

Behold The Man, Behold The King

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[0 : 00] John chapter 19 verse 12 to 22. 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. When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at the place called the stone pavement and in Aramaic, Gabbathah.

Now it was the day of preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, behold your king. They cried out away with him, away with him, crucify him.

Pilate said to them, shall I crucify your king? The chief priest answered, we have no king but Caesar. So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus and he went out bearing his own cross to the place called the place of the skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

[1 : 03] There they crucified him and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

Many of the Jews read this inscription for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin and in Greek. So the chief priest of the Jews said to Pilate, do not write the king of the Jews but rather this man said, I am the king of the Jews.

Pilate answered, what I have written, I have written. Well this morning we're continuing our series in John's Gospel and we've come to the final hours of Jesus' life.

When we reached chapter 18 a few weeks ago, Jesus had just been in the garden with his disciples praying and Judas had come with a band of soldiers to arrest Jesus and Jesus had been taken first to the chief priest and then he had taken to Pilate the Roman governor to be questioned.

And a few weeks ago we asked the question, as Jesus made his way to the cross, why did Jesus die? Well this week we're going to ask a slightly different question.

[2 : 19] Who is the person who dies on the cross? Who is this Jesus who is sentenced to death? You see as we come to this trial before Pilate, the identity of Jesus is the central topic of this narrative.

Who is this Jesus who is sentenced to death on the cross? And you might be surprised that the key truths that summarize who Jesus is here come out of the mouth of Pilate.

We saw several weeks ago that Pilate was the one who got it wrong. He thought he could sit on the fence. He could be undecided about who Jesus was. But actually here little does Pilate know, but he's actually got it right about who Jesus is.

And those two truths that he summarizes are there in verse 5 in chapter 19 and verse 14. Verse 5 Pilate says, behold the man. And verse 14 he says, behold your king.

Those are our two points. Those are our two headings to summarize who Jesus is as he stands on trial. First, behold the man. Imagine the scene after a morning of interrogation, Pilate comes out of his palace and standing before an angry crowd, he gestures to Jesus.

- [3 : 34] Behold the man. In other words, look at him. Here is your guy. Except Jesus would have been barely recognizable. The soldiers would have whipped and lacerated his skin.
- The chief priests have already spat on him and punched him in the face. A crown of thorns has been rammed onto his head and a purple robe hangs off his beaten and bruised and bleeding back.
- Behold the man. Pilate's words are dripping with irony. Here is the man that you chief priests, you crowds, claimed were so dangerous that he was a threat to the Roman Empire. Can't you see how harmless, how ridiculous this guy is?
- And yet John, the Gospel writer, records with even greater irony than Pilate has in mind. Because John says, here is the man. This is the man.
- Turn back with me to the beginning of John's Gospel, if you've got your Bible open. John introduces Jesus as the Word. John's first words in John's Gospel, he tells us that Jesus is the Word, the divine Word, the eternal Word who was from the beginning.
- [4 : 45] The one who has made all things. Verse 3, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In our Thursday night Bible studies and prayer meetings, we've been reading through Genesis 1-11.
- And Jesus, we don't see it in Genesis, but as John looks back, he says that Jesus was there at the beginning. He was there creating, he was there bringing life.
- He is the Creator God. It was Jesus who was the voice who spoke at the beginning, who spoke creation into existence, parceling out light from darkness, throwing out the stars and planets into existence, driving back the sea with a command of his mouth.
- We shouldn't really be surprised when Jesus stills the storm, when it was his voice at the beginning of creation who pushed aside the waters to create land. It was his voice that nourished the soil that caused shoots to burst out of the ground and plants to grow, that formed animals, that filled the sky and the sea with birds and various creatures.
- And if you've watched any David Attenborough series or even the new one that's coming out, this world is amazing, isn't it? But it was even better at the beginning, because it hadn't even been broken then.
- [6 : 06] And God said it was good. And then came the best bit, because God said, let us make man in our own image. So God created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created him.
- Male and female, he created them. Humanity is God's special project. Humanity is the creature that is going to reflect God's glory that more than all the rest of creation put together.
- Humanity are the ones who are going to stand and rule on God's behalf, have relationship with God, are going to be able to... God has imprinted some of his attributes, some of his character on humanity, so that they can display what he is like to the world.
- And the rest of creation is like a stage for humanity to display God's glory. Male and female, made in God's likeness, made to display God's glory.
- You can imagine as God places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. He says, behold the man. And he said it was very good. But on that cosmic stage, humanity failed.
- [7 : 13] As creation watched on in horror, Adam and Eve chose not to listen to God's word, but the word of the snake, the word of a lie, the word that said God doesn't want what is best for you.
- And instead, image bearers that are meant to reflect God's glory turned in on themselves, cracked and broken, turning away from God, turning in on themselves.

And so God spoke again, this time to curse man, with hardship and ultimately death. But in the midst of that curse, God made a promise that one of Eve's descendants would be the one who'd come and crush that serpent's head.

A man would come who would perfectly bear the image of God, the perfect man. And that's where John picks up the story. He introduces in the middle, in the beginning of his gospel, the word.

The word who is not only at the beginning, who looked on and who was active in creating man, but the word who then became flesh. God who clothed himself in humanity, who became fully God and fully man.

[8 : 20] The one who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. As Pilate cries, behold the man, John says, this is the man. This is the man we've been waiting for. This is the man who has the only perfect man who has ever walked this earth, who has not stumbled, who has not had, doesn't have a heart muddled by sin.

This is the eternal word, clothed in flesh. The first Adam failed. This is the second Adam. Let's see what he will do. And we've already had the verdict throughout John's gospel that he hasn't put a foot wrong.

The crowds didn't realize, but there stood the only human who could only, who could perfectly reflect God's glory. And John wants to show us that. The perfect man. John intends for us to see Jesus as the second Adam, the perfect man, because three times he emphasizes Jesus' innocence.

That's why we started a bit earlier on in chapter 18. If you look chapter 18 verse 38, Pilate gives his verdict, I find no guilt in him. Chapter 19 verse 4, I find no guilt in him.

Verse 6, I find no guilt in him. I cannot be plainer. The first man, the first Adam, failed on the cosmic stage. Now here stands the second Adam.

[9 : 39] He stands before the crowds. He stands before creation. And if Pilate delivers his verdict, it's actually, it's God in heaven who is delivering the verdict.

They're Pilate's words, but it's God's verdict. This is my son who I love, with whom I'm well pleased. This is the innocent one. This is the man, behold the man, who is spotless, who is blameless.

Jesus was truly man. He was also truly innocent. And both those things are vital, because Jesus came to be a substitute for sinful humanity.

You see Adam and Eve weren't the only humans to have sinned. Once they disobeyed God, it was as if humanity's DNA was infected by sin. Every human since has been born a sinner. And that's something we see quite quickly.

Toddlers soon learn to just, well, if that no doesn't mean anything, or they'll just try anyway. They'll try to get away with anything. And pretty soon children learn to lie.

[10 : 38] And by the time we're adults, we become experts at sinning. And by cat covering up our sin. Like our first parents, each one of us is a broken image bearer.

We're created for a relationship with God, but we're cut off from God because of our sin. And just like Adam, each one of us faces the punishment of death, eternal death, because of that.

To be a substitute for sinful humanity, Jesus had to be fully human. And he had to be sinless. And we're reminded in this passage that he's both.

He's the perfect man. Pilate unwittingly reminds us of that. I find no guilt in him. He's the perfect substitute. A few weeks ago, we looked at what it means for Jesus to be the substitute.

The language of substitution goes all the way through John's Gospel. Someone standing in our place. As Jesus comes onto the stage, John the Baptist sees Jesus and says, behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

[11 : 44] Later on, Jesus speaks of himself as the good shepherd. He says, I am the good shepherd who will lay down his life for his sheep. Lay down his life on behalf of his sheep.

And now as we come to chapter 19, you see in verse 14, John includes that little detail. Now it's the day of preparation for the Passover. It's the sick thou. Why is that important?

Because the Passover was one of these big events in Israel's history where we saw substitution pictured in a graphic way, in a vital way.

In the festival of Passover, remembered God rescuing his people from Egypt, from slavery in Egypt. And at that time, in the final tenth plague that God sent to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go, he was going to kill all the firstborn in Egypt.

And the firstborn of God's people were only safe if a lamb died in their place. And that blood of the lamb was painted on the doorpost to show that a death had already taken place.

[12 : 46] There was a substitute who had died instead of the firstborn son. The Passover festival looked back to that great rescue.

But it also looked forward to an even greater rescue, an even greater substitution. Because a lamb was never a proper substitute. Lamb, you know, we see them appearing now, they're cute, you don't really want to kill them.

They're lovely. But they're not the same as a person. They're just sheep. You and I are created in God's image.

We have worth and we have value beyond our comprehension. Each one of us has more value than all the rest of animals and plants and insects put together.

Because we are made in God's image. A lamb isn't an appropriate substitute for a person. Rather, it looks forward to the only substitute we could have.

[13 : 45] The perfect man. Jesus Christ, the human life. Only a human can stand in a human's place. Jesus is the perfect Passover sacrifice. Like a lamb, he's without blemish.

He's sinless. But unlike a lamb, he can stand in our place. He's human, the most human human to have ever existed. And so Pilate says, behold the man.

Behold the perfect man who will die in the place of sinful humanity. Who will die in the place of people like you and me. But that's not the only thing that Pilate gets right.

Later on in verse 14, Pilate says, behold your king. That's our second point. Behold your king. As Pilate sits down at his judgment seat before the crowd, he says, behold your king.

But what does Pilate mean? Well, Jesus' identity as king has been at the heart of this trial. You see, the Jewish leaders want to put Jesus to death, but they don't have authority to do that. Only the Romans can put someone to death.

[14 : 46] So they need to persuade the Romans that Jesus is a threat, that Jesus should die. But the problem is that Jesus has never done anything wrong. We've seen that.

So they have to invent charges. And so what they land on is let's tell the Romans that because Jesus claims to be a king, that he's the kind of king that would be a threat to Rome.

Because Jesus is the kind of king who would be a, I don't know, a revolutionary. Someone who's going to try to overthrow the Romans. He's a dangerous rebel trying to start a revolt.

Well, Pilate works out pretty quickly that Jesus is innocent, which is when the Jewish leaders play their trump card. They say in verse 12, if you release this man, you're not a friend of Caesar.

Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar. Pilate's in a political trap. On one hand, if he admits that Jesus is innocent, and if he follows through with that, well, then the Jewish leaders are threatening that they're going to report him to Caesar.

[15 : 50] But then he knows that if he does say put Jesus to death, he's killing an innocent man. Ultimately, Pilate decides to save his own skin and sentence Jesus to death.

But he tries to get his own back at the religious leaders in the process because he announces behold your king. As Jesus stands up there, this bloodied and helpless prisoner, he says behold your king.

Look how helpless your king of the Jews is. But the irony is that once again, Pilate speaks better than he knows. Because John has told us throughout this gospel that Jesus really is the king.

Not just a king, but the king. He's the Messiah, the promised king, the eternal king that God would send, the long-awaited king of the Jews.

Around a thousand years before, God promised King David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne, would sit on the throne of creation, have dominion over the world forever and ever.

[16 : 51] And the Old Testament prophets built on those promises to reveal that the king, the Messiah, would be the one who would rescue the people of Israel. Now by the time Jesus comes on the scene, there's been a lot of hype about the Messiah.

And a lot of people are thinking this person's going to come and free us from the Romans, bring political freedom. And Jesus didn't deny being the Messiah. In chapter 12, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of the donkey, not just because it was the most easily available mode of transport, but to fulfill a prophecy in Zachariah that the Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on the donkey.

Jesus is like Jesus waving a banner saying, I am the Messiah. I am the coming king. And throughout John's Gospel, we've seen what kind of King Jesus is and what kind of kingdom he is.

The first miracle he does is turning water into wine to show the abundance that his kingdom will be, that it will be one where there'll be abundant food and wine, like his prophesied, where there's an overflowing goodness.

As he later heals the official son, heals the paralyzed man, he's showing that his kingdom isn't a place for sickness or death. He isn't just showing his compassion, he's showing what his kingdom is like, that it's nothing like this broken world, that he's come to remake this broken world.

[18 : 16] As he describes himself as the good shepherd who lays his life down for his sheep. He's saying that he's reminding us that he's unlike any king or boss or government that's come before.

Jesus hasn't come to fleece the sheep and use people for his own ends. He's come to lay down his life for his people. And that self-sacrifice is central to Jesus' understanding of being the Messiah.

Earlier on in chapter 12 he says, for this purpose I have come, to be lifted up to die on the cross. And it's that part of Jesus' kingship that people didn't like then, and even the people still don't like today.

They think the Messiah is meant to be strong, not weak. God's king is meant to be victorious, not get killed. But Jesus wasn't coming to build an empire on earth.

He says in chapter 18, my kingdom is not of this world. Jesus is the king, the Messiah, but he didn't come to be enthroned in Jerusalem, but outside the city walls, on a cross.

[19 : 23] And it's on that cross, an inscription is placed to tell the whole world this is the king. Verse 19, Pilate puts an inscription, he writes the inscription, it says, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

And once again, Pilate means it as a dig at the religious leaders, but Pilate's malice serves to God's ends. You see, Jesus is the king of the Jews, but on the cross he is exalted.

There he is raised up as king over the world. Psalm 96 verse 10 says, say among the nations the Lord reigns, and that's exactly what happens.

In Aramaic, in Latin, in Greek, in other words, in the common language, the language of the army, the language of the empire, it's stated, it's declared, it's proclaimed to everyone that this is the king of the Jews.

I don't know what the equivalent would be now if you put stuff in, what, English, Gaelic and emojis or something like that. I couldn't think of a third language. It's declared to everyone this is the king.

[20 : 29] The king has come. The king has come, but how do the nations respond? Well, they say crucify him. Humanity crucifies the Messiah.

We see that in the way that all the characters in this whole narrative respond the same way to Jesus. John is making a point, the soldiers mock, the religious leader scream for Jesus' blood.

Pilate delivers Jesus over to be crucified, and the crowd shouts away with him, away with him, crucify him. Jew and Gentile, the whole world, in other words, is ganging up against God's king.

It's a fulfillment of Psalm 2 that we sung earlier. Why did the heathen nations rage? Why did the peoples plot in vain? Earth's kings combine in enmity. Her rulers join against God's reign.

It's the humanity setting themselves up against God's king to crucify Jesus Christ. The one who rules over every nation is put to death by people from every nation.

[21 : 34] Jesus' identity we've seen is revealed during the trial. We see that Jesus is the one, or we're reminded of it at least. He is the one who is the man. He is the one who is the king.

But at the same time, the hearts of humanity are also revealed. You might say Jesus is on trial here, but one of the ironies that John gives us is that actually we're on trial as we read this.

Pilate's on trial as he interrogates Jesus. The crowd is on trial as they respond to Jesus. You see, we might have quite a, I don't know, a positive picture of humanity.

Everyone's basically good. But John says, well, no, that's not true. We're all basically bad. The default position of humanity is to not, isn't to love God, isn't to worship Jesus as king and bow to him.

The default position of humanity is to reject the king, to say, crucify him. We've seen that ever since the start of the Gospel. John said in chapter 1, verse 11, Jesus came to his own, but his own people didn't receive him.

[22 : 42] Or chapter 3, verse 19, this is the verdict, light has come into darkness, but people love darkness rather than light because their works were evil. We weren't there 2,000 years ago, but the Bible reminds us that the default of our hearts is the same.

Each one of us, by nature, has rejected the king. And so we're left with a question because it doesn't have to stay that way. How will we respond?

How will we respond to this king? The irony is, as I said, that we're on trial. We're on trial for how we will respond to Jesus.

And John narrates it, such that we see that there isn't any option to sit in the middle. As we saw several weeks ago, you can't sit on the fence. Pilate tries that, but pretty soon his heart is revealed.

He says, I'm not a Jew. Am I religious, essentially? This has nothing to do with me. Maybe you've thought that way. I can just be agnostic. I don't have to decide.

[23 : 44] But in the end, Pilate ultimately has to choose a side, and he chooses to deliver Jesus over to be crucified. You see, the reality is, we all have to choose a king.

If we don't choose Jesus as king, we will be choosing someone else or something else as a king. We see that with the religious leaders. They're pushed into a corner. Pilate mocks them and says, behold, you're king, and they're so desperate for Jesus to be killed that they say, what do they say? We have no king but Caesar.

They're willing to betray everything they stand for in order to put Jesus to death. Well, there's only ever two options. We either have Jesus as king, or we choose something or someone else as king.

And in the history of humanity is a history of people grappling for power, and kings forever disappointing. Now, ever since Adam, we longed for someone to lead us properly, to help us to do things right.

But we're always going to be let down. Even the best kings of Israel were mistakes, were let down in history. And we see all around us, politicians, counselors, parents, everyone, our spouse, will always be let down.

[25 : 03] We think we can be the master of our own fate even sometimes, but we'll find that actually we can't even be king of our own lives. We're ruled by our own desires, by our own wants, we're enslaved by our appetites, which will never be satisfied.

The truth is we all have a king. We're all ruled by something or someone. However, that something will always disappoint at best, at worst abuse, crush, enslave.

The chief priests thought they were free by getting rid of Jesus. In reality, they were just choosing a worse king. Jesus, though we see, is the good shepherd. He's the best king we could have because he's the king who didn't come to be served, but to serve, the king who laid down his life for his sheep.

Left to ourselves, you and I couldn't choose Jesus as king. The reality is by nature, each one of us would keep shouting, crucify him. And we wouldn't change our minds.

But Jesus came to change that. He came to choose us. He came to go to the cross to die in our place as the perfect man, because we can't save ourselves.

[26 : 17] We need the king to come to lay down his life in our place to save us. And his grace and mercy, Jesus, the king of creation, chose to become man, to go to the cross, to lay down his life for people like you and me.

So that rebels who say away with him, Jesus has every right to say away with us, doesn't he? But instead, he chose to have his creation, have his people say away with him.

He chose to die so that we could have life, so that we could have entry into his kingdom. Behold the man, Pilate says, behold the second Adam, behold the perfect man come to die in our place.

Behold the king, behold the sovereign God, the promised one. Your king come to give life, come to give entrance into his forever kingdom.

Let's pray.