

Explanatory and Practical Notes.

Verse 28. Then led they. This was after Jesus had been examined at the house of Annas, and formally tried at the house of Caiaphas before the Sanhedrin. **Unto the hall of judgment.** Rev. Ver., "into the palace." That is, the official residence of the Roman governor, which was probably in the castle of Antonia, north of the temple. **It was early.** Perhaps about five o'clock in the morning. Roman courts were sometimes held at sunrise. **They themselves went not into.** They sent for Pilate to come out to them, as they stood in the court-yard before the palace. **lest they should be defiled.** They considered that to enter the house of a Jew would make them "unclean," though the Scriptures did not so declare. **But that they might eat the passover.** It is generally supposed that the passover was eaten on that day, Friday, in the evening. If, as some believe, it had already been eaten by the Jews, as by Jesus, on the preceding evening, the reference here may be to some of the sacrificial offerings, a part of which were eaten. (1) *See how men who are in a deed of murder can yet be careful of the outward forms of religion.*

29. Pilate. He was the Roman procurator or governor of Judea from A. D. 26 to 36. Usually he resided at Caesarea, but he went up to Jerusalem to preserve order during the feast of passover. He was cruel, unprincipled, and cowardly. Like a Roman judge he clearly saw where the right was, yet lacked the courage to do it. He was afterward banished to France, where he committed suicide. **Then went out.** Better, as in Rev. Ver., "therefore went out," that is, he went out on account of their religious scruples. **What accusation.** He knew their wishes, but desired a formal charge.

30. They answered. They were surprised at Pilate's intention to investigate the case, for they knew well that the charge of blasphemy in claiming to be Messiah was no crime in the Roman law. **If he were not a malefactor.** Rev. Ver., "an evil-doer." They try to evade the question and induce Pilate to satisfy their sentence without trial.

31. Judge him according to your law. They could excommunicate him from their Church and scourge him, but they could not put him to death, and this is what they were determined to do. **It is not lawful for us.** The power of the death penalty had been taken from the Jews about twenty-five years before, on account of their party strifes and judicial murders.

32. That the saying of Jesus. Jesus had said that he was to be crucified. John 12:32; Matt. 20:19. But crucifixion was not a Jewish form of execution; hence, for the fulfillment of his own prediction, he must be put to death by the Romans. **What death he should die.** By what form of death, that is, by crucifixion. He who could foretell the manner of his end showed thereby that he could escape it.

33. Entered into the judgment-hall. From the outer court of the palace, where he had met the Jewish rulers. **Called Jesus and said.** He summoned the accused for a private inquiry. **Art thou the King of the Jews?** Through the blood and dust that covered the prisoner, Pilate saw a certain kingliness beaming, and he felt a strange awe.

34. Sayest thou this thing of thyself. "Do you ask this question out of your own consciousness, or because the Jewish rulers have declared that I claim to be a king?" There was a sense in which this prisoner was a king, and the King of kings, but it was not in a political sense, and the Roman emperor had nothing to fear from him. (2) *There is something in Christ which makes every man feel that he is the world's Master.*

35. Am I a Jew? There was the deepest scorn in

this question. To Pilate, as to every Roman, a Jew was a most contemptible object. **Thine own nation . . . detested thee.** As if he had said, "I have nothing to do with your parties or your religion. You have been brought before me for sentence by the rulers of your own people. Tell me, what is the cause for their hatred toward you?"

36. My kingdom is not of this world. He did not deny that he was a king, nor that his kingdom was over the world; but he meant that it was not of this world, or was in any sense a political institution. **Then would my servants fight.** Just as the subjects of the Roman empire or the members of the Jewish state would fight for their cause; so would Christ's followers fight if his was a secular kingdom. (3) *Christ's cause is never advanced by the weapons of the world. Not be delivered to the Jews.* He recognized the Jews, and not the Romans, as his real foes. **Now is my kingdom not from hence.** Since his servants did not fight, it was evident that his was no kingdom of the world.

37. Art thou a king then? There is a mingling of contempt, and doubt, and awe in Pilate's question. He saw that he was dealing with no common man. **Thou sayest that I am a king.** The Jewish use of such an expression would convey a different meaning from our use. It means, "Thou sayest well, or truly, that I am a king." Thus before the representative of the world's authority Jesus declared that he was a king. **To this end was I born.** This and the following clauses mean, "To be a king was my birth, and to be a king came I into the world, in order that I may bear witness unto the truth."—*Ellcott.* **Bear witness unto the truth.** He has a kingdom, but it is in the realm of thought, and his subjects are those who receive the truth. (4) *While other thrones are built on conquest, Christ's throne stands on the eternal truth and righteousness.* **Every one that is of the truth.** Every one who has in himself the willingness and the capacity to receive the truth; every one who will allow the deepest desires of his spiritual nature to be expressed. **Hearth my voice.** Hears Christ's call and accepts his rule with loyal heart. (5) *Let us listen for the summons of our King.*

38. What is truth? It is the question of a man of the world, who has no insight into spiritual things, and thinks that he is talking with a "crank." **I find in him no fault.** Rev. Ver., "no crime." He saw plainly that Jesus was no disturber of the peace, and no rebel against the Roman authority. He hoped to induce the rulers to release him, but was unwilling to incur their wrath by a formal acquittal.

39. Just at this point in the narrative belongs the examination before Herod (Matt. 27:12-14, and Luke 23:5-16), which John does not relate, perhaps because it was well known through the other gospels. Ye have a custom. Nothing is known of this custom, except what is here related. **Release unto you one.** In times of general rejoicing it was customary in the ancient world to pardon criminals, and thus add to the general joy. **The King of the Jews.** Spoken in the contempt that marked all Pilate's dealing with the subject people.

40. Then cried they all. Incited by the influence of the rulers. **Not this man, but Barabbas.** They set aside the innocent, and chose the guilty; they refused their King, and asked for a criminal. **Barabbas was a robber.** It seems strange to us that robbers and brigands could ever be popular, but such they were in ancient times, and even during recent centuries. Roba Hood and Jack Sheppard were popular in England, and men like them are popular in Sicily and in Greece today. So it was not very remarkable that the brutal populace chose Barabbas instead of Christ.

HOME READINGS.

- M. Jesus before Pilate. John 18, 28-40.
Tu. Peter without Jesus. John 18, 15-27.
W. Jesus foretells his passion. Matt. 20, 17-29.
Th. Jesus, the King of kings. 1 Tim. 6, 12-16.
F. Jesus, the King of the Jews. Matt. 2, 1-10.
S. Jesus, the Son of David. Matt. 9, 20-31.
S. Jesus, the Son of God. Matt. 17, 1-13.

GOLDEN TEXT.

I find in him no fault at all. John 18, 38.

LESSON HYMNS.

No. 41, Dominion Hymnal.

Now just a word for Jesus,
Your dearest friend so true.