

John 64 – Do You Hear Truth?

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John 18:36-38

The Inquiry Continues

- In previous lessons I have held to the popular view that Jesus is on trial before Pilate; however, though Jesus was tried by the Sanhedrin he is not being tried by Pilate
 - Pilate is conducting an inquiry to determine the validity of the Sanhedrin's verdict requiring Roman execution
 - Pilate's purpose: To minimize his political exposure

Roman Emperors are Rome

- As this lesson deals with Roman justice, we need to understand the extant Roman emperors and Pilate to understand Pilate's acquiescence
 - Ancient Roman Empire is the last of the Gentile Kingdoms in Daniel (Chapters 2 and 7)
 - Revived Roman Empire foundation of Western culture
 - Christ begins to fulfill His role as the Rock (Isa 2:44-45, 7:13-14)

Emperor Augustus {Octavian}

- Christ came at the precise moment of history always intended before Creation (Ge 4:4-5; Ep 1:3-10)
- Though Caesar recreated the role of king, Augustus laid the foundation of the Empire and the Pax Romana ruling from Britain to India; became the first Emperor
- Upon his death he was elected god by the Senate: Voice of the People; as was Julius Caesar {August, July}
- His tax decree brought Jesus' birth to Bethlehem (Lk 2:1-7)

Though the Senate was a necessary governing body in the early days of the Empire Power flowed away from this august body toward an ever-increasing Bureaucracy. Though powerful, the emperors were not absolute and frequently assassinated

Emperor Tiberius

- Tiberius reigned during the time of Christ's execution
- His reign began as wise and temperate, he became suspicious, reclusive and violent with a surrogate ruling in Rome: Sejanus; near death he was *helped along*
 - Not handsome, afflicted with oozing sores in old age
 - His policies laid the fiscal and administrative foundation for Augustus' Pax Romana
 - He would not be voted to divinity on his death; Roman mob yelled: "To the Tiber"; fate reserved for criminals

Best and Worst of Emperors

Augustus – Peace on Earth

- Appeared humbled when given honors
- Arbitrary violent deaths of rivals kept to a minimum
- Possibly poisoned by wife
- Declared a god at death

Tiberius – Antichrist's Reign

- Appeared obstructionist when offered honors
- Arbitrary violent deaths rampant: Oft w/tortures
- Murdered by Caligula
- Treated ignobly at death

Who Was Pontius Pilate?

- According to tradition, Pilate was a Roman equestrian (knight) of the Samnite clan of the Pontii (Pontius)
 - Appointed Prefect by Sejanus during Tiberius' self-imposed exile, he exhibited pride and violence; just like Sejanus
 - Possibly censored during Tiberius reign, before Jesus' inquiry, for offending Jews who rioted in Caesarea demonstrating his inability to maintain Pax Romana: Keep taxes up, costs down
 - Recalled to Rome for killing Samaritans on Mount Gerizim without trial (A.D. 36) - Caligula ordered ritual suicide

Equestrians were second-tier officials appointed by wealthy bureaucrats, merchants, etc.
Roman equestrians probably bought their positions in government; little training
Prefect answered to the regional governor and ultimately to the Emperor

Pilate's Temperament

- Thus, Pilate, a noble by appointment and a bureaucrat by choice, probably had little leadership training
 - He had a small force at his disposal but was always answerable to the regional governor for its use
 - Without a grasp of the *larger aspects of leadership*, his governance would be arbitrary, unpredictable, disruptive
 - He would second-guess his decisions, especially being recently reprimanded by unpredictable Tiberius

Sejanus ruled Rome as Emperor in fact if not in name and appears to have been worried about challengers to his power resulting in arbitrary trials and executions
Pilate would have been loyal, if unimaginative, bureaucrat like Sejanus
Once Sejanus was executed Pilate lost his protection, quickly falling from grace

Petty, Confused, Cruel Official

- Pilate had no problem using violence to support his superiority over those he governed (Lk 13:1)
 - These were overlooked if the peace was kept so taxes could be collected and military expenditures kept low
 - Not an adroit politician, he appears confused in the gospels trying to plumb Jewish motives
 - Typical bureaucrat, he ever seeks to absolve himself of responsibility by blaming others

Inept Official Involved in Intrigue

- Pilate struggles to know why the Jews condemned Jesus
 - He would be conversant with politically powerful Jews
 - Jesus obviously not a politically powerful person
 - The charge: King of the Jews; not serious nor true
 - Probable that Pilate unaware of Jesus' teachings since they concerned Jewish religion which he despised
 - He is wary of any repercussions that could involve him

“Am I a Jew?”

- Jesus' answer when Pilate asked Him if He was *King of the Jews* only solidified Jewish stubbornness in his mind
 - Pilate's retort, “Am I a Jew?” displays his frustration
 - He demands that Jesus tell him what He has done?
- Pilate understands brute force, especially from bureaucrats like himself; he does not grasp subtle machinations of power that define talented leadership

Foolishness of Christ (1Co 1:20-25)

- As usual, Christ does not answer the question asked
 - Christ's kingdom is not earthly; ergo, not a threat to Rome nor a concern to Pilate
 - If His kingdom were of this world His supporters would be fighting to prevent Him being captured by the Jews
 - If He had not been captured by the Jews then He would not be standing before Pilate; ergo, Pilate's problem is not Him, but the Jews; which Pilate already surmised

Kingdom Not of this World

- Jesus ends His statement repeating that His Kingdom is not of this world
 - Pilate's response shows he is not mentally adept in following Christ's rhetoric when he asks Him, "You are a king then?" (Implied answer, "You are a king.")
 - Christ reminds Pilate that others made that claim
 - Christ makes no statement that can be construed as a political threat to either the Jews or Rome

Christ's answer to absolutely true in both the current and coming Dispensations
Law: He was their spiritual Messiah - First Fruits: Savior of the New Covenant
However, He will return during His Second Coming to set up His Millennial Kingdom
The Great Tribulation transitions between the First Fruits and Millennial Kingdom Dispensations

Caiaphas' Claim Gutted

- Caiaphas' claim that one man should die so the nation could live is without merit since Jesus is proving Himself no threat to Rome during Pilate's inquiry
(Jo 11:49-53)
 - Thus, the Jews had no *legitimate* reason to try Jesus and bring Him to Pilate for execution
 - This fact is not lost on Pilate who at first refuses to endorse their sentence: use Rome to do their dirty work

Reference to Opening Hymn

- Jesus continues and answers Pilate's original question, "Why are You here?" Christ states His purpose is, "to bear witness to the truth" (Jo 1:9-14, 30)
 - He alone has seen the Father and brings the Father's unadulterated message of salvation to man
 - Though He came primarily to the Jews, He also revealed Himself to Gentiles: Samaritans and Roman Centurion
(Mt 7:24-30; Jo 4:1-42; Mr 8:5-13)

Again, Election

- Christ says that not only did He come to speak the truth but, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."
 - Those who are of the truth are those chosen by God before Creation based solely on His own criteria (Ro 9:14-29)
 - They are considered *righteous* by the Father in Heaven which is always present tense, though they are not saved on earth until the time determined by God (Job 1:8; 36:5-33; 42:1-6)

What is Truth?

- Pilate's question to Christ reveals that He did not and cannot understand Jesus' statement
 - Christ said, "Everyone who is of the truth listens to (hears) my voice."
 - Pilate asks, "What is truth?"
- Pilate is not of the truth; ergo, Christ's words are foolishness to him; incomprehensible (1Co 2:14)

Pilate Declares Christ Innocent

- Pilate declares, "I find no guilt in him."
 - Within the confines of his understanding Pilate finds no Roman charge for execution, as he tells the Jews
 - Judiciously the Ancient Roman Empire acquits Jesus
 - Being declared innocent, He remains the Paschal Lamb
 - Only False Jews find Christ worthy of death (Lk 36; Jo 11:49-53)

End of This Phase of the Inquiry

- Pilate's declaration of innocence ends this phase of his inquiry (Lk 23:5-16; Mk 15:13-15)
 - Jews bring counter claims that Jesus spoke against Roman taxes, fermented unrest among people, etc.
 - Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, once he learned Jesus was from Galilee; Herod also finds Jesus innocent
 - Pilate, seeking to avoid a Jewish riot, has Jesus scourged

Christ's Torture Thus Far

- Christ was beaten and mocked twice by Jewish Temple forces before being brought to Pilate
- Though Pilate finds Him innocent, he has Christ scourged to appease the Jews threatening to riot: Fails
 - Scourging rips skin and muscle from bone flaying Him open; many died under the punishment and many died from subsequent infections: Chronic pain for survivors

Luciferian Governments

- Though innocent, He was tortured by the government of Lucifer to break His resolve to obey the Father (Jn 6:35-40)
 - The issue is not guilt or innocence but obeying God {Saved} or following Lucifer/Self {Lost} (Lk 4:15-21)
- The ritual of Scapegoat will be played out between Bar-Abbas and Jesus fulfilling Yom Kipper {Near view} in our next lesson (Lk 16)