



Jesus on trial (John 19:1 – 16)

Picking up part way through the trial of Jesus we see that, although the Jews have decided Jesus deserves death, Pilate is not convinced. In the first section (18:38 – 19:7) Pilate tells the Jews **three times**: “*I find no basis for a charge against him.*” Three times, though, the Jews are not satisfied, eventually changing the charge to blasphemy (v7).

In the second section (19:8 – 11), Pilate’s second conversation with Jesus, the tension has increased but Pilate seems more convinced than ever that Jesus is innocent (shown by his efforts in v12). Pilate tries to assert his power, but Jesus is unfazed and points out that his power is given to him, also observing the guilt of his judges.

In the last section (19:12 – 16) we see Pilate’s efforts to free Jesus fall by the wayside under the hatred and pressure of the Jews. They argue that *not* crucifying Jesus would be an act of rebellion against Caesar, finishing with a statement of allegiance to him. Pilate crumbles and hands over Jesus to be crucified.

John goes to great lengths to show that Jesus is innocent, which is essential if he is to be perfect sacrifice. With Passover heavy in the air and the groundwork laid in the first 17 chapters, we see that:

1. Jesus is the Passover Lamb, the innocent substitute for us
2. Jesus is the suffering servant king, suffering for us
3. Jesus is the king who is in control, who has chosen this path

John also paints a vivid picture of the many responses to Jesus, and in this passage, we see three contrasting ‘villains’:

1. Powerless Pilate: knows Jesus is innocent, but is swayed
2. Sadistic soldiers: don’t seem to care but happy to join in abuse
3. Jealous Jews: they’ve seen the signs, but choose to hate

The challenge, very simply, is how we choose to respond to Jesus. John is keen to show us that the same decisions that Pilate, the Jews, and the disciples made, is one that his readers also have to make.

Homegroup questions

- As we get to know Pilate more over the course of this trial, what are the most apt words we could use to describe him?
- Looking just at the interaction between Pilate and the Jews, was the outcome inevitable or could he have changed his ‘strategy’?
- What do we learn about power from this passage?
- Thinking about the three different responses to Jesus in this passage (of Pilate, the soldiers, and the Jews), what do you think is the root cause(s) of each response?
- Which responses are echoed most obviously around us in our day to day lives?
- Which response do you find most challenging personally, perhaps because you recognise one of your own traits in their response?