

# The Mock Trial Begins

John 18:28-40

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**Introduction:** When The Gospels use the term “The Jews” they are describing the religious leaders in Israel and not Jewish people in general. They were the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Scribes.

These groups of men have been plotting to kill Jesus for some time now. As Christ’s ministry progressed He had embarrassed them in every debate, exposed their greed in the temple, their hypocrisy toward the people and even their murderous intent.

**Matthew 21:12-13** <sup>12</sup> And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. <sup>13</sup> He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

**Luke 18:11-14** <sup>11</sup> The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup> I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' <sup>13</sup> But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' <sup>14</sup> I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

**John 7:19** <sup>19</sup> Has not Moses given you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why do you seek to kill me?"

It is the middle of the night. The religious leaders are rushing to murder Jesus under cover of darkness...before the throngs of people in the city for the feast awake and riot to stop it. Their illegal actions expose their hateful and murderous hearts. The entire event reveals that religious blindness is just as intense as any secular blindness. Jesus however is not surprised by their actions. He knows that people must be given spiritual life in order to hear and see spiritual truth.

**John 18:28-40** <sup>28</sup> Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. <sup>29</sup> So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" <sup>30</sup> They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." <sup>31</sup> Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." <sup>32</sup> This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. <sup>33</sup> So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" <sup>35</sup> Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have

been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world." <sup>37</sup> Then Pilate said to him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world- to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice." <sup>38</sup> Pilate said to him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, "I find no guilt in him. <sup>39</sup> But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" <sup>40</sup> They cried out again, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a robber.

Here are the religious Jews, The secular Roman and the Creator. Let's consider them.

#### THE BLINDED RELIGIOUS LEADERS:

**Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters.**

**[28a]:** The Scripture does not record any of the dialog at the house of Caiaphas. This stop was a mere formality. Caiaphas had already decided to secretly kill Jesus. This means that they could not conduct an open and legal trial.

**Matthew 26:3-4** <sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him.

But Caiaphas and the Jews did not have the authority to execute Him. The Romans wisely took that away from every people they conquered so that they would not kill the people who were sympathetic to the Roman occupation. Caiaphas sent Jesus immediately to Pilate solely to get permission to kill Him.

**It was early morning. [28b]:** This is a technical term meaning the fourth watch. It was between 3-6 in the morning when the Romans typically began their days. The Jews worked through the entire night to get Jesus killed before any one might try to stop it.

**They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover. [28c]:** Gentle homes were considered unclean and they could not enter them. This was Pilate's official residence.

They took scrupulous steps to avoid outward ceremonial defilement while carrying out the most evil murder scheme in the history of humanity. They wanted to make certain they could eat the passover while they were killing the true passover lamb of God. Religion does not open the eyes to God. It blinds them to the need of man. Let me illustrate:

The Roman Church practices seven sacraments. Each is designed to contribute to the salvation of the adherent. Baptism for instance claims to wash away the original sin of Adam. Through the Mass [which is continually offered] men receive Christ by eating His actual flesh and drinking His actual blood. All this while the Bible testifies that no offering of men can take away sin.

**Hebrews 10:11-14** <sup>11</sup> Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; <sup>12</sup> but He, having offered one

sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, <sup>13</sup> waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET. <sup>14</sup> For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

If rituals will save you, you do not need to give your heart and soul and mind and strength to Christ. Religion allows you to perform your religious rites then get on with living your life. God, on the other hand, insists that Jesus has done everything for our salvation and there is nothing left for religion to do. God calls you to give your life to Christ Jesus and not to some futile religious pursuit.

**Titus 3:4-7** <sup>4</sup> But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, <sup>5</sup> He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

#### THE BLINDED SECULAR RULERS:

**So Pilate went outside to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" [29]:** Pilate assumed there was an accusation of wrong doing. How they answer this question sets the tone between Pilate and the Jews in this account.

**They answered him, "If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you." [30]:** They said..."We are here to get a rubber stamp. We have waved our own law and everything we stand for and now we want you to do the same. Just condemn him and let's move on. Pilate is being used and Roman justice mocked.

**Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." [31]:** Pilate had plenty of duties to perform. These guys were just playing games and he quickly tries to dismiss the entire proceeding.

**The Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death." [31b]:** This is the only reason they brought Him to Pilate. They have already made up their minds. They are not interested in hearing any testimony one way or the other. This is the only way they can kill Him without getting themselves killed in turn by the Romans.

**This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. [32]:** Every event and detail here is under the direction of our Sovereign God. Jesus had already told His disciples that He would be killed by the Romans and not the Jews.

**John 12:32-33** <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." <sup>33</sup> He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus could not be killed when the town folk tried to throw Him off a cliff in Nazareth or when the Pharisee's tried to stone Him in Jerusalem! Why? Because God was driving the events and it was not the time...it was not the place and now we learn that it was not the way for Him to die. He would be crucified by Romans.

It is not just the means of death that makes crucifixion horrible. Crucifixion was reserved for the worst criminals and perverts. It was a statement that the person was vile and covered with wickedness. It pictured better than any other way what Christ voluntarily did for you and me. He bore the filth of the entire world in His sinless body. Yours were among them as were every despicable transgression you can imagine. All placed on Him. Isaiah described this in great detail nearly 300 years before the Romans invented it.

**Isaiah 53:3-7** <sup>3</sup> He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. <sup>4</sup> Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth.

**So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him [33a]:** So Pilate turns on his heels and goes back into the house that the Jews consider defiled and calls Jesus in there with him. The Religious Jews are outside staying pure for the feast.

**"Are you the King of the Jews?" [33b]:** There is no record of Jesus ever using this phrase about Himself, but the wise men used it at His birth. Jesus Himself agreed with people who suggested or said who He was.

**John 4:25-26** <sup>25</sup> The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that One comes, He will declare all things to us." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am *He*."

**Matthew 16:15-17** <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

And He repeatedly claimed to the Jews to have come directly to Earth from the presence of the Father. He made claims that only Messiah could make. He called Himself "I AM," provoking attempts on His life. He did things that the Scripture ascribe only to the Messiah....who is by sound reasoning....The King of the Jews.

**Luke 7:19-22** <sup>19</sup> Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?" <sup>20</sup> When the men came to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, 'Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?'" <sup>21</sup> At that very time He cured many *people* of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many *who were* blind. <sup>22</sup> And He answered and said to them, "Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: *the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.*

**Jesus answered, "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" [34]:** Was this a charge that the Jews were bringing or was it something Pilate sincerely wondered about. Charles Pilcher makes this observation:

“If Pilate asked it ...himself, the question would have meant, ‘are you a political King, conspiring against Caesar’! If he had asked it because of Caiaphas’ prompting, it would have meant, ‘are you the Messianic King of Israel?’ The answer to the first question would have been, ‘No’. The answer to the second question, ‘Yes.’”

**Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" [35]:** Pilate reveals that the Jews had put him up to it. I’m not a Jew he said, It is your own people and religion that have charged you. BUT...Pilate wants to know what is behind it and so he asks ....”What **have** you done?”

Pilate was evil, but he was not a fool. This group of rabble hated Rome and they would have never handed someone over to him who wanted to overthrow Rome unless there was something else they wanted. Matthew actually reports that Pilate....

**Matthew 27:18** .... knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

#### **JESUS THE CREATOR GOD:**

**Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." [36]:** “This is a Jewish religious dispute and I am no threat to Rome.” The Jews tried to use that accusation to get Pilate to execute Jesus, but Pilate was not buying it from the beginning.

Pilate unwittingly confesses another truth. Notice he does not say “so you say you are a King....whatever that is.” He **said to Him, "So You are a king?" [37a]**

**Jesus answered, "You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. [37b]:** Pilate lets Jesus go on to explain that He came into the world. He was not just born....like any other man, but He came into the world to reveal truth. **THE TRUTH!**

**THE TRUTH:** Have you ever wondered what makes something true? Evolution is true for some people and Creation is true for others. Is it true that you can spend your way out of debt or is it true that you cannot? Well this is what it is....It is an assertion that corresponds to reality. The earth is spherical is a truth. Now everything that exists in creation had an origin. The truth about the universe is that which corresponds to reality. When God said to Adam....If you eat that fruit you will surely die....was that true? Yes. It matched up with the reality of things. Men have died ever since!

So God....who created all things is the source of reality and therefore the source of truth. Things are true because God affirms that they are true. Science professes to only believe what it can prove....and yet....Scientist fall in love and stand in awe of beauty. They cannot prove either exist yet they embrace them both. God Himself is the source of both love and beauty and His creation reflects both. God said He made man in His own image

to partake of the joy of creation. Jesus came into the world to reveal the Truth...who is God the creator.

**Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice. [37c]:** “If you were united to God you would hear my voice clearly speaking truth. This is how men come to know the truth. They come into contact with God through Christ. Jesus brought the knowledge of God to humanity. Saving faith is trusting Christ with your life. I binds you to the Truth so that when God speaks you hear His voice.

**John 1:14** <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**John 1:17** <sup>17</sup> For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.

**John 14:6** <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

**John 10:27-28** <sup>27</sup> "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; <sup>28</sup> and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

**Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" [38a]:** Like post-modernists in our day, Pilate sneers at the idea of some sort of objective truth. It has always been fashionable to deny truth. Why do men do this?

It gives them cover! If you profess not to know what is true then you can use that excuse when you face the judge. This is just a logical extension of what men do with the law in everyday life. “I did not know it was illegal to do that. I am sincere judge. I did not know that I broke that law.” This does not work in court. Ignorance of the law is no excuse in civilized societies.

**And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him [38b]:** But like the truth deniers in our generation, Pilate goes right out and acts as if he believes there is truth... Post modernists do not think it is right to kill or molest children. They do not like it when the government lies to them...remember “Bush lied....people died.” Why should they care...what is truth????...anyway! No one lives like there is no truth. They just hide their moral behavior behind this curtain...saying “No one really knows what is right or wrong....but they believe they do, because they all have their own moral code that they live by. They just reject God’s! The bottom line is that when truth deniers do any of the moral things that God requires they admit that there is such a thing as “right and wrong.” The only difference is that they consider themselves to be the source of it and not the God of Creation.

**Romans 2:14-15** <sup>14</sup> For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup> in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,

**CONCLUSION:** Pilate is now going to nullify the little bit of integrity that he has shown so far. He does not want to give them what they wanted, but he could not afford another riot on his watch.

Pilate had been appointed about 7 years before and was a lousy diplomat. He did things to antagonize the Jews rather than rule peacefully and was on a kind of probation which he would eventually violate and be deposed and sent to Rome to be judged by Tiberius. So...thinking about all of these things and being concerned first of all for his own welfare...the truth of Christ's innocence suddenly does not seem like a hill to die on. He now gives himself a way out...he can get the Jews to decide after all...and still retain his authority ....so he says....

**....you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" [39]:** Pilate has decided that Jesus is no threat to Rome. On the other hand Pilate already knew they would not want Jesus released.

Pilate is a weak man. He knows right from wrong. He has a conscience...just like Scripture insists, but he is going to hide behind his post modern notion that he does not know right from wrong, guilt from innocence....truth from fiction.

**So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber. [40]:** The Jews, of course did just what Pilate knew they would do. Now he can say to himself that although he knew he was innocent, he had no choice because he needed to please the Jews at Passover.

So the trial has moved through three different men. The one man who does not want Christ killed is the only one of the three with the power to do so. Although Pilate hates the Jews and knows the charges are trumped up and believes in Christ's innocence, he makes a decision to throw the truth He does know, out the window in his own self interests. He comforts his miserable self with the lame assertion that he does not know what truth actually is. A claim that is pure nonsense!

All men apart from God make their own truth and live by it while shunning the Truth of God and His Word. They can never know God until He opens their eyes and hears. John's gospel starts with this assertion and sticks with it to the end.

**John 1:18** No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

You and I know God because God has revealed Himself to us. We need God...He does not need us. We did not do God a favor by believing in Him. He did us a favor by revealing Himself to us. We are His possession. We are His children. We are totally indebted to Christ for His compassion and grace.

AND...this knowledge leads inevitably to love for Christ. Jesus has love you. God sent Christ into the world to find you, make you alive to Himself and let you hear His voice. There is no greater thing that can happen to you than to be loved by God and to love Him in return. Peter summed it up in His first epistle...

**1 Peter 1:3-9** <sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. <sup>6</sup> In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, <sup>7</sup> so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; <sup>8</sup> and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, <sup>9</sup> obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.