

Behold the Man! (John 19:1-13)

Last week we began our study of Jn 18 considering the Jewish trial of Jesus and the witnesses John's gospel presents before Jesus went to the cross that the prosecutors didn't call. For today's study in John 19 on the Roman trial of Jesus, I want to begin the same way, like a courtroom drama, examining more evidence that demands a verdict from the other gospels. Defense team members are Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This phase of the trial will focus on after the Jewish lower court trial, witnesses Rome's higher court could call, using actual recorded testimony about Jesus the same day as his Roman trial

Defense team member Matthew calls as his first witness someone who's not a believer in Jesus but is in fact a betrayer of Jesus. What does Judas have to say this very morning about who Jesus is, whether He's guilty or innocent? "*I have sinned by betraying innocent blood*" (Matthew 27:3). Let the record show that even the enemy traitor closest to Jesus has said Jesus is innocent. The prosecution says to Judas "*What is that to us? See to it yourself*" (v. 4).

The next line of evidence presented by this defense team member, Exhibit A is a text message sent this morning by Claudia. The message was written in Latin text on a piece of paper to her husband the governor. Let the court record show she is not a follower of Jesus. May the Roman authority take note she is the wife of the highest Roman authority in the land, and Claudia is direct relative to the royal family, Caesar Augustus is father of her mom. She wrote today to Governor Pilate '*Have nothing to do with that righteous man*' (Mt 27:19). Your honor, a Roman governor's wife of Caesar's family has gone on record stating Jesus is 'righteous,' not an unrighteous criminal.

Before 1st defense team member rests, Matthew calls forth the testimony of the Roman soldiers. They could testify being knocked down hours earlier as Jesus said '*I Am*' in Gethsemane, they saw Jesus pick up a servant's ear and put it back on perfectly healed, they saw Jesus not retaliate as they mocked Him, they saw all go dark midday, felt the earthquake, they heard about the temple veil being torn from heaven to earth, they even heard people saying some had risen from the dead and appeared to people in the city. What's the testimony of these Roman soldiers? '*Truly this was the Son of God!*' (v. 54)

Defense team member Luke has exclusive testimony of the man crucified next to Jesus. He can't be here in court today, he's tied up, but we do have his recorded testimony. The witness saw Jesus closer than any through it all, and his testimony of Jesus is '*this man has done nothing wrong*' (Lk 23:40).

Next witness your honor is the Roman commander himself, the supervising officer presiding over this whole event first-hand, up close and personal. ‘In your professional opinion, Mr. Centurion, seeing Jesus during His trial and after, how He was treated by your men and the people of Israel and how He responded, are you certain Jesus was guilty as they charged?’ The centurion Roman commander surprises the court: he *‘praised God, saying “Certainly this man was innocent!”’* (v. 47). Defense team member Mark: ‘anything else, centurion?’ Yes, *‘Surely, this man was the Son of God!’* Mk 15:39 NIV

For the closing argument, the defense team would like to present to the jury Pontius Pilate as our final witness. Everyone in the courtroom knows Pilate is the highest ranking Roman government leader from the greatest nation on earth. He’s the highest legal authority and his verdict overrules lower courts – your honor, after examining the accused publically and privately, sending him to the king and back, Pilate, sir, what is your verdict? *‘after examining him before you, behold, I did not find this man guilty of any of [the] charges against him. Neither did Herod, for he sent him back to us...it was out of envy the chief priests...handed Jesus over’* [I made a public statement hand-washing] *‘I am innocent of this man’s blood’* (Matthew, Mark, and Luke)

And yet with all that, Jesus, the righteous innocent Son of God, even some pagan Romans can tell it, Jesus sovereignly sacrificially goes to the cross to shed His innocent blood for guilty unrighteous lawless sinners. John 18:38: *Pilate said to him, “What is truth?” After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.”* [1st ‘not guilty’] **19:4** *Pilate went out again and said to them, “See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.”* [2nd ‘not guilty’ verdict] ... ⁶ *When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “Crucify him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him.”* [3rd ‘not guilty’ verdict by Pilate]

Not guilty, not guilty, not guilty, Pilate says of the holy, holy, holy Lord, *‘no fault in Him’* (NKJV), or *‘I find no basis for a charge against him’* (NIV). And yet the holy innocent one with no stain on His record suffers as if guilty and dies unjustly. He had to be *‘holy, innocent, unstained’* to atone for sin (Heb 7:26). 1 Peter says He *‘suffered...for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God’* (3:18 ESV). He had to be *‘the just for the unjust’* as He *‘died for sins once for all’* (NASB). Peter says *‘suffering wrongfully...Christ also suffered for us...who committed no sin...who Himself bore our sins in His own body...—by whose stripes you were healed’* (2:19, 21-22, 24 NKJV)

Jn 19:1 *Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him [scourging by whip, leaving stripes across the back, brutal beating near death].² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe.³ They came up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and struck him with their hands.⁴ Pilate went out again and said to them, "See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him."*

Let's look at this 1st from man's perspective - v. 5 says *Behold the Man!*

If Pilate wants the people to see Jesus is innocent, why shed blood in v. 1 by whipping Jesus? Pilate was known for shedding innocent blood (Lk 13:1). On one level Pilate knew the crowd is bloodthirsty, maybe after splattering some blood around by shredding His back, he thinks maybe the blunt force trauma to the head by jamming thorny spikes 12 inches long and the blood that had to be gushing from a head wound like that, maybe Pilate thinks that will satisfy their thirst for blood? Pilate says in v. 5 as they bring Him out, literally beaten to a bloody pulp '*Behold the man!*' In Pilate's eyes he's *just a man* to behold as pathetic, a pitiable man. His black eyes and swollen face from all the blows has blood streaming down; '*behold the man!*' Pilate could say 'Look at the stripes on his back, his flesh filleted and exposed from the whipping and ripping of layers skin. We stripped him naked and scourged his bare back and behind with a cat of nine tails already. *Behold the man!* Look at him! **Hasn't he had enough?** He's obviously no threat, no fighter, I can barely get him to say anything. What a sorry sight to behold, this "man"'

I remember a time in the Philippines, it was New Years Eve 1993 and some guy was smashing car windows and windshields and tried to attack a friend and me. It was after midnight, police showed up and tackled the guy, threw him down on the ground, and cocked an AK47 at the guys' head. They kept yelling something about what he was doing to Americano's and repeatedly kicked him while he was down, and while he was bound they kept smashing him in the face. He was defenseless and was beaten almost senseless, and as we went to the police station, they continued smacking him around in front of us, I think to show us their power and that they'd taught the guy a lesson. In a lot of countries and cultures that's how it is, and by the time they asked if we wanted to press charges, I felt sorry for him and I said no because he'd already had enough. There may be a similar element in v. 1, Pilate's beating

The mindset of the guards in v. 2 was different, they're just glad a punching bag laughingstock is theirs to have a little fun with.¹ A king, huh? Here's a crown for you, and a robe for his majesty! All hail the king, all hit the king!

What was the mindset of the Jewish leaders? There's 1 thing on their mind:

⁶ *When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" 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 according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God."* ⁸ *When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.*

If now he's 'even more afraid,' that means he was already afraid. His wife's text message told him she'd lost sleep with nightmares about this man and warning him to not do anything with him. As a superstitious pagan familiar with Greek and Roman stories of gods and their sons that were part human and part divine, Pilate knew the stories never have a happy ending for men who make these divine beings angry or who mistreat them. And Pilate now hears this man he brutally flogged claims to be one of those! Jesus certainly seemed like no ordinary man Pilate ever knew in His responses. Jesus just said His kingdom is from another world (18:36). Pilate's even more afraid!

⁹ *He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?"* *But Jesus gave him no answer.* ¹⁰ *So Pilate said to him, "You will not speak to me?"* Pilate's motive is pride "are you *not* talking to me? Do you know who I am? Where are you from?" But Jesus already answered that question (18:36-37) and told him the truth, but Pilate just scoffs *what is truth?* as he walks away from it. Pilate hadn't responded to the truth already given, and the Lord isn't obligated to reveal more light to those who reject the light they already have. Listen to the Lord's sobering word, Prov 1: *'you refused to listen, because you...ignored...I will not answer...because...they did not choose the fear of the Lord...they shall eat the fruit of their way...'* ²

Lessons for us: Don't scoff at the truth. Seek after the truth while it's before you, seek the Lord while He may be found. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, seek things above, not just things of this earth as Pilate did. If you walk away from His Word disinterested, He won't speak to you. Don't be like men in our land who know the right thing to do but don't because of political correctness pressure or because it will cost them. Don't bow to men who reject Jesus and His Word on marriage or morality or for money. Stand for truth against the crowd. Who cares what a multitude thinks of you, what does the Lord say? What will it profit a man to keep a job but lose his soul? For Pilate, compromise, man-pleasing ruined him, beware lest it ruin you. Jesus didn't answer accusations but in v. 11 He addresses a higher authority *'You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you*

from above. [i.e., your power is delegated from and under God's who you're accountable to] *Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.'* ¹² *From then on Pilate sought to release him [even pagans dislike sin implications], but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar."*

At this point Pilate has no more cards to play; no wild card to beat the wild crowd, he thought Barabbas was an ace in the hole, his king didn't do it, the jokers with their court jesting failed, his sympathy card of hearts carries no points in this high stakes match. His opponent's trump card is Caesar, and Pilate can only fold. This is their dagger, a king opposes Caesar, and it will be suicide for your career if you don't kill this professed king, Jesus! If you let him off, we're not letting you off the hook, we're gonna tell on you! If Jesus doesn't go, we'll go to Caesar to tell him you're no friend of Caesar! History tells us Pilate already had 2 strikes against him, Caesar Tiberius was a paranoid leader, any question, suspicion could cost Pilate his job or worse.

¹³ *So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha [Greek word for judgment seat is bema, here Jesus is sentenced]. Matthew's gospel adds: 'while he was sitting on the judgment seat...Pilate said to them [Israel's leaders] "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" (27:19, 22). That's still the question: what will I/you do with Jesus?*

Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall, Friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all;
 [But the song says you also must answer the] call? What will you do with Jesus?
 Jesus is standing on trial still, You can be false to Him if you will,
 [or] can be faithful through good or ill: What will you do with Jesus?
 Will you evade him as Pilate tried? Or will you choose Him, whate'er betide?
 Vainly you struggle from Him to hide: What will you do with Jesus?
 Will you, like Peter, your Lord deny? Or will you scorn from His foes to fly,
 Daring for Jesus to live or die? What will you do with Jesus?
*What will you do with Jesus? Neutral you cannot be;
 Some day your heart will be asking, "What will He do with me?"*³

It takes us from Man's Perspective of Jesus to God's Perspective of Us

Our text ends in v. 13 for today, but there's much more to the story. The end of John's writings, the Bible ends with another judgment seat for Pilate and all who reject Jesus, echoing haunting words 'what did I do with Jesus?' Did I honor Him as King of my life?' Jn 5:22 says the Father gave '*all judgment to the Son,* ²³ *that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him...*

And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man...those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment' (27, 29).

The same John also wrote Rev 20 where he sees the reverse of what he saw in Jn 19, Jesus is sitting in judgment on that day. The dead, great and small, are standing before Him and are judged according to what they had done. In Jn 19 Jesus stands before sinful man. Pilate sat in judgment of what the Man had done, but later, this Man Christ Jesus sits in judgment of sinners who all stand before Him for what they've done, and many will face the lake of fire.

1st application: Behold the Man Who Judges All

We need to look beyond this earthly judgment seat to the heavenly true one. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus, look to Jesus and His coming. Pilate says in v. 5 '*Behold the man!*' Jesus says all will behold the Son of Man coming in judgment, sitting at the right hand of God the Father. The NT calls all to behold the man, Acts 17:30 says God '*commands all people everywhere to repent,*³¹ *because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.*' The gospel tells us to behold the Man who will judge the world rightly, the Man who reversed the death sentence given Him by His resurrection. He's still a man, but not just a man, He's the God-Man who judges all who don't repent and trust in Him as Lord

The word in v. 13 for judgment seat, *bema*, is applied to us in 2 NT letters: Rom 14:10 *Why do you pass judgment on your brother? Or you, why do you despise your brother? For we will all stand before the judgment seat [same word *bema*]...¹² So then each of us will give an account of himself ...* 2 Cor 5:9 (NKJV) *Therefore we make it our aim...to be well pleasing to Him.*¹⁰ *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.*¹¹ *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...[as] ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God (v. 20)*

2nd application: Behold the Man Who Saves All Who Believe

Jesus came as Son of Man to seek and save, to give His life as a ransom for many. No animal blood can take away sin, human blood was required, our blood-guilt demanded payment, but God allows a guiltless man to shed His blood for us. *Behold the Man* who takes away sin. Jesus had to be fully man to live and die for our sin as our Savior. He had to be *sinless* man to be our substitute, and it's important that we *behold the Man* as our Mediator still.

1 Tim 2:5 *'there is...one Mediator between God and men, **the Man Christ Jesus**'* (NKJV). Behold the Man Christ Jesus, the Mediator and Savior of all who repent and believe in Him as the only one who can bring man to God. His life as a man, His death, resurrection and status as a Man representing us in heaven still is a glorious truth to behold and be impacted by. Heb 2:17 says He had to be fully man to *'make propitiation for the sins of the people.'*

In Jn 19 Jesus stands bloodied wearing the robe of a sinner, in salvation we get to wear the robe of a Savior. Isaiah said our most righteous deeds are as filthy bloody garments, but God in Christ *'clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness'* (64:6, 61:10). Jesus wore a crown of death so we can wear the crown of life (Rev 2:10). Pilate meant something else by *'Behold the man,'* presenting Jesus as weak, after being beaten by ungodly men, but Romans 5 says *'while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly... the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one **man Jesus Christ** abounded for many ...much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one **man Jesus Christ**...For as by the one man's [Adam's] disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one **man's obedience** the many will be made righteous'* (v. 7, 15, 17, 19)

In Gen 3 when Adam sinned, God says to His Son *'Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil'* (v. 22). But Adam's sin isn't the end of the story, God had a plan for His Son to become like one of us to bring redemption from evil. How? An OT prophet later says *behold a virgin shall conceive* a son whose name means *God with us* (Isa 7:14). John 1:14 says He *'became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory'* (NKJV). We beheld the man in His flesh, John says, but we also beheld His glory. In Gen 3 the man Adam brought death by his disobedience. Behold the Man Jesus Christ who Rom 5 says gave life by His obedient life and death for us. Moments before God's Word first said *'Behold the man'* in Gen 3, He said thorns would be the result of sin's curse, along with the sweat on the brow.

Pilate knew nothing of Gen 3 but he put that symbol of sin's curse, thorns, on the head of Jesus as he said 'behold the man!' Pilate unwittingly used the very words and symbol of original sin in Gen 3, blood, sweat flow mingled down the Redeemer's brow, and Paul in Rom 5 calls us to see how this last Adam, 'the man Jesus Christ,' is the answer to sin and its effects from Gen 3

O sacred head now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns Thy only crown⁴

Pilate crowned Jesus' head with more than he knew, he jokingly made Jesus wear royal clothes and sit on a mock throne, but in Zech 6:12 *'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Behold, the man [there a name for Messiah] ... shall bear royal honor, and shall sit and rule on his throne...And the crown shall be... as a reminder...'* Pilate unwittingly calls us to behold the man of prophecy. Behold the Man who did all this for your sin and mine to save by His blood.

3. Behold the Man Who Knows All and Helps All Who Ask

-Feeling sin's weight? Behold the man upon a cross, my sin on his shoulders
 - Are you suffering or tempted? Heb 2 calls us to behold Jesus as fully man, *'made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might be...merciful... because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. Therefore...consider [i.e., behold] Jesus'* (Heb 2:17-3:1)
 - Are you tempted in your weakness to feel no one knows what you're going through? Remember 'when Satan tempts me to despair...upward I look and see Him there...behold Him there...the great high priest'⁵ *'able to sympathize with our weakness...one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need,'* Heb 4:15
 - Are you weary or losing heart? Does your imperfect faith need endurance and joy? Heb 12 says *'Let us fix our eyes on [another word for behold] Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured ...Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men [like in Jn 19] so...you will not grow weary and lose heart'* (v. 2-3, look to the man Jesus)
 - Are you troubled or distressed? Behold the man in Gethsemane, it says *'he began to be greatly distressed and troubled'* and asked for prayer, Mk 14:33
 - Are you in agony? Behold Him there in agony, praying for you, Lk 22:44!
 - Are you in grief or sorrow? Isa 53 calls you to behold the *'man of sorrows ...acquainted with grief...he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.'*
 - Are you oppressed, repressed, or depressed? Ever felt beat down or backstabbing pain, deep wounds, rejection or injustice? Behold the man of Jn 19

4. Behold the Lamb for All

Pilate said *'Behold the man,'* but this spirit-inspired Scripture wants us also to *behold the Lamb.* v. 14's mention of Passover takes us full circle back to where John's gospel began: *'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'* (1:30). Passover-Lamb symbolism is all over this gospel:
 - in v. 1 Jesus is led to be scourged, as Isa 53 prophesied Messiah must be led *'like a lamb...and by His scourging we are healed'* (v. 7, 5, NASB)
 - in v. 3 they do violence to the lamb who'd *'done no violence'* (Isa 53:9)

- in v. 4 Pilate bringing Jesus to the Jewish leaders as found faultless was also reminiscent of the Passover law: lambs were to be examined by the leaders to see if there was any fault or blemish or spot to disqualify him
- Jesus entered Jerusalem on the very day lambs were being brought into the temple for examination or for sale. Jesus drove everyone out of the temple and on the days prior to Passover, the Jewish leaders examined Him to try to find some fault but they failed (Matt. 21-23). Behold the perfect lamb of God who Peter redeemed us '*with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ*' (1:18-19 NAS)
- Here when Jesus doesn't answer the one who will kill Him, it's again like the prophecy: '*he opened not his mouth, like a lamb...to slaughter*'
- Here Pilate sits on the judgment seat, but the Lamb of Revelation sits on His *bema seat* and He will bring true judgment eternally. Pilate put hope in being a friend of Caesar, our hope must be in Jesus, *friend of sinners*
- Here Pilate thinks he can wash his hands of the blood of Jesus, but the only way he or we can be washed of sin's guilt is *by the blood of Jesus*
- Here Pilate thinks if he bloodies up Jesus a bit he can satisfy the people crying out for His death, but the reality is only the bloody *death* of Jesus can every satisfy the demands for justice and the death we all deserve
- Here Jesus stands before the people in a bloody purple robe, mockingly honored, I think of what the same John wrote in Rev 7 of 'the Lamb' truly honored by people from all the earth in white blood-washed robes!

Behold Him there the risen Lamb, my perfect spotless righteousness!
Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne!

- Here Pilate says '*behold the man*' as powerless, poor, foolish, weak and unworthy of their attention, but John in Rev 5 is told '*Behold the lion!*' And he sees a lamb, as if it was slain, but now the lamb reigns as worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom and strength forever. Behold the lamb

¹ "The game of "mock king," scratchings of which are preserved on the stone pavement of the fortress of Antonia...was played by soldiers during the Saturnalia...Philo tells of people mocking a certain madman...in A.D. 38. Dressed in a rug for a royal robe, with a sheet of byblus as a diadem on his head and a papyrus scepter in this hand, Carabus received homage and was saluted as a king and hailed as lord, apparently in imitation of familiar pantomimes (*Flacc. 6/36-42* [c.a. A.D. 50]' - Andreas Kostenberger, *John*, p. 532.

² Proverbs 1:24, 28-31.

³ A.B. Simpson, "What Will You Do With Jesus?"

⁴ "O Sacred Head Now Wounded."

⁵ "Before the Throne of God Above."