

## A KING NOT OF THIS WORLD John 18:28-19:16

Well last year for Easter, our focus if you remember was on Christ as the Lamb of God – He was the Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. This year though, what I want to focus on is Jesus’ Kingship. Really **the main accusation that got Jesus crucified was the claim that He was in fact a king.** In His interrogation by Pilate in chapters 18 & 19 of John, Jesus’ Kingship was the central topic. There is talk about kingdoms and kings. The word ‘king’ comes up 12 times just in those two chapters. And John is writing this because throughout his gospel he is **emphasizing the deity of Christ.** And certainly Christ’s royal Kingship adds to that. So this Easter season and through the writings of the apostle John that’s what we’ll be studying – we’ll be **“Beholding Our King!”** as John 19:14 says. We’re going to be reading through larger portions of Scripture than normal so we won’t have time for every detail. We’ll just be making our way through John’s account, explaining some things here and there.

So if you’ll turn with me to John 18:28 we will begin there. As we pick up at this point in John, what you need to know is that Jesus has already had a **Jewish or religious trial before Annas and Caiaphas** and the texts indicate that the religious trial took place overnight – what we would call the wee hours of the morning – something that would have been illegal according to Jewish law. However, they didn’t seem to care about Jesus getting a fair trial according to the Law and so now here we are picking it up as they go from the Jewish trial to the **Roman trial** early in the morning and we first look at the dialogue between the Jewish leaders who want to crucify Jesus and Pilate.

### I. THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE JEWISH LEADERS AND PILATE. (18:28-32)

“Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover. Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, ‘What accusation do you bring against this Man?’ They answered and said to him, ‘If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you.’ So Pilate said to them, ‘Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law.’ The Jews said to him, ‘We are not permitted to put anyone to death,’ to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.”

So while other gospel writers elaborate more on the religious trial before Annas and Caiaphas, John merely mentions it and focuses on Jesus’ **Roman or secular trial.** At the religious trial Jesus was brought before the religious leaders like the chief priests and scribes and namely **Caiaphas**, the high priest. And what they did there was they tried to accuse Jesus of something worthy of death according to Roman law, but they really couldn’t find a solid and guarantee-able reason to put Him to death *that Rome would accept.* The Jewish leaders obviously concluded that Jesus deserved to die for **blasphemy** according to the Jewish Law – claiming to be the Christ, the Son of God (Mt. 26:65-66). And that was something they decided that a long time ago in John 11:53. They were envious of Jesus because everybody was going after Him and believing in Him and they thought He would be a revolutionary who would start a war with Rome and if that happened, they would lose their positions of power and so they decided long ago that He needed to die before that happened. So all of this was premeditated. And Rome wouldn’t accept blasphemy against Jewish Law as a reason to put Jesus to death like they would. So they needed a reason like **treason or sedition** against Rome to put Him to death. **Treason** being betrayal of one’s country or **sedition**, rebelling against the state in an attempt to overthrow it – **insurrection** by force. But Jesus never did either one. Even when

the more militant-minded and sedition-minded Jews tried to make Jesus king, He wouldn't have it. He actually fled any political demonstrations to make Him a king that would overthrow Rome.

But one of the questions that arises when you study this passage is the question of how much authority in judicial matters did the Romans let the Jewish Councils have? And that's a difficult question to answer because when Romans conquered a people, it appears that they left some self-governing elements in place. This is why Pilate said, "Take Him yourselves, a judge Him according to your law." What I think Pilate was saying is basically, "If you want to stone Him to death according to your law, stone Him." Stoning was the consequences for blasphemy under the Law. They weren't afraid to stone Stephen or others. They weren't afraid to attempt to stone Jesus more than once earlier in His ministry. However, now, I think they were afraid to stone Him. With the feast of Passover going on and with the fact that Jesus had many followers who would be upset about Him being stoned, I think they were worried about the possibility of ruining the Passover with a riot so the Jewish leaders, instead of taking the blame, wanted Rome to do it and they needed Rome's authority to do it without ruining Passover. So when they say, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death," they are implying that they really want Him crucified and by Rome. He was too great a public figure to risk doing it on their own without consulting Rome.

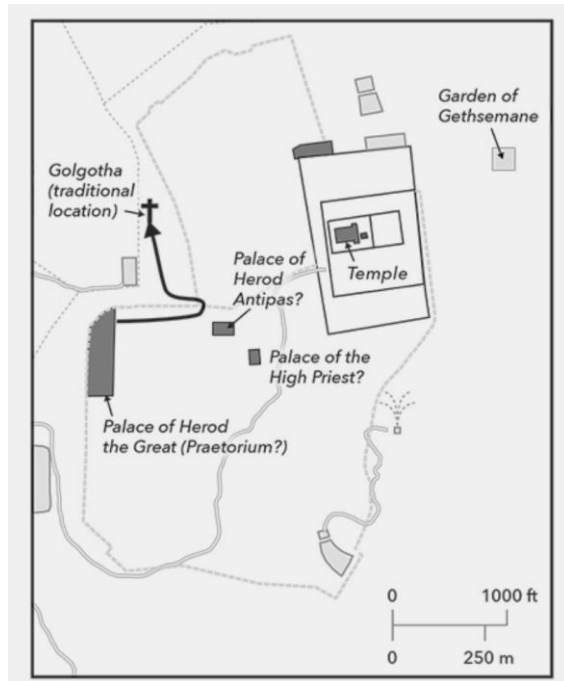
John says they did this, "to fulfill the words of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die." **And how did Jesus say He was going to die?** Jesus said back in John 3:14, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up; so that whosoever believes will have eternal life." He would be "lifted up".

❖ **Jesus was to die by being "lifted up."**

Not by being stoned down. This lifting up would clearly be done on the cross. It's amazing to think that God is so wise that even clear back in the **wilderness**, He was laying before Israel a picture of how He would come die and bring healing. Everyone who looked at the serpent on the pole was healed at that time and everyone who looks up to Christ on the cross as their Savior who died for their sins will be spiritually healed as well.

But it's really an interesting situation for both the Jews and Pilate to be in. The Jews don't want to be blamed for ruining Passover so they bring Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor, who really doesn't want anything to do with it either – and it's annoying for him because they don't really have any solid charges to bring against Him. They don't have a solid reason for Jesus to be crucified. Pilate's trying to sort out why in the world they even brought Jesus to him because the Jews' remarks start out very vague. They were hoping that Pilate will take their word for it that he is an **evildoer**. They sort of hide behind the generality of calling Jesus an evildoer<sup>1</sup> without saying that they really want Him to die for blasphemy because again, blasphemy wouldn't be accepted by Pilate.

One thing to notice is that it is still extremely **early in the morning** at this point, likely 6am. That's when the Romans started their day and they wanted to be the first trial of the day. To do that they had to come to Pilate's **Praetorium**, a short walk from the Temple.



And the Praetorium is the official residence of the governor and from where he operated. And because it was a dwelling place of Gentiles, it was considered unclean to the Jews. Notice that it says when, “they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium... [but] they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled.” In the Jew’s thoughts, if they went into this place they would become defiled for 7 days and not be able to celebrate the Passover. Funny thing is, this is not in the Law. It was just another one of their manmade religious inventions. So they’re willing to put the sinless One to death, but won’t get a little Gentile dirt on their shoes because of a manmade religious rule. It’s pretty sad. And so their hypocrisy which we are going to see throughout this account of John is just incredible.

In verses 33-40 we get into the first conversation between Pilate and Jesus. Pilate examines Jesus.

## II. THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN JESUS AND PILATE. (18:33-38)

“Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?’ Pilate answered, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?’ Let’s stop there.

Pilate asks Jesus, “Are you the King of the Jews?” because it’s no secret what has been going on. Jesus has just made quite the scene lately, especially **displaying His Kingship by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey** – the main Palm Sunday text. John 12:12 says, “the large crowd, when they had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him and began to shout, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” Jesus finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, “**Fear not, daughter of Zion, Behold your King is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.**” (Zech. 9:9). Being seated on a donkey was emblematic of a **Jewish King**. And being on a **donkey** instead of horse meant **peace**. In His 1<sup>st</sup> Coming, King Jesus brings peace. And while we focus on Jesus as King it’s important to make a distinction between His 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> comings.

In His 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming King Jesus doesn't come on a donkey, does He? How does He come? He comes on a horse, which means war (Rev. 19). He's prepared for war against all His enemies. And He will set up His literal, political kingdom at that time. In that day He will be the only King on the earth. Zechariah 14:9 says when He comes back, when His feet touch down on the Mt. of Olives, "The Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one and His name the only one." But before He establishes His physical Millennial kingdom in that second coming, He first comes to bring peace, establishing the entrance into His kingdom spiritually.

❖ **Jesus Kingship in His first coming is dealing with the spiritual restoration to His kingdom that we need.**

And this is necessary because we're all born outside of His kingdom. We're born in the kingdom of darkness. But Jesus came to make our **translation from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light** possible. To enter His holy kingdom, our sin must be dealt with. We must be justified, redeemed. Restitution must be made for the sin that keeps us out. God is love but He is also just, and He can't let sinners enter who haven't been justified. And only Christ's death and resurrection for our sins can justify us, allowing us to be translated. Colossians 1:13 says, "For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." So our sins have to be dealt with before we can be transferred to the kingdom of His beloved Son. And comes through faith in Christ's death for our sins.

And one of the ways He demonstrated His **Kingship authority** after Palm Sunday was by going into the Temple and cleansing it and teaching in it for a few days that week. His Kingship has been on display and Pilate's trying to figure out in what way He is a king. Pilate asks Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" and Jesus responds by asking another question to make Pilate clarify himself. Jesus says, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" If Pilate asked it of himself, the question would mean, "Are you a king that is conspiring against Caesar? Are you guilty of sedition or rebellion?" But, if he asked it based on the promptings of Caiaphas, his question would be taken as, "Are you a Messianic King of Israel? Are you a Jewish religious king in Israel?" So Jesus is basically saying, "I which sense are you asking? As Roman or Jewish? And political or spiritual?" Because there's a big difference. Pilate responds with "I am not a Jew am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?" Pilate's response shows contempt for the Jews and their laws. He doesn't care about Jewish laws but about *whether or not Jesus broke Roman law*. He's not convinced Jesus has.

And in verse 36, Jesus informs him that He hasn't. He says look: "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.' It's a pretty awesome statement. **His kingdom isn't of this world. Jesus is a King not of this world.** And Jesus uses this truth to prove that He hasn't led any rebellion against Rome. He has armies, but He hasn't called into action. Likely referring to the myriads of angels that could come fight for Him. The night before, He just rebuked Peter, who cut off one soldier's ear, and Jesus reprimanded Him a bit, saying, don't you think I could consult with My Father and have 12 legions of angels (72,000 angels) at His disposal right now if He wanted to fight back. But as it is, there hasn't been an military activity on Jesus' part. He didn't even muster up the crowds on Palm Sunday to lead any rebellion. He could've, but He didn't.

"Therefore Pilate said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this reason I have been born and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' So Jesus is real honest. He is a king. But His kingdom is not primarily concerned about earthly borders and taxes and power like Rome. His kingdom is concerned about truth.

That's the reason He was **born**, referring to His **humanity**. And that's the reason He **came into this world**, referring to His **deity**. To testify to the truth. And you know, only Jesus can talk like that and back it up with the miracles and teaching like Christ did. So right now, I think this is the part Pilate is beginning to get shaken up and tries to dismiss the conversation by saying, "What is Truth!" And the interesting thing though is that **the very embodiment of Truth is standing in front Him**. Truth here is a reference to the Person and mission of Jesus. **He is the Truth**.

When Pilate says, "What is Truth?" he goes outside in and begins attempting to release Jesus.

### **III. PILATE'S ATTEMPTS TO RELEASE JESUS. (VV. 18:38b-19:7)**

Pick it up now half way through verse 38: "And when he said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, I find no guilt in Him." And somewhere between verses 38 and 39 is where many think the Jews said that "Jesus stirs up the crowds, even in Galilee" (Luke 23:5) and Pilate jumped on that because Galilee meant that He is from Herod's jurisdiction so Pilate sent Jesus to Herod's place between the Praetorium and the Temple, but He didn't answer Herod or perform miracles for Herod at all and so Herod sends him back to Pilate. But after accomplishing nothing with Herod, we see an attempt to release Jesus according to a known custom. "But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?" So they cried out again, saying, 'Not this Man, but Barabbas.' Now Barabbas was a robber."

#### **A. The first attempt to release Jesus through custom. (18:38b-40)**

Apparently, they had this known and accepted **custom** of releasing one prisoner on Passover. And the choice is between Jesus and a man named **Barabbas**. Barabbas is described here as a robber but elsewhere as a Jewish hero of the insurrectionist movement against Rome. And this just adds to the mind-blowing irony and absurdity of it all... Here is a man who is literally charged with insurrection against Rome and they choose Him over Jesus who hasn't done any insurrection but they are trying to get Him killed for it! The hypocrisy is almost unfathomable! It's insane. If Jesus was really an insurrectionist against Rome, He'd be their hero like Barabbas! I think they liked Barabbas because he stood up against Rome. It's unthinkable what's going on and Pilate thought it unthinkable that they would choose Barabbas over Jesus.

And when that didn't work, Pilate tries sympathizing with their desire for bloodshed and has Jesus scourged.

#### **B. The second attempt to release Jesus through scourging. (19:1-7)**

"Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and a put a purple robe on Him; and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face. Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him." Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!" So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!" So Pilate has Jesus **scourged** as a second tactic to try and appease these Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders have this edge on Pilate because Pilate hasn't been very wise in the past according to historians – one more uprising and it's over for Pilate. And the whole reason Pilate is in Jerusalem and not in Caesarea, where he would rather be, is to prevent uprisings during the big Passover feast. So Pilate is doing everything he can right now to not have an uprising. He wants to please everybody, which isn't a good mindset for a judge to have. Luke 23:16 and 22 says Pilate wanted to chastise Him and release Him but all it did was actually generate more desire for crucifixion, rather than helping.

And **scourging** is something that is painful to even think about. They tied you to a post and whipped you. One of their leather whips was called a **Flagrum**. It was this braided whip and weaved into the braids were bits and pieces of metal or bone fragments. Historian Josephus said it would flay men to the bone (like a

fish) and could make pulp out of a man's back. A historian named Eusebius during the time of Polycarp (John's disciple) said this whip would cut through deep-seated veins and arteries and even leave inner organs exposed.<sup>3</sup> I honestly wonder if the prophecy about Jesus on the cross saying "I can count all of my bones" has something to do with this whip ripping Him open (22:17). You can literally see some of His bones. No film has depicted this so well as the movie "The Passion of Christ". I heard about people fainting as they watched the scourging. Scourging was so terrible that many men died from it alone, which is no surprise that Jesus died so quickly on the cross and didn't have to have his legs broken.

But to add to the scourging, He was beaten at both trials. The Roman soldiers here have fun with it, mocking the Jews by mocking Jesus. They put the crown of thorns on His head and a reed in His hand as a scepter and a purple robe known as a **chlamys**, typically worn by military officers. And so they dress Him up like this as a King and are coming up to Him as if to pay homage but instead, deliver mockings and slaps or punches. They take the reed and beat Him on the head with it and spit on Him. And it still wasn't enough. Pilate says in verse 6, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him." The Jews answered him [and finally the truth comes out!], "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer." Here we see the 2<sup>nd</sup> dialogue.

#### **IV. THE SECOND DIALOGUE BETWEEN JESUS AND PILATE. (VV. 19:8-11)**

Pilate at this point is becoming less and less afraid of the Jews and more and more afraid of Jesus. One of the other things that we know didn't help with his fear was that his wife actually sent him a note, saying, "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of Him." And we don't know what the dream was but apparently God was using it to give Pilate fair warning. So Pilate really wants to know where Jesus is from. But Jesus had already told him and doesn't answer. Jesus is prophetically silent, according to Isaiah 53:7. Pilate says, "You do not speak me? Do you not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" And Jesus puts him in his place with the response, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin." Jesus reminds him of two things: **#1) You would have no authority if it wasn't given you from above.** This isn't referring to the higher-ups in Rome but to the kingdom of God in Heaven.

❖ **The Kingdom of Heaven is in control here.**

Not the Jews leaders and not Pilate. But **#2) Jesus says, don't forget that others will be held responsible as well.** Though God is sovereign, there will still be accountability. The question we ask is who is the one with the greater sin? Was it Judas or Caiaphas (probably Caiaphas), he has the greater sin. Caiaphas, the high priest, knew better. He prophesied Jesus would die for the Jewish nation earlier that year. He knew the Scriptures. He saw the evidence of Christ's teaching and miracles. Yet, he closed his eyes to it. He even led an illegal trial for Jesus at night. He knew the right thing to do but he didn't do it.

And Jesus saying this stirred Pilate more to release Him. Verse 12 says, "As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar." So now they are blackmailing Pilate for not being a friend of Caesar and Pilate's fear shifts back quickly from Jesus to the Jews because it's a personal attack. He doesn't want to lose his position as governor. One more bad report could send him packing. If he were to let Jesus go, who claimed to be a king, they would bring a damaging report against him to Rome. So he caves. He caves because the whole time he has not been in control as a judge. He has simply been

trying to please everyone out of his own self-protection. J. Vernon McGee said he's not a judge but a cheap politician. However, we do see in verse 15 his final attempt to release Jesus.

#### V. PILATE'S FINAL ATTEMPT TO RELEASE JESUS. (v. 15)

He takes his judgment seat in verse 13: "Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour (it's around noon) And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!" Just imagine Pilate on the judgment seat, Jesus barely able to stand before them - barely recognizable - His body covered in blood - crown of thorns - and he says, "**Behold, your King!**" It's quite the moment. Pilate says "Behold your King" to show the absurdity of their accusation (He doesn't look like a king right now), John exposes the irony of God using Pilate to say right to their face. "This is your King." And it is their King. This is the humble, loving, sacrificial King they didn't expect - the King who left His throne in Heaven to come and die for them.

But many of them don't want this King. It says "...they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" Pilate gave them one more chance - one last opportunity - "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified." And we'll study that crucifixion on Friday night, Lord willing.

But my question to you this morning, before we go, is, "When you behold this King, what is your response?" Because how we behold this King in this life determines our eternal destinies because it is before this King that we will go for judgment when we die. And only those who have yielded to Him in faith will spend eternity beholding Him. And I am excited for that. I cannot wait to behold Christ, the King of kings, for eternity. If you believe in this King, He should become everything to You. The more you learn about Him and know about Him, the more you love Him and the more irresistible He is. **There is no one more important than Him and nothing more important than what He is about to do on that cross.** And I hope that's your attitude toward this King - you're looking forward to beholding this King for eternity with me.

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<sup>1</sup> Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 764.

<sup>2</sup> Justin Taylor, *The Final Days of Jesus* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2014), 145.

<sup>3</sup> Morris, 790.