

Behold Your King

John 119:1-16

B.I. As the true King He could make all who receive Him children of God. But He was despised and rejected of men.

LTS: Psalm 67

In that dark period of Israel's history where the nation was falling apart and preparing to be taken captive by the ancient king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, God sent His prophet to deliver a promise. He declared that one day He would send a King would restore all things. He would be the substance of which all the other kings of Israel were mere shadows. The initial prophesy was delivered with these familiar words (Isa. 9:6-7),

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Of course we know that Jesus Christ would be the fulfillment of God's promise. But His coming would involve more than His people understood. They thought He would arise as their military Champion to rescue Israel from the oppressive occupation of Rome. This, so they supposed, would be their salvation – God's King would be their Savior. But Jesus' mission would involve more than they imagined. One day He would indeed rule over the nations, but upon His first appearing His salvation would be spiritual rather than governmental. At His first coming He would hold three divine offices. He would come as Prophet, Priest, AND King. As Prophet, He would declare God's message ("the gospel of the kingdom") to sinners. As Priest, He would offer the perfect sacrifice to make atonement for sins. As King, He would rule in the hearts of all who would believe while sovereignly arranging the affairs of history to bring it to its appointed end.

As we examine the four gospel accounts recorded for us in the NT it is all but impossible to miss this kingdom motif. In fact, the word "Kingdom" is used in the gospels no less than 167 times. Let me offer you just a sample.

- Luke 1:1-3. The angel said to Mary, "behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus." ³² "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³ and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."
- Mat. 2:1-2 (context: Magi) "Where is he who is born King of the Jews?"

- John 1:49 At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Nathanael answered Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel."
- John 6:15 So Jesus, perceiving that they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him king...
- Matt. 4:23 "Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom..."

This is all "Kingdom language" because Jesus was Israel's promised King. It is important for us to note, however that since the beginning of this Gospel John has sought to emphasize that Jesus would be a rejected King. Back in chapter one (1:11), he prepared us for this eventuality by declaring that "He came unto His own but His own did not receive Him" and (3:19) He came as "Light into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the light for their deeds were evil."

What we have here at the end of John's gospel is the record of rejected royalty. Those He came to rule would make Him a crucified King. Notice with me how John highlights Jesus' royalty in Chapter eighteen:

- (33) "Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"
- (36) "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 handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." (Note: "Kingdom = Kingship, not land).
- (37) Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this 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." (Note: He is a King who speaks as a Prophet – He speaks God's truth).
- (39) Shall I release for you the King of the Jews?"

Again, John (under the inspiration of the H.S.) is pressing Jesus' identity as King. Remember, his goal (20:31) is that we might come to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life in His name." The terrible story of the rejected King bears ironic testimony to the fact that Jesus IS King. For this is what the Prophet Isaiah foretold of Him, that He would be a suffering Savior (Isa. 53),

He was despised and rejected of men... He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities. The chastening for our wellbeing fell upon Him and by His scourging we are healed.

This morning, then, we come to chapter 19 and the royalty motif continues. John shows us to what extreme His people would go in their rejection of their King. It might be helpful to break this passage down into four simple categories. How is Israel's King rejected?

- The Gentiles Tortured God's King: (1-5)
- His Jews Condemned God's King: (5-7)

- The Governor Misidentifies God's King (8-12)
- The World Crucified God's King: (12-16)

I. The Gentiles Tortured God's King: (1-5)

Read 1-5

1. What we need to understand here is that Pilate did not order Jesus to be scourged (beaten with a flesh-tearing whip) to prepare for crucifixion. Rather, he did it in an attempt to avoid sentencing Jesus to crucifixion. Remember, Jesus' innocence is abundantly established in the gospel record:

- First, Judas declared "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood" (Mat. 27:4)
- Second, Pilate declared, "I find no fault in Him (Jn. 18:4). In fact, Pilate will say this at least three times.
- Third, Pilate said (Lk. 23:15) that Herod was also unable to find fault with Him.
- Fourth, Pilate's wife entreated him to "Have nothing to do with this just man" (Matt. 27:19).
- Fifth, later in the narrative the dying thief will say, "This man has done nothing wrong (Lk. 34:41).
- Sixth, The Roman Centurion will say, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luk. 23:47)
- Seventh, those who would stand with the Centurion will say, "This was the Son of God" (Matt. 27:54).¹

2. You see, Pilate KNEW that Jesus had not done anything worthy of death, but he also knew that if he didn't do something to satisfy the blood-lust of these wicked religious leaders He was going to have a riot on his hands. So he had Jesus scourged (Isa. 53: "By His stripes we are healed").

3. The soldiers responsible for scourging him resorted to torturing Him as well. In order to mock His claim to royalty they made for him a crown of thorns. Many commentators see this as a reflection on the curse that came upon the world because of sin. God told Adam that as a result the land would produce thorns. Jesus was truly bearing the full weight of God's curse.

3. The soldiers then took a stick and placed it in Jesus' hand and wrapped him in a purple robe and mocked Him repeatedly saying "Hail King" (Ave Caesar!). They slapped Him in the face saying, "Prophecy to us. Who hit you?" Matthew tells us they also spat on Him and taking the stick from His hand they beat Him on the head with it.

¹ Tom Constable, "Notes on John," *Dr. Constable's Notes*, Sonic Light, <http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/john.pdf>, (accessed Mar. 1, 2015), 331

4. When the torture ended Pilate took Jesus back out to the Jews saying, “I am bringing Him out to you again that you will know I find no guilt in Him.” “Behold the man,” Pilate said (5). In classical literature this phrase meant Behold “this poor creature.”² Its almost as if Pilate is saying, “Has He not suffered enough?”

5. What can we call this scene besides the torture of the Son of God? Pilate had hoped that would be sufficient. He was hoping to let him go, but it wasn't to be. Though the Gentiles tortured God's King, the Jews took it a step further.

II. The Jews Condemned God's King: (6-7)

Read 6-7

1. It became obvious to the Jews that Pilate wanted Jesus to go free. He had no inclination whatsoever to crucify Jesus. The Jews need to pile on accusations so they say something that really rattles Pilate and brings fear into his soul; Namely, “He made Himself out to be the Son of God.”

2. This is not the first time they call for Jesus' death, but its important to see how relentless they are in pursuing it. They want Him to be crucified and they will not let up until they get their way. The Gentile soldiers may of tortured Jesus, but these are Jesus' own people! Nevertheless, the Jews join arms with the Gentile soldiers and condemn God's King.

3. Third, The Governor Misidentifies God's King

III. The Governor Misidentifies God's King: (8-12)

Read. 8-12

1. Pilate was a very superstitious man. His whole life he had been taught that in the invisible world there are many powerful gods, some of whom can appear in human form. Pilate is now wondering if he has made a terrible mistake by having this man scourged. What if he truly is the son of one of the gods? So he takes Jesus back inside and questions Him: “Where are you from?” In other words, “What is meant by your claim to divine origin?”³

2. Pilate knows he might be in really big trouble for what he had done. The gods might be angry with him. But Jesus isn't going to help him. He says nothing in reply. In frustration Pilate exclaims, “Don't you understand that I have the authority to either release or

² Andreas Kostenberger, *John*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2004), 533

³ Robertson Nichole, *The Expositor's Greek Testament Vo. 1*, (Grand Rapids, Eerdman's Publishing Company), 854

crucify you?” To which Jesus says, “You would have no authority over me unless it had been given you from above.”

3. Notice that Jesus does not deny Pilate’s authority. He did have authority and it was given to Him by God. Why doesn’t Pilate intimidate Jesus? Piper observes, “Pilate’s authority over Jesus is subordinate to God’s authority over Pilate. Jesus gets comfort at this moment not because Pilate is powerless, but because Pilate’s will is guided.”⁴ You see, God is absolutely sovereign over the powers that were over Jesus and the powers that are over us. Therefore, we can take great comfort. God is causing all things to work together for His good purposes and no Pilate or president can overrule His authority. As Peter will declare after the resurrection (Acts 4:27-28) “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever you hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.”

4. Pilate had indeed received his authority as governor and judge from God Himself. Because of that he would be held accountable for the manner in which he exercised that authority. His sin would be great, but the sin of Caiaphas (the high priest) would be greater because he of all men had been entrusted with the souls God’s people. He should have been leading Israel to trust in Jesus, not leading the charge to kill Jesus.

5. Pilate is still willfully in the dark about Jesus’ identity, but he is also still convinced that Jesus is innocent. So much so that he makes efforts to release Him. But the Jews are on to him. They cry out (12) If you release this man you are no friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes Himself out to be king opposes Caesar!”

5. This was their “ace in the hole.” This was the Jew’s biggest and deadliest gun in the fight. Now Pilate finds himself with no place to turn. If he releases Jesus the Jews will file a formal complaint to the emperor and Pilate’s governorship will be history. No matter how badly he wants to release Jesus he just can’t risk it.

6. The Gentiles tortured God’s King. The Jews condemned God’s King. The Governor Misidentified God’s King, and finally

IV. The World Crucified God’s King: (12-16)

1. I say the world crucified God’s King because it seems as if representatives of everyone in the world were in on it: Jews, Gentiles, religious leaders, civil governors, and thieves and murderers; Those who pretend righteousness; Those who are overtly wicked.

⁴ John Piper, *Where Our Comfort Comes From: John 19:15-16* (on-line devotional, www.desiringgod.org), for March 1, 2016.

All are represented. “And now the moment for which the entire history of redemption had been waiting has finally arrived.”⁵

Read 13-15

2. “We have no King but Ceasar!” In a way they are right. Their true King – God’s King – the promised King, they have now handed over to an unjust and lawless execution. Now the only king they have is Caesar. But even their loyalty to him is a fake. Nevertheless, this gave them what they needed to tighten the screws on Pilate. It was as if they were saying, “Caesar is our king, Pilate. Where do your loyalties lie?”

3. The next verse (16) reads, “So he then handed Jesus over to be crucified.” Matthew offers a more thorough account where he writes (Mat. 27:24–26),

When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this Man’s blood; see to that yourselves.”²⁵ And all the people said, “His blood shall be on us and on our children!”²⁶ Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

4. You see beloved, this is the story of the suffering servant, rejected royalty, the crucified King. At the beginning of this message we were reminded of John’s words, “He came unto His own but His own did not receive him...” The fact is, His own people hated Him and had Him crucified. But that’s not the end of the verse. John continues, “But those who received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God; even to those who believe in His name” (Jn. 1:12-13).

5. There are only two kinds of people in this world. There are Christ rejecters and Christ receivers. There are those who willingly bow to Jesus’ authority and those who are determined to live by their own rules, their own authority. Which one are you?

6. You see, this is not the end of the story. A couple days later Jesus arose from the dead proving that He is King. He ascended to the right hand of Majesty on high – to the very throne of God. And we must remember Jesus’ promises to His persecutors, “From now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God” (Lk. 22:69).

7. His next great promise is that someday soon He plans to return... this time not as the suffering servant but as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Where will you stand with Him then?

8. Beloved, consider this Scripture and **“Behold Your King!”**

Application:

⁵ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John Vol. 2*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1953), 420

1. Is He your king? Now is the time. Today is the day. If you have never bowed before this King in full surrender God is calling, inviting you now. Be reconciled to God. Surrender your life to Christ and find in Him all that God promised to be for you in Jesus.

2. Are you living under His reign? Luke 6:46 Why do you call me “Lord, Lord” but do not do what I say?

3. Are you resting in your new relationship with God because of His King? Because Jesus was rejected, you are accepted *in Him*. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are *in Christ Jesus*.”

4. Are you enjoying the privileges and blessings of being children of the King? “I am the Vine and you are the branches.” “In this is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit.” That’s just a way to say that God wants to use you to make an impact on this world.

5. Are you eagerly awaiting the return of God’s King?

- Revelation 11:15, Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.”
- 2 Timothy 2:12, If we endure, **we will also reign with Him**;
- Revelation 5:10, “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.

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