

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

A King and His Kingdom

John 18:36-38

Intro: We've been looking at the trials of Jesus over the last few weeks. I say "trials" because Jesus endured at least 6 different inquiries on the night He was arrested and in the following day. 3 trials were conducted by the religious rulers of Israel (all were illegal according to Mosaic Law); 1 was conducted by Herod (jurisdiction over Galilee) and 2 were conducted by Pilate. While Pilate's trials were completely legal and thorough (following all procedures for a legal Roman trial) and while Pilate came to the correct conclusion concerning Jesus ("I find no fault in Him at all.") he illegally retained Him in custody, had Him scourged within an inch of His life and then executed Him cruelly. Why did Pilate do this? Why did he act contrary to Roman jurisprudence and execute a man he had just declared innocent?

Could it be that Jesus failed to provide an adequate defense for Himself? Was He acting defiant before Pilate? Was He being cagey or was He deflecting the questions asked of Him? Not at all! In fact, in his first letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus actually witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate ([1 Tim 6:13](#)). That good confession is not found in the 1st 3 Gospels, they only record a 5 word response from Jesus when Pilate asked Him if He were the King of the Jews, "It is as you say." After this, He said nothing at all. It's only John's Gospel that fully reports the good confession that Jesus made before Pilate and it's found in [vs36-37](#).

We should be glad that John recorded this because it teaches us what a good confession is. This confession was good in regards to the way it was given. Jesus wasn't rude or condescending or purposefully vague in His response. He was kind, direct and helpful. Even though Jesus was about to be wrongfully condemned by Pilate, He didn't hate Pilate, He treated him with the respect that was due him because of his office. But, this confession was also good in regards to its content because here, in front of someone who was rightly concerned with earthly sovereignty, Jesus talked about divine affairs (vs. human) and God's sovereignty. It teaches us how to speak of spiritual things.

Another reason we should be glad John included this confession of Jesus is

because they contain a definition of the nature of Christ's kingdom from the very lips of Jesus. Trying to nail down a clear meaning of the kingdom of God from a detailed study of the Old and New Testaments is a very complex study because that phrase is used many different ways to describe many different aspects and phases of God's kingdom. While it's true that Jesus nowhere gives us a detailed theological description of the kingdom of God, these 2 verses in John come pretty close to it.

36-37 – The first thing Jesus does is confess to Pilate that He is, in fact, a bone fide King. This is really the only accusation that the Jews made against Jesus that Pilate is interested in because it's the only one that could effect Rome's (and his) authority. This is the gist of Pilate's interrogation of Jesus and He readily admits that He is a King, despite all the appearances to the contrary. You must realize that, at that time, Jesus didn't look much like a King. He was bound and beaten and He would be beaten even more, beaten beyond recognition as a man. Yet, there has never been a king seated at the height of world power who deserves to be called a king as much as Jesus did here.

What was true of this King in that day is still true of His kingdom today. Jesus didn't look like a King to Pilate but He was the embodiment of divine majesty and He conducted Himself with the regal confidence of His royal position. His kingdom, embodied by true Christianity, is like its King – is without form or comeliness, it has no beauty that men should desire it. Sure, there is a brand of "Christianity" that's advertised with great, towering churches and large, exciting ministries but this is no more than a nominal faith that is readily approved and accepted by men. But, the pure Gospel is still despised and rejected. The real Jesus is unknown and unrecognized as much today as He was in Pilate's court. People are quick to speak His name, hang a cross on a wall or put a fish symbol on their car but His desire to be honestly obeyed, followed and worshipped is ignored. They still will not have Him reign over them...

The next thing Jesus says about His kingdom is that it is not of this world. That not only says a whole lot, it implies a good deal as well. One thing it implies is that the things that are normally important to earthly monarchs are of no importance to Christ's kingdom. What's most important to an earthly king? Geography! Every earthly king rules a specific, carefully defined territory. They expend a great deal of effort and capitol to defend their

territory from others. When they fight, it's either to protect their territory or to take territory from another king. This is the basis of every World History course that's ever been taught. Territory doesn't concern Jesus; His kingdom is not of this world.

Taxes are important to every monarch. There's never been an earthly kingdom that didn't have taxes. Taxes fund the government, military, public works, and the army of bureaucrats who collect taxes and do a lot of other things. But Jesus doesn't care about taxes. His kingdom is not of this world. The king's of this world are concerned with pomp and ceremony, prestige and privileges but not Jesus. His kingdom is not of this world. But if that is the case, then where does His kingdom come from? If it's not of this world then it could only come from either hell or heaven.

There is a kingdom that's the kingdom of hell. You can't rightly say that it is from hell because no one who goes there ever comes back from there. So, you can't say that this kingdom originates in hell but hell is its destination. You also can't say that there's a geographical territory called hell somewhere in the universe over which Satan rules. There is a geographical place called hell, just as there is a geographical place called heaven; but Satan doesn't rule there. God rules hell, just as He does all His Creation. There is a satanic, hellish kingdom that's a spiritual kingdom built on hate, pride, jealousy, anger and self-seeking. The nature of this kingdom is the exact opposite of the nature of Christ's kingdom in every way. If that is the case then the source of Christ's kingdom must be heaven and Jesus must be the Son of God. Sheer logic forces every honest person to that singular conclusion.

This same logic applies to Jesus personally. There are only 3 conclusions that can be made of Him. 1) He's God, as He claimed. 2) He was crazy - He mistakenly claimed to be God when He wasn't. 3) He was a deceiver - He knew He wasn't God, yet claimed to be to gather a following by deception. There are no other possibilities. The one who faces Jesus honestly must decide among the 3. Is Jesus insane, a deceiver, or God? He cannot be put off with any nonsense about being just a good teacher or a good man; these are the only real options we have for Him.

No matter what our opinions or wishes concerning Jesus may be, we are all obliged to fall before Him and confess Him to be our Lord and God. When

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world,” many are relieved, thinking it is merely a spiritual kingdom that has nothing to do with them. They believe they can just carry on as they have been and continue to do as they please. Nothing could be farther from the truth! If Christ’s kingdom is not of this world then it is of heaven, thus, it has an even greater claim over us than the earthly kingdoms we know so well. There is real sovereignty in earthly kingdoms. There’s genuine authority that we can’t disregard or disobey. But Jesus is over all these kingdoms and we if flout His sovereignty, we risk losing not just our earthly fortunes/ lives but our eternal souls.

The 3rd thing Jesus said about His kingdom was that it was founded on truth (37). Jesus is reaffirming His previous confession: “Yes, I am a King!” But then He takes it even further by declaring, “As a matter of fact, that’s the very reason I came into the world – to be a King!” The terminology Jesus uses to make this statement points to both His humanity and His deity. The fact that He “was born” indicates His humanity but the fact that He came into this world indicates His pre-existence, His deity. It means He existed before He was born in Bethlehem.

The Gospels provide us several reasons for Jesus coming to this earth. In **Matthew** we learn that Jesus came to fulfill the law, to call sinners to repentance. In **Luke 19:10** we learn that Jesus came to earth on a search and rescue mission. **Mark 10:45** says He came to pay the penalty for our sins. In our text, He says He came to be King. So, to accept Jesus as Savior means you accept His search and rescue mission and benefit from it. But, to accept Jesus also means you accept Him as your King, which means He now has the right to rule and reign in your heart. This is not geography but a sovereign rule over the life of every individual that accepts Him into their heart. Jesus becomes the “shot-caller” in our lives and He wants us to influence the realm in which we live. He wants us to have a positive impact on our own circle of influence: the people we come in contact with on a daily or regular basis.

Jesus wants to be your King. He wants to be everyone’s King but will He be? No! Jesus says He will only be King of those who are of the truth. Well, who are they? Those who believe Jesus and trust in Him as their Savior. How is that? Well, if Jesus is truth and His kingdom is founded on truth then those who accept Him as their king are rightly considered to be of the truth. Where does that leave everyone else? If they refuse to accept the truth of

Jesus and His kingdom, this would indicate that they are quite comfortable with believing a lie. How do I know if I am of the truth? You prove it by accepting Jesus as your Lord, Savior and King. But I don't want to! Then you are what you are. But that's not fair! On the contrary, it's the most fair offer you'll ever be given. Being of the truth is not something that's assigned to some individuals and denied to others – it's a choice; and the choice you make determines your moral status, at least as far as the kingdom of God is concerned.

38 – What is truth? Pilate wasn't the first to ask this question and he certainly wouldn't be the last. This same question has been asked by every generation since. The Greek philosophers struggled with it for centuries and could never come to a satisfactory conclusion. The Romans fared no better. Today, society has almost universally accepted the concept of relativism. What is it? "Eh, it depends." It's the idea that truth is relative to the time period in which you live. Something that's true now may not have been true 20-30 years ago and might not be true 20-30 years from now. It also says something may be true for me but not for you. At its core, relativism is simply the desire of humanity to break away from whatever holds it back. But is this a valid description of truth?

No! It's not the lack of truth that brings personal or social freedom. Everyone knows: it's the truth that sets you free! How does it do that? You've got to read the entire explanation in [John 8:31-32](#). Not only must you acknowledge that His word is true – you must abide in it (live it). Only then will you be a true disciple of Jesus and only then will His truth make you truly free. Paul says that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty ([II Cor 3:17](#)). True freedom is found in submitting to God's ways and living accordingly. Applying the moral absolutes of Scripture will result in experiencing true life and true freedom.

Even secular philosophers are coming to this same conclusion. A Philosophy professor at Harvard said this recently: "A person is not free by following the desires of their own appetite; but they are, in fact, in bondage to those desires. So, if you have a desire within you and you follow that desire, live to fulfill that desire is controlling you. You're not free! The only way to be free is to set a standard for yourself that controls your desires and that is true freedom." Harvard is not considered to be a religious university any more, hasn't been for a long time but how close is this professor from

capturing the philosophy of Jesus?

The standard Jesus expects from us is simply this: “I’m going to surrender to You as King. I’m going to live my life Your way and I’m finally going to experience the true life and freedom You died to bring me and desire for me to experience. That’s where life is found – in the truth; and the Bible tells us what the truth is. The Bible says that Jesus is the truth; that the Word of God is the truth and that the Holy Spirit is truth. It also says that the Holy Spirit, in His capacity as our teacher, will not only help us understand the truth of God’s Word but He’ll also empower us to live it.

Jesus declared Himself to be a King. His kingdom is not of this world, it’s the exact opposite of the kingdom of hell, so it must be from heaven. His kingdom is founded on truth and everyone who is of the truth hears His voice and responds in faith to His call to salvation.

Is Jesus your King? He wants to be and can be! How can you enter into His kingdom? In [Mt 5:3](#) Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This doesn’t mean, “Blessed are the poor-spirited” or “Blessed are the failures.” To be poor in spirit is the opposite of being rich in pride. It means to be humble. So the first requirement for entering Jesus’ kingdom is to humble yourself and take up the position of a beggar before Him. It is to pray like the publican, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

But, while humility is a prerequisite, it doesn’t produce salvation in and of itself. You must also respond to the truth Jesus came to earth to communicate. It’s basically this: that Jesus is God, that He died on our behalf, and that those who have nothing to present to God in terms of their own merit can still come boldly to God on the merit of what Jesus has done for them.

Pilate wouldn’t have recognized the truth if it had been staring him in the face. Can you? 😊