

## *No Greater Love † In Truth*<sup>2</sup>

- † as the Passover Lamb (vv.28-32)
- † as the King of the Jews (vv.33-40)
- † as the Son of God (vv.1-16a)

In the Name of Jesus, God's great **Truth**, dearly redeemed believers:

Are the unbelievers finished yet, *Killing Jesus*? This time of year we're reminded they're still trying. A friend loaned me a copy of *Killing Jesus* by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard. But before I could read it, I ran across a book review by Pastor Ken Brokmeier.<sup>3</sup> To say I was disappointed would be an understatement. Subtitled, "A History," O'Reilly and Dugard say they wanted to "separate fact from myth." Somehow they concluded that Jesus might have grown up and "learned Scripture," then "intentionally began contriving his actions and words to mimic the prophets' predictions." Other statements that cast doubt on Christ's miracles as myths and His resurrection as maybe not true leave me scratching my head. None of that fits the history God has preserved for us in the four Gospel accounts, including here in John. Watch Jesus. Listen to Him. There is **No Greater Love † In Truth**...

### † as the Passover Lamb (vv.28-32)

Earlier in John's eighteenth chapter we see Jesus arrested. His enemies wanted to take Him by force, but He went willingly. Jesus even protected His disciples and heal a mob member's ear. How does that fit the profile of an imposter? Knowing Judas would betray Him and Peter would deny Him, why did Jesus come back to Jerusalem. He could have stayed safe somewhere in Galilee. Or camped up north near Mount Hermon where modern ski resorts suggest it would be a great place to live. He could find a quiet spot along the Mediterranean Sea. Have you ever seen those azure blue waters? And now tonight I have to ask, if Jesus studied the prophets, why would He go back at **Passover** as the **Lamb** of God?

There's plenty of untruth, hypocrisy and lies here, but not in Jesus. Outside the palace of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate stood the Jewish religious leaders. In the hours since Jesus' arrest they illegally tried and condemned Him to death. But to carry out the death sentence, they needed Roman authority as the occupying nation. Why did they stay outside? Because to go in would have violated their own rabbinic law code and made them unclean, disqualified from celebrating the seven-day Passover feast. They lived the lie of righteousness while condemning an innocent man. "***If this man were not a criminal,***" they told Pilate, "***we would not have handed him over to you.***" Actually, that was lie. No one could find a single thing wrong with Jesus in all His kindness. They simply hated what He said.

Jesus had been telling His disciples the **Truth**. He would die, not by stoning from the Jews, but by crucifixion from the Gentile Romans. The Jewish religious leaders had been persecuting and plotting to kill Jesus throughout His three-year ministry. But until His time came, they had no power. Now at the Passover, it is God's time. For 1500 years God's people had been commemorating the great deliverance from slavery in Egypt. On that night the blood of an innocent lamb painted on every Jewish doorway saved them from God's wrath against the false gods of the Egyptians. John the Baptist had pointed at Jesus, "***Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!***" (1:29) That Jesus was willing and able to accept that responsibility proves there is **No Greater Love † in Truth**. His blood saves us.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, quotes are from a draft translation by the undersigned for the Wartburg Project – John.

<sup>2</sup> From Lenten series: *No Greater Love – Our Savior's Passion Sermons*. March-April, 2014 – New Life, Shoreview, MN

<sup>3</sup> "Killing Jesus," by Kenneth L. Brokmeier. *Forward in Christ*, April 2014, p.32.

## ✠ as the King of the Jews (vv.33-40)

If you were raised as a Bible-believing Christian, and not just a cultural copy, then accepting Jesus as the Passover Lamb is no problem. But is He **the King of the Jews**? More importantly, is He your **King**? Be careful now. When it comes to **Truth**, the Psalmist says, “*All men are liars.*” (116:11) The Lord’s Apostle Paul echoes this in Romans 3, where none of us comes off as natural truth sayers: *As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” “Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit.” “The poison of vipers is on their lips.”*” (Romans 3:10–13 NIV84) We decry scholars who deny Jesus in books and editorials, but when it comes to our own lives are we really willing to let Jesus rule as our **King**? Or do we complain?

Pilate was looking for some way to give the Jews their way. If he could find that Jesus claimed to be **the King of the Jews**, there might be some justification to declare Him an enemy of the state. But Jesus kept answering not as expected, but **In Truth**. “*My kingdom is not of this world.*” The evidence is clear. Jesus’ followers do not take up arms against civil government. When Peter tried, Jesus rebuked him, healed his victim’s ear, and told Peter to put his sword away. Jesus came to suffer; suffer He would.

Then to Pilate’s direct question, “*You are a king then?*” Jesus gave a direct answer, “*I am, as you say, a king.*” That’s emphatic like, “You said it!” “*I was born for this, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.*”

As sheep of Jesus the Good Shepherd, we hear His voice calling us away from our own hypocrisy and lies. The honest truth is that we are sinners who desperately need **No Greater Love ✠ in Truth** from Jesus. Our **King** teaches us in His spiritual kingdom to love one another. He washed not only our feet but our bodies and souls in the cleansing flood waters of Baptism. Pilate with unbelieving atheists and agnostics, philosophers and skeptics all ask, “*What is truth?*” Jesus answers: “*I AM the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me.*” (14:6) Beyond Jesus there is **No Greater Love ✠ in Truth...**

## ✠ as the Son of God (vv.1-16a)

That finally came out when Pilate’s attempt to free Jesus failed in the shouts of the crowd, “*Give us Barabbas!*” (18:40 NIV) Every attempt to find just cause for crucifixion also failed, and Pilate said so. As a superstitious pagan, a believer in Roman idols, something the Jews said really rattled the governor. They finally gave their real reason for killing Jesus: “*We have a law, and according to the law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.*” *When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid.* He tried to impress on a silent Jesus his imperial authority, but Jesus answered **In Truth**. Pilate had no authority except from God above. Jesus would die for us all.

The Jews claimed Jesus “*made himself the Son of God.*” Yet Jesus’ life, prophecies foretelling it, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, divine names, divine works, divine attributes – everything about Jesus proves He is **the Son of God**. He told His disciples during the forty days of resurrection proof between Easter and His ascension: “*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore while going, disciple all ethnic groups, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to guard and treasure everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you all the days, to the gathered goal of the ages.*” (Matthew 28:18–20 MkC) From God’s right hand Jesus still uses His authority to bless all who hope in Him.

More amazing than attempts to keep *Killing Jesus*, is the fact that He gave Himself up willingly to be killed in place of all. His body and blood of the New Covenant, shared with us in Christ’s Holy Supper again tonight are blessings of **the Son of God ✠ In Truth**. Here is forgiveness for all our doubts, our misplaced confidence in human authority, our own lies to God, self and each other. Here is life and salvation in Him who gave Himself over to be crucified for all. **In Truth ✠ No Greater Love**. Amen.

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