

## Chapter 38: The Trial of Jesus

*John 18:28–40*

It is easy to become numb to the horrors of the story of the crucifixion. We sing about the power of the cross, talk about the glory of the cross, and even decorate our churches and homes with crosses. Because the church has had two thousand years to process the horrors of the cross, it can be hard to recognize just how seriously we have domesticated the most cruel, barbaric, brutal form of execution ever invented. Furthermore, the Old Testament Scriptures are very clear that dying on the cross was not merely a rotten way to die from a human perspective, but that crucifixion signified God's curse against the person being executed: "a hanged man [on a tree] is cursed by God" (Deut. 21:23). More than dying, Jesus was tortured; more than tortured, Jesus was cursed. How then can we recognize love, hope, and power in the cross of Jesus?

More than this, it is at this point in the Gospel that John starts to include Jesus' teaching about his kingdom. While the theme of the kingdom of God permeates the Synoptic Gospels from very early on (cf. Matt. 4:8–10, 17; Mark 1:15; Luke 4:6–8, 43), it is only now, during the story of Jesus' crucifixion that he begins to teach about the nature of his kingdom (John 18:33–37). Why would a condemned prisoner insist upon his right to rule as king? If he is rejected by the kingdoms of the world and cursed by God himself, how can Jesus even imagine a kingship for himself? The Gospel of John clarifies this paradox powerfully: *Jesus can take the curse of the world because his kingship is not of the world.*

### **A Curse to Bear (John 18:28–32)**

Our narrative in this passage begins immediately after Peter's third denial of Jesus (John 18:25–27). At this point, the spotlight of the Gospel shifts exclusively back on Jesus. Here, the Jews lead Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters in the early morning. John does not tell us who exactly leads Jesus ("Then *they* led Jesus..."), but George Beasley-Murray makes this observation: "While the temple police will naturally be included, Pilate's statement in v 31, 'You take him and judge him,' assumes that 'they' are prominent members of the Sanhedrin, some of whom were quite certainly of high-priestly rank (so explicitly 19:6, 15)."<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that the most powerful and visible members of the Jewish leadership are personally escorting Jesus to Pilate's residence helps to make sense of why they "themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover" (John 18:28). Given their stature and status in Jewish society, they cannot violate the ceremonial regulations for keeping the Passover feast.

Nevertheless, the Jewish religious leaders act with extraordinary hypocrisy and legalism: "They apparently regarded *ceremonial* defilement to be a much more serious matter than *moral* defilement."<sup>2</sup> Time and time again, we have seen the Jewish religious leaders willing to do anything to rid themselves of the nuisance of Jesus, but here we see the one thing that they are *not* willing to do in

their pursuit of his murder: they refuse to break ceremonial law during Passover. Although they are “full of malice, ambition, fraud, cruelty, and avarice, that they almost infect heaven and earth with their abominable smell, [they] are only afraid of external pollutions” so that they strain a gnat, but they swallow a camel (Matt. 23:24).<sup>3</sup> They are fastidious to keep the external code of the law, but they entirely miss the broader sense of the law that drives us to love God and to love our neighbor. Their hypocrisy should lead us to evaluate our own lives: what sins do we excuse, overlook, or minimize in our own lives by appealing to mere technicalities?

### Before Pontius Pilate

To accommodate their scruples, Pontius Pilate comes out of his headquarters to the Jews in order to hear their charges against Jesus: “What accusations do you bring against this man?” (John 18:29). Importantly, this is where the narrative in the Gospel of John begins to demonstrate the joint guilt that Pilate and the Jews share. Herman Ridderbos writes, “It is undeniable that Jesus was condemned to death by the representative of the Roman Empire and on the basis of Roman law, and the sentence of death by crucifixion was carried out as a Roman penalty. But it is no less clear that in this account ‘the Jews’ drove Pilate to this resolution of the matter.”<sup>4</sup> The Jewish leaders cunningly manipulate Pilate to bring about the execution of Jesus, but Pilate is no fool. He recognizes what they are doing and even goes so far as to proclaim Jesus’ innocence three times during the course of the trial proceedings (John 18:38; 19:4, 6). Nevertheless, Pilate eventually orders Jesus crucifixion anyway.

In this first round of interactions between Pilate and the Jews, the Roman governor begins by asking for specific charges against Jesus. The Romans refused to prosecute someone on the basis of vague generalities or the whims of the mob, since the “Roman method was no inquisitorial but dealt with straight-forward accusations.”<sup>5</sup> Pilate has no desire to interrogate Jesus until he is able to trip Jesus up, but he instead wants to make a judicial decision based on specific charges and detailed evidence. This approach should benefit Jesus, but the Jews deftly sidestep Pilate’s request: “They answered him, ‘If this man were not doing evil, we would not have delivered him over to you’” (John 18:30). Pilate’s insistence upon following the standard procedure for a Roman trial has put the Jews in a dilemma, for the only accusations they could bring against Jesus is that “he has cured every kind of diseases, has driven the devils out of men, has made the paralytics and the lame to walk, has restored sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and life to the dead.”<sup>6</sup> What judge would condemn a man for those things?

Pilate does everything in his power to avoid handling Jesus’ case.<sup>7</sup> He recognizes that the Jews are refusing to name actual charges against Jesus, so he attempts to turn the case back over to them: “Pilate said to them, ‘Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law’” (John 18:31a). In fact, Pilate puts his finger on the heart of the matter. The real reason that the Jews wish to condemn Jesus is that he has claimed to be both the Messiah and the Son of God, so that he is therefore (in their eyes) guilty of blasphemy, a capital offense.<sup>8</sup> This claim, however, neither violates Roman law nor threatens Rome in itself, and the Jews recognize that if they bring this charge directly, Pilate will dismiss their case immediately.

### The Kind of Death that Jesus Must Die

The Jews respond, saying, “It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death” (John 18:31). Once again, the Jews stop short of actually naming the charges that they bring against Jesus, while

nevertheless, insisting that Jesus is committing a tremendous evil. They decline to take Jesus' case back into their own courts by telling Pilate that what Jesus has done deserves death without actually defining the crime he has committed. But why do the Jewish religious leaders insist that the Romans should kill Jesus? Indeed, the Jews sometimes do put people to death by stoning for religious reasons (e.g., Acts 7:54–60) without worrying about Roman jurisdictions.<sup>9</sup> Why not do the same with Jesus and be done with it?

In response to the statement of the Jews about the lawfulness of putting someone to death, John writes, “This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die” (John 18:32). John is referring back to a previous statement of Jesus: “‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die” (John 12:32–33).<sup>10</sup> From the perspective of the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus cannot be beaten or stoned by death by the mob. Instead, Jesus must be crucified by being “lifted up from the earth” on a cross. According to Deuteronomy 21:23, “a hanged man [on a tree] is cursed by God.” Therefore, the religious leaders insisted that Jesus be crucified on a cross—that is, hanged on a tree—“to ensure that Jesus was not viewed as a martyr for God’s cause, but as an imposter who died under the curse of God.”<sup>11</sup> It would do them no good if Jesus’ martyrdom only emboldened his followers, so they had to demonstrate through his manner of death (that is, by being lifted up on a tree of the cross) that God had cursed Jesus.

In this, the Jews are both correct, but yet mistaken. Indeed, God *does* curse Jesus when Jesus is lifted up from the earth on a tree; however, God does not curse Jesus for the reasons that the Jews believe that God *should* curse Jesus. The Jews seek out Jesus’ crucifixion because they believed that *he* has blasphemed by claiming to be the Son of God. The Father, on the other hand, sends Jesus to the cross because of *our* blasphemy in our rejection of God. Jesus dies on the cross in order to bear *our* curse, sin, and shame—not his own. As the Apostle Paul writes, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree’” (Gal. 3:13). John Calvin describes the irony of this misunderstood curse this way:

If we suppose that this is done by the caprice of men, and do not raise our eyes to God, our faith must necessarily be confounded and put to shame. But when we perceive that by the condemnation of Christ, our condemnation before God is blotted out, because it pleased the Heavenly Father to take this method of reconciling mankind to himself, raised on high by this single consideration, we boldly, and without shame, glory even in Christ’s ignominy.<sup>12</sup>

God so sovereignly superintends every details of his Son’s death that he uses even the wicked intentions and hypocritical manipulations of the Jews to ensure that Jesus would redeem us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us. The very purpose for which Jesus came was to bear this curse by being hanged on the tree of the cross.

### **A Kingship to Claim (John 18:33–38a)**

Pilate then re-enters his headquarters, and, calling Jesus, asks, “Are you the King of the Jews?” (John 18:33). It is difficult to know why Pilate asks this question, since the Jews themselves carefully avoided naming any specific charge against Jesus. It may be that John does not include the

entirety of Pilate's dialogue with the Jews, or it may be that Pilate knows something of Jesus independently of this trial (cf. Matt. 27:19). Somehow, Pilate comes to recognize that the kingship of Jesus is at the crux of this dispute, so he asks Jesus directly whether he is indeed the King of the Jews.

In fact, this is actually the only charge that would be relevant for Pilate to investigate in his office as a Roman governor: "Pilate's mind must understand this in a political sense, as a reference to a king claiming secular power, and thus wanting to be the head of a Jewish rebellion against the authority of the Roman emperor. This is the very kingship Jesus had repudiated (6:15)."<sup>13</sup> If indeed Jesus does claim to be a secular king in rivalry with Caesar, then Pilate has an obligation to execute Jesus for treason. But if, as we will see, the nature of Jesus' kingship is not of this world, then Jesus poses no direct threat to the Roman empire, and he is innocent of whatever the Jews are bringing against him. Instead of being exposed as a traitor through this interaction, Jesus appears all the more regal and majestic through the patient endurance of his suffering: "Subtly, but very definitely, John brings out the supreme royalty of Jesus."<sup>14</sup> Just as the Jews misunderstand the nature of the curse that they seek to bring upon Jesus, so they also misunderstand the nature of these charges of Jesus' kingship. The cross does not disqualify Jesus from his kingship. Rather, it is by the cross that Jesus *claims* and *takes possession* of his kingship.

### Of Whose Accord?

Jesus responds to Pilate's question: "Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" (John 18:34). We might understand the thrust of Jesus questions in two ways. On the first approach, it may be that Jesus is asking whether Pilate himself is interested in the Messianic claims of Jesus (that is, whether Pilate is considering whether to believe in Jesus as the Christ), or whether he is simply going through the process of investigating charges that other people have brought against Jesus.<sup>15</sup> On the second approach, it may be that Pilate's asking this question "of [his] own accord" means that he is doing his due diligence in his office as a Roman governor to determine whether Jesus is inciting an insurrection against the Roman empire. On the other hand, if it is others who have suggested to Pilate that Jesus may indeed be the King of the Jews, then Pilate may be seeking whether to classify Jesus' case as only having to do with matters of Jewish law, prophecies, and ceremonies (cf. John 18:31).<sup>16</sup> As Jesus probes the intent behind Pilate's question, it seems that Jesus is opening an evangelistic door to Pilate, albeit carefully. Jesus knows what must happen to him, but even so, he offers Pilate an opportunity to turn to turn to him in faith.

Pilate rejects this opportunity, responding to Jesus with contempt: "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?" (John 18:35). Pilate is wholly skeptical of the Messianic identity of this prisoner delivered over to him in judgment, and moreover, Pilate sees himself as altogether superior to the Jews in virtue of his Roman citizenship and office of governor. The idea that this *Jewish* prisoner could offer him something seems preposterous to his hard, unbelieving heart, and Pilate dismisses the notion out of hand. For his part, Pilate is still trying to get to the bottom of the animosity of the Jewish leaders against Jesus, asking himself, "What has Jesus done to make the rulers so intent on his execution? Is his offense simply against Jewish traditions, or has he actually committed a crime that Roman law must punish?"<sup>17</sup>

### A Kingship Not of This World

Jesus answers Pilate's question about what he has *done* by defining the nature of his kingdom:

“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36). As we begin to expound the meaning of this rich statement, we should start by clarifying the meaning of “kingdom” in this context. Sometimes, this word for “kingdom” can refer to “the territory or the subjects ruled by a king.”<sup>18</sup> In this case, however, the “kingdom” that Jesus describes here does not refer to the territory of his rule or to the subjects under his power. Jesus’ kingship is not defined by *what* or *whom* he rules, but by his own *rulership*—that is, his own *authority* to rule. For this reason, it is probably better to translate this word as “kingship” (in reference to his authority itself) rather than “kingdom” (in reference to that which is under his authority).<sup>19</sup> This meaning is underscored by the threefold repetition of “my kingdom” in this verse. In fact, this is not the normal phrase for “my kingship” (*hē basileia mou*) but a much stronger version (*hē basileia hē emē*): “‘the kingship that is mine,’ over against the kingship that belongs to all other kings. The kingship of Jesus is in a class by itself, in its very nature is infinitely superior to that of all merely secular kings.”<sup>20</sup>

Jesus identifies the specific way in which the kingship that is his differs from the kingships of all other rulers: namely, Jesus’ kingship is not of this world. That is, Jesus does not rule over a temporal, worldly kingdom that possesses a specific territory or a specific group of people. For this reason, Jesus also does not seek to expand his kingdom by conquering and overthrowing merely temporal, worldly kingdoms. Instead, Jesus’ kingship is spiritual, and, as such, his kingship does not seek to overthrow temporal, political, worldly kingdoms.<sup>21</sup> The goal of Jesus’ kingship seeks instead to expand his reign and influence in the lives of those who believe in him through the work of the Holy Spirit. As Herman Ridderbos writes, “In distinction from all worldly government, it is only by the power of his Spirit that he establishes his rule in the hearts of humans and admits them to his kingdom (cf. 3:3, 5f.). However much worldly government might want to serve justice, peace, and liberation, it cannot remove the sin of the world, because it has no power over the hearts of human beings.”<sup>22</sup>

This does not mean that the kingship of Jesus has nothing to say to worldly rulers and governments, but only that Jesus’ kingship will not look like the kingship of his ancestor David. King David governed a worldly kingdom, and in order to establish that kingdom, David had to fight physical wars. Jesus, on the other hand, contrasts this kind of a kingship with his own by saying, “If my kingship were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingship is not of this world.” Indeed, when Peter used his sword to strike the high priest’s servant Malchus in a misguided attempt to deliver Jesus from capture, Jesus rebuked Peter, telling him to put away his sword (John 18:10–11). The reign and rule of Jesus is not dependent on Jesus’ personal safety. In fact, Jesus will establish his kingship by delivering himself up to be harmed, beaten, cursed, and crucified for his subjects.

This is where the true significance of Jesus’ work on the cross comes into focus. If Jesus’ kingship *were* temporal, then he would need to do whatever he could to avoid the death that he is about to face. A temporal king cannot reign if he is dead, and, moreover, a temporal king would be disqualified from his kingship if he were cursed by God by being hanged on a tree. Nevertheless, Jesus insists that his kingship will not be destroyed, but rather *established*, by taking upon himself the curse of the cross. The only way that this works at all is when we recognize that the kingship of Jesus is not of this world. Because Jesus’ kingship is other-worldly, he is able to bear the curse of the world under the wrath of God without damaging his claims to the throne. In fact, Jesus’ other-worldly

kingship explains Jesus' mission altogether: he is the king who has come to claim his kingship by redeeming his kingdom through taking upon himself his kingdom's curse.

On a smaller level, this principle has enormous implications for our own involvement in the world. The nature of Jesus' kingship teaches us that we should never put too much faith in the kingdoms of this world. The direction of a country or even the world as a whole cannot damage the kingship of Jesus Christ. We do not need to worry as though the kingship of Jesus rose or fell on the strength of a ruler, a law, or court decision. Our king is not of this world, so his kingship does not rest on our ability to affect policy, elections, or even public opinion. In fact, Jesus' cross demonstrates that sometimes God accomplishes the most when the kingdoms of this world rage the strongest against God, God's Messiah, and God's people. In fact, violence *against* the church does far more to expand Christ's kingdom than violence *on behalf of* the church ever could. As the church father Tertullian famously said, "The blood of Christians is seed."<sup>23</sup>

### Defending the Church by Force?

At the same time, we should not think that God calls us to no involvement whatsoever in the public sphere. Jesus' words are not a license for Christians to take a passive, hands-off approach to the affairs of the world. So, in our interpretation of this passage, we must be careful to avoid suggesting that Jesus outlaws the use of all force. Jesus is drawing a contrast between his other-worldly kingship and the kingdoms of the world, and by doing so, he acknowledges the reality that the kingdoms of this world will continue to use force and violence in order to protect themselves. Jesus' point, rather, is that his kingdom cannot be established and expanded by violent military conquest. Alexander the Great may have expanded the Greek Empire over the entire world through warfare, but the kingship of Jesus does not operate in the same way.

John Calvin helpfully pulls together these questions in his commentary on this passage, asking whether it is lawful to defend the kingdom of Christ by arms:

I answer, first, they who draw this conclusion, that the doctrine of the Gospel and the pure worship of God ought not to be defended by arms, are unskillful and ignorant reasoners; for Christ argues only from the facts of the case in hand, how frivolous were the calumnies which the Jews had brought against him. Secondly, though godly kings defend the kingdom of Christ by the sword, still it is done in a different manner from that in which worldly kingdoms are wont to be defended; for the kingdom of Christ, being spiritual, must be founded on the doctrine and power of the Spirit. In the same manner, too, its edification is promoted; for neither the laws and edicts of men, nor the punishments inflicted by them, enter into the consciences. Yet this does not hinder princes from accidentally defending the kingdom of Christ; partly, by appointing external discipline, and partly, by lending their protection to the Church against wicked men. It results, however, from the depravity of the world, that the kingdom of Christ is strengthened more by the blood of the martyrs than by the aid of arms.<sup>24</sup>

First, Calvin notes that this passage does not directly address the question of defending the church with arms. Jesus is here defending himself from the charges that the Jews have brought against him. Recognizing this helps keep us from twisting Jesus' words further than he meant them to go.

Second, Calvin differentiates the idea of *defending* the church from seeking to *strengthen* or *increase* the church. While discipline, laws, political campaigns, and even war can be helpful to protect people in the world (including the church) from the wicked, those means of *defense* do not in themselves establish or expand the kingdom of Jesus, for the kingdom of Jesus is spiritual in nature, and not of this world. Such measures may reform the kingdoms of this world, which can be a very good thing, but we should avoid suggesting that such *worldly* measures can in any way build up the *spiritual* kingdom of Jesus.

### “For this purpose I was born”

Pilate follows up to clarify Jesus’ statement: “So you are a king?” (John 18:37a). Pilate seems surprised for two reasons: (1) Jesus has actually claimed a kingship for himself, and (2) Jesus also insists that his kingdom is not of this world.<sup>25</sup> What kind of a kingship is real, and yet not of this world? Even here, Pilate does not speak like someone who is earnestly seeking after the truth. Instead, he speaks like someone who is bewildered by the words of his prisoner, and yet unimpressed with the claims that he is hearing. As a governor of Rome, he must get to the bottom of the matter, but Pilate is not moved to faith by this man who has been arrested and turned over to him by his own people.

Jesus responds, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth” (John 18:37b). Although the two phrases “I was born” and “I have come into the world” point to the same reality, Jesus uses both in order to draw emphasis to his pre-existence and the miracle of his incarnation.<sup>26</sup> Here, Jesus declares that the purpose for his life is larger than what the Jews think of him, or even what Pilate ultimately decides as his judge. His kingship is not of this world because he has come from *outside* this world, bearing witness to a truth that transcends this world.

And in fact, his entire life has pointed to this moment. Here, Jesus will bear witness to the truth on a public stage before both Jews and Gentiles alike. He will speak the truth, but the whole world will condemn him and demand that he be crucified as a sign of his condemnation by God. As extraordinary as the incarnation of Jesus is, the birth of Jesus was not an end in itself. Nor is it the case that Jesus’ signs or teaching stand ultimately on their own. Instead, the whole purpose of Jesus’ life comes down to this moment when he will be crucified for bearing witness to the truth that he has come into the world from the Father who sent him to die for the sins of the people whom the Father is giving to the Son. As we will see over the next few chapters, John goes out of his way to connect the death of Jesus back to his birth in order to demonstrate the continuity between the two events. The *purpose* of Jesus’ birth was *to die*.

### “What is truth?”

To this statement, Jesus adds a final word: “Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice” (John 18:37c). This is an echo of what Jesus said when he described himself as the Good Shepherd: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me....And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice” (John 10:14, 16). In contrast to the thieves, robbers, and wolves, the Good Shepherd speaks with a voice that commands the attention of the sheep. The sheep are of the truth, because they are those whom the Father gives to the Son (cf. John 6:37–39). As such, they listen to the voice of Jesus as the voice of

truth. By listening to the voice of Jesus, they recognize that Jesus lays his life of his own accord for them (John 10:11, 17–18). Once again, Jesus seems to be opening an evangelistic door, offering Pilate salvation if he will simply listen to Jesus' voice.

And once again, Pilate refuses. He speaks disdainfully, asking, "What is truth?" (John 18:38a).<sup>27</sup> If there is such a thing as truth, the last place where Pilate expects to find that truth is in this pitiful man standing before him. Pilate does not care for the way that the Jewish religious leaders are trying to manipulate him, but on the other hand, he has absolutely no respect for the man they are seeking to crucify. The Truth (John 14:6) himself stands in front of Pilate, and Pilate scornfully rejects him.

### **A Course to Take (John 18:38b–40)**

Pilate does not intend on continuing the conversation any further. With that, he goes back to the Jews: "After he had said this, he went back outside to the Jews and told them, 'I find no guilt in him. But you have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?'" (John 18:38b–39). After interrogating Jesus, Pilate is not swayed to faith in Jesus, but he also recognizes that Jesus has broken no law and poses no threat to the Roman empire. Rather than releasing Jesus, he puts the question back to the Jews, asking them if they would like him to release him to them in honor of the Passover. Specifically, he asks if they wish him to release "the King of the Jews." The Jewish leaders reject Jesus' claims to a kingship, but what about all the other Jews who are present? Do they wish to claim Jesus as their king?

Sadly, not at all: "They cried out again, 'Not this man, but Barabbas!' Now Barabbas was a robber" (John 18:40). There is a tragedy in the final statement identifying Barabbas as a robber: "By this choice they murdered Jesus and made themselves true moral brothers of the murderer Barabbas. John's word is an understatement, for Barabbas was worse than a robber, namely a murderer, Mark 15:7, and an exceptional one at that, Matt. 27:16."<sup>28</sup> They have the option of embracing the man whom Pilate himself identifies (albeit most likely sarcastically) as the King of the Jews, but they instead choose for themselves an infamous robber and murderer. Not only does Pilate reject Jesus, but so do the Jews. As John told us from the beginning of this Gospel, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him" (John 1:11).

Nevertheless, this rejection will not mean the defeat of Jesus. It will lead to his crucifixion, but at that crucifixion, Jesus will take possession of his kingship through the victory of his own suffering and death. The Jews reject Jesus as their king, but so far from detracting from his kingship, their choice actually establishes his kingship forever. By rejecting Jesus toward being lifted up on the cross, Jesus will draw all people to himself as the true, eternal king. In the eyes of the world, this course toward the cross will put an end to the Messianic claims of Jesus by manifesting the curse of God against him. Nevertheless, they misunderstand not only what *they* are doing by crucifying the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8), but also what *Jesus* is doing as he willingly embraces the curse of God in order to redeem his kingdom.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What should we learn from the hypocrisy in the way that the Jewish religious leaders so scrupulously avoid entering the home of a Gentile, but nevertheless hand over the Son of God to be



murdered (John 18:28)? This kind of behavior is a classic example of legalism in seeking to keep God's law outwardly, while nevertheless justifying extraordinary abuses of the weightier matters of the law in love and justice. Are there areas where we too live by legalism?

2. Why must Jesus come under the curse of God? What does the severity of Jesus' punishment tell us about the severity of our sin? Stop for a moment and consider that this curse is not something general, but personal—*your* sins deserve God's curse and wrath. Do you recognize how much God hates your sin? Do you recognize how much God loves *you* to send his Son to bear that curse in your place?

3. If the kingship of Jesus is not of this world, then how should the church seek to promote, expand, and establish the kingdom of Jesus? What means and methods has God given us for establishing Christ's kingdom? What means and methods has God *not* promised to bless for establishing Christ's kingdom?

4. If the kingship of Jesus is not of this world, then what *is* our role and obligation to this world? How should we view our involvement in our communities? In our jobs? In our families? In our nation? Why is this work still extremely important? Why does this work fall short of affecting the other-worldly kingdom of Jesus?

## Notes

1. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 327.
2. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 401.
3. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 205. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.viii.vii.html>>
4. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 585.
5. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1215.
6. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 206. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.viii.vii.html>>
7. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 405.
8. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 590.
9. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 591.
10. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1219.
11. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 328.
12. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 207–08. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.viii.vii.html>>
13. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1221–22.
14. Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 678–79.
15. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 330.
16. C. Venn Pilcher, *The Gospel according to St. John* (Sydney, n.d.). Cited in Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, 679–80.
17. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 330.

18. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1228.
19. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 408–09.
20. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1228–29.
21. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 209. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.viii.viii.html>>
22. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 595.
23. Tertullian, "Apology," ch. 50. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf03.iv.iii.l.html>>
24. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 210–11. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.viii.viii.html>>
25. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1231.
26. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1232.
27. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 212. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.viii.ix.html>>
28. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1242.