

John 18: 12-19:16 “The Ironic Coronation”

Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor
Michael Gunn on September 2nd, 2007

Intro

Over the years scholars have noticed some of the major differences between the gospel of John's account of the passion of Christ and the Synoptics (Matthew, Mark and Luke). There has been much speculation, and in some more skeptical scholarship, a rejection of the historicity of the book of John. Although total objectivity may be impossible on both sides of the theological spectrum, a closer analysis seems to negate this negative conclusion. First we must understand that the gospels are not static, but living, and all four authors are presenting the information that best recalls and tells the story that they are trying to tell. There is clearly a distinction between the “Words” of Jesus and the “Voice” of Jesus in the NT. Jesus spoke mainly in Aramaic, yet He is quoted in Greek. Many of His recorded sermons are a few lines long, even though we know that some of these sermons lasted hours and even days. Thus a lot of the words written in our bible are accurate summaries of the content of Jesus' words. The Jewish people had elaborate ways to remember the oral teachings that they were entrusted with, and they had elaborate copying systems that has helped transmit the gospel text more accurately than any ancient text in antiquity. Most of the main details of the passion of Christ are included in all four gospels. **Specific details** such as: **1.** Jesus and the disciples departing the city and heading for a location west of the city on the Mt. of Olives; **2.** Jesus arrives with a crowd to arrest Jesus; **3.** Jesus is examined by the high priest; **4.** Jesus is questioned by Pilate; **5.** Pilate infers Jesus' innocence and offers to release Him; **6.** The crowd calling for Barabbas's release; **7.** Pilate gives the death order; **8.** Jesus is crucified with two men; **9.** The soldiers divide Jesus' clothes; **10.** Jesus is offered wine; **11.** Jesus dies; **12.** Joseph of Arimathea requests Jesus' body to bury. Though there are details he adds and/or omits, it doesn't destroy the historicity of this story, and adds eyewitness credibility to it. Not only are there different witness accounts, but also different perspectives that each author wanted to emphasize. That doesn't negate the truth of the story, but it gives it life, and depth.

In our passage today we see the arrest, questioning and sentence of Jesus. But the thing that John wants us to see the most is that this act is the coronation of our king! Our King's great victory came as a result of His death, so that His kingdom could be established in His people. The bulk of our passage is set up with the story of Jesus' unlawful questioning of Him by Annas, who was the former, High Priest, and who still wielded a lot of power. The “unknown” disciple has been thought to be possibly Judas, or even John himself, which makes more sense in the context. Peter is also a player in this drama. In spite of his denial of Jesus under pressure, we know that Jesus still loved him!

From chapter 18:28 until chapter 19:16, we see what is referred to as a “Chiasm.” Chiasm is an ancient poetic device to make a point of emphasis. One writer explains chiasm as such; “*Chiasm is therefore a natural result of the social need to package a difficult message in a way that prepares one for its force and provides encouragement after the delivery.*” There is a climax or turning point in every chiasm that accentuates the point the author wants us to focus on. It's sort of the central point and is found in the center of the chiasm. Because of this, I am going to label my points with letters that show the relationship of the chiasm. Note the parallels with the letters too.

From the Head...

A1. Outside Pilates Chambers (John 18:28-32)

Here we see that it was early, and the Jewish authorities (Those in power) led Christ to Pilate. The early arrival would have been normal since Roman officials most often worked from 5:00 a.m. until around 10:00 a.m. It was also normal for the Jewish authorities to not want to defile themselves by entering in to a gentile home. The Mishnah provides evidence that this would have made them ceremonially unclean, and they couldn't take part in some of the Passover meals.¹ This in itself is an irony. The Jews would take pains to avoid ceremonial uncleanness so that they could participate in the Passover, while at the same time manipulating the judicial system to kill the true Passover Lamb Jesus Christ.

B1. Inside Pilates Chambers (John 18:33-38a)

Inside in this private conversation we witness a pretty important truth of the gospel. Jesus Christ does come as a king, but not as a revolutionary like Che Guevara or Karl Marx, who see change in a new set of rules. Christ's revolution involves a new heart. Christ's kingdom is a different kind of kingdom that aims to lovingly free people from the bondage that every other kingdom brings them under. This is the truth, that the kingdom of the world (And all its lusts) are what bring us in to bondage, and that He came to free us from that so that we could live in His kingdom. It is important to note that Jesus doesn't mean that His kingdom has nothing to do with this world. He is defining it as

¹ The “Passover” meal that is meant here includes the entire Passover festival that would have been going on for days.

something that is wholly different, but it has broken in to this world, and it has clear meaning for this world now. As a good 'ole pre-postmodern, Pilate asks "*What is truth?*" The problem is Pilate wants to talk the language of politics, and Jesus wants to talk the language of the heart. His kingdom doesn't come with tanks, and force, and money; His kingdom is about mercy, forgiveness, grace and real justice, not the mockery that was happening.

C1. Outside Pilates Chambers (John 18:38b-40)

There is a sense here that Pilate may want to do the right thing, but his politics won't let him. Pilate has had a rough time as the prefect of Judea. Palestine has been unruly, and he has had tension with Rome. Politically, he needed to control the Jewish "Problem," but he also needed them in order to be successful in the eyes of the Caesar. There is a sense that he is antagonizing the rulers when he refers to Jesus as the "King of the Jews," but he also tries to appease them without sentencing Jesus.

D. Jesus' Mock Coronation (John 19:1-3)

Here we have the centerpiece that John wants to emphasize. It is itself a chiasm. In verse one Jesus is flogged, then in verse two He is crowned king, and then arrayed in a Royal robe. He is then hailed as king, before he struck in the face. Though this is certainly done to mock Him, it highlights who Christ is, and how we treat Him. How is it any different, when we treat the creator of the universe, the savior of our sins with contempt and disdain, because He hasn't done enough for us? This is John's point! "*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him*" (John 1:10)!

C2. Outside of Pilates Chambers (John 19:4-8)

Pilate is caught between his own ambition and goals, and desires, and what he knows is the right thing to do. Does this sound familiar to you? Do you have goals, ambitions and desires that you continue to justify your life's actions or inactions with? Is Christ secondary to things you want and desire?

B2. Inside Pilates Chambers (John 19:9-11)

Pilate is scared, and is trying to discern who this Jesus is. His fears though do not bring him to wisdom and the knowledge of who Christ is. They only cause anxiety without the relief of knowing Christ. He still believes that he is in authority over Jesus. WE often act in similar fashion. It is not our will that has any authority over Christ. Christ is there, because He has laid down his life in the foreordained plan of God (John 10:18 cf. Acts 4:23).

A2. Outside Pilates Chambers (John 19:12-16)

In the end, Pilate's political ambitions win out, and he sentences Christ to death. He had the world's power, but he didn't have the power to do the right thing. He did the expedient thing, the pragmatic thing, but in the end truth and righteousness was thwarted, and in spite of that, God's plan was enacted. What the people meant for evil, he means for good!

...To the Heart

It is so easy to blame the Jews or Pilate for the death of Jesus, and not come to a heartfelt understanding that it was in reality our own sins that sentenced Christ to that tree, and that shame. In spite of this, Jesus' death happened because our sins indicted Him. "*He made Him who knew no sin to become sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in Him!*" Hallelujah!

For Further Reading: "*The New Daily Study Bible: The Gospel of John*" William Barclay; "*The Gospel of John*," F.F. Bruce; "*The New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John*," William Hendriksen; "*Preaching the Word; John: That You May Believe*," R. Kent Hughes; "*The NIV Application Commentary: John*," Gary M. Burge; "*The Pillar NT Commentary: The Gospel According to John*," D.A. Carson; "*The Word Biblical Commentary on John*" George R. Beasley-Murray

Next Weeks Verses: John 19:17–37

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