

CHRIST VALIDATING HIS JUDGE

The Lord's Supper

August 2, 2015

John 18:12-40

“Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” John 19:11

When the death of Jesus Christ is considered, it is usually His role as victim that is in focus. His innocence was utterly unworthy of the suffering that was heaped upon Him. His extreme sufferings were more than any human should bear at the hands of other men. The multifaceted injustice, abuse and agony are things that grab news headlines. Thus, Christ's victimhood is usually the focus of contemplation.

But Christ was more than a victim. His death was a sacrifice, and sacrifices require both a victim and a sacrificing priest. The offering of an animal was not a sacrifice if there was not a God-appointed priest to make the offering. And, there was no priesthood without a sacrifice. Both the offering and the priest who offered it were necessary elements of any sacrifice made to God.

In Jesus' death, he was both victim and priest. Jesus Christ, “an high priest of good things to come . . . offered himself without spot to God (Hebrews 9:11, 14). In each observance of the Lord's Supper this year, we are focusing upon Christ's role as the sacrificing priest. Although various persons took part in the rejection, betrayal, abuse and crucifixion of Christ, yet through it all He was the one and only sovereign, giving himself in sacrifice for the sins of mankind.

Thus Pontius Pilate, the highest human authority in the crucifixion events, interrogated Jesus. But Jesus “gave him no answer” (John 19:9). Pilate responded, “knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee? Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above” (19:11, 12).

This response was the culmination of a four-step sequence of communication. First, Christ had informed Pilate that He was a king, but that His kingdom was not of this world (18:33-37). This was a startling claim to Pilate, given that the one making it also performed super-human miracles. Second, Christ's accusers charged that “he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God” (19:7). Pilate had been reared in a pagan world where gods and goddesses were believed to produce offspring that sometimes visit earth. Such superstition in Pilate's mind imbued this charge with frightening possibilities.

Third, in this state of alarm, Pilate wanted to know where Jesus originated, and asked Him, “Whence art thou?” (19:9). When Jesus refused to answer, Pilate boasted his authority to release or to crucify Jesus. Jesus answered that Pilate had no power at all, except power that was given to him from heaven – from whence Jesus had come!

Herein Christ showed that He was the source of the authority by which His highest earthly judge would condemn Him to death. And herein, Christ displays another action in which He offered Himself as the sacrifice for our sins.