

John 18:24-40
January 4, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Jesus makes it clear that His Kingdom is not of this world. If someone asked you, “What is the Kingdom of God...how would you answer them? [Let people engage]

Transition: During our last study before Christmas, we focused on the first half of John 18, in which Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane by the Jewish officials who want him dead. These Jewish officials were made up of chief priests and Pharisees, and they lead Jesus to Annas, the high priest. Annas questions Jesus about His disciples and His teachings, and Jesus basically says “I taught in the synagogues where all the Jews gather. Nothing I said was secret. Feel free to ask those who heard me.” It’s almost like Jesus was saying, “So what’s the problem.” Annas doesn’t take his response well, which leads us to today’s storyline.

Annas has Jesus bound and sent to Caiaphas, another high priest who happened to be Annas’s father-in-law. After Jesus is questioned by Caiaphas, Jesus is led to the Roman governor, who is Pilate. Let’s listen to the interaction Jesus has with Pilate. Let’s begin.

BOOK:

Peter’s Second and Third Denials

²⁴ Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest.

²⁵ As Simon Peter stood warming himself, he was asked, “You are not one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it, saying, “I am not.” ²⁶ One of the high priest’s servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, “Didn’t I see you with him in the olive grove?” ²⁷ Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow.

Jesus Before Pilate

²⁸ Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?”

³⁰ “If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.”

³¹ Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”

“But we have no right to execute anyone,” the Jews objected. ³² This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

³⁴ **“Is that your own idea,”** Jesus asked, **“or did others talk to you about me?”**

³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

³⁶ Jesus said, “**My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.**”

³⁷ “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “**You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.**”

³⁸ “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹ But it is your custom 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’?”

⁴⁰ They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Jesus clarifies that His kingdom isn't political or earthly, but spiritual, a reality for those of us who follow Him. This contrasts with Pilate's worldly power struggles. As believers, we live in two worlds, called to prioritize God's eternal kingdom over temporary worldly systems and values.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 375-379)*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

As you watch Peter, you see him gradually moving into the place of temptation and sin; and his actions parallel the description in Psalm 1:1. First, Peter walked “in the counsel of the ungodly” when he followed Jesus and went into the high priest’s courtyard. Peter should have followed the counsel of Jesus and gotten out of there in a hurry! Then, Peter *stood* with the enemy by the fire (John 18:16, 18); and before long, he *sat* with the enemy (Luke 22:55). It was now too late and within a short time, he would deny his Lord three times.

First, a servant girl asked, “Art not thou also one of this Man’s disciples?” The Greek text indicates that she expected a negative answer, and that is what she got! Peter denied Christ by denying that he belonged to the band of disciples.

Peter remained by the fire, so it is no wonder that he was approached again. (That same night, Jesus had been perspiring as He had prayed in the Garden!) Another servant girl asked the same question, again expecting a negative reply. The pronoun *they* in John 18:25 suggests that others in the circle around the fire took up the question and one by one hurled it at Peter.

The third question came from one of Malchus’ relatives! The Greek construction indicates that he expected an *affirmative* answer: “I saw you in the Garden with Jesus, didn’t I? Yes, I did!” After all, this man had gotten a good look at Peter because he was probably standing with Malchus when Jesus was arrested. Some of the bystanders took up the discussion (Matt. 26:73; Mark 14:70) so that Peter may have been surrounded by challengers.

At that point, Peter’s resistance broke down completely. He began to “curse and swear” (Matt. 26:74). This does not mean that Peter let loose a volley of blasphemies, but rather that he put himself under a curse in order to emphasize his statement. He was on trial, so he put himself under an oath to convince his accusers that he was telling the truth.

It was at that point that the cock began to crow (John 18:27) just as Jesus had predicted (Matt. 26:34). There were four “watches”: evening (6–9 p.m.), midnight (9–12), cockcrowing (12 midnight to 3 a.m.), and morning (3–6 a.m.) (see Mark 13:35). The crowing of the cock reminded Peter of the Lord’s words, and he went out and wept bitterly.

The crowing of the cock was assurance to Peter that Jesus was totally in control of the situation, even though He was bound and being harassed by the authorities. By controlling one bird, Jesus affirmed His sovereignty. According to Genesis 1:26, God gave man authority over the fish, the fowl, and the animals. Peter had seen Jesus exercise authority over the fish (Matt. 17:24–27; Luke 5:1–11) and the animals (Matt. 21:1–11); but now he recognized His authority over the birds.

But the cockcrowing was also an invitation to repentance. “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Luke tells us that Jesus turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61), and

this look of love broke Peter's heart. Peter had been a witness of Christ's sufferings (1 Peter 5:1), and by his own denials he added to those sufferings.

Keep in mind that the crowing of the cock was the announcement of the dawning of a new day! "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Ps. 30:5). It is worthwhile to contrast Peter and Judas. Peter wept over his sins and repented, while Judas admitted his sins but never really repented. Judas experienced remorse, not repentance. When Judas went out from the Upper Room, "it was night" (John 13:30); but when Peter went out to weep bitterly, there was the dawning of a new day. It is the contrast between godly sorrow that leads to true repentance, and the sorrow of the world (regret and remorse) that leads to death (2 Cor. 7:9–10). We will discover that Jesus restored Peter (John 21) and enabled him to serve with great power and blessing.

In the Garden that night, you would find both guilt and grace. Peter was guilty of resisting God's will. Judas was guilty of the basest kind of treachery. The mob was guilty of rejecting the Son of God and treating Him as though He were the lowest kind of criminal.

But Jesus was gracious! Like King David, He crossed the Kidron, fully conscious that Judas was betraying Him. He went into the Garden of Gethsemane surrendered to the Father's will. He healed Malchus' ear. He protected His disciples. He yielded Himself into the hands of sinners that He might suffer and die for us. "Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!"

What is in your hand today—the sword, or the cup?

CHAPTER TWENTY - "SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE"

John 18:28–18:40

Long before the Jewish leaders had Jesus arrested in the Garden, they had determined to kill Him (John 11:47–54). However, the Jewish council did not have the right to execute prisoners; so it was necessary to get the cooperation and approval of Rome. This meant a visit to the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate.

There were three stages in both the Jewish "trial" and the Roman "trial." After His arrest, Jesus was taken to the home of Annas and there interrogated informally (John 18:12–14, 19–23). Annas hoped to get information that would implicate Jesus as an enemy of the state. He wanted to prove that both His doctrine and His disciples were anti-Roman, for then He would be worthy of death.

Stage two of the Jewish trial took place before Caiaphas and whatever members of the Sanhedrin the high priest could assemble at that hour of the night (Matt. 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65). When Jesus confessed clearly that He was the Christ, the council found Him guilty of blasphemy and therefore, according to their law, worthy of death. However, it was necessary for the council to meet early the next morning and give their verdict, since it was not considered legal to try capital cases at night. So, stage three of the Jewish trial took place as early as possible, and the leaders condemned Jesus to death (Matt. 27:1; Luke 22:66–71).

The three stages of the Roman trial were: the first appearance before Pilate (John 18:28–38), the appearance before Herod (Luke 23:6–12), and the second appearance before Pilate (John 18:39–19:16; and see Matt. 27:15–26; Mark 15:6–15; and Luke 23:13–25). As you can see, the Apostle John records only the interrogations by Annas and Pilate, and mentions Caiaphas only in passing. He focuses primarily on the Roman trial. By the time he wrote this Gospel, the Jewish nation had been scattered by Rome, Jerusalem had been destroyed, and Roman power was all that really mattered.

Pontius Pilate was in office from a.d. 26–36 and was not greatly liked by the Jews. He could be ruthless when he wanted to be (see Luke 13:1–2), but he also understood the Jewish power structures and knew how to use them. His handling of the trial of Jesus reveals an indecisive man, a weak man, a compromising man. Rome’s motto was, “Let justice be done though the heavens fall!” Pilate was not concerned about justice; his only concern was to protect himself, his job, and Rome. Alas, he failed in all three!

As you read John’s account, you see Pilate seeking to find some “loophole” that would please both sides. He was afraid of the crowd, but then he grew more and more afraid of the prisoner! At least three times he announced that Jesus was not guilty of any crime (Luke 23:14; John 19:4; Luke 23:22; John 19:6). Yet he refused to release Him!

The Roman “trial,” conducted by Pilate, revolved around four key questions:

“What Is the Accusation?” (John 18:28–32)

As soon as the Sanhedrin had voted to condemn Jesus, the officers took Him to the palace where Pilate was living during the Passover season. It was customary for the Roman governor to be in Jerusalem during Passover in case there were any outbursts of Jewish nationalism. The religious leaders did not hesitate to condemn an innocent man, but they were careful not to be defiled by walking on Gentile ground! It would be tragic to be ceremonially defiled during the seven days of Passover!

It was logical for Pilate to ask for the official accusation. Instead of stating the charges clearly, the Jewish leaders “beat around the bush” and probably made the astute politician suspicious. Luke 23:2 lists three “official charges”: (1) He led the nation astray; (2) He opposed paying tribute to Caesar; and (3) He claimed to be the Jewish Messiah and King.

Pilate was not anxious to get involved in a Jewish court case, especially at Passover; so he tried to evade the issue. After all, if the prisoner was creating problems for the Jews, let the Jews try Him under their own law. Rome had permitted the Jews to retain a certain amount of jurisdiction, especially in matters relating to their religious laws and customs. (See Acts 18:12–16 for another example.)

But had the Jews *alone* judged Jesus and found Him guilty, He would have been killed by stoning; and God had determined that the Son would be crucified (see John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32–33). Jesus was to bear the curse of the law and become a curse for us; and in order to do this, He had to hang on a tree (Deut. 21:22–23; Gal. 3:13). The fact that the Romans allowed the Jews to

stone Stephen to death indicates that Rome was lenient with the Sanhedrin on some capital cases (Acts 7:57–60).

When you seriously consider the three accusations against Jesus, you quickly see that they were completely unsupportable. For one thing, He had not “subverted” the nation, either politically or religiously. Of course, He had publicly denounced the Pharisees and their hypocritical religious system, but He was not the first one—or the only one—to do that. Jesus had blessed the nation and brought them new hope. The fact that some of the militant Jews saw in Him a potential King (John 6:15) was not our Lord’s fault, and He fled from all such political demonstrations.

As for opposing paying tribute to Caesar, *He taught just the opposite!* “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s,” He said, “and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matt. 22:21). He did claim to be King but not in a political sense. Even His own disciples did not fully understand these truths until after His resurrection (Acts 1:1–8). It is no wonder the common people sometimes misunderstood Him (Luke 19:11). Of course, the Jewish religious leaders were groping for any piece of evidence they could find on which they could build a case; and they were even willing to secure false witnesses!

“Are You the King of the Jews?” (John 18:33–38)

The question asking Jesus if He was King of the Jews is recorded by each of the Gospel writers. As Roman governor, Pilate would certainly be interested in the claims of any king. Messianic expectations always ran high at Passover season, and it would be easy for a Jewish pretender to incite the people into a riot or a rebellion against Rome. Pilate no doubt felt himself on safe ground when he asked about Christ’s kingship.

However, he was not prepared for His answer. “It is as you say” (Matt. 27:11, NASB) But then Jesus added a question of His own: “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?” (John 18:34, NASB) What was our Lord really asking? “What kind of a king do you have in mind? A Roman king or a Jewish king? A political king or a spiritual king?” Jesus was not evading the issue; He was forcing Pilate to clarify the matter *for his own sake*. After all, it was not Jesus that was on trial; it was Pilate!

If Pilate had a Roman king in mind, then Jesus could be considered a rebel. If the governor was thinking about a Jewish kind of king, then political matters could be set aside. It is interesting that Pilate called Jesus “king” at least four times during the trial, and even used that title for the placard he hung on the cross (John 18:39; 19:3, 14–15, 19).

Pilate’s reply to Jesus showed what the Romans thought of the Jews: “Am I a Jew?” No doubt there was an obvious note of disdain and sarcasm in his voice. Jesus was not a prisoner because Pilate had arrested him, but because His own nation’s leaders had arrested Him! Where there is smoke there must be fire; so Pilate asked, “What have You done?”

Graciously, Jesus consented to explain Himself and His kingdom. Yes, He admitted that He is a King; but His kingdom (reign) does not come from the authority of the world. The Jews were under Roman authority, and Pilate was under the authority of the emperor; but Jesus derived His authority from God. His kingdom is spiritual, in the hearts of His followers; and He does not

depend on worldly or fleshly means to advance His cause. If His kingdom were from the world, by now His followers would have assembled an army and fought to release Him.

Jesus did not say that He had no kingdom in this world, or that He would never rule on earth. He does have a kingdom in this world, wherever there are people who have trusted Him and yielded to His sovereignty. One day He shall return and establish a righteous kingdom on earth (Dan. 7:13–28). Pilate’s concern was the source of this kingdom: where did Jesus derive His authority? In John 18:37, Jesus explained who He is and what kind of kingdom belonged to Him. Pilate probably did not grasp the significance of these profound words, but we today can discern some of the meaning Jesus had in mind. He was “born,” which indicates His humanity; but He also “came into the world,” which indicates His deity. The fact that Jesus came “into the world” means that He had existed before His birth at Bethlehem; and this is an important and repeated truth in John’s Gospel (John 1:9–10; 3:17, 19; 9:39; 10:36; 12:46; 16:28; 17:18).

But Jesus not only told Pilate of His origin; He also explained His ministry: to bear witness unto the truth. His was a spiritual kingdom of truth; and He won people to His cause, not through force, but through conviction and persuasion. He spoke the truth of God’s Word, and all who were His people would respond to His call (see John 8:47; 10:27). Rome’s weapon was the sword; but our Lord’s weapon was the truth of God, the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

We do not know with what attitude Pilate asked his now-famous question, “What is truth?” In his classic essay “Of Truth,” Francis Bacon wrote, “ ‘What is Truth?’ said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer.” But we are not certain that Pilate was jesting. Perhaps he was sincere. For centuries, Roman and Greek philosophers had discussed and debated this very question and had come to no settled conclusions. Whether Pilate was sneering or sighing as he asked the question, we do not know; so it would be unwise to pass judgment.

At least he had the courage to face the crowd and declare his verdict: “I find in Him no fault at all.” But he did not get the response he desired, for the chief priests and elders only began to accuse Jesus all the more! (see Matt. 27:12–14) Jesus was silent before His accusers (1 Peter 2:21–23) and this silence amazed Pilate. Could this King not even defend Himself? If He did not speak, how could anyone secure any evidence? Pilate faced a dilemma.

But the chief priests and elders solved his problem when they shouted that Jesus had stirred up the people even in Galilee (Luke 23:5). Galilee! That was Herod’s responsibility, so why not send the prisoner to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem for the feast? Between John 18:38 and 39 you have the events recorded in Luke 23:6–12. Pilate’s maneuver did not solve his problem, because Herod sent Jesus back! All that it accomplished was the healing of the breach between these two rulers. Pilate still had to deal with Jesus and the Jews.

“Shall I Release the King of the Jews?” (John 18:39–18:40)

The fact that Herod had found nothing worthy of death in Jesus encouraged Pilate to confront the Jewish leaders and seek to release the prisoner. He summoned the chief priests and rulers and told them that he found no guilt in Jesus, that Herod had found no guilt in Jesus, and that the next step would be to punish Jesus and release Him. The Jews had already made it clear that they wanted Jesus to die (John 18:31), but Pilate was feebly trying to do the noble thing.

Hoping to strengthen this suggestion, Pilate offered to bargain with the Jewish leaders. It was a custom at Passover for the governor to release a prisoner and please the Jews; so, why not release Jesus? Or, he could release Barabbas; but why would the Jews want Barabbas set free? After all, he was a robber (John 18:40), a notorious prisoner (Matt. 27:16), an insurrectionist and a murderer (Luke 23:19). Who would want *that* kind of a prisoner turned loose?

Incredible as it seems, the crowd asked for Barabbas! The people were persuaded by the chief priests and elders (Matt. 27:20) whose religious convictions did not motivate them toward justice and equity. National feelings always increased during Passover, and a vote *for* Barabbas was a vote *against* Rome. Even though Jesus had been a popular figure among the people, many of them no doubt were disappointed that He had not led a popular uprising to overthrow Rome. Perhaps they had even hoped that His “triumphal entry” a few days before would be the start of Jewish liberation.

There is no explaining how a mob chooses its heroes. No doubt many of the Jews admired Barabbas for his cunning and courage, and they rejoiced that he was fighting Rome. Had they honestly compared and contrasted the two “candidates,” the people would have had to vote for Jesus Christ. But when a mob is manipulated by crafty leaders, in an atmosphere of patriotic fervor, it loses itself and starts to think with its feelings instead of its brains. Their condemning vote said nothing about the Son of God, but it said a great deal about them.

Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 336-338) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

18:24. It was easier to evade **the truth** or to silence the One who spoke the truth than to attempt to answer the truth. Truth has a self-evident power of persuasion and those who oppose it find it difficult to deny. **Jesus** pressed this point and exposed their hypocrisy. They knew the truth but loved error. They saw the light but loved darkness (cf. 3:19; Rom. 1:18). Following this preliminary interview, **Annas sent** Jesus on to his son-in-law **Caiaphas** (cf. John 18:13). (The NIV text is more probable than the NIV margin)

18:25–27. In this section **Peter** denied the Lord for the second and third times. Peter’s betrayal is reported in all four Gospels, which indicates something of the importance the Gospel writers saw in this defection of the disciples’ leader. Since all men fail and even many noted Christians stumble greatly, the record of Peter’s denials (and his subsequent restoration; cf. chap. 21) is of great pastoral comfort. The final denial was prompted by a question by **a relative of the man Malchus**, whom **Peter had** tried to kill in the garden. Just after Peter denied Jesus the third time, the Lord looked on him (Luke 22:61) and he went out weeping bitterly (Luke 22:62). Then **a rooster began to crow** (cf. Matt. 26:72–74), which fulfilled Jesus’ prophecy (John 13:38). (Mark wrote that a rooster crowed twice; see comments on Mark 14:72.) A rooster crowing and Baalam’s donkey speaking reveal God’s sovereignty and the movement of all things in His plan and timing.

C. The civil trial (18:28–40).

18:28–29. Each of the Gospel writers had a special emphasis in his presentation of Jesus’ trial, death, and resurrection. John seems to supplement the material of the first three Gospels. Only he reported the interview with Annas, and he reported the interview with Pilate in much more detail and psychological insight. John did not report the trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin (Mark 14:55–64) with the charge of blasphemy. (See the list of Jesus’ six trials at Matt. 26:57.)

Since the Jewish council did not have the legal right to put Jesus to death, the case had to be brought before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate (a.d. 26–36). Normally the governor lived in Caesarea, but during the great feasts it was prudent for him to come to Jerusalem in case a riot or insurrection took place. **Passover** was particularly dangerous because emotions ran high as the Jews remembered their deliverance from bondage.

The location of **the palace of the Roman governor** is disputed. It could have been at the Antonia Fortress on the north side of the temple area or at one of Herod’s two palaces on the west of the city. **The Jews** would **not enter** a Gentile house (in this case **the governor’s palace**), but they could go into the courtyard or under the colonnades. It is ironic that the Jewish leaders were concerned with ritual **uncleanness** while they planned murder! **So Pilate came out to the Jews** (probably to a courtyard) and began an informal inquiry.

18:30–31. The Jews’ reply to **Pilate** revealed the hostility between them. (Pilate was hated by them for his harshness and the fact that he was a Gentile ruling over them. Pilate despised them and eventually in the year a.d. 36 they were able to get Pilate recalled to Rome.) At this time Pilate refused to be their executioner. He knew what was going on. He had seen the Triumphal Entry a few days earlier. He knew that envy was the cause of their accusation against Jesus (Matt. 27:18). So Pilate decided to play a game with the Jews with Jesus’ life as the prize. He refused to do anything without a sufficient charge. The Jews’ accusation of blasphemy would be difficult to prove and would not impress Pilate as worthy of death under Roman civil law. The Jews seem to have lost the official **right to execute** but in certain cases people were stoned (cf. Acts 6:8–7:60). Jesus was popular, and the Sanhedrin wanted Him dead and, if possible, killed by the Romans. The Sanhedrin could condemn, but only the Romans could execute legally.

18:32. John explained why **Jesus** was delivered by the Jews to the Romans. Jewish executions were normally by stoning, which broke bones. The Roman method of execution was crucifixion. It was necessary for three reasons for Jesus to be crucified by the Romans at the instigation of the Jews: (a) to fulfill prophecies (e.g., that none of His bones be broken; cf. 19:36–37); (b) to include both Jews and Gentiles in the collective guilt for the deed (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:27); (c) by crucifixion, Jesus was “lifted up” like “the snake in the desert” (cf. comments on John 3:14). A person under God’s curse was to be displayed (hanged) on a tree as a sign of judged sin (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13).

18:33–34. **Pilate** had a private interview with **Jesus** (vv. 33–38a). He realized that the Jews would not normally turn over one of their own to the hated Romans, so something was strange about this case. According to Luke (23:2) they accused Jesus of three things: subverting the nation, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and claiming to be “Christ, a King.” Pilate began by asking Jesus if He was **the King of the Jews**. Jesus asked Pilate if he had that **idea** on his **own** or if **others** (Jews) talked **to** him. Jesus here asked Pilate if he was concerned that He was some political threat to Rome, that is, a revolutionary.

18:35–36. **Pilate** sarcastically **replied** with a question as to whether he was a **Jew** or not. Of course he was not interested in Jewish questions, but only in matters pertaining to civil government. It must have hurt Jesus deeply to have Pilate press the point that **it was** the Jews, His own **people**, and their own religious leaders **who** had accused Him. In his prologue John had sounded this sad theme, “He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him” (1:11). **Jesus** replied that Rome need not fear a political insurrection. He was not a zealot or a revolutionary guerrilla leader. His **kingdom** is not like that. **It is not of this world; it is from another place**, that is, heaven. Therefore, it comes not by rebellion but by submission to God. Its source was not from men’s acts of violence but from a new birth from heaven which transferred a person out of Satan’s kingdom into God’s **kingdom** (cf. Col. 1:13; John 3:3).

18:37. Since Jesus spoke of a kingdom, **Pilate** seized on the word “king.” **You are a king, then? Jesus answered** that question in the affirmative and then clarified that His kingdom is not like Rome’s. It is a kingdom of truth which overshadows all kingdoms. He said, **Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me**. Jesus in a few words asserted His divine origin (**I was born ... I came into the world**) and ministry (**to testify to the truth**). Later *He* became Pilate’s judge.

18:38. Pilate’s question, **What is truth?** has echoed down through the centuries. How his question was intended is problematic. Was it a wistful desire to know what no one could tell him? Was it philosophical cynicism concerning the problem of epistemology? Was it indifference to anything so impractical as abstract thought? Or was it irritation at Jesus’ response? These are all possible interpretations of his words. But the significant thing is that he suddenly turned away from the *One* who is “the Truth” (14:6) without waiting for an answer. Pilate’s declaration of Jesus’ innocence is important. He would die like a Passover lamb, a male in its prime without blemish (Ex. 12:5).

18:39–40. Having displayed a lack of interest in truth, Pilate then revealed a lack of commitment to justice. He lacked the courage of his convictions. If Jesus was innocent of all charges, then Pilate should have set Him free. Instead, Pilate began a series of compromising moves to avoid dealing with an inconvenient truth in a difficult circumstance. First, when Pilate found out Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod (Luke 23:6–7). Second, Pilate tried to appeal to the crowd (John 18:38), hoping to bypass the desire of the chief priests and elders. Knowing Jesus was popular, he thought the crowd would prefer Jesus to **Barabbas**. But the leaders proved to be persuasive (cf. Matt. 27:20). The offer **to release ... Barabbas** who was guilty of murder and insurrection showed poor judgment for a person responsible for Rome’s interests.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 18:24-40. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.