

# The Trial

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] What do you think of chapter 18 verse 37? Do you all think that's amazing? He's in the middle! He's in the middle of his own trial. Everyone is accusing him. Chapter 18 verse 37. Everyone! On the side of truth listens to me, says Jesus.

In our society today everyone tiptoes so softly around one another don't you think? Doesn't matter what you believe as long as you believe in it and I have my truth and you have yours and that's okay and that's great and whatever kind of truth helps you through life is good if it works for you and in contrast do you not think Jesus here is so stark and bold and clear? Everyone on the side of truth listens to me. Flowing from this bold claim a clear challenge for Pilate back then and for every person in Cambridge today and you and me and anyone listening.

Which side are you on? Are you on the side of truth? Do you listen to the man of truth or are you on the side of lies and lost in a world of darkness? That's the challenge.

So we're looking this morning at the trial, the famous trial of Jesus before Pontius Pilate. Having been betrayed by Judas and captured by the Jewish officials and questioned by the high priest in 18 verse 28 you see the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. So this is where we're up to. They've been trying to arrest and kill Jesus for years, desperate to do away with the one who claims to be the son of God and now they've got him but they're not allowed to kill him themselves. There's only one man in Judea who has the authority to condemn and execute people, the Roman governor Pontius Pilate who rules brutally on behalf of Caesar the emperor and so to Pilate's military headquarters it's more that than a flashy palace they take Jesus. They won't go in, they want to be good clean Jews not tainted by entering a non-Jew's house even as they seek to kill God's son and so Pilate comes out to them verse 29 and the trial proceedings begin what charges are you bringing against this man? In one sense of course this is the trial of Jesus because all the way through Jesus is the focus of the attention he's the one on trial officially yet I think at the same time we're meant to notice how a searching spotlight falls in part on the world but more on Pontius Pilate himself. If you were filming the trial you'd need two cameras one outside the palace and one inside as all the way through we follow Pilate going out then in then out then in outside Pilate listens to the Jews he goes inside he summons and questions Jesus he goes out again to the gathered and shouting mob then back inside to have Jesus flogged out again to the Jews then inside afraid with Jesus where do you come come from before outside for a final time sitting down to pass judgment at every moment in every scene through the trial you see Pilate listening questioning calculating his next move there is pressure on Pilate to make a decision and so we might say it is Pilate on trial here as he tries Jesus whose voice will he listen to whose side is he on what will he do with Jesus which are exactly the same questions that John's Gospel all the way through puts to us and to our world today confronted with God's King who has come into the world here is the man whose voice will we listen to which side are we on what will we do with Jesus follow through the main flow of the trial with me it's long there's all sorts going on but firstly up to the end of chapter 18 see God's innocent king

God's innocent from heaven truth testifying king because that is who he is he's no criminal he's no direct threat to Caesar he's done nothing deserving death rather he is from God he speaks truth to Pilate and you and me in verse 29 Pilate came out to the Jewish leaders he asked what charge are you bringing against this man it's a clear question an important question and they reply if he were not a criminal we wouldn't have handed him over to you which is not a reason it's not a clear answer Pilate says understandably take him yourselves and judge him by your own law what's this got to do with me they say but we have no right to execute anyone I mean that's what they want to do this took place by the way to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die he will be crucified at some point it's not here in John the Jewish leaders must have said something

about Jesus claiming to be king such a crafty way of putting it because maybe this king is going to threaten the Romans and fight them and so Pilate goes back inside the palace he summons Jesus and he says to him are you the king of the Jews straight away Jesus begins to interrogate Pilate is this your own idea Jesus asked or did others talk to you about me am I a Jew says Pilate your own people and chief priests handed me over to you over to me what is it you've done here verse 36 now such important teaching from Jesus as he speaks where he says my kingdom is not of this world that is the king that he is in John's gospel the world it's not so much this good created world it is rather the world in rebellion against God and lost in darkness and lies kingdoms that are of this world establish themselves through violence and fear and lies they wield power they have bigger weapons like wrestlers grappling each other and flailing about in mud rulers and presidents fight to get the upper hand those are the kingdoms of this world that not what's going on in our world today where China and Russia and the US and Iran all all vie for power kingdoms fighting however they can for territory for dominance for Ukraine for Greenland for elsewhere for Taiwan or think of the conflict in the Congo right now and the ethnic religious carnage going on as people fight Jesus says though my kingdom is not of this world

[ 7 : 59 ] Jesus is not one religious leader rising up out of the mud ready to threaten and fight against Pilate and Caesar and grab some land and power Jesus will not use violence Jesus will not use terror to build himself a political religious state some kind of Christian caliphate he won't do that if it were verse 36 my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders but now my kingdom is from another place say which place Jesus's kingdom is from heaven from above from the God who sits enthroned above the circle of the earth Jesus comes into the world from above with God-given authority he's the rightful legitimate king of all because he is God's king he establishes his kingdom not by violence but by dying and rising from the dead and today he draws people from every nation to himself that Roman emperors and Jews and Brits and Iranians and Chinese might enjoy life to the full under his good and gentle rule in the kingdom of God that is the kind of king he is in verse 37

Pilate has heard something you are a king then Jesus replies you say that I'm a king in fact the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth I came from heaven to testify to the truth I love this what Jesus says here we live in a world don't we of competing opinions and half truths and lies and fake news clips get posted out of context words get twisted you think how can I know what's true in the world images and voices constantly bombard us telling what's real and good what will last how we should live what will make us happy some of us in our heads sometimes can feel we're losing touch with reality

I don't know anymore what's true or right or what I should believe Jesus declares the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth that is why he came wonder if you've got hold of that yet from John's Gospel it's such a wonderful thing Jesus has come into the world from above he came from the father full of grace and truth so do you want truth in your life you're going to go to Jesus I tell you the truth that I heard from God he says truth about God who he is what he's really like truth about us who we are where we're from what God's plan is for us truth about how we can enter the kingdom of God and know God for all eternity Jesus says if you hold to my teaching you will know the truth and the truth will set you free Jesus says I am the truth it is so good that we are not left in ignorance and lies that we don't have to stumble around in darkness anymore trying to work out what's what in life it's so good that this king has come to testify to what's true it's so good that we can run to him and soak up his teaching and allow the truth that he speaks to us to shape us and drive out the lies and give us light that we be set free as we live in the light with the one true God that's the kind of king he is and therefore listen to him says Jesus while at the same time presenting this challenge because as he stands before Pilate eyeballing him I guess here's our verse from the start 18 verse 37 everyone on the side of truth listens to me so who's on trial now pretty much every human being don't you think would like to say that we're on the side of truth in some way as you post on Facebook or on X or on truth social as you share your opinions sitting on your sofa the brainy professor the certain work colleague we all like to think that we're on the side are you on the side of truth if you are you will listen to the man of truth to the Lord Jesus Christ Christ but here from Jesus those who refuse to listen to Jesus however clear or certain they are are not on the side of truth they're on the side of lies and belong to the father of lies the trial of Jesus it is Jesus on trial here and yet at the same time Pilate is on trial as he tries Jesus he is on trial as is every human being whose voice will we listen to which side are we on what will we do with Jesus

this king who has come speaking truth to us in verse 38 Pilate answers I don't know what you reckon to this what is truth is it a genuine question

I don't think it is has Jesus got to him maybe and Pilate's looking for a quick way to get out of the conversation that does happen in life or is Pilate revealing which side he is on right there sort of pushing Jesus away what is truth and with this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said I find no basis for a charge against him which is right because Jesus is no criminal and he is no direct threat to Caesar there are no grounds for a charge against him rather he stood before Pilate then and he stands before the world today as God's innocent from heaven truth testifying king and yet they will not treat him as they should because secondly more briefly see God's innocent king now condemned by a guilty world at the end of chapter 18 Pilate he knows Jesus is no criminal he picks a game plan to try and get Jesus released it is your custom he said to the Jews for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover do you want me to release the king of the Jews and they say no not him give us Barabbas they would rather a rebel is freed than the one who is innocent and so back inside Pilate tries his next move maybe a beating would satisfy the crowd out there so Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged and then it's so cruel and mocking this the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and they clothed him in a purple robe and went up to him again and again hail king of the Jews and they slapped him in the face and once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there look I'm bringing him out to you to let you know I find no basis for a charge against him he is innocent and when Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe

[17:05] Pilate said to them here is the man look do you see him and in chapter 1 verse 14 John writes the word became flesh and made his dwelling among us we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only son who came from the father full of grace and truth now see him crowned with thorns and bruised and bleeding but those looking on are united and demanding as soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him they shouted crucify crucify they're like a mob they're all certain they're buying for blood Pilate answered you take him and crucify him as for me I find no basis for a charge against him and the Jewish leaders insisted we have a law and according to that law he must die because he claims to be the son of God when Pilate heard this he was even more afraid you think didn't he realize he was maybe dealing with the son of God and he went back inside the palace where do you come from but Jesus gave him no answer maybe trying to regain control do you refuse to speak to me don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you I'm in charge around here

Jesus answered you would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above from God know your place therefore the one who handed me over to you Caiaphas most likely is guilty of a greater sin and from then on Pilate tried to set Jesus free he did but the Jewish leaders kept shouting if you let this man go you are no friend of Caesar anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar which is so manipulative if you side with Jesus Pilate you'll fall out of favour with your boss you'll become an enemy of the state you ever heard anything like that if you side with Jesus you're no friend of the company there's no credibility for you anymore if you side with Jesus you will lose your friends and you don't want that do you when Pilate heard this what pressure on him he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at the place known as the stone pavement in Aramaic Gabbatha and it was the day of preparation of the Passover it was about noon this is the climax of the trial scene here is your king Pilate said to the Jews look at him do you see him God's innocent king who has come down from heaven testifying to the truth what will they do with him and they shouted take him away take him away crucify him get him out of our lives this king this truth teller we don't want to see him again get him away from our schools and our universities and our society and our lives we don't want to listen to him ever again shall I crucify your king Pilate asked the chief priests Jews who have God as their king we have no king we have no king but Caesar and finally I mean awfully now having made his decision Pilate passes judgment and handed him over to them to be crucified this is the trial of Jesus it is high drama see Jesus God's innocent from heaven truth testifying king condemned condemned by a guilty world and let me just put this simply we asked at the beginning whose voice will we listen to in life whose side are we on having got to this point in John's gospel there is a clear choice and it is one or the other don't be like Pilate don't be manipulated by others don't be fearful don't give in to the voice of the mob don't accept lies don't live in darkness be on the side of truth listen to Jesus

I mean this is foundational this is everything it is the choice we all face he came into the world from God he is no rising from the muck fighting king he is king of kings and lord of lords sent by his father into the world he came into a world of darkness and ignorance to testify to the truth the kind of truth that will set us free and he came to die as the innocent lamb of God at Passover time sacrificing his life to take away the sins of the world what will we do with Jesus got to listen to him bow down to him enter the kingdom of God come into the light and enjoy life to the full don't listen to the lies stick with come to the king of truth put your faith in him live for him and believe in him let me lead us in a prayer and then we're going to sing together the reason i was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth everyone on the side of truth listens to me our lord and god we praise and thank you that the word became flesh and his glory was seen the one who came from you full of grace and truth thank you that your son the lord jesus christ is the rightful king of all thank you that he is the way and the truth and the life help us to listen to his voice and have him as our shepherd and our god we pray that in the lead up to good friday and easter the message of jesus christ the truth-telling king who gives his life would be proclaimed broadly and widely and that hundreds and thousands of millions would stream to the lord jesus christ and listen to him and walk in the light of life we ask in jesus name amen