

Jesus Proves He Is The Messiah

Rick Blackwood: [inaudible 00:00:25] Wow, it's so good to be back. Thank you so much. By the way, how about our women's overflow this Friday night? Wasn't that amazing? Wow. 1,500 of our women. Girl power rules at Christ Fellowship. Love it. I want to welcome all of you to Christ Fellowship. We're broadcasting from our West Kendall campus today. Yup, so I want to welcome all of our campuses. By the way, my name's Rick, and I serve as the lead pastor here, and today we're going to be looking at a text that is so, so vital to your confidence in what you believe, so I want to jump right into this. You can remain standing, because we're going to read the Bible in a moment, but this is going to be one of those messages that is a faith-builder, a doubt killer. Maybe all of us have times at some point in your life where you wonder, is Jesus really who He said He was? Is God really the true God? This is going to be one of those messages that are going to kill all of those doubts, give you confidence in what you believe.

With that in mind, if you have your Bibles, open them to John Chapter 18, just too kind of tell you where we are. If you're a guest with us for the first time, so glad that you joined us. For the past three years, we've been studying the gospel of John. Easter three years ago, we started in John Chapter 1, Verse 1. We've just been walking chapter by chapter, verse by verse. Hasn't it been amazing just to every week walk in the steps of Jesus? This Easter, we came to John Chapter 18, and we kicked off a series that we've entitled Tougher Than Nails. We're looking at the arrest, the trials, and eventually the crucifixion of Jesus on the cross. All of that being said, we're in John Chapter 18 today, Part Five of this series called Tougher Than Nails. Very important message today for you, so let's read. I want to begin by reading just one verse, just to kind of get us started, from Verse 32. You follow with your eyes as I read it.

The Bible says, "This took place," and here's a key word today. "This took place to ..." Everybody say that next word.

Congregation: Fulfill.

Rick Blackwood: Yeah, at all of our campuses. This took place to?

Congregation: Fulfill.

Rick Blackwood: Like you really mean it. This took place to?

Congregation: Fulfill.

Rick Blackwood: Yeah, to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death He was going to die. Everybody take a seat at all of our campuses, and I want to set this up by sharing this with you. I was thinking back this week on summer days when I was a boy, because when school would let out, my brother and I would wake up early in the

morning. We'd always have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for breakfast, and then we would always watch this game show that was called Let's Make A what? Yeah, a deal. How many of you remember that from back in the day? Yeah, if not, let me give you the quick skinny on it. To begin with, Let's Make A Deal was hosted by this charismatic guy named Monty Hall. Cool name for a game show host. Monty Hall. At any rate, as opposed to calling the guests down from, like, "Come on down," as opposed to doing that, Monty Hall would actually go out into the audience, and he would handpick the contestants based on how outrageous their costumes were.

Everybody dressed up crazy in these costumes, and it was a lot of fun, but check this out, because I always thought to myself, "The name of that game show should not be Let's Make A Deal," but I always thought it should've been, Let's Make A Guest, and here's why. Monty would say something to one of the contestants like this. He would say, "You have a chance to win a brand-new car." Yeah, and audience would applaud, and cheer. Someone would describe the new car, Monty would tell about it, and the guest would get so excited. Then, folks, they would show these three doors, big doors. The car was behind only one of the doors, and Monty would tell the contestant to guess which door the car was behind. In fact, he would stand like this. He would say, "Is the car behind door number one? Is the car behind door number two, or is the car behind door number three?" Yeah, but folks, check this out. There was absolutely no way for the contestant to know for certain which door the car was behind. It was, listen to this, there was no evidence either way.

You see, get it. Your mind cannot know anything for certain without a certain amount of evidence. You need that, but there was no evidence either way, and you can always see the angst on the contestant's face as they tried to guess which door was the right door. Three possible doors, but only one true door, but again, there was no way to know for certain which door to choose, because there was absolutely no evidence either way. Folks, with all of that in mind, let me turn a corner and kind of bring that over to our study today, because what an image about how many people feel when it comes to which God to choose. What an image of how many people feel when it comes to which door to choose to God, and who knows? Maybe I'm describing you today. Maybe you know you're not a believer. You're not a churchgoer. Somebody invited you here. We're so glad you're here, but you'd say, "Yup, that describes me, Rick. I'm sort of agnostic. I think there's a God. I just don't know which one."

You might say, "You know, Rick, I know, I know that Jesus claims to be the door to God." In fact Jesus said in John 10:7, He said, "I am the door for the sheep," for the sheep. In John 14, Verse 6, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life," and then He went on to say, "No man could come to the Father except through Me." Translation. Jesus was saying, "I am the door to God. I am the door to eternal life," and you would say, "Rick, I know Jesus makes that claim," but at the same time, you'd say, "How do I know that, though? How do I know if I choose door number two, the Jesus door, and follow Jesus, how do I know that following Him is actually

going to lead me to eternal life? Because Rick, Rick, there are other doors out there." There's so many religions. There's so many faiths. There's so many beliefs out there. They say they're the door to God, and then there's the Buddhist door, and they would say, "No, no, no. We're the door to God."

Oh, by the way, Rick, there aren't just three doors. There are hundreds of doors out there. There is Hinduism. There's Scientology. There's Unitarianism. There's Zoroastrianism. There's Buddha. There's Mohammed. I wish I could put all the doors up, so we could see how confusing this really gets, and so you would say, "How in the world can I know which door to select, to choose?" Listen, here's what you need to know. All religions have this in common. Every religion out there calls people to blind faith, and by that, I mean every religion calls people to believe without any kind of evidence. In fact, they would say to you, "How dare you ask for proof. How dare you ask for evidence." Again, folks, it's like I've already said. Your brain can't believe anything without a certain amount of evidence. If you're standing at the edge of a cliff, and it's dark, and I say, "Jump," and you believe me, there's something down there that's going to catch you.

You're going to be like ... Right, because your brain's not going to let you jump unless you see some evidence. That's the way your brain is wired, and listen. Nobody understands your brain any better than Jesus, because He made it. Here's what separates Jesus from all religions of the world, and this is my proposition. This is what I hope you go out the door with today, and that is this. Jesus does not call you to blind faith, but rather, Jesus calls you to follow Him based on ... Everybody say that word with me.

Congregation: [inaudible 00:10:22]

Rick Blackwood: Say it like you mean it. Based on what?

Congregation: Evidence.

Rick Blackwood: Evidence. In fact, Hebrews Chapter 11 Verse 1 puts it this way. It says, "Faith, belief," and by the way, this is the Christian faith this verse is talking about. It says, "The Christian faith is the ... " Say that next word with me. The substance of things hoped for. Here's the keyword, and the evidence. Again, folks, Jesus does not tell you to follow Him blindly, but rather He calls you to follow Him based on solid evidence. He's the true door. You might be saying, "Well, Rick, what is the evidence?" We're going to find out some of that evidence as we go back to this narrative in John Chapter 18. I want to give you three thoughts today about evidence. By the way, today is going to come across a lot more like ... You have teaching, then preaching, so you're going to have to really put your brain in gear and lean into this one, because we got a lot to think through. Also, how many of you have your listening guides at all of our campuses?

This is one you really need to take notes on, because one day, you're going to need to remember this stuff, so three thoughts about evidence. Here they are. Number

one, if you're filling in the blanks, number one, fulfilled prophecy proves, i.e. gives evidence that Jesus is the true door. Everybody say, "Fulfilled prophecy." With that in mind, let's pick up the narrative beginning at John Chapter 18, Verse 28. If you don't have a Bible, it's all on the screen. You can follow along that way, but we're going to kind of go back to the beginning and get a running start on this. This is where we left off a few weeks ago. Verse 28. You follow with your eyes as I read it. It says, "Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor," so the Jewish leaders take Jesus to the Roman governor. Key fact here. By now, it was what? It was early morning. Stop right there, and let me kind of reset the scene for us.

To begin with, it's the morning of April the 11, 32 A.D. It's probably around 6:00 in the morning, but folks, don't miss this. By 9:00 on this morning, within three hours of what we're reading right here, Jesus is going to be on the cross, and by 3:00 in the afternoon, He'll be dead on that cross, so at this point, things start moving rapidly towards the crucifixion. What I want to do just briefly is wind the clock backwards to the night before this morning, because you'll remember, we looked at that night. On that night, Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane with His disciples, and He was arrested by the Jewish authorities. In the middle of the night while everybody was asleep, they held an illegal trial. It was not legal to do what they were doing. They trumped up false charges against Jesus, and they find Jesus guilty, even though they had nothing on Him. Now the night has ended, it's early morning, and these Jewish priests are taking Jesus now to the Roman governor. Look at Verse 28. You get the idea.

Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus to the palace of the Roman governor. This Roman governor's name was Pontus Pilate. Folks, these Jewish leaders want Pilate to execute Jesus. By the way, just so you know, one of the reasons why the Jewish leaders don't want to execute Jesus themselves is because by this time, Jesus had a huge following, and so they know if they kill him, they're going to have a huge problem on their hands. They don't want to do it. What they want to do is they want to get Pilate to do the dirty work for them. With that in mind, let's pick it up in Verse 29. Pilate came out to them. You could kind of picture this. He's the governor. It's early in the morning. Somebody probably goes in and says, "Hey, Pilate. Wake up. Wake up. Got your guys out there, want to talk to you about somebody they want to kill." You can see Pilate, 6:00 in the morning, comes out to see what they want. Verse 29.

Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" "If he were not a criminal," they replied, "We would not have handed them over to you." Translation. We really don't have anything over this guy. Verse 31. "Pilate said, 'Take Him yourselves, and judge Him by your own law.'" Translation, you kill Him, and you deal with Him. Watch their response. "But we," they say we, that is we Jews, "Have no right" to do what? To execute anyone. In other words, these Jewish leaders are saying to Pilate, "We want to execute this guy, but we have no legal right to do it, so we're gonna make you, the Roman governor, we're gonna make you do that for us." Folks, with that thought in mind, I want you to

watch the next verse, because it's so powerful. Look at Verse 32. It says, "This took place," everybody heads up. What took place? The Jews were not able to execute Him. They didn't have the legal authority, so they're going to have to get Pilate to do that for them.

That all took place, watch this, that took place to ... Here's the keyword. Say it again. To. Come on everybody, like you mean it. To-

Congregation: Fulfill.

Rick Blackwood: To fulfill what Jesus had said about what kind of death He should die. Everybody, heads up. Everybody look up. Much of the evidence that proves that Jesus is the Messiah, is the door to God, is the Christ, much of that evidence teeters on that little word, fulfilled. I want you to put your thinking caps on. To begin with, the word fulfilled there is a translation of the Greek word [Greek 00:16:54] has to do with fulfilled prophecy, and here's what you need to know about that. Listen to this. A prophecy in the Bible is when God foretells an event that is going to happen in the future before it happens. In other words, God is all-knowing. He's omniscient. He knows everything, and He knows what's going to happen before it happens. Sometimes God will foretell events that are going to happen before they happen, and He had a prophet write it down in the Old Testament. That's called a prophecy. God foretells that event in the future.

Get this. A fulfilled prophecy is when that event that God foretold actually happens. Get it? Get it? Good, because God uses that formula, prophecy-made, and a prophecy fulfilled to take away all of the guess work, and give evidence that Jesus is the Messiah. Folks, here's how it works. History caps on. All the way back in the Old Testament, thousands of years before Jesus was ever born, before He ever came. In fact, you can go all the way back to the book of Genesis, and God promised that one day there would come a Messiah, and this Messiah would be the door to God. He would be the door that would lead us to eternal life, and we're all like, yay. A Messiah is coming. Not so fast, because no sooner did God promise that a Messiah was coming, then Satan began to send out false religions, false Messiahs, all claiming that they are the door, making it difficult for you and I to know which one's the Messiah, which one's really the true God. Here's what God did.

To take away that confusion from us, and to create clarity, God came up with a system, and watch this, of 331 prophecies about the coming of the Messiah. In those prophecies, watch this, before Jesus ever came, God told 331 events that would happen to the true Messiah, the real door. Folks, here's the key. Only the true Messiah, only the true door, would be able to fulfill all 331 of those prophecies. Does that make sense? Got to make sure you're following. Does that make sense? Okay. Let me show you how it works. Here's an example. For example, get all this stuff together here. For example, 500 years before Jesus came, 500 years before He was even born, all the way back in the book of Daniel, in Daniel 9, God gave a prophecy. God said, "Here's one way you're gonna know the true Messiah." He said, "When the true Messiah comes," here's the evidence. One

of the evidences is this. He will come on April the 6, 32 A.D. Folks, get that. God is standing back here 500 years before Jesus comes.

He doesn't give you a year. He doesn't say, "Here's a month." No, God reaches out into the future and grabs an exact date, April 6, 32 A.D., and He said the real Messiah will come on that day. You say, "So what?" Folks, that is the exact day that Jesus rode into Jerusalem, Palm Sunday, and officially declared Himself to be the Messiah, perfectly and accurately intersecting with that day, perfectly fulfilling exactly what God had said. That's one prophecy. There's 331, but watch what that prophecy does. Anybody who claims that they're the Messiah, that they're the door, who wasn't alive on April the 6, 32 A.D., who did not ride into Jerusalem on that day, they're a false Messiah. How about this? 500 years before Jesus was born, in the book of Zachariah, God said, "When the Messiah rides into Jerusalem on that day, He won't ride in on a horse. He's gonna ride in on a donkey."

Folks, just like that prophecy said, Jesus came riding in. People were saying, "Blessed is He who comes, Hosanna, on a donkey." Perfectly and accurately fulfilling that prophecy? How about this one? God said, "When the true Messiah comes, you'll know He's the true Messiah because He'll be born in what city?" What town? Bethlehem, just like God predicted, just like God foretold. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. How about this one? God said, "After He's born, somebody's gonna come after Him, and He's gonna have to flee to Egypt." You know of the story. Herod came after Jesus. Mary and Joseph, they had to flee to Egypt, just like the Bible says. How about this one? The Bible says when the true Messiah comes, He would be born of a virgin. Jesus was born of Mary, just like the Bible said. How about this one? In the book of First Samuel, a thousand years before Jesus came, the Bible said when the true Messiah comes, He will be able to trace His lineage back through Abraham."

It's like ancestry.com. Yeah. The amazing thing is if somebody tried to do this today, they couldn't do it. They couldn't trace their ancestry, because the ancestry's been lost. This is why when you open the book of Matthew, the New Testament, the first book, what's the first thing it starts doing? Tracing that genealogy, showing that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy just like God had said, but listen, folks. Watch this. You see what God does? God makes the prophecy. Jesus fulfills it, every one of them, so think about it like this. Anybody who would claim to be the Messiah, who can't trace their lineage through Abraham and David, who wasn't born of a virgin, who didn't flee to Egypt as a child, who was not born in Bethlehem, who didn't ride into Jerusalem, who wasn't around on April 6, 32 A.D., they are a false Messiah. They can't be the door to God. I'll never forget one time, when we lived in Charlotte, the Unitarian church came to my house, knocked on the door.

I invited them in, and they of course believe Sun Myung Moon is the Messiah, so they said, "We want to tell you about them," so I said, "Okay. When you get through, I want to tell you something, too." Okay, so by the way, there was a leader, a guy who was the leader, and there was a guy that was kind of the student, was being taught. I listen to what they say, and when we get through, I said,

"Great." I said, "Can I ask you something? Let me show you something." I said, "Let's look at the book of Daniel here real quick." We go over to Daniel, and I walk them through Daniel 9, that first prophecy, and I showed them how that verse predicts the day the Messiah will come was on April 6, 32 A.D. They're both down, looking at this, and so when we all look up, I look at the student, and I said, "Was your guy around on April 6, 32 A.D.?" He looks at the teacher and goes, "Was our guy around on April 6, 32 ... " I kid you not.

I said, "Not only that. Was he born of the lineage of Abraham and David? Was he born of a virgin? Did he ever flee to Egypt? Was he born in Bethlehem?" Do you see, folks? How many is that? That's one, two, three, four, five, six. I'm going to give you some more here in a minute, but do you see how it starts to go down to only one possible choice. Folks, here's where things get really cool, because not only did God foretell how Jesus would live, but God also foretold how He would die, what kind of death He would die. In fact, I want you to write this down as A and B. This is so important. Jesus foretold the kind of death that He would die. Listen to what He says in Verse 32. Listen to what the Bible says. "This took place," what? This took place, what? The Jews couldn't kill him. The Romans were going to have to do it. That took place to fulfill what Jesus had said about the kind of death he was going to die.

You say, "Rick, when did Jesus tell us what kind of death He was going to die?" Back up to John Chapter 3. Listen to this. Jesus said, Verse 14, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be" what? Be lifted up. By the way, that phrase lifted up, [Greek 00:26:05] in the Greek, it was a Greek figure of speech that referred to crucifixion, because the victim ... This cross isn't high enough, but the victim was literally lifted up off the face of the Earth. Jesus said, "I'm gonna die a death where I have to be lifted up." Folks, here's what's even more amazing than that. Not only did Jesus foretell what kind of death He was going to die, but check this out. Psalm 22 foretold what kind of death Jesus would die. How many of you have ever read Psalm 22? Let me see your hands. Yeah, if not, I want you to just listen to Verse 1, because you're going to recognize what it says.

Remember this is written a thousand years before. Listen to what it says. Verse 1. Let's read it together. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" How many of you recognize those words from somewhere else? Let me see your hands. Yeah. Remember, those words, Psalm 22, were written a thousand years before, but they are the exact words that Jesus would cry out from the cross a thousand years later. You say, "Why?" Because folks, Psalm 22 was a prophecy given by God telling about the coming death of the true Messiah. What God does all the way back here in Psalm 22 is He describes death by crucifixion. We're going to look at that, but here's the amazing thing. When God described crucifixion in Psalm 22, crucifixion had not even been invented yet. Nobody knew what that was. It wasn't invented until 600 years later by Persians, but watch this accurate description that God gives.

By the way, Jesus said when He died, what kind of death would He die? A lifted up death, and in Psalm 22, it begins to describe that death. Listen to Verse 16, written

a thousand years before. Dogs surround me. A pack of villains encircles me. They, they what? They pierce my hands and my feet. There is God describing the piercing of Jesus' hands on the cross a thousand years before it ever happened, but a thousand years later, when Jesus was crucified, He perfectly fulfilled that prophecy, just like He said. His hands and feet were pierced with the nails. Listen to Verse 18. "They divide my garments, and ... " What do they do? They cast lot for my garments. There was God a thousand years before, foretelling what Roman soldiers did. You know what Roman soldiers did? They stripped the victim virtually naked on the cross, threw his clothes at the foot of the cross, and then they gambled.

You read Matthew's gospel, and you find, boy, was that ever fulfilled to the letters. They gambled for the clothes of Jesus, perfectly fulfilling that prophecy. How about this one? My heart is turned to wax. It is melted within me. There is a physiological description of how Jesus died. He died of heart rupture. We're going to see that in a few weeks. His heart literally ruptured with Him, which brought about His death, perfectly fulfilling that prophecy. How about this one? My mouth is dried up like a pottier, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. There is God describing the extreme thirst that someone experienced on the cross, and there's more. I could add more, that His bones were dislocated. All of that is described. It is a perfect description. Listen to this. It is a perfect description, a thousand years before it was ever invented, of crucifixion, of crucifixion.

Folks, here's what I want you to see. You see all this evidence? Look at these. There's no evidence for them. Why? They don't have any evidence, so they have to call people to blind faith. By the way, let me help you to understand this. Here's the description of death by crucifixion. In Jesus day, only the Romans crucified. All other countries at that time either hung people as a means of execution, or, or they would stone them to death, like the Romans did. Folks, with that in mind, the Jews stoned people to death, so write this down as number two. Aren't you glad the Jewish leaders didn't execute Jesus? You say, "Why?" Write this down as A and B. The Jewish people executed by stoning. Listen to Verse 29 again. "So Pilate came out to the Jewish leaders and asked, 'What charges are you bringing against this man?' 'If he were not a criminal,' they replied, 'We would not have handed him over to you.'"

Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." What Pilate was basically saying to these Jewish people, he was saying, "Look, I'm gonna let you go ahead and do this yourself. You crucify, or you kill him." Folks, had the Jewish people said, "Okay, we'll take care of killing him," you need to understand, they would not have pierced Jesus' hands and feet. They would not have cast lots for Him. They would not have lifted Him up on the cross. Instead, they would not have lifted Him up. They would've thrown Jesus into a pit, down, not up. This is how they did it. They would've taken huge boulders. We think of stoning as somebody standing there throwing rocks at somebody. No, no. They put them in a pit where they couldn't escape, and they took boulders, and crushed that person, and pulverized their body. Folks, had they stoned Jesus ... Write this down as B. This is so important.

Had the Jews, had Jesus been stoned by the Jews, the prophecy would have been broken. They would not have lifted Him up. They would have thrown Him down. They wouldn't have broken His bones. The prophecy would've been broken, and that would mean Jesus is a liar. Jesus is a false prophet. We can all throw our bibles away, and everybody can go home, because we have no hope, because the prophecy would've been broken. He had to fulfill all of them, so here's what I love, and I'm almost done, so stay with me. Write this down as big number three. So important. God controlled history. God controlled history to ensure that Jesus would be crucified, that Jesus would be crucified, that He would die the way this prophecies foretold He would. Listen again to Verse 28. Watch this. "Then the Jewish took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor." Put the history caps on for a moment, because at this time in history, Israel was an occupied country.

By that, I mean they were under the control of the Roman Empire. Rome controlled a lot of nations back then, but you need to understand that when it came to Israel, Rome's control of them was no oppressive. They didn't try to oppress the Jewish people. In fact, they only had two agendas with Israel, and that was this. They wanted to extract taxes from the Israeli people and keep the peace. That's all they wanted. Just get their money and keep them at peace. That's all that the Romans wanted to do, so what Rome would do would be this. The countries they controlled, they would dispatch a small detachment of soldiers, a small army of Roman soldiers, along with the Roman governor. They would go into places like Israel, and again, their goal was ... I want to see if you got it. To extract taxes and keep the peace. In fact, to show good will to the Jewish people, Rome let them actually govern themselves. They carried out their own government.

Not only that, they let the Jewish people carry out their own judicial system, so the Jewish people could find a person guilty of a crime, and they could actually even carry out the punishment of the crime of their own people. However, you need to understand this. If the Jewish people decided a person needed to be executed, needed to be put to death, they couldn't do it. There would have to be a second trial by the Roman governor, and then the Roman governor could hand down a death sentence, and then he could carry out the execution. It was called the law of [inaudible 00:35:29], the power of the sword, the power of the death belongs to Rome. With that in mind, listen again to this. Then the Jewish leaders took Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. Verse 32. Pilate said to them, "Take him and judge him by your own law. Kill him yourselves," but watch their response. "But we have no right to execute anyone."

They want Pilate to do what they're telling him, and he knows they don't have the authority to do. Folks, you need to understand this. Pilate did not want to kill Jesus. You'll see this next time, next weekend. He didn't want to do it, because he was afraid that Jesus actually might be some sort of a God. The Romans had multiple gods, and he's thinking, "Oh, my gosh. This guy might be a god. I don't want to kill a god," so he doesn't want to do it. You say, "Well, Rick, if Pilate doesn't want to kill

Jesus, why doesn't he just tell these Jewish people to take a hike?" I'm in charge. Take a hike. Why does he do that? This is where it gets really interesting. Hang with me a few more minutes. These Jewish people actually had Pilate blackmailed, and they're going to blackmail him into crucifying Jesus. Again, I need you to think through with me. As a Roman governor, Pilate would've reported directly to the Caesar, and what did the Caesar want his governors to do? He wanted them to extract taxes, keep the peace.

Folks, Pilate was an honor failure at this, and he was a failure because he did two stupid things that turned the Jewish people against him. Let me give you those two stupid things that he did. The first one happened in his inauguration, his inaugural trip to Israel. You see, it was a custom for all new governors to visit the city of Jerusalem, and what the governor would do is he would ride into Jerusalem with a detachment of soldiers on their horses. Those soldiers would have staffs in their hands, and folks, on the top of that staff would be the bust of a Roman god. A Roman God that the Jewish people viewed as a false God, so in respect to the Jewish people, all Roman governors before Pilate would stop outside the city, have their soldiers take that off, and then go in. Not Pilate. Pilate was going to show the Jewish people he was in charge, so he rides in with that on the top of the staff, into the holy city of Jerusalem, and let me tell you something. The Jews went crazy.

They revolted. There was an insurrection almost in the makings. They rioted in the streets. This whole thing finally ended up in an amphitheater. The Jews were bearing their necks, telling the Romans to kill them, or they were going to kill the Romans, but eventually, the Jews were able to report this back to the Caesar in Rome. The Caesar severely reprimanded Pilate. He said, "I sent you down there to keep peace, and you've started a war?" Strike one, Pilate. The second stupid thing he did was about three years later, because when Pilate would stay in Jerusalem, he'd always stay in the palace of Herod, the great Herod. That palace which the Jews viewed as a sacred palace. On one of his stays there, he decided that he was going to put up these votive shields on the walls of the palace, and these shields had the image of Roman gods on them again. Pilate's wife told him. "Don't do that." His advisors said, "Don't put those up. You're gonna turn the Jews against you again."

Pilate wouldn't listen. He puts them up again. The same thing happens again. The Jews revolt. They have riots in the street. This time the Jews report him back to the Caesar, and the Caesar calls Pilate to Rome. He says, "If you do this again, you're gonna lose your job. I'm gonna take you out." Folks, with all of that in mind, let's move forward to this trial with Jesus, because the Jewish people had already reported Pilate to the Caesar twice, and what did they report him for? Here's what they reported him for, for tolerating false gods in the holy city. That in mind, listen to Verse 7 of Chapter 9. Watch this. The Jews insisted, we have a law, and according to that law, He must die. Why? Because He claimed to be the what? The Son of God. The Jews were accusing Jesus of being a false God, and they're saying to Pilate, "Pilate, you better kill this guy, because He's claiming to be a false God. We've already reported you once. We've already reported you twice."

Watch what they say in Verse 19. Watch this. Verse 12. "From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar.'" Oh, Pilate. We've reported you twice. We'll report you again. This time, Pilate, you're going to lose your job. You see, folks, Pilate so didn't want to execute Jesus, but as history had it, he was forced into executing Jesus. Here's the point of this. Here's the point of this, what I want you to get. On the surface, it looked like Jesus was being controlled by the Romans, that Jesus was being controlled by Pilate, that Jesus was being controlled by these priests, that Jesus was being controlled by these Jewish leaders. It looks like they are controlling Him, but folks, in reality what was going on, Jesus was not just a man. He was God Almighty in the flesh, and what was going on was He was controlling everybody there. Pilate, the Jews, the priests, the leaders, the soldiers.

Why? So that He would be put to death like the Bible said He would be put to death. Not thrown down into a pit and stoned, but lifted up on a cross, hands pierced, feet pierced, casting lots. Why? So that he would fulfill that prophecy, so that you would know that you have your faith in the right place. You see, folks, let me bring this home to where you and I live. One day you're going to stand at the door between life and death. I have stage three cancer. I may be standing at that door a lot sooner than I thought, but we're all going to stand at that door. Let me tell you something. If you're a child of God, you don't have to face that going, "Wow, I hope door number two was the right door." You don't have to do that. Why? Because you have evidence, I have evidence, not blind faith. We have solid proof. I just got some. 331 prophecies, all fulfilled to give us proof. You know what? People ask me all the time, "Now Rick, why do you seem to be so happy? Do you know what you have?"

Listen, I'm so happy because stay or go, I know where I am going. I will always be with God. When we put our faith in Christ, He is the door that leads us to God, and that leads us to eternal life. You don't have to hope that. You can know that. Listen, maybe you're here today and maybe you haven't been a believer. You've never really followed Jesus, but maybe at a distance you always wished you would, but because had so much doubt, you just couldn't do it. Maybe now that you're looking at the evidence, that Jesus gives you to show you He's the door to God, He's the door to eternal life, maybe there's something in you that's thinking, "Wow, I want that." I know now, and I want to know that when I die, I'm going to be with Him. You can know that, so here's what I want to ask us to do. At all of our campuses, I want to ask every head to be bowed, every eye to be closed. Nobody looking around, at every campus.

I want to ask you the most important question you'll ever be asked in this life. Here it is. If you die today, do you know that you would go to be with God? Do you know that you have eternal life? Not do you hope you have it, not do you think you have it, but do you know that you have it? Listen, if you know that beyond any shadow of a doubt, while nobody's looking around at all of our campuses, would you slip your hand up to God as a testimony to God? It's just between you and Him. You'd

say, "God, I know if I died, I'll be with You." God bless you. You can put your hands down. Any time I ask that question, I know there are people at all of our campuses who couldn't raise their hand. Maybe that was you, and you'd say, "Rick, the reason I didn't raise my hand, I'm just being honest with God. I don't know that." Maybe at the same time, you wish you did know. You wish you did know that you had eternal life.

Listen, I've got great news for you. You can know it. The Bible says these things are written so that you can know that you have eternal life. Not hope you have it, not think you have it, but so that you can know it. You say, "Well, Rick, what do I do to receive eternal life?" Here's what the Bible says everyone. Who does that mean? Everyone. In other words, no matter how bad you may think you are, no matter how far away from God you think you are, this means you. The Bible says everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, will receive eternal life. What do you need to do to receive eternal life? All you need to do is call on Him. You don't have to join this church. You don't have to sign anything. You don't have to become a member of anything. It's personal between you and Him. He says, just call and ask. He'll give it to you. You might say, "Well, Rick, I'm not sure what to say, how do say it." Listen, let me help you. Let me lead you in a prayer.

You pray this prayer not to me. You pray it to God, because He's listening with all of His heart. You pray this prayer. Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for giving me evidence so that I can know. God, my mind, my brain needs proof, needs evidence. I thank You that You give that evidence so clearly, and so Lord, right now, I want to become a follower of Yours. I want to follow You. I want to walk with You, and so Lord, I ask You right now to forgive me of all of my sins, my past sins, my present sins, Lord, even the sins I haven't committed yet. Forgive them all, and Lord, I ask You to give me everlasting life. Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me. Thank You for caring about me. Thank You for helping me. Thank You for Your patience, Your kindness, Your compassion, Your mercy, Your forgiveness. Thank You so much for giving me today everlasting life.

Lord, help me from this day forward to spend the rest of my life following You, loving You, and being loved by You. Your name I pray. Amen.