

Title: The king of the Jews.

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Main Scripture: John 18: 33

*“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?”*

This is the third sharing on the subject of Jesus, as the son of David. We here discover this reality and parallel between David and Jesus, seen in the first part of their ministry, as those who were rejected kings. They did not make a big deal out of it, more or less hiding the fact that they were king. Anyone who acknowledged them at that time based it upon something seen beyond the pomp, the dress and the look and manner in which a king would carry himself, in order to prove he was a king. Neither Jesus nor David did that. They were king. They manifested not the official glory being a king, but instead, they manifested the glory of the character of a king. The character of a true king. An honorable king.

We were looking at this briefly in the last sharing, but we would want to look at it a little more this time in relationship to Jesus. In John eighteen: thirty-three, Jesus is before Pilate. “Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?” Now, before we move on, I would like to quicken your sensitivity to this statement. This is because in the next two chapters after this, in John 18, I would like to show that Pilate was a little more moved and a little more in tune with this reality that Jesus was actually King.

For a minute let us consider this. Jesus is standing before the authority of Rome, with a torn, one piece garment on. Jesus resembles absolutely nothing of a king. I am sure that Pontius Pilate knew of Jesus, knew of his 'lower echelon' of disciples, even knew of his birth place of Nazareth. Knowing this alone perhaps begged the question, can any good thing come out of Nazareth, much less a king! Yet Pilate looked Jesus in the eye and asked him, are you the king of the Jews? Truly I wonder why he would have asked him such, as through the eyes of the world, Jesus was of no substance.

It must be remembered here the term kenosis, in it meaning one hiding their official glory, living by the nature that brings glory to god. So Jesus, when he came in his kenosis, emptied himself of all official glory and all trappings that would draw glory to him based on anything other than someone discovering the true king within. Someone that would not be drawn by the outward, or caught up in the circumstance. Someone that would go past everything, finding a true king within.

So Pilate asks Jesus, art thou the king of the Jews? In verse thirty-four Jesus answers him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself or did others tell thee of me?" Now that is a good question. How so? Well it is because it prompts Jesus to wonder, has this earthly authority truly discovered me, for in Kenosis I have hidden my glory, or has another told him? Although Pontius Pilate's response is not entirely promising, he will not leave this issue. In verse thirty-six Jesus then says, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

I believe there are two meanings to his words here. The first and most common understanding is in Jesus is saying that his kingdom is not from this world, because if so his servants would fight, and he would not be delivered unto the Jews. The second is in Jesus alluding to his kingdom not being of the nature of this world. That he is unlike other kings, who strive to ensure that everyone knows they are king. These kings are all about governing people, taxing people and about the honour of man. The nature of this world is about prestige and power and pride. If we his servants, as his body, were like that, we would fight for it. But that does not sound like the true king, the lamb on the throne.

The importance of this is its discovery in practical situations. For instance when someone does not honour you, or respect you. Do you say, “My kingdom is not of this world”, or do you fight back, even in some, small manner. Even with just a phrase, or a simple sentence. If so, then the king did not speak that sentence. Pride spoke. Jealousy spoke. It is not you speaking, because pride and jealousy, in that moment, are your king. However if Jesus is your king, ruling in your heart, Then you fight for the right to lay down your life, so that the father would be glorified by the nature of it.

So Jesus is standing before Pilate as a king. So too in the Old Testament, in the book of Kings, did David stand before Saul as a king. David did not kill the usurper king. Strangely enough, all this fighting between David and Saul was not about David seeking Judea or Israel. Saul was the pursuer, at every given moment. David did not fight back and every little thing he did smote him deeply within. Why? It is because there was another kingdom at work in David’s life, the kingdom of Christ. When he violated the kingdom of Christ within him, David could not move forward from there. It smote his conscience to where he would cry out father forgive me. It is possible to do and say the wrong thing, David did, but it smote his conscience. These little failures, though not little to those committing them, in light of eternity. They were little things that happened, which were immediately turned by the government of God within them and so will not be remembered in the eternal plan of god. It says so in Hebrews eleven. It mentions that their faith stayed with their lords. Why? Well because lord never just forgives us. He always just forgives and forgets.

Following on from above, in Verse thirty-seven, it says “Pilate therefore said unto him art thou a king then?” Pilate is being pulled by something. He is being drawn by something unseen. He is a Roman Official, a higher class, and so he understands authority. He can detect these things. Jesus Answers him saying “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” Jesus did not say to this end came I that I will be king, for that that is how we could understand that.

What Jesus said was “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” A king will do that. He is of such a character that he stands up for the kingdom, for the father of the king and the highest authority in his life. He says “I should bear witness unto the truth, everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.” He does not say it is everyone that sees the externals that prove that he is kingly. Rather, it is them for whom there is an unveiling of the fact that he is kingly in how he stands for the truth, that he will not falter or fail. In that stance, Jesus says that those who know the truth will be able to hear from this king and recognise him as king. They hear not because he told them he was king, because he did not. This is a result of it not being about words or about trying to convince them of something. It is the same with you and me, if they cannot see the king then we need not try to convince them of it, for it does not matter. We can just continue being kingly by allowing him live through us.

Pilate then sayeth unto him, “what is truth?” and then walks out unto the the Jews and says “I cannot find fault in him.” This is the beginning of Pilate getting under this thing. He perceives something about this man. The veil is over the holy of holies, yet he feels something behind it. It is powerful and glorious and it is kingly, but Jesus is not showing to him. In verse 39 he says “but you have a custom that I should release unto you one at the Passover, will you therefore that I release unto you, the king of the Jews?” Here Pilate did not describe Christ as the man whom they served, or even as Jesus of Nazareth. Still, and often, this verse can be read in such a way that portrays Pilate’s manner as mocking when addressing Jesus as the king of the Jews. I do not believe that Pilate was doing so at all because of the fact that he said, “I find no fault in him, would you rather I release unto you the king of the Jews?” Pilate went out there with the intention of telling them that firstly, he could find no fault in him, secondly, that this man was the king of the Jews and thirdly that he wanted to try to release him.

Then in verse forty, the crowd cried “not this man but Barabbas”, now Barabbas was a robber but Jesus was a king. It is clear then, that the crowd based their decision on the threat they perceived from Jesus. Jesus was not a threat to anything, but that was not the way they saw it. In the mind of the Pharisees, Barabbas as a robber was not an immediate threat, but Jesus was. Jesus was an immediate and present threat. Barabbas was a threat to their possessions but Jesus was a threat to their prestige and position, to their pride and to the honour they received. Jesus was a threat to their official glory. Therefore, they yelled crucify.

“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him. And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! And they smote him with their hands,” John Chapter nineteen verses’ one to three. Clearly these soldiers did not think he was a king, but it did not matter. For he was a king. A king standing directly in front of them. The king that Roman soldiers would honour was Caesar. Would they have treated Caesar like this way? Never. Yet Jesus was the king of kings. Clearly they did not see that. They saw a Nazarene. They saw a man who befriended tax collectors and fishermen. The best as far as who those affiliated with Jesus were and what prestige they brought to the circle that Jesus was in, the twelve in him, was a man named Judas. He was the only one from Jerusalem with any kind of honourable background. He was in charge of the purse, as someone to be trusted. The one with the highest official glory saw to it that Jesus was put to death, and it was this that these soldiers saw.

Let us move now to verse seventeen of chapter nineteen, where it says “And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two other with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.” That is just wonderful is it not? This glorious saying, for all to see, placed on the cross. Here is the king! So often, earthly kings put a sign on themselves, telling all that they are a true king, when in fact they are not. God put a sign on the cross, saying ‘look, here is a true king.’ ‘See that he is not ruled by his fear, or by his pain. See that he is not ruled by circumstances or by his pride.’

Is it not strange that Pilate keeps coming back to this, that Jesus is king? I believe, personally, that Pilate was convinced that he was in the presence of royalty. Now I do not think Pilate bowed his knee in Jesus' presence or that he served the king for the rest of his life. I believe that Pilate, because of his background and authority, perceived or saw something past the veil, something to indicate that there was more to this man than the credit he was being given.

Carrying on from here, verse twenty says "This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin." This is very interesting. Why? Well let us think about it. Latin was spoken by the Romans. The Greek language was the language of the day. The Hebrew language was the language of the country in which Pilate ruled. Therefore, Pilate, in a very public manner, had put it so that everyone could read the title. Something had caught this man. Then in verse twenty-one "Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews." Is this not just the perfect definition of their hearts, that the title of Jesus, the true king, should be read by all as an accusation, as "he said, I am King of the Jews." "Pilate answered, What I have written I have written."

I do not know where Pilate stands in the midst of all this. I truly do not, but this man said to the High priest's, that they crucified a man in whom he found no fault in. Evidently he was moved by them. Moved by the fact that they said they had no king but Caesar. I believe Pilate was moved by fear. The fear that the Jews placed in him in verse twelve, when they said "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar." Despite this he still stood up and titled Christ as he did. Is this, however, not the place where one does need to stand up? Of course, yes. Some would argue that we would have needed to stand up for Jesus to keep him from being crucified. Is this the case? Of course not! Peter tried it in Matthew sixteen: twenty-three, to which Jesus replied "Get thee behind me, Satan." Jesus is the Lamb of God, he is the king that lays down his life, and we cannot stop that. We must not stop that. That must take place. Yet, when it comes to others removing the sign saying that at the cross one will find their true king, surely then it must be time to stand up? Yet again no, we should not, for that is the king and we need to know it, not stand up for it.

In Matthew sixteen: thirteen, it says “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” Notice Jesus is still calling himself the son of man. This means he is veiled. This is the Kenosis. Following this they said, “Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Jesus marveled at anyone who saw the true depth of who he was, for it had been veiled. He was not doing things outwardly to draw attention the fact that he was Christ, the king of kings. If not, then what were all the miracles he performed for? Were they not such outward displays, to draw attention? These are important questions, and will be addressed later as we show them in light of the truth, that they did not actually testify of deity.

Clearly, in reference to what was said above, Jesus was moved by the fact that something had been revealed, or unveiled. The word revealed also means unveiled. So this is speaking of that which is behind the veil, that which is in the holy of holies. That which is remaining veiled as long as the flesh is there. When it is crucified though, when Jesus is crucified, and the veil is rent then we shall see what is on the inside. Jesus is alluding to that in these verses, saying flesh and blood cannot open the veil but that his father must. He must have because Jesus did not. So Jesus is excited, saying “blessed art thou Simon Barjona.” He has seen the true king though he is in kenosis. Verse eighteen says “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Jesus is not saying I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against specifically Peter, because later on he has to pray for Peter. Instead Jesus is saying he shall build his church upon something else. Jesus Christ is saying that he shall build his church upon the revelation of Jesus Christ.