about him, who would merely close his mouth and stand in awe.
29. I don't know who this man is, but He is dying in my place. Whoever He is, I owe Him my life, my soul, my all.
30. I don't know brethren, but I truly wonder—given the fact that Christ is crucified soon after this, whether or not Barabbas following the crowd outside the city.
31. And if he did, no doubt stood in awe at the scene—he hears the nails being hammered in Jesus hands and feet.
32. He sees the cross lifted up and placed in a hole—he looks upon the face of the One who was dying in His place.
33. (3) Crowd—the crowd was likely made of the Jewish leaders along with others who had heard about the trial.
34. Pilate sets before them two options—they can either choose Jesus or Barabbas, but they cannot choose them both.
35. Well tragically, they reject Christ and condemn Him to die—"Not his Man, but Barabbas!" Matt.27:22—"Pilate said to them, 'What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' They all said to him, 'Let Him be crucified!'" V25—"And all the people said, 'His blood be on us and on our children.'"
36. It was because of this rejection of Christ, that He rejected them, and would destroy them as a nation in 70 AD.
37. There is a sense in which, Christ and this world are set before us, and every single one of us must choose only one.
38. Furthermore, Christ in the gospel stands before every sinner just as He stood before these Jews—as their sinless substitute and sovereign King.
39. This is how you must embrace Him—as your sinless substitute who was condemned in your place, and as your sovereign King to rule over your heart and life.
40. Ps.2:12—"Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him."