

The Roman Trial Before Pilate, the Great Exchange

John 18:28-40

September 3, 2023

1. Jesus Delivered to the Roman Authorities (28)
 - a. Jesus is led from the Jewish trial to the Roman trial in the praetorium, the official residence of a governor of a province.
 - b. This trial occurred early in the morning on the day of the Passover meal.
 - i. Jesus' meal with His disciples the previous day was not the Passover meal.
 - ii. The meal did not include a Passover lamb.
 - iii. The purpose of that meal was to give new meaning to the bread and the cup, picturing His body and blood.
 - c. In their great effort to be religiously pure, the Jews actually turn Jesus over to die as the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb!
 - i. John the Baptist declared that Jesus was the Lamb of God (1:29, 36).
 - ii. Jesus declared Himself the Good Shepherd that gives His life for the sheep (substitutionary sacrifice) (10:11).
 - iii. As the sacrificial Lamb of God, none of His bones would be broken (19:33-36).
 - iv. Jesus would be offered a drink from hyssop, which was also used by Moses to sprinkle the doorposts (19:29).
 - v. Jesus would be crucified in the sixth hour, the same hour that the Passover Lambs were to be slain (19:14).
2. Pilate and the Jews: "What Accusation Do You Bring?" (Front Stage) (29-32)
 - a. Since the Jews refused to defile themselves by entering the judgment hall, Pilate went out to them (29a).
 - b. Pilate, acting as judge, demands of the Jews the reason for prosecution (29b).
 - c. The Jews try to declare Jesus guilty without a formal charge (30).
 - d. Pilate forces the Jews to reveal their motive (31).
 - i. The Jews admit that what they are trying to do is not lawful.
 - ii. The phrase, "It is not lawful", is almost always used in the Gospels to refer to the law of Moses.
 - e. The narrator points out that as wicked as this betrayal was, the Jews were fulfilling Jesus' word about the way He would die (32).
 - i. Jesus prophesied that He would be lifted up (3:14).
 - ii. Jesus' Roman crucifixion was part of God's plan from eternity past (Genesis 3:15; Psalm 22; Deuteronomy 21:23).
3. Pilate and Jesus: "What Is Truth?" (Back Stage) (33-38a)
 - a. The third part of this section takes place inside Pilate's residence and involves a private dialogue between Pilate and Jesus (33a).
 - b. Pilate's question reveals the issue at stake in Pilate's mind, is Jesus the King of the Jews (33b).
 - i. Jesus did refer to the kingdom of God with Nicodemus (3:3).
 - ii. Jesus was treated like a king (12:1-19).
 - c. Jesus challenges Pilate's question with a question of His own (34a).
 - i. Jesus reversed roles with Pilate and accuses His accuser.
 - ii. Jesus' question accuses Pilate of being manipulated.
 - d. Pilate admits his cooperation in the matter (35).
 - e. Jesus responds that His kingdom is not from this world (36).
 - i. Jesus' authority does not originate from this world, but instead encompasses it.
 - ii. Jesus' kingdom does not originate from human origin.
 - iii. If Jesus' kingdom was of human origin, His servants would be fighting, but Jesus stands alone, abandoned by His servants.
 - f. Jesus explains His kingship (37)
 - i. Jesus emphatically states, "You say I am a king."
 - ii. Jesus describes his kingship.
 1. His mission's purpose is to bear witness to the truth.
 2. The result of His mission is believers who receive His witness.
 - a. Jesus came to bring light into the darkness (1:5).
 - b. Jesus came to set captives free (8:32).
 - c. Jesus came to give abundant life (10:10-11).
 - g. Pilate responds with a tragic question, "What is truth?" (38a).
 - i. Pilate's response is meant to rebuke Jesus, but his question falls short.
 - ii. The question He should have asked is "Who is truth?"
 - iii. Jesus is the truth (14:6).

4. The Great Substitution (Front Stage) (38b-40)
 - a. Pilate escorts Jesus back outside to the awaiting Jews and declares Him innocent (38a).
 - i. Neither the Jewish authorities nor the Roman authority could find legal grounds for death.
 - ii. Jesus was the perfect, sinless Lamb of God (Hebrews 4:15).
 - b. Pilate tries to appease the Jews by appealing to a Jewish Passover custom (39).
 - i. In order to build good will with the Jews, the Romans would release a Jewish prisoner before on the Passover.
 - ii. This release would likely have been viewed as a symbolic gesture honoring Israel's release from bondage in Egypt.
 - c. The Jews rejected the release of Jesus, and instead chose Barabbas (40).
 - i. The Jews refuse to even use Jesus' name and refer to Him as "this man."
 - ii. They instead choose the release of a thief.
 - iii. Barabas means, Son of Abba, or "son of a father."
 - iv. The Jews could not know how symbolic their actions were, the Son of the Heavenly Father was exchanged for the son of a father.
 - v. We, like Barabas, are thieves, trying to climb up another way (10:10).
 - vi. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gave his life to save religious thieves like you and me.

Conclusion:

1. As our Passover Lamb, Jesus has won the victory over sin, death, and the ruler of this world. Are you living out that victory in your daily life?
2. Truth is found in the person of Jesus. Are seeking Him to know truth, or are you seeking truth in other places or people?
3. Jesus has made the exchange, offering Himself for you. Have you made the exchange, your righteousness for His?