

The Verdict of Rome

John 18:29-19:15

Introduction

Religion used to be a simple thing. People did what they were told, they paid their dues, brought their sacrifices, and longed for better days. The Roman government was oppressive and pagan. Yet still, the people hoped; they yearned for the coming One and leaned forward on their rough synagogue benches, as men read of the Conqueror who would end their domination.

Over the course of generations, men stepped forward and announced that they were indeed the Messiah. Several decades earlier, the popular Theudas, a strong winsome leader, claimed he was it. Four hundred men rallied by his side, but he was crushed by the Romans. He was not Israel's hope. Then, even more recently, Judas of Galilee stepped forward and announced that he was God's promised deliverer. The people cheered and prayed; there was bloody guerilla warfare, until he also was killed by the Roman army.

The Prisoner Before Pilate

In our previous discussion on the book of John, we saw that the latest man to step forward had been arrested and tried – yet, He was different. He would not pick up a sword – He would pick up a cross. He would not even try to stay alive – He spoke of wanting to die. He did not offer Israel relief from persecution – He promised it; He suffered it. And, He did not claim to be from God – He claimed to *be* God!

Religion used to be a simple thing – until Jesus came. He would change religion forever – better yet, He would destroy it, and offer, for the first time, an intimate relationship.

His claim had finally brought Him before the “Supreme Court” of Israel. These seventy-one men were the “power brokers” in the land. Because of Jesus, they had lost their religious grip on the people. Power is addictive, and the addicted will kill to feed their habit. It was time to kill.

So, a second series of trials begins. This time, they are Roman trials. Let us pick up the narrative with John, chapter 18, verse 28. A trial is about to take place in Pilate's home and Jerusalem headquarters.

They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

Stop! Did you catch that? They are about to shed innocent blood. They have already stooped to brutality by descending upon a defenseless man, spitting on Him, hitting Him, and mocking Him. They have already set aside due process. They have already bribed false witnesses. They have already indicted Jesus without testimony. But, “Hey, watch it! Don't go into Pilate's house – he's a Gentile. If you go in there, you will become ceremonially unclean for a day. Watch out! Don't even step on his porch. You've got to keep clean – you don't want to miss the Passover meal.”

Do you see what they are doing? They are keeping petty observances, while committing terrible crimes.

What they are doing is a little like me robbing a bank at midnight and then, as I make my getaway, I stop at all the red lights, as a good driving citizen

should. Or, like me shoplifting at the mall, but holding the door for the ladies who are leaving the mall behind me – I take pride that I am a gentleman. It is like cheating on your income tax and giving some of your return to the church fund – you might as well.

That is the problem with religion – you can keep all the religious ceremonies and yet, be a murderer in secret, filled with envy and hatred.

While in Dallas, my wife and I heard a story of deception from a young lady. She shared with us that she had earlier, broken off an adulterous relationship with a married man. She told us that she would meet him at some getaway restaurant and hotel, yet, before they ate their dinner, they would bow their heads and pray.

Oh that God would open all of our eyes to the fact that we are all capable of looking good to the public eye and the Christian community, while sweeping under the rug, hideous sins of the heart and flesh.

“Hey, fellow murderers, don’t go inside Pilate’s house; don’t forget the rules – remember your ceremonial purity – that’s important.”

Do they think they can fool God?! They are as funny as the middle school boy, that I read about, who decided to skip school. He called the school office and the principal answered to hear his young, low voice say, “I’m sorry, but Thomas Bradley won’t be in school today.”

The principal was a bit suspicious of that voice. He asked, “And may I ask who is calling?”

There was a long pause, then the voice came back, “This is my father speaking.”

God is not fooled by pious tones and religious words either!

Now, continue in John, chapter 18, to verses 29 and 30.

Pilate therefore went out to them, and said, “What accusation do you bring against this Man?” They answered and said to him, “If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.”

In other words, they were irritated that Pilate would even question them. They did not want a Roman trial, they wanted the Roman procurator to simply nod approval and thus, put into place the process that led to crucifixion. But Pilate hated these Jews as much as they hated him.

So, he dismissed them with contempt. Notice verse 31a.

Pilate therefore said to them, “Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.” . . .

Pilate was literally giving them the right to kill Jesus. The Old Testament Law laid it down, in Leviticus, chapter 24, verse 16a,

. . . the one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. . . .

Now, notice the last part of verse 31, of John, chapter 18.

The Jews said to him, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death”

They certainly took that Law into their own hands with Stephen, as we are told in the book of Acts, chapters 6 and 7. They stoned him for, according to them, being guilty of blasphemy!

The Crucifixion . . . A Must!

But, not in this situation. Why not take Jesus out and let the mob stone Him to death? *Why not?*

Was it because they were afraid of the mob? Perhaps, but after a few hours, the mob will be screaming for His death. So, *why not?!*

John provides the answer in verse 32.

that the word of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

Jesus had said earlier, in John, chapter 12, verse 32,

. . . if I be lifted up, . . . [I] will draw all men to Myself.

Lifted up – by means of glorification? Yes. Lifted up – by a Roman cross? Yes! He prophesied that He must be crucified, not stoned, therefore, Jesus had to die a Roman death, not Jewish.

Have you ever wondered, why redemption had to come by means of a cross? Why not stoning – it was quicker? Why not a sword through His heart? Why not cast Him off a cliff?

There is a long list of reasons, but let me suggest four, as to why it would be a cross.

The fulfillment of Christ's own words

1. The first reason is for the fulfillment of Christ's own words, ". . . if I be lifted up . . .".

The fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy

2. Secondly, for the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

This includes prophecy such as in Psalm, chapter 22.

Verse 1,

My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Continue to verses 6 through 8,

. . . I am . . . a reproach of men and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; . . . they wag the head, saying, "Commit yourself to the Lord; let Him deliver [you] . . ."

Skip to verses 14 through 15 and verse 18.

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; . . . My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; . . . They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

This was written centuries before by David. It was now experienced by the Son of David – the rightful king.

The combination of both Jews and Gentiles in a conspiracy of death

3. Thirdly, the crucifixion would combine the Jew and the Gentile worlds in a conspiracy of death.

The responsibility and guilt for the death of Jesus was placed upon the world. When anyone says that the Jews are the Christ killers – they do not know what they are talking about.

In Acts, chapter 4, verse 27, Peter says that the crucifixion of Jesus was the responsibility of Herod, Pilate, the Jews, and the Gentiles (the nations).

If Christ had been stoned, the Jews would have taken full and final blame. But, Christ would stand not only in a Jewish court, but in a courtroom of the mightiest nation on earth – the Roman empire. He would be condemned by the world.

If it ever bothers you how the courts of our pagan world deliver injustice and legislate immorality, let it be learned in this that, even though the high courts of Christ's world were having their way with Him, He was really having His way. Although their verdicts was read, we are allowed to see behind the scenes that, in every detail, it was really the court of time eternal that was having its verdict read!

The fulfillment of the typology of an Old Testament event

4. Finally, the crucifixion fulfilled the typology of an Old Testament event.

Turn to John, chapter 3. While you are turning, let us review a little history. The children of Israel had rebelled against the provision of God. God sent poisonous snakes to afflict the children of Israel, but He also provided a cure. He told Moses to fashion a serpent out of bronze and put it up on a pole. Then, Moses was to tell the children of Israel that, if they would look at that serpent on the pole, they would live. Now, that solution may have seemed strange – to put on a wooden pole a figure of that which represented the agent of death. It makes sense, however, in John, chapter 3, verses 14 and 15.

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.

Wow! The Son of God became sin – the cause of death, as Romans, chapter 6, verse 23, tells us, "For the wages of sin is death . . .". Jesus now becomes sin, and, if anyone looks at Him, Who now represents the very cause of their death, they will live.

With that in mind, a different Old Testament Law comes into play. Deuteronomy, chapter 21, commanded that, if anyone was under a divine curse, he was to be killed by hanging on a tree; he was to be hanged from a tree in judgment for his sin.

So, the words of Paul explode with meaning as he writes in Galatians, chapter 3, verse 13,

Christ . . . having become a curse for us – for . . . "Cursed is everyone who hangs upon a tree"

There had to be a Roman trial and a Roman crucifixion because Jesus Christ would become a curse, He would become the serpent, or sin, the cause

of death for every member of the human race. And, those who look to Him will be saved.

The Predicament of Pilate

Let us go back to John, chapter 18. The Jews have a problem – they cannot stone Jesus. They have their reasons – I have just shown you God’s reasons. So, they have to come up with something to rattle Pilate into condemning Jesus. And, between verses 32 and 33 of John’s narrative, the gospel of Luke provides the full accusation. Notice the way they create an accusation that is tailor made to rile a politician like Pilate. Look at Luke, chapter 23, verse 2.

. . . We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, . . .

(here is the “clincher”),

. . . and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.

In other words, “Pilate, He’s leading the entire nation and, in doing so, He’s telling them not to pay taxes – which line your pockets – and that He’s the King – He’s after your job.”

The Jewish leaders cannot be criticized for stupidity. They are brilliant!

And, it worked! Look at John, chapter 18, verses 33 and 34,

Pilate therefore entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus, and said to Him, “Are You the King of the Jews.” Jesus answered, . . .

(I love this!),

. . . “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?”

In other words, “Did you come up with that all by yourself or did you have help? Do you really want to know if I’m the King for yourself, or just for the sake of courtroom procedure.”

Pilate is a picture of humanity - curious, superstitious, and more than willing to talk about who Jesus is – just don’t get personal!

This Christmas season, our western world will sing Christmas carols, have fuzzy religious yearnings, maybe even say grace before a Christmas dinner – but that is close enough.

We can talk about God, but, “Let me do it on my terms; let me define God my way – just don’t get personal.”

And that was Pilate’s response, in verse 35,

Pilate answered, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me . . .

In other words, “I’m not here to talk about me; I was just curious!”

Then he changes the subject away from who Christ was, to simply, what Christ had done. Continue to the last part of verse 35 through 36.

. . . “what have You done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”

What Jesus is doing is refusing to change the subject. Three times, in His answer, He has repeated the phrase, “My Kingdom, . . . My Kingdom, . . . My Kingdom!”

He is going to answer the first question, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

Why? Because what He has done is directly related to who He is. And you will never be able to understand what He has done, until you believe who He really is.

He will look Pilate in the eyes and say, “Yes, I am the King of the Jews and I have My own Kingdom too!”

People say, “I don’t believe all the things in the Bible – the creation; the parting of the Red Sea.”

Why? Because they do not know God.

People say, “I really don’t believe Jesus did all those miracles.”

Why? Because they do not know the person of Christ.

The issues of life are not all answered; not all understood, but they are resolved when we come by faith to believing *who He is*. And, when we believe *who He is*, we can believe *what He has done*.

So, Pilate inquisitively asked again, in verse 37,

. . . “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say correctly that I am a king.” . . .

(And Jesus continues, and basically says, “Now that you know who I am, I’ll tell you what I’ve done.”)

. . . “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

Then, in verse 38a,

Pilate said to Him, “What is truth?”

Can you imagine? Pilate had never been closer to the truth in his entire life. The problem was, Pilate did not really want an answer. In fact, the text tells us that, as soon as he asked the question, he turned on his heels and walked out.

You need to understand that this was not a question of deep sincerity, but the expression of cynicism, “Phhh, yea right, what is truth?!”

Why the cynicism? Because that world, like ours, was already waterlogged with philosophical disillusionment. His cynical cry is the cry of our age, and every age. His questions are the questions of mankind today, “Jesus, who are You? What is really true in life?”

Recently, *Newsweek* ran an article entitled, “The Search for the Sacred”. It was rather typical in that it talked of people’s spiritual longings and journeys, without ever taking them to Jesus Christ. I expect that. In the next issue, I was interested in the “Letters to the Editor” section, where people responded to the article. Let me read some of the responses.

This one writes,

*My parents had open minds and allowed me to explore different teachings and beliefs, rather than stifling me or limiting me to any one path. I’m grateful for that. As a youth, I studied Greek mythology and I read Frazier’s, *The Golden Bow*. I then read the Bible from cover to cover, after a near-death experience. I have spent my life examining various philosophic and religious beliefs through independent study. And today, I have a deep and significant relationship with the god of my understanding.*

Since this writer has rejected the God of creation, she has replaced Him with the god of her own creation.

Here is another one,

Although I didn’t consciously seek the sacred in my travels, during the last five years, I found it – at dawn, in the Hong Kong botanical gardens, observing Chinese practice Tai Chi. I found it on a drizzly morning in a London church listening to a rehearsal of a Mozart selection. I found it at midday in an outdoor Hindu temple in Bali, and at night in the Karnak temple in Luxor, Egypt. I found it in all of those places.

I’d like to have this person’s frequent flyer miles!

Then, I like this one. This is one of the last ones they included in the responses.

Tell me, when are we atheists going to get equal time? We don’t lack inner strength, peace, identity, self-esteem, or a purpose for living. What we do lack is the need to lean on a crutch of a fantasy figure who will make everything alright, who will take care of us and forgive us, no matter what we do. We lack the desire to have our lives and loves defined by a two thousand year old collection of documents. Atheists don’t have all the answers, but at least we know that the place to start looking is within oneself, not into the ozone.

So, which god is it? Which truth is truth? Is it the truth of the Chinese, or the Hindu; the truth of self-created theology, or of atheism, or that there is no truth embodying God? It is interesting that even those who disagree about Christ, disagree with each other.

We live in a world that is searching spiritually – it is the nature of mankind. It is interesting that Plato, and other Greek philosophers, had grown weary of searching for the truth. Plato once wrote, “It may be that some day there will come forth from God a “logos,” or Word, Who will reveal all mysteries and make everything plain.”

John answered that in his opening lines of chapter 1, verse 1,

In the beginning was the [logos] Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

And, in verse 9,

[He] was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man..

Are you searching for spiritual truth? John recorded for us, in chapter 14, verse 6a,

Jesus said . . . , “I am the way, and the truth . . .”

The gospel of Luke, chapter 23, tells us that, at this time, Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee. That was outside his jurisdiction, so, in order to hand off this troubling prisoner, he sent Him to Herod Antipas.

For the sake of time, we will not discuss that account, but let me at least say that this Herod was the son of Herod the Great. Do you remember that the wise men came before Herod the Great and asked if he knew where the King of the Jews had been born? Then, after the Magi were divinely warned not to tell him where they had found the babe, Herod the Great ordered every male Jew under the age of two, in and around Bethlehem, to be killed. He was insanely jealous; no one would take his title away from him – for he loved to be referred to as, the King of the Jews.

Now, thirty five years later, Jesus is standing before the son of Herod the Great. You would think Herod Antipas could figure it out. Luke tells us that he asked a great deal of questions, but Jesus never answered one. Herod begged Jesus to perform some miracle to amuse him, but Jesus stood silent. So, Herod, and his soldiers, mocked Him, spit on Him, beat Him, and then, sent Him back to Pilate.

But, poor Pilate really does not want this trial. Something was going on that kept this cruel Roman ruler from pronouncing guilt on Jesus. *What?!*

What kept Pilate from condemning Jesus?

Let me give you a “pop quiz” and ask you which of the following three things were keeping Pilate from condemning Jesus:

- Pilate knew Jesus was innocent;
- Pilate knew the true motive of the Jewish leaders; and/or
- Pilate’s wife told him to leave Jesus alone.

If your answer is, “All three,” you have earned an A+! You also get to sit on the front row next Sunday! Don’t get so excited!

Pilate declares the verdict for Jesus – Innocent!

1. The first answer is, Pilate knew Jesus was innocent of any crime which was deserving of punishment by death.

This is important. Do you remember that, before a lamb could be sacrificed during the Passover, it had to be without blemish? The Supreme Court could not indict Jesus on any crime. And, throughout our study, Pilate repeatedly, publicly declares that Jesus is, “Not guilty!”

Three times Pilate declares the verdict for Jesus of, “Innocent!”

- The first time was at the conclusion of the Roman trial. Look at John, chapter 18, verse 38b, where Pilate said,

. . . I find no guilt in Him.

This was the standard form of a verdict by the Roman judge. In effect, Pilate was throwing the case out of court for lack of evidence.

- The second time was after Jesus returned from Herod. Look at John, chapter 19, verse 4, where Pilate again said,
- The third time was after having Jesus flogged. Hoping, I believe, to elicit sympathy from the enraged Jews, Pilate declared again, in chapter 19, verse 6,

. . . I find no guilt in Him.

I believe that Pilate ordered the flogging to reveal that Jesus was an ordinary man, who was capable of suffering and bleeding. Would a Son of God allow this to happen to Himself? Since the answer should be, “Surely not,” the conclusion is that He is an innocent, ordinary, deluded man.

What is another reason that Pilate would seek to let Jesus go?

Pilate knew the true motive of the Jewish leaders – envy!

2. Pilate knew the true motive of the Jewish leaders.

There is a little verse that indicts, not Jesus, but the religionists who were trying to coerce Pilate into saying, “Jesus is guilty of death.”

Turn to Matthew, chapter 27, verse 18.

For [Pilate] knew that because of envy they had delivered Him up.

You might say, “But, I thought it was for blasphemy; I thought it was for the honor of God’s name.”

No! And a pagan Roman saw through the sham of religion, and knew – they hated Him because the people they had enslaved just might turn and follow Him instead. He was the One the people were all quoting. He was the One the people loved to hear teach. And, they envied Him and hated Him because of it.

It was a pagan politician who saw through the facade of empty religion to know the rotten motive in their cry for crucifixion. Then, perhaps there was another reason Pilate wanted to release Jesus.

Pilate had received a message from his wife to leave Jesus alone – disturbing!

3. Pilate had received a secret, disturbing message from his wife to leave Jesus alone.

Stay in Matthew, chapter 27, and look at verse 19.

And while [Pilate] was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, “Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him.”

“Here Pilate, there is a written message from your wife, Claudia, and she says it’s urgent!”

Maybe the note read something like this, “Sweetheart, last night I had a dream that this man you were judging was innocent – even righteous. Whatever you do, don’t condemn Him – somehow get out of it. I’ll tell you the details of my dream later. Love, Claudia.”

The Romans were particularly superstitious where dreams were concerned. They never made any major decision without having their dreams interpreted. They believed the gods spoke to them in their dreams. So, Claudia dashes off a quick note, “Pilate, leave Jesus alone.”

Now what does he do? If he lets Jesus go, he is in trouble with the Jews; if he does not let Him go, he will be eating leftovers for weeks.

His quick mind remembers a strange custom – at Passover time, the Jews allow a criminal to be set free, as a symbolic reminder of their liberation from Egyptian captivity. Pilate thinks, “Surely they will let this innocent man go, instead of the notorious criminal, Barabbas.”

We will deal with this passage in full later, as we study the release of Barabbas, but the people desire Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus.

Go back to John, chapter 19, verses 1 through 5.

Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; and they began to come up to Him, and say, “Hail, King of the Jews! and to give Him blows in the face. And Pilate came out again, and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.” Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, “Behold, the Man!”

In other words, “Look at Him – He’s bleeding, He’s hurting, He’s innocent – won’t you just let Him go?”

Continue to verse 6.

When therefore the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate said to them “Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.”

So, Pilate says they can go ahead and crucify Jesus – which will fulfill Scripture. But, by now, the world would know that the Jewish leaders had killed a man whom Pilate had legally declared innocent.

The Jews deal with this in verse 7,

The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.”

In other words, “Listen, Pilate, if you can’t find anything in your law to condemn Him, at least consider our law – He’s claimed to be God’s Son.”

Pilate responds in verses 8 and 9.

When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.

If Jesus had answered Pilate – with some statement or miracle – He could have been released! But, He had not come to earth to be released, He had come to redeem, by His death on the cross.

Continue to verses 10 through 12.

Pilate therefore said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin.” As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, . . .

(Here it comes! Take note! Nothing can coerce Pilate to condemn this man, except this final threat by the Jews.)

. . . “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

In other words, “We’re going to tell Caesar that you aren’t his friend!!”

Imagine, for a moment, that you are standing in Pilate’s place. Whose friend would you rather be – the Roman emperor or the Lamb of God?

Make no mistake, you stand in his place countless times – in the shop, in the university classroom, in the corporate environment, in the political world. Whose friend are you – the emperor’s or the Lamb’s?

Who was Pilate’s choice? Look at verses 13 through 14a.

When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. . . .

Imagine – the Jewish nation is preparing for the Passover and each family is slaughtering an unblemished lamb – in just a matter of hours, the pure Lamb of God will be slaughtered by the united family of humanity.

You need to see how important it was that the innocence of Jesus was firmly established. The Lamb of God was without blemish.

Seven witnesses agree – Jesus is innocent!

There were not even two witnesses that could agree on His crime, but there were at least *seven* witnesses who declared His innocence.

- Pilate declared, three times, “. . . I find no guilt in Him.”

- Herod, found Him blameless, as recorded in Luke, chapter 23, verse 15, saying, “. . . nothing deserving death has been done by Him.”
- Pilate’s wife said, “Have nothing to do with that righteous Man . . .”.

Other witnesses, at the sight of the slaying, will add their testimony.

- The dying thief said, according to Luke, chapter 23, verse 41, “. . . we indeed [are dying] justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”
- The centurion in charge of the crucifixion said, according to Luke, chapter 23, verse 47b, . . . “Certainly this man was innocent.”
- The crowd, who had come to sneer and mock, after seeing the darkness and feeling the tremors of the earthquake, said, according to Matthew, chapter 27, verse 54b, “. . . Truly this was the Son of God!”
- Judas, earlier, took his thirty pieces of blood money and threw them on the floor before the religious leaders, and said, according to Matthew, chapter 27, verse 4a, . . . “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” . . .

This Lamb was without blemish! The guilty verdict was the frustrated decision of the Jewish Supreme Court and the verdict of the Roman court. The only thing Jesus was guilty of was that He had told the truth – He was guilty of being God.

Now, look at the final desperate attempt of Pilate. Matthew, in chapter 27, verse 24, reported that, just before he turned Jesus over to the screaming mob, Pilate dipped his hands in water, and then said,

. . . “I am innocent of this man’s blood . . .”

This is fascinating as this was not a Roman custom – it was a ceremony of Jewish religion. Pilate adopted the Jewish custom of the elders. Mosaic Law had provided that, when the elders were unable to determine the identity of a murderer, they could publicly wash their hands, say a prayer, and not be held liable for being unable to render justice.

Pilate becomes a religious man; he makes an external attempt to cover an inward guilt. And, Pilate becomes guilty of what the religious leaders are guilty of – and what people around the world are guilty of –

they are externally clean in their own eyes, but inwardly guilty.

A Present Day Challenge

The truth is, ladies and gentlemen, no matter how religious you are; no matter how you choose to wash your hands, we are all sinners; we are all guilty of sin for which the Lamb died on the cross.

The blood of Christ is either . . .

Jesus stands in courtroom of your heart – what will you decide; what is your verdict? I want you to know that His blood is either on your hands (guilty) or His blood covers your heart (guilty, yet forgiven).

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