



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 19:8-16 Commentary **New Revised Standard Version**

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(John 19:8) Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever.

Notice: John wrote that Pilate was “*more afraid* than ever,” In 1 John 4:18, John wrote, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.” Pilate feared the possibility that Jesus might be the Son of God, and God or Jesus might punish him if he ordered Jesus' death. He also feared the chief priests would report him to the emperor if he set Jesus free, and the emperor might punish him for freeing a revolutionary.

Because his position, power, and wealth as a Roman governor were his gods instead of the true God, Pilate became increasingly fearful the more he learned about Jesus. When he questioned Jesus, Pilate probably saw in Jesus the qualities of character and courage that he had seen in no one else—qualities he knew he did not possess; so, he probably thought Jesus just might be the King as He claimed. Jesus had certainly shown Pilate wisdom from above in answering his questions, so maybe Jesus was the Son of God as He claimed (see John 19:7). Pilate's fear of Jesus, the chief priests, and what the emperor might do to him influenced Pilate to question Jesus once again.

(John 19:9) He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, “Where are you from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.

Away from the chief priests and the crowd, Pilate returned to questioning Jesus. He asked Jesus where He was from, and Jesus had already told Pilate that He had come from a kingdom that was from another place. Pilate did not ask for a further explanation from Jesus at the time of his first meeting with Jesus when he could have done so. Jesus knew that if He tried to explain to Pilate exactly where He was from and what He had been teaching as the King of the Jews about the Father and himself that Pilate would not understand. Pilate did not seem interested in understanding Jesus. He only wanted to know enough to determine if Jesus were guilty or innocent and pass judgment in a way that would enable him to stay in power.

Jesus had already told Pilate that “Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice,” and He knew Pilate would not listen to Him (John 18:37). When Pilate could have done so, he had not waited for Jesus to answer His last question, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). Therefore, Jesus gave no answer to a man who had no interest in taking the time to understand who Jesus was and is as King and the truths Jesus had been teaching. Jesus has given Christians an example they can prayerfully follow.

(John 19:10) Pilate therefore said to him, “Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?”

Pilate may deserve some credit for respecting Jesus enough not to have Jesus beaten until He answered Him. Looking at Jesus after He had been beaten and wearing a crown of thorns may have given Pilate some sympathy for Jesus, sympathy given to Pilate by the Father. The hand of the Father also restrained Pilate from abusing Jesus more before they crucified Him. Pilate asked Jesus two reasonable questions. Jesus answered the first question by speaking to Pilate. Jesus answered the second question because it deserved an answer, for Pilate misunderstood the source of his power and authority and he needed correction. Pilate thought he had power and authority from the emperor to release or crucify Jesus, and he was quickly learning that if he did not order Jesus to be crucified that the chief priests would report him to the

emperor, and the emperor would remove him as governor. Though he probably did not want to admit it, because of his fear he was also under the power of the chief priests. Jesus wanted Pilate to know that he was under the power of God and he should rightly fear God far more than he feared the priests and the emperor. The emperor eventually removed Pilate as governor and he disappears in history,

(John 19:11) Jesus answered him, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

In correcting Pilate’s claim that he had power over Jesus, Jesus referred to what He had previously told Pilate (see John 18:36-38). Jesus emphasized the fact that His kingdom was from above; therefore, He was a King from above. Jesus’ kingdom was not from this world because Jesus’ kingdom was greater than all the kingdoms of this world. Jesus’ kingdom had power over the kings and kingdoms of this world. Jesus’ kingdom had power over Rome and the emperor. Jesus had no time to explain all this to Pilate, and Pilate would never have understood, repented, and believed in Jesus. Pilate knew about the Greek and Roman gods, but he did not know the true God. Pilate understood Jesus, but he did not believe that ultimately God had given him the authority and power he exercised over Jesus. As King from a different world, Jesus showed no fear. He showed complete peace of heart and

mind when He told Pilate that Pilate depended on God for his power. Jesus also told Pilate that if he exercised his power over Jesus to crucify Him then he was guilty of sin or disobedience to God. Jesus also stressed that the chief priests who handed Jesus over to Pilate were guilty of greater sin, of greater disobedience to God, for they knew or had the opportunity to know the Law of God and they ignored God and His Law of Love. The chief priests would further demonstrate their greater sin when they threatened Pilate so Pilate would unjustly condemn Jesus to death. When Pilate tried three times to release Jesus, they took advantage of Pilate's fears so he eventually felt compelled to order Jesus' crucifixion. Pilate also feared Jesus, because if Jesus was truly a King and the Son of God, then Jesus or His soldiers might punish him. He feared the high priests more than God or Jesus, for they could tell the emperor that he had not done his duty and cause him to lose his position or worse, his life. Fear ruled Pilate's life.

(John 19:12) From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

The Bible does not tell us all we might like to know about Jesus' trial before Pilate, but the Bible does tell us some of the influences that can motivate people to do what they do. Fear of the possible consequences from Jesus' kingdom

may have motivated Pilate to try to release Jesus with all the legal means at his disposal—he found no case against Jesus. By his use of “Jews,” John wanted his readers to understand that the Romans bore little responsibility for Jesus’ crucifixion, because the Roman governor wanted to release Jesus. But Pilate caved under pressure from the chief priests, who feared they would lose everything if Jesus became the Messiah. Pilate lacked the courage to do his duty and release Jesus, and he feared what might happen to his career more than he feared God or God’s punishment for his sins. Many people have this problem.

Jesus never set himself against the emperor, for Jesus’ kingdom was not from this world. When the scribes and Pharisees tried to entrap Jesus with a question about paying taxes to Caesar, Jesus had told them: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17). Jesus had far more important obligations than “setting himself against the emperor.” But the lies of the chief priests intimidated Pilate and influenced him to order Jesus’ death the way the chief priests wanted Jesus to suffer and die by crucifixion. Their evil intent fulfilled the prophecies of God in their Scriptures. Jesus would sacrifice His life and die on the cross for the forgiveness of sins.

(John 19:13) When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge’s bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha.

To satisfy the chief priests, Pilate brought Jesus outside his headquarters again, and representing Roman justice Pilate sat on his judge's bench to pass official judgment against Jesus. John carefully gave the Hebrew name for "Stone Pavement." Today, we do not know its exact place in Jerusalem, but it was an elevated bench designed to impress people when the governor made judgments and to enable a crowd to hear him speak.

(John 19:14) Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!"

The day of Preparation for the Passover would have been Friday, and the chief priests continued to be more concerned about obeying their ceremonial laws instead of the moral law of God, the Law of Love. They had refused to enter Pilate's headquarters to keep from becoming unclean while they demanded the death of an innocent man, the Son of God. For this reason, in Matthew 23:25-26, Jesus said rightly of them, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside also may become clean." Jesus had celebrated His Last Supper with His disciples the night before, on a Thursday, when He established the New Covenant in His blood that He would spill for the salvation of those He came to save when He died on the cross on Friday. Whether Pilate was convinced or not that Jesus

was a king, in a final effort to humiliate the chief priests and the Jews who demanded Jesus' death, Pilate introduced Jesus to them as "their King!" Unintentionally, Pilate spoke the truth.

(John 19:15) They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor."

In response to Pilate's efforts to release Jesus, the chief priests expressed their hatred of Jesus, who had done nothing but good. When Pilate asked if they wanted him to crucify their King, their Messiah, they told the truth with deep implications. Though their Scriptures taught that God was their King, their ancestors had demanded a man for a king, so God gave them Saul. In 1 Samuel 8:6-8, when the people asked for a man for a king, we read, "But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to govern us.' Samuel prayed to the LORD, and the LORD said to Samuel, 'Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but *they have rejected me from being king over them*. Just as they have done to me, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so also they are doing to you.'" Many years before, the chief priests had rejected God as their King. When God sent them the Messiah as He had promised, they also rejected Him as their King. Unwittingly, they truthfully declared that the Roman emperor was their god and king, and they

would serve him as their god and king. In 70 A.D. by using a Roman emperor and his army, the true God destroyed Jerusalem and ended a corrupt religious and political priesthood.

(John 19:16) Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus;

In response, Pilate handed Jesus over to the chief priests to be crucified at the hands of Roman soldiers. Pilate never convicted Jesus of a sin, of rebellion, or any other crime. By threatening Pilate, he only did what the chief priests demanded of him. They wanted to murder Jesus and they wanted Jesus crucified and Pilate gave them all they wanted.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Why do you think Pilate was “more afraid than ever”?
2. Why do you think Jesus refused to answer Pilate?
3. Why do you think Jesus finally chose to answer Pilate?
4. What did the Jews (the chief priests and the police) cry out when Pilate tried to release Jesus?
5. When Pilate asked them, “Shall I crucify your King?” what did the chief priests say and what did that reveal about their relationship with God?

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