

John 18:38

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.

Analysis

What is truth? (Τί ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια;)—History's most tragic question, asked while standing before the incarnate Truth. The Greek *alētheia* (truth, reality, unconcealedness) echoes Jesus's self-identification: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6). Was Pilate's question cynical skepticism, philosophical musing, or genuine inquiry cut short by political pressure? John leaves it unanswered—Pilate exits without waiting for response.

I find in him no fault at all (οὐδεμίαν εὐρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ αἰτίαν)—Three times Pilate declares Jesus's innocence (here, 19:4, 19:6), fulfilling the Mosaic requirement of multiple witnesses and foreshadowing Christ as the spotless Lamb. The word *aitian* means "cause, guilt, accusation." Pilate pronounces Jesus legally innocent yet proceeds to execute him—the very definition of injustice, exposing how truth yields to expedience when power lacks moral courage.

Historical Context

Pilate's question reflects first-century philosophical skepticism, especially Roman Stoicism and emerging relativism. Pontius Pilate governed during Tiberius's reign (AD 14-37), a period of political paranoia where governors feared accusations of disloyalty. His declaration of innocence while capitulating to pressure reveals his character: truth-aware but truth-denying.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life do you ask "What is truth?" while refusing to wait for or act on the answer?
2. How does declaring Jesus innocent while still condemning him mirror modern proclamations of faith without obedience?
3. What does Pilate's encounter with Truth incarnate teach about the bankruptcy of relativism?

Interlinear Text

λέγει	αὐτῷ	ὁ	Πιλάτος	τί	ἐστιν	ἀλήθεια	καὶ	τοῦτο
saith	him	G3588	Pilate	What	is	truth	And	this
G3004	G846		G4091	G5101	G2076	G225	G2532	G5124
εἰπὼν	πάλιν	ἐξῆλθεν	πρὸς	τοὺς	Ἰουδαίους	καὶ		
when he had said	again	he went out	unto	G3588	the Jews	And		
G2036	G3825	G1831	G4314		G2453	G2532		
λέγει	αὐτῷ	Ἐγὼ	οὐδεμίαν	αἰτίαν	εὕρισκω	ἐν	αὐτῷ	
saith	him	I	no	fault	find	in	him	
G3004	G846	G1473	G3762	G156	G2147	G1722	G846	

Additional Cross-References

John 19:4 (Parallel theme): Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.

John 19:6 (Parallel theme): When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.

Luke 23:4 (Parallel theme): Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

Acts 17:32 (Parallel theme): And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org