

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

King of
the Jews

INTRODUCTION

John 18:28-40

A legend tells of an Irish king who disguised himself and went into the banquet hall of one of his barons. He was escorted to a lowly place among the throng who sat at the feast. The brilliance of his conversation and the nobility of his manner soon attracted the attention of someone with sufficient authority to escort him to a higher table. The same thing occurred again, and soon he was seated among the nobles of the realm. After another display of great wisdom, one of the lords spoke out, "In truth, Sir, you speak like a king. If you are not a king, you deserve to be one." Then the king removed his disguise and took his rightful place among his subjects (Let Me Illustrate [Revell], Donald Grey Barnhouse, pp. 180-181).

That's what should have happened when Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, laid aside His glory, took on human flesh, and dwelt among us. Although He was a common carpenter from the despised town of Nazareth, by His words and His deeds, including His miracles, the Jews should have recognized Him as their promised Messiah and King. But the Jewish leaders were so blinded by their sinful pride that even the stupendous miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead only hardened their resolve to kill Jesus.

In John's portrayal of Jesus' trial before Pilate, he wants us to see that even though Jesus was despised and rejected by the Jews, mocked by the soldiers, and finally condemned by Pilate, the man on the cross is the King. John wants us to see the majesty of Christ as He faced this suffering on our behalf. He also wants us to see the depth of sin that resides in every heart. Apart from God's grace, we would have responded to Jesus as the Jewish leaders or Pilate or the Roman soldiers did. But also, hidden in this story is the way that we all should respond to Christ: *You can reject Christ for many reasons, but His kingly majesty calls you to trust in Him as Savior and Lord.*¹

OPEN IT

1. What has been the greatest accomplishment of your life so far?

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-95-what-will-you-do-jesus-john-1828-1916>

READ IT

John 18:28-40

EXPLORE IT

2. Where did the authorities take Jesus after he stood before Caiaphas?
3. Why did the Jews not enter Pilate's headquarters?
4. Why did the Jews refuse to judge Jesus according to their own law?
5. What was the first question Pilate asked Jesus?
6. What would Jesus' servants have done if His Kingdom was from this world?
7. What did Jesus say was the purpose for His birth?

APPLY IT

Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea, is introduced to the narrative. He received his appointment from the Emperor Tiberius in AD 26, probably about four years earlier than these events, and held the post until AD 37. He has often been thought of as a Roman Procurator, owing to the evidence of the Roman historian Tacitus, but an inscription published in 1962, discovered in the Herodian theater in Caesarea, calls him 'prefect of Judea'. The Gospels use the generic category 'governor'. Both from biblical and extra-biblical sources, historians have come to know him as a morally weak and vacillating man who, like many of the same breed, tried to hide his flaws under shows of stubbornness and brutality. His rule earned him the loathing of the Jewish people, small groups of whom violently protested and were put down with savage ferocity. (cf. Lk. 13:1)

Because the Jewish authorities refused to enter the praetorium (v. 28), the Governor *came out to them*. This is not historically incredible. Any Roman governor would have been aware of the Jews' deep religious sensitivities, and some of them, at least, he would have honored, especially during the high feasts when it was more than usually necessary to avoid riots. It was an easy task to order his servants to move his judgment seat.²

8. The religious leaders refused to 1) defile themselves by entering Pilate's headquarters, and they wanted to 2) pursue the death penalty for Jesus. Knowing what we know about them from the rest of the Gospel of John, how do you think these leaders justified themselves in keeping the law in both of these circumstances?

9. Religious fervor can cause a person to do great things, but it also can cause a person to do terrible things "in the name of God." What are some examples of this happening throughout history? (Both good and bad.)

² DA Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans 1991 p.590

10. What are some checks and balances that you have in your life that help you discern the will of God for you and your family? (So that you will not use God's name to justify wrong actions....)

His question: What *charges are you bringing against this man?* formally opened the judicial proceedings. The fact that Roman troops were used at the arrest (v. 3,12) proves that the Jewish authorities had communicated something of this case to Pilate in advance; the sparring that follows in the wake of his question confirms the point. They had expected Pilate to confirm their judgment and order the death sentence by crucifixion; instead, he orders a fresh hearing in his presence.³

11. When have you been tempted to do what works rather than what's right?

³ DA Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, Eerdmans 1991 p.590

12. When, like Jesus, have you been willing to stand your ground regardless of the consequences?

13. How would you answer the question, "What is truth?"

14. When have you had to stand up for the truth? What were the particular circumstances that made it either relatively easy or particularly difficult?

15. In what settings might you need to stand up for the truth this week regardless of the consequences?

16. How is Jesus the King in the world? How about in your life? What is one way you can arrange your priorities this week in honor of God as King over you?