

“A Career Government Appointee Who Hated His Job and Was In Over His Head”

5/23/10

John 18:28-19:22

9 & 10:45 am

Series, “*Ambassador to ...*”

INTRODUCTION

It seems much of the time people are in a love-hate relationship with their government ... whatever style of government that may be.

In Russia, under old-style communist rule, people wanted freedom. They wanted to elect their own governmental leaders, they wanted to be able to express their opinions without risking jail or death, they desired freedom to worship according to the dictates of their consciences, even freedom to open a business and have free-market enterprise.

But, once greater freedom came and with it an entirely new way of life and thinking, and new kinds of challenges they hadn't faced before, many wanted to return to the old ways. The old ways were familiar, the government provided food and there was less crime.

In Jesus' day, Israel was controlled by the Roman government. The Romans appointed their own governor who was responsible to maintain a delicate balance of the self-rule of the Jewish people and the rule of Roman law.

Pilate was the appointed Roman Governor during the time of Jesus' public ministry. He held ultimate authority over civil, military, and criminal matters. The Jewish Sanhedrin was allowed to exercise judicial functions, but if they desired to inflict the penalty of death, the sentence had to be confirmed by Pilate.

“Pilate had no easy task, nor did he make his job easier by his actions. He seems to have detested the Jews, their culture, customs and religious practices, and this led to violent collisions between him and the Jews.

“On one occasion he used the sacred treasure of the temple to pay for an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem. A crowd came together and complained against him. In anticipation of their protest, he had ordered soldiers to dress as civilians and to mingle with the multitude. At a pre-arranged signal, the soldiers beat the protesters severely and quieted the riot. (Josephus, Ant, XVIII, iii, 2; BJ, II, ix, 4). (ISBE)

In Luke 13:1 we read, **“Now there were some ... who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.”**

The Jewish historian, Josephus, (Ant., XVIII, iv, 1, 2) recorded the incident which led to Pilate's removal as governor. "A religious pretender in Samaria promised the Samaritans that if they would assemble at Mt. Gerizim, he would show them the sacred vessels which Moses had hidden there. A great multitude assembled, but before they could climb the mountain, they were attacked by Pilate's cavalry, and many were killed. Rome decided they had had enough of Pilate's heavy-handedness and removed him as governor." (ISBE)

When we open to John 18, we see that Pilate is the governor when the Jewish leaders bring Jesus to be executed. They need Pilate's permission for capital punishment.

This situation gives us some unique insight into how Jesus interacted with this career government appointee.

From Jesus, we can glean valuable insights into how we can represent Him, as His ambassadors, when we interact with our governmental leaders today.

How does an Ambassador of Christ carry His message to leaders in government?

OPEN to John 18:28 (**PAGE** 1682)

READ John 18:28-38a

How does an ambassador of Christ carry His message to leaders in government?

I. Represent the Heavenly Kingdom (John 18:33-38)

John 18:33, 36 "Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked Him, 'Are You the king of the Jews?'"

36 "Jesus said, 'My Kingdom is not of this world. If it were, My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My Kingdom is from another place.'"

When Jesus says, "My Kingdom is not of this world," He is speaking of His Kingdom's character and origin (Greek, 'ek').

Jesus' Kingdom did not originate in the world. His Kingdom originated in Heaven.

His Kingdom does not have the character of earthly rule. The character of His Kingdom is the character of Jesus Himself, all that selfless love, self-giving love is and does ...

... opposite from the character of a worldly kingdom where it's often about who can win, who can grasp the power, who can have their own way.

And since Jesus' **Kingdom** is not earthly in nature, it does not derive its authority or power from the world ... that is, from its culture or people (popularity); or from governments through delegated authority and power.

Jesus said that if His Kingdom derived its authority from the world, physically fighting the Jews to maintain His freedom and worldly authority would have been necessary.

So, for us, as ambassadors of Jesus, our authority to represent His Kingdom is not derived from the world, from government, or from culture. Our authority and ministry comes from Jesus Himself:

Matthew 28:18-19a “**All authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations ...**”

We do not need the approval of culture or government in order to be Jesus' representatives. Our approval, our message, our authority as ambassadors comes from Jesus Himself.

As ambassadors, we seek to influence the kingdoms and cultures of the world through the words and actions of Jesus. We speak the truth of God Himself, we carry the keys to the Kingdom of God through *The Message* about Jesus.

We also speak the words of Jesus to those in authority. And they choose whether they will accept the truth or whether they will live according to the world system.

We also represent the heavenly Kingdom by the privilege and responsibility we exercise when we vote; voting in a way that demonstrates God's heart and God's priorities, from the truth of Scripture, as far as we can.

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We Represent Jesus Kingdom, the Heavenly Kingdom.

II. Recognize that Ultimate Power Comes From God, Not Government (John 19:7-11)

Jesus' conversation with Pilate continues into chapter 19.

READ John 19:7-11 “**The Jews insisted, ‘We have a law, and according to that law He must die, because He claimed 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 **‘Do you refuse to speak to me?’ Pilate said. ‘Don’t you realize I have power either to free You or to crucify You?’**
 11 **Jesus answered, ‘You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above.’ Therefore the one who handed Me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.’**

Jesus is telling Pilate that his power does not come, ultimately, from the Roman Empire, but from God.

Pilate is being told that He is accountable to God for how he exercises His power. It is not as if whatever Pilate or any government decides to do automatically carries the approval of God simply because they are in power. (NIVAC)

- Government *is* ordained by God and its authority is *from* God. (Romans 13)

This is why we are told to submit to and obey the law.

- Does this mean that governmental authorities or laws they create *always* reflect God’s will? No. But, they are always accountable to God for how they exercise the responsibility and authority He has delegated to them. (Acts 5:33-39)

- Sometimes, and most often very rarely, we must disobey the government. That time is when they command us to do something that violates God’s will, as in Acts 4:1-20 when the apostles refuse to submit to the command to stop speaking about Jesus.

- Some Christians have been engaged in peaceful civil disobedience in regards to clear biblical issues.

If you choose that avenue, make sure you are clearly on God’s side of the issue, as revealed in His word, and then be willing to accept the consequences of your actions.

So, back to our story, “Pilate must choose to follow either the truth revealed by Christ, or he must choose the world and its devices.”

Every government makes this decision. (NIVAC)

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III. Trust God to Accomplish His Will (John 19:12-16)

READ John 19:12-16 “**From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, ‘If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.’**

13 When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge’s seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).

14 It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour. ‘Here is your king,’ Pilate said to the Jews.

15 But they shouted, ‘Take Him away! Take Him away! Crucify Him!’ ‘Shall I crucify your king?’ Pilate asked. **‘We have no king but Caesar,’** the chief priests answered.

16 **Finally Pilate handed Him over to them to be crucified.** So the soldiers took charge of Jesus.”

God can accomplish His purposes even through unbelieving government officials, as He does here. (Acts 3:17-18, 4:27-28; and also through Nebuchadnezzar and the Assyrians)

It was God’s predetermined plan that Jesus would be crucified. Pilate, even though he knew he was condemning an innocent man to death, was used by God to accomplish His will.

As ambassadors for Jesus, we do not need to *control* the government to *fulfill our mission*. (REPEAT)

- The early Christians, in the midst of the inhumane Greco-Roman culture, changed that culture by caring for throwaway babies, the sick, the poor and the elderly; as did ending the Gladiatorial games, which severely degraded the sanctity of human life. (The Benevolent Influence of Christianity by Wayne Jackson and Pagans, Christianity, and Charity by Christopher Price)
- As a result of Jesus Christ and His teachings, women in much of the world today, especially in the West, enjoy more privileges and rights than at any other time in history. It takes only a cursory trip to an Arab nation or to a Third World country to see how little freedom women have in countries where Christianity has had little or no presence. (Christianity: The Best Thing That Ever Happened To Women by Sue Bohlin)
- Christians founded hospitals and health care in the fourth century, and they began orphanages and charitable organizations. (Pagans, Christianity, and Charity, by Christopher Price)
- Christians greatly impacted art, music and literature.

- The Ten Commandments and social and criminal laws from the Bible influenced many nations' laws and judicial systems for centuries.
- Christianity had an important impact on every step of the road to modern science. (Christianity and the Rise of Science, <http://www.bede.org.uk/sciencehistory.htm>)
- The anti-slavery movement in England and the USA was led by Christians.
- The civil rights movement in the USA was led by Christians.
- The pro-life movement in the USA is led by Christians.

(See also: UNDER THE INFLUENCE: How Christianity Transformed Civilization, Alvin J. Schmidt)

All of this and more without controlling the government, but by intentionally being Jesus' representatives who influenced many people, and through that changed society, and through that influenced the government.

And how about you and me?

Will we follow in this great heritage?

What would it be like if 2,000 people, all in the same week, each did something to touch, encourage, bring hope to another person, to express the love of Jesus to someone. What would it mean? What could happen?

What can you do *this week* to touch someone's life with the love, hope and encouragement of Jesus?

If you will join me in doing something in the next seven days, please stand.

I will send you a reminder e-mail tomorrow. What I'd like you to do is e-mail me through the church website and let me know what you've done ... big or small ... so that you can be of encouragement to your brothers and sisters in Christ. We're not going to brag to the world, but we do want to sharpen and encourage and stimulate one another as we learn to be more effective ambassadors for Jesus.

Next Sunday morning ... we're going to take the time to share some of what has been done. E-mail me through the church website!

Father in Heaven, please lead me this week in touching someone with the love of Jesus. Please fill me with the Holy Spirit and use me as an ambassador for Jesus. Amen!"