

Jesus' Conversation with a Cynical Roman Governor

Lesson 5 of 6 in the series: "Conversations with Jesus"

1. **John recorded some fascinating conversations Jesus had with people from many different backgrounds so that we can believe that Jesus is the Son of God and better understand what He came to do.**

"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 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." John 20:30-31 (NKJV)

"In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it... **He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him. He came to his own people, and even they rejected him...** So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." John 1:1-5,10-11,14 (NLT)

2. **2. Jesus had a conversation about who He was and why He came with Pontius Pilate, a Roman governor. (The Jewish High Council needed his permission to have Jesus executed.)**

"...Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, 'What is your charge against this man?' 'We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!' they retorted. 'Then take him away and judge him by your own law,' Pilate told them. 'Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone,' the Jewish leaders replied. Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked him. Jesus replied, 'Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?' 'Am I a Jew? Pilate retorted. 'Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?' Jesus answered, '**My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom.** If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world.' Pilate said, 'So you are a king?' Jesus responded, 'You say I am a king. Actually, **I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth.** All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true.'" John 18:28-37 (NLT)

- a. Jesus didn't come to start a political movement or become an earthly king. He came to form a kingdom of people who willingly surrender their lives to God and submit to His authority. We enter into it through repentance and new birth. "The Kingdom of God is near! **Repent of your sins and believe** the Good News!" Mark 1:15b (NLT)

"But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. **They are reborn**—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God." John 1:12-13 (NLT)

- b. Jesus was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. Jesus said to the people who believed in him, "You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And **you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.**" John 8:31-32 (NLT)

"I am the way, **the truth**, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

John 14:6 (NLT)

- c. Pilate was a prideful, political opportunist and a jaded cynic who didn't believe in truth. "**What is truth?**" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, 'He is not guilty of any crime.'

Note: The Roman Emperor Tiberius appointed Pontius Pilate to be the Roman governor (prefect) over the province of Judea from AD 26-36. He likely obtained this appointment because he had married into Tiberius' extended family. Pilate's job was to administer the affairs of government and keep the peace, but he had a hard time doing this because he was inflexible, self-willed, and relentless. Pilate was known for excessive use of force and his disregard for Jewish faith and religious traditions, so his tenure

in Judea was filled with tension, violence, and animosity. On numerous occasions the Jews threatened to have Pilate recalled to Rome which would ruin him.

Life Application: Through a personal relationship with Jesus we can know the truth and the truth will set us free! “And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and he is eternal life.” 1 John 5:20-21 (NLT)

3. Jesus and Pilate also had a brief conversation about power and authority after Pilate's attempts to appease an unruly mob failed.

“Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, ‘Look, here is the man!’ When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, ‘Crucify him! Crucify him!’ ‘Take him yourselves and crucify him,’ Pilate said. ‘I find him not guilty.’ The Jewish leaders replied, ‘By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God.’ When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. He took Jesus back into the headquarters again and asked him, ‘Where are you from?’ But Jesus gave no answer. ‘Why don’t you talk to me?’ Pilate demanded. ‘Don’t you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?’ Then Jesus said, ‘You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin.’” John 19:5-11 (NLT)

Note: Pilate thought He was in charge and putting Jesus on trial, but in reality, Jesus was in charge and Pilate was on trial. “As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside privately and told them what was going to happen to him. ‘Listen,’ he said, ‘we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence him to die. Then they will hand him over to the Romans to be mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day he will be raised from the dead.’” Matthew 20:17-19 (NLT)

“Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, ‘If you release this man, you are no “friend of Caesar.” Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar.’ When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, *Gabbatha*). It was now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people, ‘Look, here is your king!’ ‘Away with him,’ they yelled. ‘Away with him! Crucify him!’ ‘What? Crucify your king?’ Pilate asked. ‘We have no king but Caesar,’ the leading priests shouted back.” John 19:12-15 (NLT)

- a. Pilate knew the right thing to do but he lacked the courage and conviction to do it. “Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified.” John 19:16 (NLT)

Life Application: If we surrender our lives to Jesus, the Holy Spirit will give us the courage and conviction we need, when we need it. “For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.” Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

- b. Ultimately, it wasn’t cowardly Pilate or the angry mob that sent Jesus to the cross. It was our sins and Jesus’ outrageous love for us. “No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded.” John 10:18 (NLT)

“There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

Read John 18:28-19:22 & 20:30-31. Then discuss the following questions:

1. Are you doing anything special to celebrate Easter this year?
2. Why do you think Pilate’s attempts at appeasing the crowd failed? Why did Pilate give in to them? Have you ever been pressured to do something you knew was wrong?

3. React to the following statements:

- Jesus didn't come to start a political movement or become an earthly king.

He came to form a kingdom of people who willingly surrender their lives to God and submit to His authority. We enter into it through repentance and new birth. (Mark 1:15, John 1:10-14)

- Pilate thought He was in charge and putting Jesus on trial, but in reality, Jesus was in charge and Pilate was on trial.

(John 19:8-11, Matthew 20:17-19)

- Ultimately, it wasn't cowardly Pilate or the angry mob that sent Jesus to the cross. It was our sins and Jesus' outrageous love for us. (John 10:18, 15:13)

4. Why do you think John recorded Jesus' conversation with Pilate? How can we apply it to our lives?

5. Read John 8:31-32, 14:6 & 17:17. What do these verses teach us about truth? How do we know truth?

6. Spend some time as a group praying for our church. Ask God to make us spiritually strong, courageous people who seek God first without hesitating. Also ask God to bring people to Centerpoint this Easter who need to hear about Jesus and need a church home.