Welcome to today’s episode of the Easter Studies. We’re about halfway. And the story is coming to a climax.

Before we start today. I thought it might be a little helpful to know something about the legal system Jesus was subjected to.

There were three jurisdictions o[erating at the time.

**The Sanhedrin** for local religious matters. The Sanhedrin was powerful and very influential, but they didn’t have authority from the Romans to order an execution (though extrajudicial unofficial killings were common as was seen in the case of the stoning of Stephen).

**The Tetrach** (local ‘King’) who did have the authority to execute. But was careful and wary of poking the bear. And riots over dead heroes definitely did that!

**Rome** (the bear). The ultimate authority and not to be messed with. Crucified tens of thousands without mercy or restraint.

John 18:28-40

### Jesus Before Pilate

**28**Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness they did not enter the palace, because they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. **29**So Pilate came out to them and asked, “What charges are you bringing against this man?”

**30**“If he were not a criminal,” they replied, “we would not have handed him over to you.”

**31**Pilate said, “Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.”

“But we have no right to execute anyone,” they objected. **32**This took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

**33**Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

**34**“Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

**35**“Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

**36**Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

**37**“You are a king, then!” said Pilate.

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

**38**“What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him. **39**But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews’?”

**40**They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.

In Pilate’s world like ours, truth was a variable commodity. Jesus made a statement that was almost laughable to Pilate.

“The reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

This whole charade Jesus was subjected to was based on lies. Pilate and the the priests and the Sanhedrin all lived in the shady land of convenient truth. Political dance moves to achieve desired ends. Truth was a casualty of progress.

**Lets start with the Priests and Sanhedrin.** They were beholden to Rome for their continued existence and capacity make money (lots of it) on the backs of the poor. Jesus challenged them in the temple. He spoke truth, but they wanted to kill him. They needed Jesus put of the way so they could get back to business. They even had people lie about what Jesus said to bring about a conviction (Mark 14:55-59).

And how ironic that they should think about ceremonial cleaness whilst attending to such a foul and disgusting frame up.

**Pilate** was always on the watch for revolutionaries trying to unseat Roman authority. But he knew that the priests and Sanhedrin press to have Jesus killed had nothing to do with an insurrection! He knew their lies, and he made them say them out loud!

The spiritual leaders of the nation lying through their teeth! Even more ironic, they bayed for Jesus blood claiming him to be a dangerous revolutionary, and wanted to exchange him for a convicted one!

“What is truth” muttered Pilate. None to be found here this day!

Except Jesus who was pure truth. Not that Pilate really cared. What was another crucifixion to him. Nothing at all.

We live in a world of shifting truth! Truth is what will drive the economy (don’t ask us what we might have to sanction), Truth is what will give us the best return for our investments (don’t ask how the money is made).

Truth is what will help me to get ahead (not my concern to worry about others who might fall behind so that I can get ahead).

Christians have been known to think about what’s true with a simple test “What would Jesus do?”

That test is likely to shape Jesus to match our ambitions.

The more important question is “what did Jesus do… say.”

We’re far more likely to find the truth!