

Two Kingdoms Pt.1
John 18:33-38a

We have been looking at the arrest and trial of Jesus in this 18th chapter of the Gospel of John. Last time we saw Jesus taken before Pilate. There would have been a large gathering just outside of his official residence. Pilate came out, and he could see the battered body of Jesus. Right after the verdict was handed down by the Jewish authorities, they began beat and spit on Jesus. Here are these cultured and aristocratic men acting like savages. And now they deliver him over to Pilate. Pilate asked what charge they bring against him, and their intentions become clear when they evade the question, and say we would not have brought him if he didn't do great evil. Pilate says then handle him according to your Law, and they say they have no power to put someone to death. Now it became evident what they wanted to do.

And no doubt they thought they were in control, and also a little bit worried that Pilate might not do their bidding. But they still think they are in control, and we ended off last time seeing the one who is truly in control in verse 32, **"This was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die."** The handing over of Jesus to the Gentile powers was just what Jesus said would happen, and therefore according to God's plan. None of this takes Jesus by surprise. He came to fulfill the mission his Father gave him to do to give his life as a ransom for many so that through their salvation he would be eternally glorified. None of this is by chance.

And what we have next beginning in verse 33 is a clash of kingdoms. There are two kingdoms in this passage, two powers and two authorities. Pilate certainly is the earthly power and authority. Most of us have lived in democracies most of our lives, and we cannot comprehend the power and the authority that Pilate has here. It is near absolute. He basically does what he wants. Rome basically ignores all of his escapades as long as he keeps the peace and has loyalty to them. And the tyranny of these kings and authorities in everyday life was real and always a threat.

But we are also brought face to face with another king and another kingdom. And so often we are either so angered or so fearful of the earthly kingdom because of the way they affect our everyday lives. People get wrapped up so much in politics that it becomes their identity — their very lives. But there is One who is king. There is an ultimate authority. Just before Jehoshaphat goes into battle he prays to the Lord in 2 Chronicles 20:6, **"and said, 'O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you."** There is someone so great, mighty, filled with all wisdom who not only ordains the powers that be, but he rules over the powers that be. His will comes to pass, and his will can never be thwarted. Psalm 115:3, **"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases."** God says in Isaiah 45:7, **"I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things."** God's absolute sovereignty and absolute rule is not a minor teaching in the Scriptures but it is everywhere. It is everywhere in this passage, even as we saw in verse 32. He is the ruler of all things, and his will always comes to pass.

And think of it because the ramifications for us as the people of God could not be greater as the subjects of the King of kings, because God has the wisdom and the power to bring to pass the best ends through the best means possible. Everything happens in your life and my life not first and foremost because of others or earthly powers or just bad luck, but because there is one who ruling and reigning over all the affairs of your life and mine. Listen to Ephesians 1:11, **“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”** What does all things mean here? It means all things that are in my life and your life according to his counsel and his will. Romans 8:28, **“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”** What does the “all things” mean here? Again, the same thing. Everything in my life works for my good and God’s glory. Why? Because there is someone reigning and ruling, someone’s will who is absolute and whose will — will always be accomplished.

And this is so important because there are times in our lives where God’s will and rule will either not make sense or we will not be able to see the good and the glory of God. We will seem like we are the victim of others or we are just under the powers that be. No doubt this would have challenged all the followers of Jesus. All the apostles know what is happening to Jesus. Imagine the thoughts that went through their minds. Yet through the greatest evil comes the greatest good. We are called to trust in him. And where are we doubting the all pervasive and all good rule of our God? We need to see the glory of King Jesus in this passage, and hopefully increase our confidence with whatever we are going through — our God, our Jesus knows what he is doing.

1. We need to see the clash here of kingdoms. Vv. 33-36

It is such an incredible dialogue. Here again, we see something of the greatness and confidence of our Lord. Think of the treatment that he has received thus far. If it was all about acquittal and he was helpless, then he would be begging Pilate at this time. But Jesus here is calm and composed and gives such well-thought answers to this interrogation. And the reason why is because there is a peace which passes understanding when we realize our God is in control and there is nothing that man can do to us that God has not ordained for the greatest and highest purposes. And Jesus knows the purposes of his Father above. He knows that even as he stands before this most powerful man, as we speak of earthly powers, that there is another that is directing and ordaining his steps. Jesus is so kingly in this passage, that we need to behold our great King.

So read again verse 33, **“So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’”** Now although the religious leaders were evasive up above in the passage as far as a charge against Jesus. They could not even get the witnesses to agree in their statements. They finally gave a charge against Jesus, and that is in Luke 23:2, **“And they began to accuse him, saying, ‘We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that he himself is Christ, a king.’”** He is misleading the nation wanting to set himself up as a king as a rival to Rome. And we can see that is false. They tried to take him by force in chapter 6 after the feeding of the five thousand and

he left them. Also Jesus recognized God is the one who ordained the powers that be. And the Jews tried to trap him in a question about taxes that they might ultimately accuse him. Mark 12:17 records, **“Jesus said to them, ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.’ And they marveled at him.”**

So these are false charges and they knew it, but in their desperation they wanted some charge so serious that Caesar would hear it. Again, they wanted Jesus put to death. And this really forces the hand of Pilate to hear the case. So he asks the question, **“Are you the King of the Jews?”** And the question no doubt is to find out information about the charge against him, but there is something in the wording here that is incredulous to really think this man is any type of king. I mean look how he is dressed, look how he has been beaten. This man a king? And Pilate’s thoughts about kingship were all thoughts of earthly royalty and pomp and the finest things of life, but here is a man dressed in a poor man’s garb and beaten with spittle dried on his beard and face all bludgeoned. The Greek reads something like, **“Are you, you the king of the Jews?”** It is unbelievable that this man would be any threat. And yet as we have seen through this gospel and even at the beginning of this chapter there is no one more powerful and authoritative than the One who is before Pilate.

Now look at the response of Jesus, **“Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?’** Now think about the answer here, because Jesus could not answer in a “yes” or “no” in a way. He wants to clarify Pilate’s question. And not clarify it for himself but clarify it for Pilate. Are you just wanting to know what they are saying about me if that is true? Do you want to know if I have been teaching against Rome and taxes, or do you truly want to know who I am? And if Pilate wanted to know the true identity of Jesus, then this conversation would have gone in a whole different direction. No doubt he was aware of the triumphal entry. What was it about this man that made people flock to him? But he is really not interested in knowing who Jesus is. And that is the response of so many. They would rather hear what others say about Jesus rather than understand the true nature of his personhood, what Jesus actually says about himself.

And you get that response here in the passage, **“Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?’**” But even though Jesus offers grace to him and knows he will reject it, he still offers it to any and all. Pilate is essentially saying that he does not want to hear and understand who Jesus is. He does not want a theological understanding of the Messiah. No doubt he has heard something of the Jewish hope. He also knows, and we find this in Matthew’s gospel that the Jews have delivered him over because of envy. They are jealous of Jesus. But what has he done to so enrage them?

And it is here that he teaches the nature of his kingdom. Look at verse 36, **“Jesus answered, ‘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.’**” Amazing isn’t it. Jesus here claims to be king. He claims to have a kingdom with subjects and servants of that very kingdom. But it is a kingdom like none other. It is not the kingdom like Pilate thinks of a kingdom where there are political forces and wars and battles and the subjugation of

people. If his kingdom was of an earthly nature then you would see what normally has taken place would ever have taken place. And please do not misunderstand what Jesus is saying. He is not denying that at his second coming he will put all things under his feet. He is not saying that he will not reign and rule over everything and everyone in a perfect earthly kingdom one day. Isaiah 9:7, **“Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”**

But what he is indicating here is the whole purpose of why he has come, and that is to give his life for a ransom for those who are his subjects. He has come not to be served but to actually serve. Citizens of an earthly kingdom exist for the welfare and the prestige of the king, but King Jesus exists for the welfare of his people. His kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is not earthly but it is over the hearts and souls of men. And I believe this is why so many scoff and scorn Jesus is that he really does not seem like that great of a threat. Look at him, beaten, scarred and bloody. Look at him before the powers that be. He is just no threat! But Jesus does give a warning, listen to Matthew 10:28, **“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”** Now think of what this means, doesn't this mean that Jesus has a greater claim over us than any earthly kings? We might think that we can ignore Jesus but not ignore the powers that be in our lives. But to ignore the King of kings is not only to put your earthly life in peril, but the eternity of your soul in peril. We cannot afford to ignore none other than King Jesus!

2. We need to see how our King and his kingdom really relates in our lives.

One of the things that we have to realize is that Jesus' kingdom is a kingdom not only to come but in the here and now. We do not have to think of his kingdom as yet to come, but Jesus is our King. And he is reigning and ruling over all. There is no greater power or authority than King Jesus. Ephesians 1: 21-23 speaks of the authority granted to Christ after his resurrection, He is **“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”** All things are under his feet. He is The Ruler of all! But he is particular over the church.

And think of what Jesus is doing, and this is on the basis of what he has done on the cross. Christ is bringing in kingdom citizens into his church, those given by the Father before the foundation of the world. We are certainly citizens of this world but we are citizens of a much greater kingdom — the kingdom of King Jesus. Listen to what he has done, and marvel that this is a description of you if you are a believer in Christ, Colossians 1:13, **“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”** There is a transfer of loyalties and a transfer kingdoms here that comes through the finished work of his dear Son. We found our all in the world. We were of the world, but even though we are still in the world we are no longer of the world but there is a transfer. We have been given a new

identity, a new Passport, we are now citizens of Christ' eternal kingdom. Do you ever marvel at that? None of us are too terrific, but quite the opposite. We do not have royal robes or a huge entourage following us and doing our bidding, but our status is none other than we are a child of the King! Again, is there anything or anyone greater? It is amazing that so many, even those who claim to be Christ's live for something else other than King Jesus. But we are not our own. We are bought with a price therefore we to glorify the One who is owner and our great Ruler. We live for him.

So what is life all about? It is about living for the King. It is about accomplishing his will. Citizens in the ancient world would have understood this so much better than we understand it today. We submit to the will of the powers that be. We do not walk according to our own wants and desires. We walk under the Lordship of another. He is Lord. He is Sovereign. He is our all. Jesus is above every power that is. We are to make him known. When Peter and John are ordered to stop preaching in the name of Christ listen to their reply in Acts 4:19-20, "**But Peter and John answered them, 'Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.'**" Our ultimate loyalty and love is to King Jesus, and we realize he has given us a mandate to make and mature disciples for the glory of God. He is the greater authority. His will is ultimate. And so Christ calls others out of darkness into the light of Christ through our witness. He truly can do far more than we ask or think. Is anything too difficult for the King of kings?

And we realize Jesus, because his kingdom in the here and now is spiritual in nature, that the real battle field as far as loving him, worshiping him, and following him, the real battle field is the heart. And if that is true, which it is, then our weapons are so different from those of the world. We are not conquering on the outside but seeking to conquer on the inside. Listen to what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, "**For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh.**" This is what Jesus was saying to Pilate. His kingdom is totally different. There is no threat to Rome, but his kingship can do what no other king or kingdom can do. "**For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.**" Now look at where the power is. It is not of the believer but in the divine power of the One who is ruling and reigning. We can do nothing without Christ, but with him we can bring down strongholds. Strongholds in the ancient world were places in warfare that seemed to be impenetrable to attacking armies. But listen to what these strongholds are in the verse. "**We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.**" It is what is going on inside of you.

I am always amazed at the change that comes over believers' lives. It speaks of this citizenship. It speaks that we are of another country, another kingdom. It is amazing to see the immensity of forgiveness and love and zeal for the King that never existed before. But here is the thing in the passage. And so many want change in their lives. They want change in their marriages or finances or whatever, but the greatest change God wants in our lives is not external but internal. In fact, external change that glorifies our king can only come through internal change. And the battle is in the mind. No one talks to you more than you. And we are all talking to ourselves. What message are we giving? It might be hatred or envy toward someone. It might be illicit sensuality.

It might be that I am just a loser or God should kick me to the curb. I have messed up too much. It might be that I am so good, God is lucky to have me on his team. And all of these are false messages. All of them are lofty opinions raised against our King and ruler. All of them are a false gospel.

But here is the glory and good news, because Jesus is such a different and greater king, the goal, and it is through his power to bring every thought captive to Christ. Captive again is a war or battle term. If you bring every thought under control to Christ, then who is life about? It is all about the king. It is all about our Ruler and Lord who triumphed over all the powers that to bring us into His kingdom. This goal one day will be realized when we are forevermore before our Lord, but it is our marching orders today. And our king has given us everything necessary to bring down the strongholds in our lives. Aren't you glad Jesus' kingdom is not of this world? His Lordship has brought us into a kingdom that we could never have brought ourselves into. This is who we truly are. Let us all live out our new identity in Jesus Christ. Let us fight the war he wants us to fight.