

# 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 ἔστιν 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 εὑρίσκω 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

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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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

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λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Πιλᾶτος 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 εὑρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ  
**saith** **him** **I** **no** **fault** **find** **in** **him**  
G3004 G846 G1473 G3762 G156 G2147 G1722 G846

## Additional Cross-References

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**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.

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