

Daniel Perrin – Lesson 7: Blessed Are Those Who Believe – Tuesday, November 12: The Unwitting Witness of Pilate

1. Q: How is Pilate's verdict connected to the theme of John's Gospel?
 - a. The theme, found in **John 20:31** – ...but these are written ***that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.***
 - b. John shows us that the evidence which leads us to believe is everywhere.
 - But God is so thorough that He preserves evidence that flows from sources we would not expect
 - c. In this case it is Pontious Pilate
 - And it's not just a small part Pilate plays – 37 verses describe Pilate's involvement

2. We don't know anything about Pilate's early life
 - a. His existence has been confirmed through multiple historical and archaeological sources
 - b. He was the Roman Procurator of Judea from 26-36 A.D.
 - Overlapping all of John the Baptist's ministry and Jesus' ministry
 - c. He hated the Jews he ruled over and didn't have any problem shedding innocent blood.
 - d. WHY is Pilate's testimony important? He's not a disciple, he's not even a Jew – one of God's people.
 - There were "good" Gentiles – he's not even one of those.
 - So far as we know, he never heard Jesus teach or witnessed a miracle.
 - He's, at the very least, disinterested in the identity of Jesus, and potentially antagonistic.
 - THAT is one of the strengths of what Pilate has to say about Jesus: it's unsolicited, neutral, and disinterested. He has no stake in the matter.
 - There can be no claim of COLLUSION or CONSPIRACY
 - Whatever he has to say is not tainted from any bias in Jesus' favor
 - More likely, Pilate is very irritated by the whole affair and would be happy to have Jesus gone as soon as possible.
 - The word "unwitting" means: "not intentional, unaware, unconscious"
 - e. Pilate's testimony represents human legal wisdom & authority
 - But from his official capacity as representative of Rome, Pilate's words have significance to us.

3. Something about Jesus tells Pilate that he needs to give Him his attention
 - a. Without saying a word, Jesus is DIFFERENT, and Pilate is INTRIGUED
 - b. Pilate calls Jesus in for a private interview
 - In other words, Pilate didn't pronounce his verdict based on a momentary glance at Jesus
 - NOR did he put his rubber stamp of approval on someone else's recommendation
 - He EXAMINED JESUS
 - Each of the gospels add details to this encounter, but we'll focus in on John's account
 - c. **John 18:33-38**
 - Pilate digs in to find if there is any political cause to put Jesus to death by asking "Are you the king of the Jews?"
 - ...Ultimately Jesus responds that His kingdom is not of this world
 - d. **Vs. 37-38** – *Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*³⁸ *Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews, and said to them, "**I find no fault in Him at all.***

- Pilate sees no political cause in Jesus for putting Him to death. And Pilate would gladly have condemned Him quickly.
 - Pilate’s unwitting witness is essentially this: “whatever reason you want Him dead, it’s all about your religious Laws”
 - In other words, Pilate unwittingly focuses everyone’s attention on the spiritual realities regarding Jesus: IT’S A SPIRITUAL QUESTION
 - e. Pilate had Jesus scourged, and allowed the soldiers to place the crown of thorns on Him and beat Him again in the Praetorium.
 - Then Twice more Pilate makes the same declaration:
 - **John 19:4** – *Pilate then went out again, and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him.”*
 - **John 19:6** – *Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him.”*
 - Even through all his hard-heartedness, Pilate could see that Jesus had done nothing wrong
 - **1 Timothy 6:13** – *I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed [testified] the good confession before Pontius Pilate*
 - f. **19:12-15** – Pilate’s unwitting witness pushed the Jewish leaders over the edge so that all could see what was truly in their heart: “We have no king but Caesar!”
 - The Jewish leaders CLAIMED to be motivated by loyalty to God and to Israel
 - ...UNTIL they were compelled to state their true loyalty.
 - The truth always comes out.
 - Pilate’s unwitting witness revealed the truth of their hearts.
 - g. Finally Pilate’s Written Testimony – THREE LANGUAGES: Hebrew / Greek / Latin
 - **“Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”** – and he refused to change it.
4. What does this tell us?
- a. Unwitting Testimony lives on
 - Pilate died ignorant of the fact that his judgment of Jesus was the most important thing he ever did.
 - Words we speak have convincing power
 - Someone is always watching
 - Our example has convincing power
 - b. We carefully manicure our example for the times when we engaged in specific ministry
 - But unguarded moments testify even more loudly
 - We need the sanctifying influence of God to saturate our whole life so that we don’t have to TRY to live a good example that testifies for Jesus.
 - We need the living experience that
 - c. Not everyone who testifies for Jesus is sanctified by faith in Jesus
 - It takes more than a head knowledge to be a follower of Jesus.
 - Jesus said, “you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).
 - Pilate said true things about Jesus, but ultimately he didn’t know the truth
 - And he was not free.
 - He continued to use violence unjustly against both the Jews and Samaritans, and was relieved of his post in AD 36 – He was banished by the Roman Emperor and took his own life.
 - d. We need to live by our convictions.
 - Pilate said, “He’s innocent,” then had Jesus executed while claiming he wasn’t to blame.