

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Delegated Authority John 19:1-11

Intro: We have been dealing with the Roman trial of Jesus Christ and, at first glance, it would seem that the trial is still ongoing but that that is not the case. Strictly speaking, what John records in the first part of **ch19** is not a trial. The Roman trial of Jesus was officially concluded in **vs38** where Pilate gives his initial verdict of acquittal. Yes, Jesus is still in Pilate's custody and Pilate hasn't yet turned Him over to be crucified but the official trial actually ended when Pilate declared of Jesus, "I find no fault in Him at all."

What's happening in that block of time between the formal verdict of acquittal and the execution of Jesus is basically just a series of attempts by Pilate to escape the wishes of the murderous mob. He knew Jesus was innocent of the charges that were brought against Him but the religious leaders and rulers wanted Him crucified. First Pilate sends Jesus to Herod hoping he would provide a solution. Then he tries to release Jesus instead of Barabbas to honor the Jewish custom. When that doesn't work, he tries to appeal to the pity of the leaders and the crowd by having Jesus beaten within an inch of His life. None of these ploys work but they point to the desperation of Pilate and the determination of the enemies of Jesus Christ. All the events that follow are pregnant with meaning and irony.

1-5 – John chooses not to elaborate on the scourging of Jesus. In fact, he only uses the one word to describe it at all. The Roman practice of scourging was performed with a whip that had many leather straps, each having sharp pieces of bone or metal at the ends. The typical scourging reduced the back to raw flesh and it was not unusual for the condemned to die from it even before they were executed. Few victims remained conscious through out the ordeal and some even went insane from of the excruciating pain. A scourging had 3 purposes: it was used to either punish a prisoner, to gain a confession of other crimes from a prisoner or, in the case of a crucifixion; it was used to weaken the victim so that they would die more quickly on the cross. Of course, none of these applied to Jesus' case.

Pilate had not yet condemned Jesus to be crucified; hadn't found Him guilty of any crimes so he had no reason to punish Jesus. So why did he have

Him scourged? It could only be to evoke some feelings of pity from the crowd so they would change their minds and call for His release. What man could look upon the shattered body of a scourged prisoner and still want him crucified? Maybe, since nationalist feelings were high, if they saw a fellow Jew, one of their own countrymen and highly esteemed at that, being so severely abused and mistreated at the hands of the hated Romans, they would feel that He had been punished enough and finally have sympathy on Him. If this is the case, then the irony lay in the fact that Jesus wasn't scourged in preparation for crucifixion but to escape crucifixion.

It would appear that Pilate was trying to help Jesus but "with friends like that, who needs enemies?" No matter how magnanimous Pilate was trying to be, the soldiers to whom he delivered Jesus were not on the same page. Everything they did to Jesus was done for the purpose of humiliating Him. At His trial before Caiaphas, the rulers mocked His claim to be a Prophet, now the Gentile powers mock His claim to be a King.

Kings wear crowns but not crowns of torture. This crown cut, pierced and bloodied the head of the King that wore it. Kings often wore purple robes because the dyes to make the fabrics purple were expensive. This purple robe was given to Jesus as a cruel joke. Kings are greeted with royal titles and in their spite they mocked Him with this title. It was not only meant to humiliate Jesus but the Jewish nation in general – "This is the best King they could find?" The physical abuse was more extensive than just the beatings. Matthew tells us that they also gave Him a reed as a mocking royal scepter then took it and beat Him over the head with it while He was still wearing the crown of thorns. The soldiers mocking and beating of Jesus was done simply to gratify their cruelty and wickedness. The forces of hell were having a heyday Pilate's judgment hall.

In all of this we must remember that Jesus was actually declared innocent by Pilate, yet He was treated as though He was guilty and He did it all for us! Pilate goes out and appeals to the crowd first, reaffirming his innocent verdict and then presents Jesus to them and invites them to "Behold the man!" "Look at this One who is beaten and mocked, with blood sweat and spit all over His body. Look at this suffering One and look with careful consideration!" Pilate hope to arouse some pity for Jesus in their hearts. "Look at this poor fellow! Hasn't He suffered enough?"

But, who is this Man that Pilate has scourged and now presents to the mob for their appraisal? We know He is an innocent Man. Judas declared it; Pilate's wife declared it; Pilate himself would declare it several times. Herod found Him to be blameless; the thief who dies beside Jesus will declare, "This Man has done nothing wrong" (Luke 23:41). The centurion in charge of the crucifixion will state, "Certainly, this was a righteous Man" (Luke 23:47). Even the crowd at the cross, when they experienced the earthquake and saw the other supernatural signs that accompanied His death, would declare, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt 27:54).

Not only was this an innocent Man, it was also a brave Man! Jesus had been mercilessly beaten and cruelly mocked and humiliated and yet there is nothing cringing or compromising in His character of bearing. There was no crying or whimpering by Jesus; no pleas for mercy, no anguished cries for relief; no giving up; no backing down; no surrender!

This alludes to the last noticeable characteristic of this Man on display – His majesty! Jesus carried Himself through all of this pain and humiliation not just because He was brave but there was an air of majesty that surrounded Him, not just a royal majesty but a divine majesty; a majesty befitting of the Son of God. Behold the Man? Yes, but behold the King too! Not the mocking that the soldiers laughed about but the true King – the King of kings whose dignity and great grace shone through even at the point of His greatest physical humiliation. This was an innocent Man, a brave Man and a majestic Man; but this was also God, as the resurrection was soon to reveal.

6– If Pilate meant to appeal to the pity of the Jews or their nationalistic sympathies or anything else that might be favorable to Jesus, he was tragically disappointed. The only result of bringing Jesus out to the crowd was to cause the chief priests and their cohorts to raise the cry and call for His execution. Pilate thought that he might win the people over to his way of thinking but the leaders waste no time. They don't even try to persuade the crowd, they just begin to yell out, "Crucify!" It's a one-word slogan that's easy for a mob to adopt and take up as their own.

The failure of Pilate's plan teaches us an important lesson: it takes more than human sentiment to bring lost sinners to salvation. If any group of people should have been moved by pity, it was this crowd of Jews that waited Pilate. What nation has suffered more than the Jews? Yet, here was one of their own suffering unjustly at the hands of the Romans and they did

not repent or show even a hint of pity. If the sinners who actually saw Jesus in His suffering refused to repent, what hope is there for people 2000 yrs later who only read about His agonies? The cross and all the events leading up to it were not meant to evoke pity from the lost. Jesus went to the cross to pay the price required by the Father for the sin of the world. His death on the cross not only declares the extent of God's love for the world, it also defended the holiness and justice of God. The lost are not saved by feeling pity for Jesus, they're only saved by repenting of their sins and trusting in Jesus as their sinless Substitute.

This is not to say that, as Christians, we shouldn't contemplate the cross and meditate on His sufferings. In fact, we tend to talk about it and even sing about it constantly. But, we shouldn't confuse sentimentality with true spiritual emotion. It's one thing to shed tears during a church service or be moved emotionally at a concert or a revival meeting but it is quite another thing to sacrifice, suffer and serve after the meeting is over. Jesus doesn't merely call us to contemplate the cross – He calls us to carry it! ([Mark 8:34](#)).

Pilate's frustration is seen in his remark for them to take Jesus and crucify Him themselves. Of course, he knows that they won't do that because they do not possess the legal authority to do so. Plus, they wouldn't want to ceremonially defile themselves this way during the Passover celebration. Pilate has declared Jesus innocent time and time again and if they will not accept his verdict than they should take matters into their own hands. This is not a valid option and Pilate knows it but he is once again trying to dodge culpability by shirking his own responsibility. Pilate's own words condemn himself – "I find no fault in Him." Then why did you have Him scourged? His actions fail to line up with his official verdict. Pilate is a weak-willed man who, like many politicians, tries to find a happy compromise that will please everybody (except Jesus). Confucius defined cowardice as "to know what is right and not do it."

7-10 – Ah, now we get to the heart of the matter; the religious leaders finally play their last hand. They had levied no less than 6 other charges against Jesus up to this point. They accused Him of 1) threatening to destroy the temple 2) being an evildoer 3) perverting the nation 4) forbidding Jews to pay taxes to Caesar 5) stirring up the people 6) made Himself a King. Yet, none of these charges were the real reason for the religious leaders hatred of Jesus or their bringing Him to Pilate. Their real beef against Jesus was

that He claimed to be the unique Son of God, a claim they say is blasphemy. As the true accusation is revealed, it sends shockwaves through Pilate's already troubled heart.

The Greeks and Romans had numerous myths about the gods coming to earth as men so it's likely Pilate had these stories in mind. He was already impressed with the words and calm demeanor of Jesus, he had never met a prisoner like Him before. Let's not forget that Pilate's wife had also sent him a message not to have anything to do with Jesus because He appeared to her in a dream! Could this indeed be a god who has come to earth? It's doubtful that Pilate was a religious man but he evidently was a superstitious man. He takes Jesus back in for further interrogation.

Why did Jesus not answer Pilate here when He readily answered his questions before (18:34-37)? It could be that before, Jesus felt that Pilate was legally discharging his official duties as a judge but now Pilate is exceeding them. The only question Pilate was required to decide on was Jesus' guilt or innocence, His origin was irrelevant. Another reason why Jesus may have refused to answer Pilate's question was because He'd already answered it (18:36-37). It's a basic spiritual principle that God doesn't reveal new truth to us if we have failed to act on the truth we already know. Pilate had made it clear that he was not interested in spiritual truth (18:38) so, he didn't deserve an answer!

Jesus' silence only adds to Pilate's fear and frustration so now he feels that he has to throw his weight around. The problem with this is: if you constantly have to remind people how powerful you are then you're probably not that powerful. Pilate feels that he has to remind Jesus of his Roman authority; that he has the power to crucify Him or release Him. But the irony is, his statement doesn't actually demonstrate his power, it exposes his true weakness! If he really had the power to release Jesus, why hadn't he done it already? He's declared Jesus to be innocent several times! If he really had the authority to release Jesus, why is he bending over backwards in all these attempts to avoid making a decision on Jesus' case? Pilate condemns himself with his own boastful words.

11 – Jesus' response to Pilate is His final words to him and they reveal His faith in the Father and His surrender to His will. Jesus explains the true nature of power to Pilate. Pilate believed he had power over Jesus because

it had been granted to him by Rome but the only power Pilate possessed was power that had been delegated to him from and by God. In Pilate's mind, Rome had all the power but the reality was, God had all the power.

What kind of power was Jesus referring to? There are 3 Greek words commonly translated as power in English: dynamis – explosive power; dynamite/ dynamic. Kratos – naked power to rule; this can be legitimate or not; democracy, plutocracy... Exousia – legitimate authority. This is the word Jesus uses for Pilate's power and He's declaring that since legitimate authority to rule comes from God then human government is divinely authorized and exercises a authority that must be recognized. Since God has legitimized human government, it should function properly and be highly respected. Jesus respected Pilate's authority; He answered his initial questions and never once suggested that Pilate didn't have the right to pronounce judgment on Him. Pilate would pronounce wrongly but he still had the authority to make the pronouncement, even if it was wrong. His authority came from God.\

If Pilate had the authority, why does Jesus mention sin? Since Pilate's authority had been delegated to him by God, he had a responsibility to exercise his delegated authority in a way that reflects the wishes and character who gave him that authority. Delegated authority that is not properly executed is a sin against the One who gave you the authority. Divine authority not only enhances human government, it also limits it because it's an authority that is bound by the moral nature of the God who has granted it. One day, God the Father will call Pilate into account for the way he used and/or abused his official privileges and God-given responsibilities, as will every other ruler.

greater- Jesus declares Pilate's actions to be sinful: greater sin implies a lesser sin. He didn't hold as much authority as he thought he did but he was responsible for his own actions and thus, he is guilty of sin in this case. The one Jesus refers to is Caiaphas, not Judas. Caiaphas was the corrupt High Priest who had long before determined that Jesus must die (11:47-54). Caiaphas knew the Scriptures and had every opportunity to examine the evidence but he willfully closed his eyes and hardened his heart to the truth about Jesus. Judas was a tool; Pilate was a spiritually blind Gentile but Caiaphas was a Jew who had knowledge of the Scriptures so it was he, not Pilate, who had the greater sin.

Pilate's sin was great; he was sinning against his conscience (he knew Christ was innocent) and against his divinely given responsibility (he had pronounced Jesus innocent). But the sin of Caiaphas was greater; he was sinning out of a hate-filled heart and against his own law (which should have protected Jesus). This teaches that the greatest danger lies with those who are closest to spiritual things. Some may sin out of ignorance, neglect or cowardice but the religious crowd is more inclined to sin out of arrogance, pride or hatred of God and His truth, even when they believe they are the most moral!

Behold the Man! There is a sense in which Pilate was actually speaking for God here because it is God who invites all of humanity to behold the Man, Jesus. Look at the Man of men; the perfect Man; the tested and approved ideal of all humanity. Look at Jesus; observe how He is superior to Adam. As the first man, Adam was created to be the representative head of all humanity. As our representative head, Adam fell into sin and thus, all men and women are born in sin. Jesus came to be everything that Adam was not. Instead of falling into sin, Jesus lived a perfect life. Instead of living for Himself, Jesus gave His life to redeem lost sinners from the bondage of sin and reconcile them back to fellowship with their Creator and God.

Jesus also serves as a representative head. His sacrifice on the cross makes possible the forgiveness of sins and the creation of new life in the hearts of all who accept Him as their Savior. Behold the Man; behold the Lamb of God; behold the Savior! Will you make Him yours today? 😊