



The DAILY JESUS NEWS #317  
Friday... Day of Agony and Atonement

Jesus’ Three-Phase Roman Trial

Pilate Conducts His Second Private Interview of Jesus  
John 19.7-12

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7 The Jewish leaders insisted, “We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he made himself out to be the Son of God.”

8 When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, 9 and he went back inside the palace.

“Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer.

10 “Are you refusing to speak to me?” Pilate said. “Don’t you understand that I myself have the power to free you, and I myself have the power to crucify you?”

11 Jesus answered, *“You would have no power over me if it had not been permanently given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”*

12 From then on, Pilate kept on seeking to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, “If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king openly opposes Caesar.”

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = <sup>MT</sup>, Mark = <sup>M</sup>, Luke = <sup>L</sup>, John = <sup>J</sup>, Acts = <sup>A</sup>. This “superscript ID” is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

	CONTEXT DIGEST
Location	The Praetorium: Pilate’s Palace in Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus’ Life Context	Stage VIII: Passion Week
	E. Friday: Day of Agony and Atonement
	Jesus’ Three-Phase Roman Trial
Title	Pontius Pilate Conducts His Second Private Interview of Jesus

We saw in the previous reading (DJN #316) that Pilate's attempt to obtain Jesus' release by subjecting him to scourging, and abuse by his soldiers failed. The Jewish leaders whipped up the crowd into a mob crying out for Barabbas to be released, and Jesus to be crucified.

Today's reading began with the leaders explaining the reason for their insistence upon the death penalty for Jesus. Their real charge against him was not insurrection against Rome, but blasphemy: Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. This had been the issue from the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

*"For this cause the Jewish leaders were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the Sabbath, but he was also calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." (JN 5.18)*

Beware of people who claim that Jesus never claimed to be God. The truth was that he always made himself out to be Divine. If Jesus did not consider himself to be God, he would have said so clearly, and he never would have been crucified for blasphemy. After all, Jesus claimed that he was born to declare the truth.

The Jewish leaders were correct in attributing Divine claims to Jesus. They were wrong in seeking the death penalty for Rome on this charge, for it was not a crime to make such claims under Roman law. They were also wrong for making other, false accusations against Jesus. It was THEY who were committing blasphemy by their actions against Jesus!

When Pilate heard this explanation, he became even more fearful. He had been concerned that Jesus was being falsely accused. His wife had sent him word of her dream concerning Jesus' righteousness. Now the enemies of Jesus told him that he had made himself out to be God Almighty--the Hebrew God whom they claimed had created the universe!

Pilate pulled Jesus back into his private chambers in the Praetorium to try to understand what was going on. While the governor did not believe in the Hebrew God, he did not want to be part of executing a lesser god, either.

Pilate queried Jesus again regarding his origin, but Jesus did not answer. Pilate was not honestly seeking the truth concerning Jesus' Deity--he just wanted to make sure he did not bring a curse on himself for harming a god. Pilate tried to bully Jesus by reminding him that as the Roman Governor, he had complete authority over his prisoner. Jesus was not intimidated in the least by this statement, for it was false.

Jesus answered back with the truth. Only God has absolute authority. The power that Pilate wielded was sovereignly given to him by God, who establishes all the human authorities in this world. Jesus used the Greek perfect tense to describe the way God has given Pilate power. Jesus believed that everything that was happening was according to his Father's sovereign plan, not the mere whims of the mob calling for his death, or the plots of the Jewish leaders, or even Pilate's decision. He had confirmed all of this in his hours of prayer in Gethsemane. His Father was firmly in control. This was Jesus' faith.

Jesus also talked truthfully about sin. Pilate was sinning by not using his God-given authority to make a just decision--no matter what the consequences. However, the leaders who created these circumstances by lying and cheating their way into this quandary for Pilate were committing the greater sin. They were responsible for their actions, even as Pilate was. Jesus' boldness to speak about Pilate's sin in these circumstances is shocking.

This balance of God's absolute sovereignty, and human free will in choosing to oppose God's will is the perfect Biblical balance. Both truths are in full effect, and exist in perfect harmony: God is absolutely

sovereign, and people have a free will. Jesus believed this and proclaimed it as the truth many times, including this text. He did so at the cost of his own life.

Pilate had never seen such truth and wisdom before. Jesus has been horribly abused, and was the victim of massive injustice, including the scourging that Pilate had ordered just to appease the mob. Yet Jesus had no self-interest motivating him. His motives were utterly pure. He refused to defend himself, yet he spoke nothing but the truth. Jesus was love. Pilate had never met anyone like Jesus, nor been as impressed by anybody.

The governor was now convinced that Jesus must be exonerated and set free. He made up his mind to exercise his power to preserve Jesus' life. The problem was that Pilate had the God-given authority to make that happen, but he did not have enough personal integrity and strength of character to carry through with his decision against the will of the mob. Pilate was a moral wimp.

#### APPLICATION:

Moving through the various phases of the trials of Jesus has shown us his glory in the worst circumstances of human history. Meditate on Jesus' words and attitude in JN 19.11 today.

*Do you see the power of your sovereign God at work in every situation--good and bad-- of your life?*

Jesus had said that the greatest faith he ever saw was based upon belief in the absolute authority of God. (MT 8.5-13; LK 7.1-10) He demonstrated that faith here.

Believing that God is in control when everything in your life is crashing in on you with pain, heartbreak, and injustice is not easy, but it is the truth. This faith is the foundation for the peace that passes all understanding.

*How do you need to affirm and praise God for his sovereignty in your life today?*