

**John 19:1-22**  
**Seeing the Glory of Kingship in the Suffering of Jesus**

**Introduction**

Last week, we saw the exchange between Pilate and Jesus, “backstage”—while the Jews waited outside (18:33-40). We saw how the theme of this entire exchange was the *kingship* of Jesus.

The Jews have accused Jesus of claiming to be their King, and therefore of being a political threat to Rome. So Pilate, full of scorn, asks Jesus: “Are *You* the *King* of the Jews?” Jesus answers not with defensiveness or with belligerence, but as the one who has the “true” authority. He answers with His own question: “Are you saying this from yourself?” [Do you really want to know if I am the King of the Jews? If yes, then I will tell you the truth.] “Or did others tell you about Me?” [Are you only asking sarcastically because of the charge against Me?]

Pilate answered: “Am I a Jew?” [Why should I have any *personal* interest in whether or not You are the King of the Jews?] “Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me.” [So obviously You *can't* be the King of the Jews.] “What did You do?” [*You tell me* why the Jews have *accused* you of claiming to be their King.]

Jesus answered, “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 delivered over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not from here.” Jesus has come to inaugurate the rule of God not by military and political conquest, but rather by raising sinners from death to life; by calling out a people to be His willing subjects and giving them the true *eternal* life (cf. Jn. 17:1-2) —“righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” This is why the Jews have accused Jesus of claiming to be their King, because the kingdom He has come to bring—the kind of authority and rule that He has come to exercise—is not the authority or rule that they want. Jesus qualifies His connection with the Jews: “If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be delivered over to the Jews.” The kingship of Jesus is not of this world, and therefore it isn't limited to one ethnic group. This means that even Pilate is called to confess Jesus as *his* King – as the one who alone has the authority to raise Pilate from death to life.

“Therefore Pilate said to Him, ‘So *You* are a *king*?’ Jesus answered, “You yourself said I am a king. [‘You have spoken the words, and the words are technically correct, as far as they go. Yes, I am a king.] For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.” The authority of Jesus resides not in any human appointment or office (as did Pilate’s), but in the fact that *His* birth was His “coming into” the world. The authority of Jesus resides in that truth to which He alone can testify, because He Himself *is* that truth (cf. Jn. 14:6). Therefore, Jesus isn't the King of the Jews only. Everyone”—Jesus says to Pilate—“who is of the truth hears My voice.”

And so we begin to see the true nature of Jesus' kingship. His kingship is rooted in who He is (in His person) and in what He has come to do (in His work) as the revelation of the Father—of the saving power of God. His kingship consists in the power and the authority that He has been given to raise the dead to life – to impart to sinners the *true* life that belongs to the age to come,

which is the life of the *kingdom*. It's when we understand this that we can see *in the cross* the *saving revelation* of Jesus *as King* – the King who is over all kings.

We pick up this morning in chapter nineteen:

**I. John 19:1–3** — Pilate then took Jesus and flogged Him. And when the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; and they were coming to Him and saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and were giving Him slaps in the face.

John doesn't elaborate on the brutality of the flogging, he simply tells us that it happened: “Pilate then took Jesus and flogged Him.” He doesn't elaborate on the length of the thorns or how painful it must have been when they were pressed into Jesus' head, he only tells us that “when the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head.” He doesn't describe in any great detail the physical abuse that Jesus received from the soldiers, he tells us only that they “were giving Him slaps [in the face].” The physical suffering of Jesus is clear, but what John emphasizes most is the soldiers' mockery of Jesus as “*King of the Jews*.” They put a *crown of thorns* on His head; they put a *purple robe* on Him; and they were coming to Him and saying, “Hail, *King of the Jews!*”

Why does John describe this? Because he means for us to see *in* this mockery—and even in the sufferings of Jesus that are already foreshadowing His death—a revelation of Jesus' true kingship. As John portrays this abuse and mockery of Jesus, we bow before Jesus and hail Him as *our King*. Not because we feel sorry for Him, or because it's the least we can do in return for all that He did for us, but rather because we see in this portrayal of Jesus being abused and mocked the absolute claims of His Lordship; we see the *power* and the *glory* of His kingdom. What the Roman soldiers are utterly blinded to, we see even in and through their blindness. When they hail Jesus with His crown of thorns and purple robe, we understand that this is how He is achieving for us life in His kingdom. And so we bow in worship, and hail Him as our King.

**II. John 19:4–5** — And Pilate came out again [to the Jewish chief priests] 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!”

How does Pilate's simply “bringing Jesus out to the Jews” show them that he finds “no guilt” in Jesus? The answer is that he brings him out flogged and beaten, *and still wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe*. “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him”—so that you may know that I find Him to be a pathetic and miserable excuse for a king and that therefore, whatever His claims, He's no threat to anyone. “Jesus then came out, *wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe*. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the man!’” Look at Him! *This* is the man you're so worried about? *This* is the man you're telling me is a threat to Rome? I see no king here.

Why does John record this? Not so that we will feel pity. Not to play on our emotions and elicit from us a greater love and devotion to Jesus. But rather so that we will see *in* the sufferings of Jesus the power and the glory of His kingdom. Pilate mocks Jesus probably to convince himself

that Jesus really is a fraud. But he also mocks Jesus in the hopes of securing Jesus' release—because he's afraid. "Behold, the man!" And so we hear in Pilate's scorn and unbelief the call to look upon Jesus in faith—to see in this dressed up Jesus the King who is over all kings — who has authority to lay His life down so that He might raise us up with Himself. When Pilate says, "Behold, the man [this sorry excuse for a king]!" we hear, "Behold, the man"—the eternal Word made flesh (1:14); the Son of Man on whom the angels of God are ascending and descending (1:51); the one to whom God has given authority to execute judgment (5:27). We behold, the man, and we bow in worship and hail Him as our King.

**III. John 19:6a** — So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, "Crucify, crucify!"

What is it about the sight of Jesus beaten and dressed as a mock king that would drive the chief priests and officers to a reaction exactly the opposite of what Pilate had hoped for? What is it *specifically* about this sight of Jesus that drives them to cry out, "Crucify, crucify!" The answer is in what we read next.

**IV. John 19:6b-7** — Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him [something both he and the Jews knew was impossible], for I find no guilt in Him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

What is it about the sight of Jesus beaten and dressed as a mock king that drives the chief priests and officers to cry out, saying, "Crucify, crucify"? What they're seeing is for them the final proof of just *how* blasphemous is the blasphemy of Jesus. *This* is the man who makes Himself out to be the Son of God!—who makes Himself out to be equal with God (cf. 5:18; see Carson)! And yet here He is, standing before a Gentile governor, dressed up as a king, and beaten and mocked by Roman soldiers. Here is all the more reason why He must die, because here is all the more proof of His blasphemy; because He would have us believe that the *Son of God* could be subjected to such shame and derision and reproach. "Crucify, crucify!"

They look upon Him who is dressed up as a mock king and conclude that He's a blasphemer. We look upon Him who is dressed up as a mock king, and we see the revelation of God in His mighty power to save. We see the power and the glory of the true King who is over all kings.

**V. John 19:8-9** — Therefore when Pilate heard this statement [that Jesus made Himself out to be the Son of God], he became more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

The fear of Pilate is partly due to his pagan superstition. But John sees that it's mainly the result of the divine authority of Jesus with which Pilate has already been confronted (cf. 18:33-38). In Pilate's fear, *we* see the one who has the authority to take away all our fear. In Pilate's fear, we see the one who has the authority to reconcile us to God so that we do not come into judgment, but have passed out of death into life (Jn. 5:24).

Remember that Jesus has already answered Pilate three times. Each time, Jesus said just enough to testify to Pilate in a way that was perfectly suited to Pilate's condition. But Pilate's fourth question was dismissive and looked for no answer: "What is truth?" Now he asks basically the same question ("Where are You from?") and looks for an answer, but Jesus will give Him none. Jesus never gives what is *holy* to dogs; He never throws *pearls* before swine (Mat. 7:6). Jesus will not needlessly expose the truth about the incarnate revelation of *His Father* to Pilate's scorn and contempt.

What do we see, then, in the silence of Jesus? The point here isn't meekness. The meekness of Jesus is seen in His refusal to exercise the divine prerogatives of His majesty and power (cf. Phil. 2:6-8)—in His refusal to appeal to His Father for more than twelve legions of angels (Mat. 26:53). The meekness of Jesus is seen in the fact that "while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Pet. 2:23-24; cf. Isa. 53:5, 7). What we see in this silence of Jesus is not His meekness, but rather the authority of that one by whose word Pilate has already been judged (Jn. 12:48 & 3:18). We hear in Jesus' silence, His answer to Pilate's question. Where is He from? He "*proceeded forth* and [has] *come from God*" (8:42; cf. 13:3; 16:28; 17:8). In Jesus' silence, then, we see once again the power and the glory of His kingdom. But that's not what Pilate sees.

**VI. John 19:10–11** — So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" Jesus answered, "You would have no authority [feminine noun] over Me, unless it had been given you [unless this situation and set of circumstances had been given you; (neuter participle)] from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you [the Jewish chief priest, Caiaphas] has the greater sin."

Jesus isn't trying to make Pilate feel better about himself; neither is He trying to gain favor with Pilate. He's simply telling Pilate that his authority to release or to crucify would be irrelevant if God had not decreed that Jesus should be standing before him now. For this reason [because Pilate's role is reactive], it's Caiaphas, who has [actively] delivered Jesus to Pilate, who has the greater sin. Pilate will be guilty of sin, just not the "greater sin"; and the *reason* for this is not to be found in any relative goodness of Pilate, but only in the sovereignty of God—and therefore in Jesus' own submission to His Father's will. When Pilate, then, gives the word to crucify Jesus, what will we see? We see the Father's plan coming to fulfillment as Jesus pursues that plan in perfect obedience. We see in the sentence that Pilate pronounces the authority of Jesus—and the power and the glory of His kingdom.

But Pilate still tries to find a way to calm his fear and sooth his conscience.

**VII. John 19:12–14** — As a result of this Pilate kept seeking to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, "If you release this man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself to be a king opposes Caesar." Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation [for the sabbath (Friday),] [the sabbath] of the Passover [week; a "high" sabbath]; it was about the sixth hour [about 9:00 AM Friday morning]. And he said to the Jews, "Behold, your King!"

Why does John record these words? Because he means for us to hear in these mocking words God's own overruling testimony to the truth. Remember what Jesus said to Nicodemus in chapter three:

- John 3:3–7 — “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again [unless one is born anew into the life of the kingdom] he cannot see the **kingdom** of God [the rule of His Messiah].” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the **kingdom** of God. That which has been born of the flesh is flesh, and that which has been born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again [you must be born from above into the life of the kingdom].’”\*

But how does God give to us this kingdom life?—this eternal life? By what means? Jesus’ last words to Nicodemus were these:

- John 3:14–15 — “As Moses *lifted up* the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be *lifted up* [‘*exalted*’ on a cross]; so that whoever believes will in Him have *eternal life*.”

It’s in and through His cross work that Jesus has achieved for us eternal life—life lived under His rule and kingship. And so we see *in the cross* the *saving revelation* of Jesus *as King* – the King who is over all kings. It’s in this light that we go on to read in verses 15-18:

**VIII. John 19:15–18** — So they cried out, “Away with Him! Away with Him! *Crucify Him!*” [But we hear, ‘*Lift Him up!*’] Pilate said to them, “Shall I *crucify* your *King*?” [But we hear, ‘Shall I *lift up* Your *King*?’] The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.” *So he then delivered Him over to them to be crucified* [but we hear, ‘to be *lifted up*’]. They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own *cross*, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. There they *crucified* Him [but we hear, ‘there they *lifted Him up*’; cf. 8:28], and with Him [they crucified] two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between.

John doesn’t elaborate on the horrors of crucifixion, he simply tells us that it happened: “There they crucified Him.” The shame and the suffering of the cross is assumed, but it’s not what John emphasizes. What John wants us to see in the cross is the “lifting up” of Jesus (12:32-33). What John wants us to see in the cross is the authority and rule of Jesus—the power and the glory of His kingdom. Remember what Jesus said in chapter thirteen:

- John 13:31 — “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.”

Remember what Jesus prayed in chapter seventeen:

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\* Fifteen times in this section we see the word “king” or “kingdom” used in connection with Jesus. In the previous eighteen chapters, we’ve seen this theme of the kingship of Jesus (explicitly) only six times (Jn. 1:49; 3:3, 5; 6:15; 12:13, 15), and only once has Jesus Himself spoken of His kingship (Jn. 3:3, 5; contrast Jesus’ numerous references to the Messianic kingdom in Matthew, Mark, and Luke [some 100+ times]).

- John 17:1 — “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.”

So John continues in verse nineteen:

**IX. John 19:19** — And Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it *on the cross*. It was written, “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Every other time that the expression, “it was written” or “it is written” (*estin/en gegrammenon*) is used in John, it introduces the word of God given through the prophets (cf. 1:45; 5:45; 8:17; 15:25).

- John 2:17 — His disciples remembered that **it was written**, “ZEAL FOR YOUR HOUSE WILL CONSUME ME.”
- John 6:31 — “Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; **as it is written**, ‘HE GAVE THEM BREAD FROM HEAVEN TO EAT.’”
- John 6:45 — “**It is written** in the prophets, ‘AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT BY GOD.’”
- John 10:34 — “**Has it not been written** in your Law, ‘I SAID, YOU ARE GODS’?”
- John 12:14–16 — 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.” These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that **these things were written** about Him.

When John introduces the inscription on the cross with these words, “It was written,” he means for us to see that Pilate is functioning as God’s own prophetic mouthpiece (cf. Caiaphas, 11:49-52). “It was written”—*on the cross*: “Jesus the Nazarene, the *King* of the Jews.” This is the testimony of God Himself when His Son was “lifted up” on the cross.

**X. John 19:20–22** — Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews;’ but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

We see in the cross the saving revelation of Jesus’ kingship. We see even in the cross itself the power and the glory of His kingdom. We see Him “lifted up.” And so we have, in Him, eternal life. We have been raised out of death into that life of *obedience* to Him as our King that’s lived in the power of the Holy Spirit and that belongs to the age to come. Let us live *that life* today, and this week, and always.

- Ephesians 5:8–10 — You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of that light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving [in the daily living of your life] what is pleasing to the Lord.