

# The Gospel of John: The Trial of Kings

*John 18:28-19:16a*

## Before Pilate (v. 18:28-40)

- After they finished questioning Him, the Jewish leaders bring Jesus to the praetorium, the headquarters of the Roman military in Jerusalem, to see Pilate, the Roman-appointed governor
  - But they refused to enter the residence because they believed being in a Gentile's residence makes them unclean, and therefore unable to partake in the Passover
- Pilate comes out to talk to them, asking what Jesus has done wrong
  - The Synoptics report that the Chief Priest & Elders accuse Jesus of sedition against Rome, insisting that He be executed (Mt 27:12-13; Mk 15:3-4; Lk 23:2)
    - They brought Jesus to Pilate because, under Roman law, only Rome could execute someone
    - The Roman means of executing dissidents was public crucifixion
- Pilate asks Jesus if He is the king of the Jews (Messiah)
  - Jesus affirms this (Mt 27:11), but asks Pilate if this is his own conclusion
  - Pilate is offended at the thought of being pulled into Jewish religious squabbles
- Jesus assures Pilate that He is not seeking to overthrow Rome, but is setting up a spiritual kingdom, something that Pilate does not comprehend
- Jesus testifies to the truth of His identity & mission, but Pilate is blind to it
  - Pilate asks, "What is truth?" while the Truth is standing before him
- Pilate seeks to release Jesus for the first time, calling on a Passover custom
  - But the crowd demands the release of an actual dissident, Barabbas (Mark 15:7)

## Crowned as King (19:1-11)

- Pilate seeks to appease the Jewish leaders without killing Jesus by having Him beaten and ridiculed, including:
  - Dressing Jesus like a king
    - Purple was the color of royalty
    - A crown twisted from the spikes of palms
  - And mocking Him as a false king while beating Him
- When Pilate tries to release Jesus because Pilate sees He is not guilty, the crowd calls for His execution
  - The Jews insist on Jesus' death, claiming that He has committed blasphemy by calling Himself the Son of God (cf. Lev 24:16)
- This claim of divinity frightens Pilate, leading him to ask Jesus where He is from
- When Jesus doesn't answer, Pilate asks Jesus if He understands the power Pilate has over Him
  - Jesus clarifies that the power Pilate has is from God, and thus will accomplish God's will

## Who Is the King? (19:12-16a)

- Pilate repeatedly tries to release Jesus, but the Jews are on the verge of rioting
  - They even try to question Pilate's loyalty to the Emperor if he releases Jesus
- At this, Pilate sits on the judgment seat (bema) to give his official verdict
- He claims Jesus as their king, likely in a mocking way, but, as throughout John, in a way that is greater than he realizes.
  - They reject Jesus as king, claiming their king is the Emperor

- They choose the world's kingdom rather than God's
- Pilate finally relents and sends Jesus to be crucified
  - John notes the time to draw attention to the fact that Jesus is being killed precisely when the Passover lamb is sacrificed

### **So What?**

- Pilate & the Jewish leaders had the Truth before them, but could not see it
  - Do we see Jesus as the source of truth?
- Which kingdom are we a part of, and which king do we serve?

**Meditation Verse:** John 18:37b

**Next Week:** John 19:16b-27