

“What Manner of King?” (Jn. 18:28-38)

1. Tragic Hypocrisy (28)
 - a. v. 28 highlights their woeful hypocrisy as they avoid outward defilement yet are ruled by their defiled hearts to seek the slaughter of God’s holy Lamb who is Himself undefiled. Furthermore, they lied claiming Jesus spoke political threats against the empire due to his being king (Lu. 23:1-2). Finally, their hypocrisy would reach the zenith point when, for their selfish and malicious purposes to kill Jesus, they publically cried out that they had no king but Caesar (19:15)!
2. Procedural Exasperation (29-31)
 - a. vv. 29-30 the proceeding was not atypical in that Pilate asked for the official charges brought against Jesus. However, their reply was irritable because they wanted to dispense with the formalities and on to a sentencing. Pilate had seemingly assumed Jesus’ guilt to have approved soldiers to sieze Jesus. Nevertheless, Pilate and the Pharisees hated each other and he seemingly didn’t miss an opportunity to make them wait and or jump through the hoops of procedure which emphasized their submission to his rule and authority. After their terse reply, he then says, in a sense, well then if you don’t need my approval, and this is a mere theological dispute, take Him and deal with Him yourselves. But he obviously knew what they desired and so his comment was further insult v. 31. But could Pilate be this lucky to avoid the conundrum all together by turning Jesus over to them? Hardly, as they needed him, Pilate also would have to acquiesce to them due to the threat of rebellion and the Pharisees’ threats to report Pilate’s negligence...
 - b. “In spite of his authority, Pilate seemed to be a troubled man, trying to make the best of a difficult and very insecure position. Over the years his status had been undermined by these stubborn Jews in a number of incidents. And he had to contend with the wealth and power in the house of Annas and deal with the Sanhedrin which was a well-organized, exclusive group. There was also the constant challenge of radical groups, particularly the Zealots and the Essenes. And the feast of the Passover with thousands of pilgrims crowded into Jerusalem was always an explosive time. It must have seemed like an impossible situation. And he could not help wondering about his standing with Caesar, who had developed a special relationship with Herod. Several of his decisions over the past few years had been reversed because of Herod’s influence.”¹
3. Providential Jujitsu (31-32)
 - a. After his rhetorical dismissal, they had to begrudgingly admit their need for him. Though they were using him, they had to endure his comments. He knew they were merely using him and he loathed that fact and thus attempted to make things uneasy for them if not impossible. Don Carson summarized, “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).”² Pilate was one who was not to be tested.
 - b. Why not stone Jesus themselves? His popularity, days earlier he was met with by a multitude who praised Him and paved his path with palm branches. Before such, they did seek to stone Jesus but He seemingly supernaturally strolled through the midst of the ‘would be’ murderous mob (Jn. 8:59; 10:31). Furthermore, they took such an opportunity with

¹ Fredrikson, R. L., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1985). *John* (Vol. 27, p. 258). Thomas Nelson Inc.

² Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 590). Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

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Stephen (Acts 7:58-60). However, after Jesus’ reception into Jerusalem they dared not take the blame for an isolated execution. They would disenfranchise many Jews who they desire to influence (or just keep in line) and feared themselves be ostracized by a majority if they killed Jesus for theological reasons when He had taught open and consistently to the crowds – revealing themselves to be petty, pretentious, jealous, insecure, envious, malicious, hypocrites. So they had to employ Pilate with a – now altered charge – of sedition; one Pilate could not ignore. So then, they had their leverage as did Pilate. And their leverage won out because of the incited mob mentality which was shortly to come. The threat of such was really likely the only initial concern of Pilate, which turned to reality.

- c. For those who fall prey to it, evil deceives them that their plotting is ingenious and that cleverly manipulating and maneuvering to stay on top is wise. They knew that rather than privately stoning and condemning Jesus which would alienate them from many, a public, official, Roman execution would prove He was a failed self-proclaimed messiah. Bruce Milne wrote, “Sympathy for him [Jesus] and his claims was widespread. They therefore had to move carefully. Indeed, during the whole procedure they give the appearance of men looking over their shoulders much of the time. There would be no surer way to dampen any backlash provoked by his execution than by having him crucified by the Roman overlords. Crucifixion was proscribed in the law as a sign of God’s curse (Dt. 21:23), hence a ‘crucified Messiah’ was about as likely as a square circle. It was a moral and spiritual impossibility, the more so when it expressed submission to the Gentile power.”³
- d. I’d like to add another pertinent point: As this was God’s plan from the beginning, it was revealed that the Lamb would be slain but the revelations were cryptic enough that how such would happen was concealed from Satan (hence he entered Judas...) and yet specific enough to pin point their fulfillment in hindsight! See 1 Cor. 2:7-8!

4. Ubiquitous Theocracy (33-37)

- a. A King? vv. 33-37 A Private Hearing. Pilate wanted to know what he was really up against and I’m certain he found more than he had expected or wanted. Perhaps further exasperating the Jews, Pilate took Jesus into the Praetorium (inside headquarters) where the Jews would be outwardly defiled. But one on one with Jesus proved intimidating for Pilate not Jesus. An opportunity, however, for Pilate to get the real and ultimate truth as he spoke to the personification of truth itself! He got to the point and asked if Jesus was a king. Jesus’ response was gracious as He asked Pilate if indeed he really wanted to know for himself if Jesus was king. Pilate would have loved to be able to clearly dismiss Jesus as a zealot and hand him over after toying with the Pharisees and such would have been indicative of the second part of Jesus’ inquiry viz. “or did others tell you this concerning me?” Did Pilate hear of such claims, which would indeed, be threats to Rome or at least Pilate’s own post and local peacekeeping? I think it is at this point where Pilate really sees the solemnness of the moment, decision, and repercussions. The reality – and what John is at least partly conveying is that Pilate is on trial as it were and Jesus is the Judge. Even so it seems obvious to me that Jesus was being easy on this hardened man, giving him opportunity to inquire of Jesus’ kingship, kingdom, and truth itself. Pilate was uninterested. It was as if Jesus was the kind interrogator who was allowing Pilate to further inquire for himself. Jesus’ person and work demand a decision not just a verdict – for Pilate gave his verdict v. 38 but with a contradicting sentence 19:16.

³ Milne, B. (1993). [*The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide*](#) (pp. 265–266). InterVarsity Press.

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- b. A Different Kingdom (Nature of): v. 36. What kind of king(dom)? “Not ‘of’ this world” literally, “from” this world. The Greek term *ek* is “out of” or “from” signifying origin and or nature hence Jesus kingdom is from above and has a heavenly nature which is to be brought *to* “earth as it is in heaven” (Mat. 6:10). Though His kingdom is “from” above it is *for* earth and His Kingdom citizens are to be in but not of the world (Jn. 17:15-18) and they are to be overcomers of the world by trusting in Him (1 Jn. 5:4). Furthermore, He has conquered (Eph. 4:8; Col. 2:15) and reigns – and will continue to do so until all enemies are put under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25-28, 50-56).
- c. Kingdom Manifesto
- i. The Sermon on the Mount is a something of a Kingdom manifesto⁴ which describes the manifestations of God’s Kingdom on earth in these last days (cf. Joel 2:28ff.).
 - ii. There is much debate regarding the manifestation and prerogatives of God’s Kingdom the last few years. Should Christians get political? Should they have a place in politics? An absurd question indeed. Or, should “political” issues be preached on from the pulpit? I often say I’m not getting political, I’m discussing values, priorities, virtues, and attitudes. I’m discussing truth. Jesus’ Kingdom brought to earth via His revelation, His person, and His Church; is a Kingdom of truth v. 37 and righteousness. If the Church doesn’t speak on such, she is neglecting her mission to bring the Word of the Gospel.
- d. Prophesied Kingdom: Promises of old declare that the kingdom come would be empowered by God’s Spirit and that His people would call on the name of the LORD (Joel 2:28-32). And, in fact, Peter quoted Joel and said that that was prophesying this (Acts 2:16-21). Furthermore, Jeremiah (31:31-33) and Ezekiel (36:25-28) foretold the nature of this agency and theocracy albeit in the midst of many nations. As C. S. Lewis wrote, “Enemy-occupied territory---that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.” Therefore, in Mat. 13 Jesus’ parables describe the current Kingdom of God as a mixture of good and evil with the righteous Gospel grows eventually as a small seed to a supernatural tree. Therefore Mat. 5:38-48. Therefore, God’s rule on earth is now as Joel and the others predicted. It is also spiritual and personal – a theocracy within. Following point is the song “Theocracy” lyrics →
- e. At the center of my heart there sits a throne
That the rightful occupant's not always
free to call His own
For how can I give the King
His place of worth above all else
When I spend my time striving
to place that crown upon myself
- Battle cry, to engage
For the war, set the stage
And the armies march and kings arise
For the choice, time has come
Mine or Thy will be done?
And the pain reflects in holy eyes
For the will to obey

⁴ Mat. chs. 5-7: Kingdom Prerogatives (5), Kingdom Priorities (6), Kingdom Perspectives & Prerequisites (7).

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From the night to the day
And the seasons change and rulers die
Not of flesh, not of men
Wage the war deep within
On and on it rages undenied

I take my crown, cast it down
Castles burning, Castles burning
Learn to grow, grow to be
A flesh and blood Theocracy
To take the loss, bear the cross
Raise the Kingdom, raise the Kingdom
Burn away all I've been
To resurrect Theocracy within

And the would-be rulers of my heart
That I place upon the throne
Each lead the kingdom of my life to ruin
To bring every thought into submission,
to tear the idols down
is to break the chains, to rearrange
to give the King his crown

Battle cry, to engage
For the war, set the stage
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For the choice, time has come
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To resurrect Theocracy within

Father, use me to be Your hands down here
A mirror to reflect Your glory into hurting eyes
And let me see the world with vision clear
and not through selfishness and lies
For if I am consumed with my own cares
What right will I have to speak the words
"The Kingdom come"?
And if I am consumed with my own will

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What right to pray "Thy will be done"?

As all around me I see bleeding souls
Please give me strength to never pass them idly by
And as the angry storm clouds start to roll,
May they see comfort in my eyes
For just as you are full of mercy and love
The same to others, You have called me to be
And by the covenant of grace, above and below
Within our souls: Theocracy

Battle cry, to engage
For the war, set the stage
And the armies march and kings arise
For the choice, time has come
Mine or Thy will be done?
And the pain reflects in holy eyes
For the will to obey
From the night to the day
And the seasons change and rulers die
Not of flesh, not of men
Wage the war deep within
On and on it rages undenied

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Burn away all I've been
To resurrect Theocracy within

- f. Kingdom of Truth: v. 37. Pilate: ‘are you that kind of king?’ Whatever that may be. N. T. Wright commented on Pilate’s inquiry when he asked Jesus a second time: “So when Pilate faces Jesus, and someone hints that the reason the chief **priests** have handed him over is because he thinks he’s a king, this must be what he assumes is going on.”⁵ → “And people [like Pilate back then] knew how kings became kings, too. Often, the crown would pass from father to son, or to some other close male relative. But from time to time there would be a revolution. The way to the crown, for anyone not in the direct family line, was through violence. This was so among the Jews as much as among the pagans. Judas Maccabaeus had established his dynasty, two hundred years before Jesus met Pilate, through military revolution against the Syrians, winning for the Jews their independence, and for himself and his family a royal status they had not previously aspired to. Herod the Great, thirty years before Jesus was born, had defeated the Parthians, the great empire to the east, and Rome in gratitude had allowed him to become ‘King of the Jews’, though he, too, had no appropriate background or pedigree.”⁶ Jesus confesses that He is a king but contrary to monarchs of lineage, overthrows, or coups, the nature of His Kingdom (rule/reign) is truth. A sad irony is

⁵ Wright, T. (2004). [*John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21*](#) (p. 114). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

⁶ Wright, T. (2004). [*John for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 11-21*](#) (pp. 113–114). Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

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that Pilate, who had a private audience with Jesus, could have inquired further about such but was uninterested as He was speaking to the personification of truth!

g. A Reign on Earth

i. Because Jesus’ Kingdom is not from this world doesn’t mean it is not for or in it. In fact, it is over all the kingdoms of earth reconciling the nations (individuals therein) to Himself. We live in both Kingdoms as Christians and render to each its due (Lu. 20:25). And because our adversaries are not flesh does not mean they don’t use the flesh (2 Cor. 10:3-5; 11:10-15; 4:1-18).

ii. Read Gab’s article “Every Christian is a Christian Nationalist”

5. Squandered Opportunity

- a. v. 38. Pilate’s truth or reality was likely that of most who are in politics viz. truth is what is pragmatic. Further irony could be conceived as shrewd and cynical Pilate would scoff at those who would claim to proclaim truth (how many politicians today claim such while vilifying their opponents?) and yet he cannot ignore the authenticity of Jesus’ claim and so declares Him faultless. Nevertheless, he will go on to sentence Jesus as if He was guilty (19:16).
- b. Concerned more with his own reputation, position, security, etc. He begins to conjure a plan to appease the potential mob, those who followed Jesus, his own reputation, and avoid executing an innocent and intriguing man. Milne explained, “He will offer to release Jesus, their ‘king’ (39). Three advantages might have accrued to Pilate by this ploy. First, he would be tacitly admitting that Jesus is a criminal, which would please his accusers. Secondly, he would thereby allow the people to speak because ‘he perceived it was out of envy that the priests had offered him up’ (Mt. 27:18). Thirdly, he would clear his own conscience since in his heart he knows that Jesus is no criminal.”⁷

⁷ Milne, B. (1993). [*The message of John: here is your king!: with study guide*](#) (p. 267). InterVarsity Press.