

“Executing’ Justice” (Jn. 19:6-16)

(‘Terminating’ Justice or ‘Performing’ Justice)

1. Coveted Authority (6)
 - a. The Jewish leaders knew the threat was real to their influence and were more concerned with preserving their perceived power than pursuing justice. Instead of executing (performing) justice, they were executing (killing) justice.
 - b. They were not satisfied with the verdict of innocence nor with the punishment. They were bloodthirsty and fearful of Jesus.
2. Deferred Authority (6)
 - a. “**You**” take Him... I find no fault in Him.”
 - b. This reveals Pilate’s fickle and conviction-less attitude towards what happened to Jesus.
3. Duplicitous Authority (7)
 - a. Though the Law stated penalty of capital punishment for blasphemy, there was no real trial with evidence against Jesus’ claim to be the divine Messiah.
 - b. Furthermore, why not just stone Him as they would Stephen (Acts 7:58)? Earlier they threatened the adulterer with stoning but Jesus had convicted them of their hypocrisy (Jn. 8:3ff.).
 - c. Finally, they wanted nothing less than a public Roman sanctioned crucifixion, which would presumably defame Jesus and legitimize their authority as the true chosen of God.
4. Divine Authority (7)
 - a. “He made Himself the Son of God.” Did He really? If so, it should have been easy to prove but they could not (Mk. 14:56).
 - b. “Seated at the right hand” (Mat. 26:64). Matthew recorded Jesus’ earlier exchange with Caiaphas and even though they could not get witnesses to agree on a charge against Jesus as a blasphemer, when asked if Jesus was the Messiah, He proclaimed (Read Mat. 26:64-66). Subsequently, they should have reviewed the Scriptures and Jesus’ works to see if such was true – but they presumed guilt as if anyone claimed such would automatically prove guilty. They proved they didn’t really trust the Scripture at worst or did not understand it at best.
 - c. We still have the pharisaical problem today viz. We mold an image of Christ according to our understanding or desire thus reject the Jesus mocked, maligned, scourged, and crucified – the Jesus who calls us to die to ourselves and fear not the one who can destroy the body... That Jesus doesn’t promise an earthly prosperous life where our superficial security and assumed authority is prioritized.
5. Unsteady Authority (8-10)
 - a. Fear and wonder. Pilate has already thrice proclaimed that he found no fault in Jesus and such was after Jesus’ profound claim (18:36-37) to Pilate in private.
 - b. Now, Pilate hears that Jesus is said to be divine. To give context to Pilate’s plausible perception, I’ll quote two commentaries: **8–9** Pilate was evidently superstitious. He can scarcely be called a religious man, but the news that his prisoner had made divine claims scared the governor (his fear cannot be fear of the Jews; it must be fear connected with Jesus in some way). He had possibly been affected by a message from his wife about a dream she had (Matt. 27:19). And every Roman knew of stories of the gods or their offspring appearing in human guise. “Divine men” were part of the

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- first-century understanding of life. Pilate had plainly been impressed by Jesus as he talked with him. Now that he hears of the possibility of the supernatural he is profoundly affected.¹⁶ Was he being confronted by a “divine man”? Or in view of the habit of referring to the Roman Emperor as *divi filius* (“Son of God”) it may be that Pilate feared that, after all, Jesus was claiming to be King in a political sense. But a superstitious fear seems more likely.¹ ¶ “To a Graeco-Roman ear, the charge sounded quite different. It had nothing to do with blasphemy, and presented no threat to the Roman Empire; rather, it placed Jesus in an ill-defined category of ‘divine men’, gifted individuals who were believed to enjoy certain ‘divine’ powers. If Jesus was a ‘son of God’ in this sense, Pilate might well feel a twinge of fear; he had just had Jesus whipped.”²
- c. Now, Pilate seemingly scurries (if not physically, emotionally) back into the Praetorium taking Jesus back for another private discussion. However, Jesus does not defend Himself nor explain the logistics of His title and purpose. For Pilate had already dismissed the prerogative of truth, proved w/o conviction, had Jesus scourged, presenting Him as a prop, etc.
 - d. Furthermore, Carson well articulated: “So why should Jesus think the governor is any more prepared for truth now? What answer, long or brief, could Jesus have provided for the Roman prefect who is more interested in political manoeuvring than in justice, who displays superstitious fear but no remorse, who (in the next verses) still struts on the stage of human power but is enslaved by the political threats of his frenzied opposition?”³
 - e. Unlike Pilate, who was concerned with civil unrest and ultimately his job and even life, Jesus’ Kingdom prioritizes truth, righteousness, and repentance unto eternal life – which requires acknowledging Him as LORD, significant sacrifice, and possible martyrdom. Pilate was trying to save his neck and Jesus would save his soul. Pilate feared Caesar more than Christ. Will you or I vacillate if confronted with choosing Christ or Caesar as Curios? Would we choose safety, convenience, wealth, etc. over Christ?
 - f. It matters much how we think of the civil impact of the Gospel. Pilate had concerns which were and are legitimate. Consider Ro. 13: God has instituted civil authorities and we must acknowledge such vv. 1-2. E.g. the sword is given to the gov. not individual judges v. 4. God has also instituted His Church who is not to mindlessly slavishly obey a corrupt gov. or illegitimate authority vv. 3-5. This means that many have, are, and will (providing Jesus tarries) be punished, persecuted, discriminated, or even martyred for the cause of the Kingdom.
 - g. The Hebrew midwives blatantly refused king Pharaoh’s orders and were favored by God for doing so (Exod. 1:15-21). Sometimes it not just civil authority we must repudiate but religious authority. See Acts 4:17-20; 5:18, 25-29. When one fears God, she need not fear what man can do to her (e.g. Ps. 56, 3-4, 11; 118:6; Heb.

¹⁶ μάλλον ἐφοβήθη is somewhat curious. There has been no previous mention of Pilate as being afraid. Thus, the expression makes it seem as though the meaning is “was afraid rather than—.” Perhaps the Jews expected him to be angry or the like, but rather he was afraid. More probably the term is elative, “he was very much afraid.”

¹ Morris, L. (1995). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 704). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 600). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 600). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

13:6). Man can kill the body... (Mat. 10:28 cf. 1 Jn. 4:18). I’m a wimp and peel back one of my fingernails and I’m telling all including making up stuff you want to hear. However, I have to trust that God will provide exceptional courage at the time of extraordinary threat. My trust is not in me but He who began and will complete (Phil. 1:6).

- h. God is obviously not naïve and thus knows all governments are corrupt to differing degrees and that taxes in Caesar’s day and in ours, are used for evil as well as legitimate needs. Therefore, we must determine when we can and should repudiate gov. control. I propose that direct affronts to the order of creation in the purpose and institutions of imago dei (thus human life in or out of the womb is to be treasured not murdered), gender, marriage, family, church, and proclaiming the Gospel are clear are clearly to be opposed. “One Christian who refused to comply with sinful Nazi edicts was Martin Niemoeller, a pastor who continued to preach the gospel and to speak out against government atrocities. A Christian friend once visited him in jail and urged him to stay silent about Nazi abuses. If Niemoeller would agree to this, his freedom could be secured. ‘So, why are you in jail?’ he concluded. Niemoeller answered, ‘Why aren’t you in jail?’”^{3 4}
 - i. In short: We are to render unto the State that which is the State’s prerogatives only, and render unto God what has His image on it (Mat. 22:21).
 - j. Because Jesus feared not Rome, Pilate, the Jews, etc. He was able to stand with unspeakable courage in the face of crucifixion – of which he had already assured His Disciples by which He would die. And because of His conviction and steady resolve, the one with legitimate civil authority feared. With amazement (Mat. 27:14), Pilate asked, “Are you not speaking to me? Do you not know that I have the power to crucify You and power to release You?” v. 10. It was not a question of ignorance but amazement.
6. Ultimate Authority (11)
- a. Seemingly the only thing Jesus said to Pilate after being scourged was this. He reminded Pilate that there is one (from whom He came e.g. 17:5) who has all authority and Pilate will answer to Him. Actually, that authority is shared by the Father with the Son and indeed given to Him in final judgment e.g. Jn. 5:26-29; thus Pilate was unaware that He was indeed before the end of days Judge. Such is one of the many ironies packed in the passage.
 - b. On the same note of accountability all owe to the one living God, Jesus adds, “Therefore the one who delivered me to you has the greater sin.” A soft answer from Jesus alludes to Pilate’s culpability i.e. ‘greater sin’ implying his lesser sin. Though Pilate has been given his post of authority, he (like all others) is responsible for every decision cf. Mat. 12:36. In fact, where one spends the rest of eternity hinges on the mother of all question. Read Mat. 16:13-17.
 - c. Caiaphas’ sin is greater as “he not only took an active if not determinative part in the plot against Jesus (11:49–53) and, as high priest presiding over the Sanhedrin, he took

³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 5:1481–82.

⁴ Phillips, R. D. (2014). *John* (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.; 1st ed., Vol. 2, p. 534). P&R Publishing.

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a leading part in formulating the charges against Jesus (*cf.* Mk. 14:61–64), charges of which John demonstrates his thorough awareness.”⁵

7. Exploited Authority (12)

- a. Not an informed soul present believed that the Pharisees were legitimately concerned with Caesar’s authority being breached. Seeing that Pilate was increasingly determined to release Jesus, they played the trump card feigning concern for Pilate’s loyalty to Caesar.
- b. A real threat: “Tiberius Caesar was known to be quick to entertain suspicions against his subordinates, and swift to exact ruthless punishment.”⁶ “The emperor Tiberius was suspicious of the least talk of treason, and a delegation to Rome providing the slightest evidence that Pilate had supported a self-proclaimed king could lead to Pilate’s beheading. Philo tells us that Pilate also backed down much earlier in his career when the Jewish leaders threatened to petition the emperor against him.”⁷

8. Executing Authority (13-14)

- a. After the threat of word getting back to Tiberius of his neglect to squash a revolt by failing to uphold the local laws {A Roman prefect was not only responsible for keeping the peace but, within the constraints of Rome’s priorities, he was to maintain local law as well⁸} even though he didn’t understand them nor were they being presented with integrity {But even falsely claiming to be the Messiah was not a capital offense in standard Jewish teaching, as long as one were not a false prophet advocating other gods. On their own terms, Jesus’ accusers are thus mistaken about the law’s teaching about him (10:34–36)⁹} and failure to punish an act of sedition (though it didn’t truly threaten Tiberius, Pilate, or Rome), he had to make a judgment.
- b. A moment of decision. It was Pilate’s time to answer Jesus’ question back in Mat. 16:15. And in a last effort and or frustrating blow to the Pharisees who had just put him in check mate, He exclaimed, “Behold your King!”
- c. At first, and after the scourging, Pilate presented Jesus as “The Man.” Now, He asserts He is their King in a similar ironic parallel to Caiaphas’ prophetic proposal that one man die for the sake of the nation (Jn. 11:50). Little did Caiaphas know that Jesus was the One to die for the nation and the whole world – taking our place in judgment. And little did Pilate know that the One he begrudgingly presented to the Jews as their king – indeed is the King of the Jews and of the universe. The Son of David is the Son of God who is also the Son of Man.

9. Scorned Authority (15)

- a. The struggle between Pilate and the Jews comes to a crescendo with their bloodthirsty cries for crucifixion and his loathsome jab “Shall I crucify your King?”
- b. He found Jesus innocent and they refuse his verdict. He has the power to release Jesus but has Him beaten and crucified because those he hates the most are demanding it.

10. Exchanged Authority (15)

⁵ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 601). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁶ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 602). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁷ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Jn 19:12). InterVarsity Press.

⁸ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 599). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁹ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Jn 19:7–9). InterVarsity Press.

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- a. And in their obsession to be rid of Jesus, they seemingly lose all façade of piety calling out, “We have no king but Caesar!” ipso facto proving guilty of the very charge for which they demand Jesus’ death. Except for this violation of treason was not against King Caesar but the King of Glory.
- b. Keener noted: “The authorities’ cry is typical of the irony of John: Jewish people prayed daily for the royal Messiah, and one Jewish prayer that came to be part of the Passover celebration at least in later times acknowledges no king but God (cf. also comment on 8:33).”¹⁰
- c. Carson articulated: “The Hebrew Scriptures repeatedly insist that the only true king of Israel is God himself (*e.g.* Jdg. 8:23; 1 Sa. 8:7); the Davidic kings are legitimate, at least in theory, only because they are vassal monarchs in liege to the Lord and bound by the covenant. By vehemently insisting they have no king but Caesar, they are not only rejecting Jesus’ messianic claims, they are abandoning Israel’s messianic hope as a matter of principle, rejecting *any* claimant (‘We have *no king* but Caesar’), and finally disowning the kingship of the Lord himself. ‘Their repudiation of Jesus in the name of a pretended loyalty to the emperor entailed their repudiation of the promise of the kingdom of God, with which the gift of the Messiah is inseparably bound in Jewish faith, and Israel’s vocation to be its heir, its instrument, and its proclaimer to the nations’ (Beasley-Murray, p. 343). This is the ultimate evidence in support of the Prologue’s pronouncement, ‘He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him’ (1:11), and of the terrible blindness depicted in 12:37ff.”¹¹
- d. Furthermore, they also contradict their pretentious claims to liberty and position they made previously to Jesus (Jn. 8:33-34) demonstrating both their “bondage” to Rome, Caesar, and Pilate as well as to sin in general. They exchanged God for Caesar and true liberty for enslavement of sin.
- e. N. T. Wright insightfully articulated the following: “It’s a devastating thing to hear, coming from the lips of the official representatives of Judaism. The scriptures, songs and revolutionary slogans of Judaism had spoken for a thousand years of its God as the true king, of the coming **Messiah** as God’s true king, and of pagan rulers as a sham, a pretense, a bunch of trumped-up idolaters. What would Isaiah have said to the chief priests? How would they feel, next time they heard the psalms sung in the **Temple**? What would they say to the crowds, many of whom had supported Jesus precisely because they hoped he would be the king who would free them from Caesar?”¹²

11. Executed Authority (16)

- a. Pilate’s fear of political and personal repercussions overrode his fear of Jesus being innocent, a King, and divine. If you think that is crazy, it’s for lesser reasons that we do not choose Jesus over our safety, security, peace, popularity, luxury, etc.
- b. To embrace the King of Glory is to die to the kings of earth, the world’s perks and promises, comfort, and approval. To embrace Jesus is to die to yourself, take up your cross, and follow Him (Mat. 16:24-26).

¹⁰ Keener, C. S. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Jn 19:15–16). InterVarsity Press. Beasley-Murray G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Word Books, 1987).

¹¹ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 606). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

¹² Wright, T. (2004). *John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21* (p. 123). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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- c. Some, like Pilate, are simply not interested in truth when it is presented right in their faces. Therefore, they just follow the flow of time, current of the culture, and their own desires etc. However, it is not harmless to have an incomplete view or misunderstanding of Jesus’ person and work. The Pharisees knew much of what to expect of the Messiah, yet they missed a crucial characteristic of His mission viz. to liberate the sin held captives – not the politically held captives. And He would do so by paying for our sins and transferring His righteousness to us. Read Ro. 10:1-4.
- d. The stakes are eternity. This is why Paul preached “Christ crucified” see 1 Cor. 1:20-23-2:5.
- e. Celebrity ‘Christianity’ will not save. “Jesus has got my back” ‘Christianity’ will not save expound. Jesus will put a cross on your back and a target on your forehead (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Lu. 6:26; Jam. 4:4).
- f. In their sin enslaved, blackened hearts, they triumphantly escorted Jesus to His execution.
- g. Read Acts 3:13-15.