

Chapter 39: The Kingship of Jesus

John 19:1–16a

When Pilate asked Jesus whether he was a king, Jesus told Pilate, “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). This idea is not new to the Gospel of John, for throughout John’s depiction of Jesus’ life and ministry, we have seen again and again that Jesus does not follow the typical paths of someone pursuing power. Yes, Jesus is a king, but his kingship looks nothing like the reign of worldly kings. Again and again we have seen Jesus resist the crowds, rebuke the powerful, and embrace suffering and shame. What kind of a king is this?

Counterintuitively, John uses this moment in Jesus’ life—as Jesus is beaten, mocked, and condemned on his way to the cross—to depict the nature and source of Jesus’ kingship. Jesus is not the most attractive man, nor the most connected power broker, nor the most well loved by those in the world. In fact, John demonstrates painstakingly how Jesus is at the bottom of all measures of worldly power as he goes to the cross. From a worldly perspective, Jesus loses everything as he is sentenced to die at the cross. It is only when we lift our eyes above the power structures of this world that we recognize the true source of Jesus’ kingship: *Jesus’ royal power is not of this world.*

Jesus’ Royal Power is not from Personal Appearance (John 19:1–7)

In the previous passage, Pilate tried to get Jesus’ case off of his docket in a variety of ways: (1) Pilate insisted that the Jews file actual accusations against Jesus (John 18:29); (2) Pilate suggested that the Jews judge Jesus according to their own law (John 18:31); (3) Pilate interrogated Jesus to learn about Jesus’ guilt or innocence for himself (John 18:33–38a); (4) Pilate pronounced Jesus to be not guilty (John 18:38b); and (5) Pilate offered to release Jesus according to his custom of releasing a prisoner during Passover (John 18:39). Since all of these efforts fail, Pilate tries a new approach to avoid allowing the Jews to bully him into a judgment against Jesus. Surprisingly, Pilate tries to make Jesus appear ridiculous (and therefore *nonthreatening*) to the people so that they will drop their charges against him. Along these lines, Pilate’s first move is to order that Jesus be flogged: “Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him” (John 19:1).

What exactly does Pilate intend from flogging Jesus? In the context of the power struggle between Pilate and the Jewish religious leaders, it is clear that Pilate does not see merit to the charges against Jesus, so that this flogging is not the preparatory beating that the Romans inflicted on criminals immediately before crucifying them. Instead, it seems that Pilate means for this flogging to *limit* Jesus’ overall punishment: “Jesus was not scourged in order to be crucified but in order to escape crucifixion.” Pilate is hoping that flogging Jesus will be enough to satisfy the Jews so that he will not need to crucify him.

D. A. Carson explains that the Romans used various degrees of floggings to accomplish various purposes:

Flogging administered by the Romans could take one of three forms: the *fustigatio*, a less severe beating meted out for relatively light offences such as hooliganism, and often accompanied by a severe warning; the *flagellatio*, a brutal flogging administered to criminals whose offences were more serious; and the *verberatio*, the most terrible scourging of all, and one that was always associated with other punishments, including crucifixion. In this last form, the victim was stripped and tied to a post, and then beaten by several torturers (in the Roman provinces they were soldiers) until they were exhausted, or their commanding officer called them off. For victims who, like Jesus, were neither Roman citizens nor soldiers, the favored instrument was a whip whose leather thongs were fitted with pieces of bone or lead or other metal. The beatings were so savage that the victims sometimes died. Eyewitness records report that such brutal scourging could leave victims with their bones and entrails exposed.²

Carson goes on to argue that this flogging is most likely the *least* severe form of flogging, the *fustigatio*, and that the most severe *verberatio* scourging will not come until later, after Pilate sentences Jesus to be crucified. So, Pilate orders the *fustigatio* here “partly to appease the Jews and partly to teach Jesus a lesson...for being something of a trouble-maker.”³ Perhaps the Jews will let the matter go if Pilate flogs Jesus and turns him back over to them?

A Mocked King

The next part of Pilate’s strategy to avoid crucifying Jesus involves making a mockery of Jesus’ supposed kingship: “And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and struck him with their hands” (John 19:2). It is unlikely that the soldiers would have abused their prisoner so freely apart from the command of Pilate.⁴ In fact, Pilate’s plan is to present Jesus as a ridiculous king (John 19:5), beaten and bruised by his flogging, bleeding from his crown of thorns, and dressed only in the purple robe of a king.⁵ Then, one by one, the soldiers “filed past Jesus” (as the grammar suggests in the phrase “They came up to him”; John 19:3) to declare, “Hail, King of the Jews!”⁶ Rather than showing Jesus genuine honor and respect, however, the Roman soldiers strike Jesus with their hands, just as one of the Jewish temple officers did (John 18:22).

Throughout this passage, John captures the glee and rage of both the Romans and the Jews as they abuse and mock Jesus. And yet, the “irony of the narrative is that it inverts their own irony: he is genuinely the person whom they sarcastically claim him to be.”⁷ This is the final, cruel, hard-hearted rejection of Jesus—not only from the Jews, but from the Gentile Romans as well. Here, Jesus is proclaimed and manifested as king, and yet he is scorned, dishonored, and crucified. But even though the world rejects Jesus’ kingship, it is by going to the cross that Jesus takes possession of his kingdom as he dies to save his people. They believe that they destroy Jesus’ kingship by crucifying him, but in fact they are playing into the eternal plan of God to establish Jesus as King by his voluntarily self-sacrifice that redeems his people.

The First Presentation of the King

After preparing Jesus in his royal raiment, Pilate brings out Jesus to display him in this broken state to the Jews: “Pilate went out again and said to them, ‘See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him.’ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, ‘Behold the man!’” (John 19:4–5). Here, Pilate declares Jesus’ innocence for the second time: “I find no guilt in him” (John 19:4; cf. John 18:38). Pilate’s purpose for displaying Jesus in this way, then, is to demonstrate that they do not need to crucify Jesus: “‘Look!’ he cries dramatically; ‘take in the man!’ ‘King?’—why, a ridiculous king! ‘King, dangerous to Caesar, calling for the procurator’s power to destroy him?’—why, he is absolutely powerless, abjectly helpless! Look and see for yourselves!”⁸ Make no mistake: Pilate here mocks Jesus, but “he is ridiculing the Jewish authorities with no less venom.”⁹ Pilate mocks the Jews as though he were saying, “Why have you brought me this man who is so clearly powerless and unable to defend himself? What threat could this man possibly pose to the Roman empire? Are you Jews really so weak to consider this miserable man a threat?”

Isaiah’s prophecy of the suffering servant here comes to be fulfilled:

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. (Isa. 53:1–3)

People who have with extraordinary personal appearance often receive advantages in life that other people do not. In fact, historians argue that certain people have achieved great power for no other reason than personal appearance.¹⁰ The opposite is true as well, however. Not only is Jesus a man with “no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him,” but after receiving his flogging and the cruel crown of thorns, Jesus stands as a bruised, bloody mess, dressed only in a purple robe. Jesus looks like a criminal and not like a king! Here, Jesus is so hideous that the world hides their faces from him, esteeming him as nothing. Jesus’ royal power, however, does not depend on his personal appearance, for his royal power is not of this world.

“Behold, the man!”

Additionally, Pilate here offers an announcement about Jesus: “Behold the man!” (John 19:5). Shortly, Pilate will offer another announcement: “Behold your King!” (John 19:14). At the beginning of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist similarly announced Jesus twice: “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29), and “Behold, the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36). Now, at the very end of Jesus’ public ministry, it is not John the Baptist manifesting Jesus to the world, but Pilate:

Four acclamations frame Jesus’ public ministry: two announcements of Jesus as God’s lamb by John the Baptist at the beginning (1:29, 36) and two announcements, one of Jesus’

humanity and one of his kingship, by Rome's representative at the end. John surely wanted to parallel these acclamations, whatever Pilate's own intentions may have been.¹¹

In some ways, these parallel acclamations demonstrate the fact that the whole world, both Jew and Gentile, received the testimony about the identity of Jesus. The fact that Jews and Gentiles still put Jesus to death together only underscores the guilt of the whole world in regard to the death of Jesus.

More than that, each of these acclamations tell us something critical about Jesus. John the Baptist's declarations that Jesus is the Lamb of God shaped the way that we read the entire Gospel, with the expectation that Jesus has come to take away the sin of the world through his sacrificial death. Now that we actually come to that sacrificial death in the narrative, however, we see that Jesus is only *figuratively* a lamb, but that he is *literally* a man. D. A. Carson writes this:

But the Evangelist records the event with still deeper irony: here indeed is the Man, the Word made flesh (1:14). All the witnesses were too blind to see it at the time, but this Man was displaying his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, in the very disgrace, pain, weakness and brutalization that Pilate advanced as suitable evidence that he was a judicial irrelevance.¹²

Indeed, while the Jews seek to put Jesus to death because they believe that he has committed blasphemy by claiming to be the Son of God (cf. John 19:7), John wants to re-emphasize Jesus' *humanity* here. Certainly, Jesus is more than merely a man, but he cannot be less than a man. God cannot suffer in his nature as God, which is why the Son of God had to become fully human in order to suffer for the sins of the world.

This is a critical piece of information, since Gnosticism, one of the earliest heresies against Christianity, did not deny Jesus' divinity, but his full humanity. Many Gnostics claimed, for example, that Jesus was not really human, but that he only *seemed* to be human when he was in fact purely a god and therefore unable to truly suffer. John himself is not only aware of the heresy of Gnosticism, but he explicitly combats it in his First Letter: "By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world" (John 4:2–3).¹³ So yes, Pilate is mocking Jesus when he proclaims, "Behold the man!" Nevertheless, it is also as though Pilate is entering into evidence a crucial piece of information: this is *a man*.

"Take him yourselves"

Pilate's stratagem to avoid crucifying Jesus does not work: "When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him'" (John 19:6). This is the third time that Pilate proclaims Jesus' innocence (cf. John 18:38; 19:4), and by this time, Pilate is exasperated. He does not know how to avoid the outcome of having Jesus' crucified while also keeping himself from becoming the executioner pressed into the service of the Jews. So, Pilate tries something new: he tells the Jews to take him for themselves to crucify them, since he wants no part in what they are insisting that he do.¹⁴ It is unlikely that Pilate is serious about this, since the Romans did not permit the Jews to

administer crucifixion, so it is probably better to read this as Pilate's rhetorical venting in the midst of a frustrating situation.¹⁵

"We have a law"

The Jews respond by attempting to increase the stakes for Pilate to crucify Jesus: "The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the Son of God'" (John 19:7). Most likely, the Jews are referring to Leviticus 24:16: "Whoever blasphemes the name of the LORD shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him. The sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death."¹⁶ Pilate has said "I find no guilt in him," so the Jews respond by saying, "*We* have a law...."¹⁷ Because Pilate continues to insist that he sees no good reason for putting Jesus to death from his own perspective, he compels the Jews demonstrate their reason for believing that Jesus must die. This accusation is what Pilate asked for originally (John 18:29), but the Jews knew that if they cited their own law as the basis for a capital punishment, Pilate would have dismissed their case against Jesus. At this point, however, they feel that they have no other choice if they wish to see Jesus crucified, so they cite their own law.

Jesus' Royal Power is not from Political Clout (John 19:8–11)

In this move of citing their own law, however, the Jews take a crucial misstep that might derail their murderous mission altogether: "When Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid" (John 19:8). Roman mythologies are full of stories of gods who have appeared to be humans, so that Pilate the polytheist is naturally much more likely to believe (and tremble at) the idea that this Jesus may indeed be a son of the gods than the Jews who reject the idea that Jesus could be the only begotten Son of God.¹⁸ Literally, John writes, "When Pilate heard this *word*....," using the same word that John used at the beginning of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the *word*...." R. C. H. Lenski writes:

And now came "this word," and not from Jesus but from the Jews themselves that this strange man whom Pilate had dressed up as a mock king made himself "God's Son." Actual fear gripped Pilate. The indefinite feeling that he had all along now received definite support. Turning, his eyes searched the face and the figure at his side, and the thought shot through his mind: "What if "this word" of the Jews were true? Like a flash it shot through Pilate's mind that "this word" might, indeed, be the key to everything. Too late the Jews see that their ardor in pitting their law against Pilate's law had made them reveal too much. They had made a false move—they had stiffened Pilate's reluctance."¹⁹

Once again, we see a deep irony in this narrative: "the agent of Rome proves more ready to believe something divine about God's son than his own people do (cf. 1:11; Mark 15:39)."²⁰

"Where are you from?"

So, Pilate returns directly to interrogate Jesus further: "He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer" (John 19:9). Remember, this takes

place after Pilate's soldiers have flogged Jesus, twisted a crown of thorns onto his head, and dressed Jesus in a purple robe. The whole purpose of that charade had been to demonstrate the weakness and insignificance of Jesus, but now Pilate is terrified of what he may have done. This moment perhaps best captures the true significance of the scene. Though Jesus is disfigured, bloodied and bruised by his beatings, and though Jesus stands before Pilate in meek humility, Pilate begins to see Jesus' true power and majesty.²¹ If Jesus indeed possesses more power than he has so far displayed during this trial—that is, if Jesus is indeed the king he has claimed to be—then Pilate stands condemned by a higher power than even the emperor of Rome. Pilate has understood the morning's proceedings as a two-directional power struggle between him and the Jews, but he now recognizes the possibility of a third dimension for which he had not previously accounted.

Jesus, for his part, gives Pilate no answer. By this silence, Jesus reiterates and reinforces his further testimony: "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).²² Jesus has come into the world for no other purpose than "to bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37), and he has fulfilled that role perfectly. Jesus has fully revealed his identity to Pilate, so what else could he say now? It is not as though Jesus hid the truth from Pilate, but Pilate did not listen to Jesus' voice and even mocked the very idea of truth (John 18:37b–38a).

True Authority

Pilate is astonished at Jesus' response: "So Pilate said to him, 'You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?'" (John 19:10). The portrait John gives us of Pilate profoundly reveals the Roman governor's fickleness. At one moment, he is filled with fear at the thought that he may have flogged the Son of God, and at the next moment, he is puffed up with pride to assert his authority over Jesus.²³ Jesus has said nothing to deny the claim, and yet Pilate no longer worries about the possibility of the judgment he may incur by his mistreatment of Jesus. Instead, he tries to bully Jesus into a response. Son of God or not, Pilate believes from the depths of his soul that *he* is the one who holds the power and authority in this situation. On one level, Pilate is correct that as the governor who represents Rome, he is the one who holds the authority to release Jesus or to crucify him. And yet, Jesus' royal power does not arise from his political clout according to the kingdoms of this world.

Jesus therefore responds to Pilate by reminding him of the strict limitations on his authority: "Jesus answered him, 'You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin'" (John 19:11). In the first sentence, Jesus identifies the ultimate authority in this situation: the one who reigns "from above." That is, Pilate would not have the power to make a decision over Jesus' life unless God himself had entrusted that power to Pilate.²⁴ In other words, Pilate can "do nothing more than God permits."²⁵ In the imagination of the conquering Romans, the idea that the Roman empire held absolute authority over the world against their subjects was taken for granted. Jesus flatly rejects this idea, testifying to Pilate that God alone grants authority from heaven—both in a general sense and also in this specific instance.

In the second sentence, Jesus shifts the subject to culpability: "Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin." That is, Pilate does incur some measure of guilt for the sin of what he is doing, but he does not incur as much guilt as "he who delivered me over to you." Jesus does not

clearly identify this person who has delivered Jesus to him, so Jesus may be speaking about Judas, Caiaphas, or even the entire Jewish nation. If we must identify a single person (*“he”*), then it is probably best to understand Jesus’ words in reference to Caiaphas “since he not only took an active if not determinative part in the plot against Jesus (11:49–53), and, as high priest presiding over the Sanhedrin, he took a leading part in formulating the charges against Jesus (*cf.* Mk. 14:61–64), charges of which John demonstrates his thorough awareness.”²⁶ Caiaphas’s guilt is greater than Pilate’s because “Pilate, though thoroughly corrupt, did not fully realize what he was doing. But Caiaphas acted with knowledge and grim determination.”²⁷

Taken together, these two sentences form a powerful rebuke against Pilate’s arrogance. He believes that *he* holds the authority in this situation, and yet Jesus informs Pilate that Pilate’s authority comes as a gift and that Pilate will not even be the most guilty party in this wicked event.²⁸ So far from possessing authority as the primary actor, Pilate’s role is not even secondary, but tertiary! God’s sovereignty rules over all, while the human actors involved are still held responsible for their moral actions. D. A. Carson explains this paradox helpfully: “even the worst evil cannot escape the outer boundaries of God’s sovereignty—yet God’s sovereignty never mitigates the responsibility and guilt of moral agents who operate under divine sovereignty, while their voluntary decisions and their evil rebellion never render God utterly contingent (*e.g.* Gn. 50:19–20; Is. 5:10ff.; Acts 4:27–28).”²⁹

Jesus’ Royal Power is not from Public Opinion (John 19:12–16a)

John gives us very limited insight into Pilate’s thoughts, feelings, and motivations. So, while we know that Pilate became afraid at the thought that Jesus is the Son of God (John 19:8), we do not learn exactly what Pilate thinks of Jesus’ response in John 19:11. Instead, we simply learn that Pilate continues on his course of trying to release Jesus: “From then on Pilate sought to release him, but the Jews cried out, ‘If you release this man, you are not Caesar’s friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar’” (John 19:12). Does Pilate believe that Jesus *is* the Son of God? Does he simply feel that the prudent decision is not to execute him? Whatever his thoughts, Pilate stays the course, trying to get Jesus’ case off of his docket.

The Jewish religious leaders, however, do not permit Pilate to act as he wishes. They play their trump card, compelling Pilate to crucify Jesus by warning him that releasing Jesus could be constituted as treason: “Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.” In part, John walks us through this progression so that we see Jesus’ innocence demonstrated again and again, leaving us without any doubt whatsoever that Jesus must be crucified only to serve as the sacrifice for *our* sins, and not for anything that he had done.³⁰ So, John demonstrates that the Jews push Pilate into a corner that leaves him with only one choice if he wishes to save his career, his political standing, and possibly even his own life: Jesus must be crucified. William Hendriksen writes this:

This was the last straw. One can imagine the rage which these words kindled in the heart of Pilate! He knew that these Jews were liars, and that they had no love whatever for the Roman government or its emperor. He was thoroughly convinced of the fact that deep down in their hearts they themselves were most unloyal. Yet, here they were, apparently deeply disturbed about the political loyalty of One who had never so much as spoken a single word against the Roman government. Despicable hypocrites they were, but they had him

cornered.³¹

Right or wrong, loyal or disloyal, Pilate believes that he must crucify Jesus

The Second Presentation of the King

Once again—perhaps as a final, desperate attempt to portray Jesus as someone whose crucifixion is unnecessary—Pilate parades Jesus before the Jews as their king: “So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Stone Pavement, and in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’” (John 19:13–14). By “the sixth hour,” John means that the time is approaching noon. There is a minor difficulty here in reconciling Mark’s account of the crucifixion, since he says that Jesus is crucified at “the third hour” (Mark 15:25), or at 9:00am. In the days before people could keep precise time, this difference is neither surprising nor important because of the fact that, “since people related the estimated time to the closest three-hour mark, any time between 9:00 A.M. and noon may have led one person to say that an event occurred at the third (9:00A.M.) or the sixth hour (12:00 noon).”³² This is not a contradiction, but simply a normal feature of life before clocks.

Moreover, we should not think that Mark and John are reporting the time for the sake of technical record-keeping. In John’s Gospel, the time serves an important theological purpose. At noon on the day of Preparation for the Passover, three things took place: “Jews cease their work, leaven is gathered out of the houses and burned, and the slaughtering of the Passover lambs commences.”³³ John is bringing out the theological symbolism of the timing of Jesus’ crucifixion to demonstrate that Jesus’ crucifixion is a kind of second Passover. He is the new Passover lamb who must be slain to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29) as God orchestrates “a second Exodus, wherein God would achieve an emancipation for all nations, not for Israel alone, giving them life in the promised land of his eternal kingdom.”³⁴

As Pilate prepares to slaughter the new Passover lamb, he declares to the Jews, “Behold your King!” Again, we need to read this announcement, along with “Behold the man!” (John 19:5), as parallel to John the Baptist’s announcement of Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36). This connection helps to underscore that Jesus is becoming the new Passover Lamb, but it also serves to bookend his public ministry with statements that testify to his true identity. Jesus is not a false, pretender king, but a true king, despite all appearances. Leon Morris writes:

As in the case of “Here is the man!” (v. 5) John’s irony lurks behind the words. For Pilate there was no question of kingship; his bedraggled prisoner was the antithesis of all that kingship meant for him. Jesus was not a king in any sense in which he understood the word. He was simply using the terms of the accusation in a last-ditch effort to get the Jews to drop proceedings. But for John the kingship was real. He wants us to see Jesus as King in the very act in which he went to death for the salvation of sinners.³⁵

Jesus was born as a true man and the rightful king, and the entire purpose for which he came was to become the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. The crucifixion is the capstone event to Jesus’ life and public ministry.

No King but Caesar

The Jews continue to insist on Jesus' crucifixion: "They cried out, 'Away with him, away with him, crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar.' So he delivered him over to them to be crucified" (John 19:15–16a). In so many ways, John has portrayed for us the self-evident reality of Jesus' kingship, even down to the identification of Jesus as the king of the Jews by the pagan Pilate. Nevertheless, crowd cries out to demand that Pilate send Jesus away to be crucified. The votes are in, and the people have spoken decisively against Jesus as their king. Nevertheless, Jesus' royal power does not rest on public opinion, but on the truth of God.

Additionally, the chief priests insist that they have no king but Caesar. They reject the true king whom God had given them—in addition to the kingdom of God itself—in order to align themselves entirely with Caesar to the exclusion of God. Even if Jesus were not God's true king, this statement is blasphemous and idolatrous for the covenant people of the God who insists that *he* is their king (e.g., Ps. 93–99).³⁶ The hypocrisy of this is self-evident, since the Jews earlier sought to make Jesus a king precisely so that he could lead them in war against Caesar (John 6:15), but they hardly care about the truth right now. They are so blinded by rage and hatred that they want only for Jesus to be crucified.

Finally, when John tells us that Pilate "delivered him over to them to be crucified," that does not mean that the Jews themselves carried out the administration of the crucifixion. Instead, it only means that Pilate ordered that Jesus be crucified according to "the will of the Jews who sought his death."³⁷ After so many warnings, demonstrations, presentations, and acclamations of Jesus' true identity, Jesus' "own" (John 1:11) reject him altogether, sending him off to be crucified by the Romans. If Jesus' royal power depended on the kingdoms of this world, Jesus' kingship would be finished. On the contrary, it will be through this crucifixion that Jesus will exercise his kingship to defeat his enemies and establish his everlasting kingdom through his death and resurrection.

Discussion Questions

1. How many ways do we see Pilate wanting to avoid crucifying Jesus? Name a situation where you have felt pressured into doing something you knew to be wrong, but where the weight of the world seemed to force you in that wrong direction anyway. How did you fight that temptation? What should we do when we find ourselves, like Pilate, in a battle to choose between what is right and what is convenient?
2. Consider this question honestly: How often do you make decisions based on personal appearance? How do those decisions shape whom you support, invest in, and love? Why does God demonstrate repeatedly through the Scriptures that we should not base our decisions on outward appearances, but instead on the heart (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7)?
3. How does Jesus contrast the political clout of Pilate with the authority of his Father? What does this idea teach us about our own view of politics, whether the politics of government or the politics in our families, neighborhoods, workplaces, and even churches? What does it mean to honor the authorities in this world while yet remembering that our kingdom is not of this world?

4. Think through all the places where you expose yourself to public opinions: newspapers, cable news, social media, water cooler conversations at work, etc. Why does the court of public opinion hold so much sway in our society? If we are honest, how much does public opinion shape the way that *we* think, believe, and act? How might we seek to be faithful when the votes of the court of public opinion are entirely against us?

Notes

1. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1243.
2. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 597.
3. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 597–98.
4. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 215. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.ix.i.html>>
5. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1247–48.
6. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1248.
7. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, 1123.
8. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1253.
9. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 598.
10. e.g., “The Warren Harding Error: Why We Fall for Tall, Dark, and Handsome Men,” in Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2005), 72–98.
11. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, 1124.
12. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 598.
13. See Gerber, *That You May Know*, 82–87.
14. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 215–16. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.ix.i.html>>
15. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 416.
16. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 599.
17. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1256–57.
18. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, 1125.
19. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1259.
20. Keener, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 2, 1125.
21. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 219. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.ix.ii.html>>
22. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1261–62.
23. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 220–21. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.ix.ii.html>>
24. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 603.
25. Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 221. Available online: <<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35.ix.ii.html>>
26. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 601.
27. Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, vol. II, 418–19.
28. Lenski, *The Interpretation of John's Gospel*, 1266.

29. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 600.
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