

Spong, *The Fourth Gospel*, Chapters 24-26
Wesley Advocates 16 July 2017

Pilate: The Conflict between Survival and Truth

What do we know about the historical Pontius Pilate? What do we know about him from the synoptic gospels?

Note the dates Spong offers for the synoptic gospels: Mark c. 72-75, Matthew c. 82-85, Luke c. 88-93. According to JSS, why might these writers present a particularly sympathetic view of Pilate?

Why might the Johannine writer present a “whitewashed” Pilate?

Why does this gospel include the long interrogation, Pilate’s to-ing and fro-ing, the Jewish priests’ and the crowd’s insistence on crucifying Jesus, Jesus’s odd questions and silences? Why does JSS call Pilate “a seeker”?

What is the ultimate power of the state? What is Jesus’s relationship with and attitude toward the state’s power?

Why does John set the crucifixion on the day of preparation for Passover?

At the Cross: The Mother of Jesus and the Beloved Disciple

Who is the only person in this gospel to proclaim Jesus’s kingship? Describe the circumstances.

How does the Johannine gospel describe the passion as fulfilling OT scripture?

When did we last see Jesus’s mother—before the crucifixion? How did she interact with Jesus? Her presence at the crucifixion indicates what for the John writer, according to JSS? What reconciliation does she afford?

JSS concludes that the “beloved disciple” is the symbolic figure Lazarus of Bethany. Based on what evidence? Why does this gospel writer find Lazarus a suitable character to witness the crucifixion? And how does this “beloved disciple” represent the Johannine community of believers?

It Is Finished: Water and Blood Flow Together

See page 258, opening paragraph: what does JSS mean here, saying that “the cross was a portrait of one who could live without boundaries”? What do the subsequent two items in the series mean?

How is Jesus’s mother a symbol of the past, especially of Judaism in the past?

On page 259, Spong notes that, according to this gospel, “Jesus . . . did not come to create a new religion, but to transform their religion of the past by transcending its boundaries and removing its limits.” Explain. What sounds familiar to Methodists about such a statement?

How does John’s description of individual elements involved in the crucifixion fulfill OT scripture? Why is that important?

When pierced, Jesus’s body produces water and blood. Symbolic of what?