

Study Hints for Thinking Further

International Bible Lessons

John 18:28-37

Sunday, April 1, 2012

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Some Bible study groups or classes can further discussion by asking some or all of the **Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** below. Others may want to send the bulletin size *International Bible Lesson* home with their students for further study in the coming week to encourage continuing Bible study. The *Study Hints for Thinking Further* below are not actually intended to be answers to the discussion questions, but hints a teacher may use to help students think through and discuss the questions in class.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What is a ritual? Why are the performance of rituals important to some people? What is ritual defilement?

According to my Webster's dictionary, a "rite" is a "ceremonial or formal solemn act, observance, or procedure in accordance with a prescribed rule or custom, as in religious use." A "ritual" is "a set form or system of rites, religious or otherwise." "Ritualism" is "an excessive devotion to ritual." To "defile" is "to make filthy or dirty; pollute; to make ceremonially unclean." Some people superstitiously think they can avoid "Bad Luck," if they do certain things at certain times; such as, "Knock on wood," and this can become a ritual for them. Some people think they can act as they please, whether morally or immorally, and remain right with God if they perform certain rituals they believe He commands them to perform; such as, go to church every Sunday or put money in an offering at church. Ritual defilement can result from not performing a ritual exactly as prescribed; such as, not doing one of the rites in a ritual perfectly or not at all. Jesus said that the Jewish leaders (and practicing Jews in general under their leadership) were more concerned about their rites and rituals than they were about the weightier matters of the law. He warned, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. It is these you ought to have practiced without neglecting the others" (Matthew 23:23). They should love their neighbors as themselves, but when the Jewish leaders went to Pilate to arrange for Jesus to be "legally" put to death by crucifixion, based on false and conflicting evidence, they were more concerned about entering Pilate's headquarters and becoming ritually defiled than they were about convicting and murdering an innocent person. If they became ritually defiled, they could not have celebrated the Passover and they would have failed to perform a prescribed ritual, which they believed would keep them in a right relationship with God in spite of murdering Jesus. Thus, ritualism can

2. What do you think Pilate might have assumed were the objectives of a King of the Jews or the King of the Jews? Why might these objectives concern him?

If Jesus were **a** King of the Jews, then He might try to overthrow Roman rule. Jesus indicated that He was not **a** King of the Jews, because if He were His disciples would

fight for Him. If Jesus were **the** King of the Jews, then He was the Messiah that the Jews expected, and Pilate would still consider Him a threat to Roman rule, perhaps even a greater threat. Jesus indicated that He was **the** King, but not of this world. He was the long-expected Messiah, but His kingdom was heavenly and spiritual instead of this worldly. His spiritual kingdom is greater than any earthly or worldly kingdom, and He rules within the hearts of all who trust in Him as King, Lord, and Savior.

3. Why do you think Jesus did not give Pilate simple “Yes” or “No” answers to his interrogation?

Pilate’s questions could not be answered with a simple “yes” or “no,” because of Pilate’s limited knowledge and understanding of Jesus and Jesus’ teachings and kingdom. Jesus wanted Pilate (and of course those who would read the gospels) to think and come to a knowledge of the truth and then decide what to believe and do on the basis of having heard the truth about Jesus.

4. Read John 18:37 again. Why did Jesus come into the world? Do you often hear this reason given when people talk about why He was born?

Jesus came to “testify to the truth.” Jesus was the King, and He came into the world to testify or bear witness to the truth that He knew as the Son of God and having lived in the Kingdom of God in heaven as King before He was born as a human being in human flesh.

5. What kind of person listens to Jesus? When Jesus spoke to Pilate, what did He mean by “listen”? According to Jesus, what kind of person refuses to listen to Him?

A person who belongs to the truth listens to Jesus. If Pilate had been a man of truth, a man of honest endeavors, he would have listened to Jesus. Instead, Pilate was a man who would listen to and believe lies and threats and succumb to political pressures. People who prefer to believe and do whatever they choose without concern for the truth and living according to the truth will not listen to Jesus. To “listen” means to hear what someone says, evaluate what they say, consider whether or not it is the truth, and if it is the truth; then, believe and obey. With regard to the Bible’s teachings and the teachings of Jesus, the Holy Spirit always helps sincere seekers come to a knowledge and understanding of the truth so they will listen to Jesus. To “listen” also implies living according to the truth a person learns. Jesus expects those who listen to Him to obey Him, just as a father or mother expects their child to obey when they say, “Listen to me!”

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