

Title: The King
Date: 4/20/25
Subject: Jesus is the King.
Scripture: Hebrews 1:13

There was a lot of confusion about who Jesus was during his last week on earth. During the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, people shouted, “Blessed is the King of Israel” (John 12:19). They treated him as a king by placing palm branches and their coats on the road as he rode into town on a donkey. They were ecstatic. Their long-expected political ruler had come and would expel the hated Roman oppressors.

Less than a week later... the shouts carried a different message and tone: “Crucify him!”

This attitude shift baffled Roman governor Pilate. Maybe it didn't take much to do that when it came understanding, tolerating, the Jewish belief system. He was definitely suspicious of the motives of the religious leaders and correctly discerned their antagonism stemmed from jealousy and hatred of the man known as Jesus.

After Jesus was arrested, Pilate interviewed him several times. The reason was the religious leaders brought an accusation: “He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king” (Luke 23:2). That charge warranted an investigation as the governor was to eliminate threats of rebellion to the emperor.

The governor wanted to determine who Jesus was. He concluded Jesus had done nothing deserving a death penalty or even arrest. He certainly wasn't the dangerous rebel the religious leaders had portrayed.

The governor tried to release Jesus...several times...but he never did. Think of it. He was the governor with the full backing of the military might of the Roman Empire behind him. He could have released Jesus and told the people, “You don't like it? Tough! This man is going free and if anybody lays so much as a finger on him... they'll be the ones to pay... dearly. Got it? End of story.”

By the time Jesus was on trial before Pilate, it was more difficult to gain information. Accusations filled the air. Jesus no longer spoke to the religious leaders or answered any their accusations. This amazed Pilate.

Jesus and the governor had their own conversation. A great amount of the questioning focused on whether or not Jesus was a king (John 18:33-38). His first words to Jesus were: “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus responded with his own question: “Is that your own idea or did others talk to you about me?” Pilate got a little huffy at the assertion that he personally concluded Jesus was a king? The governor was quick to put the blame on religious leaders and “your people.”: “Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

Jesus spoke about his kingdom - it's not of this world but from another place.

Pilate's mom didn't raise a dummy. He responded, “You are a king then!”

Jesus confirmed his identity, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

The conversation ended with a final question from Pilate: “What is truth?”

Pilate may have tried to diminish truth: "Truth isn't a big deal. What matters is power and authority." He may have been serious, insinuating that truth isn't easy to find, harder to live by and wanted to know what Jesus had to say about truth. Either way, it was a passing moment. He concluded Jesus wasn't a rebel and there wasn't any basis for charge against him. Teaching what a person believes to be true isn't a crime.

As mentioned earlier, Pilate tried to release Jesus by various approaches. He presented the mob with a choice – did they want a despicable, horrible, murderous criminal to be released or Jesus who was the King of the Jews (John 18:39). He also played upon their pity. After the soldiers had put a crown of thorns on Jesus, dressed him in a purple robe, hit him in the face and mocked him by saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" Pilate presented Jesus to the crowd: "Here is the man!" (John 19:5). The emphasis was on Jesus was only a man and not a king. The governor even challenged the crowd and told them, if they wanted so badly for Jesus to die, they should take him and crucify him themselves (John 19:6).

The situation became murkier when the religious leaders said Jesus must die because he claimed to be the Son of God (John 19:7). Pilate became more afraid (John 19:8). His mind was racing as he tried to figure out who this person was that caused so much hatred. Could Jesus be deity?

Pilate was superstitious and believed Roman gods could become human. The Roman governor also knew his Roman history. After Julius Caesar died, he was given God status. His will named his grand-nephew as his adopted son and heir which led to Caesar Augustus claiming to be the son of God. His stepson became emperor and was the one to whom Pilate answered. Emperors were worshipped.

Pilate was at a crossroads and didn't know which road to take. He appealed to Jesus for some help: "Where do you come from? Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?" (John 19:9, 10). Jesus corrected the Roman governor, telling him his power came from above - not the emperor, but from God.

Pilate made a last-ditch attempt to release Jesus but he faced a determined crowd. They reminded him that anybody who claims to be king opposes Caesar (John 19:12). He again presented Jesus – who'd been beaten, was disfigured and looked nothing like royalty – "Here is your king" (John 19:14). Was it with a note of sadness as he tried to show how preposterous their attitude was? Was he making fun of them for thinking Jesus was a threat? Was he halfway serious about Jesus being king?

The people wanted nothing to do with Jesus and called out, "Crucify him!" Pilate was at a loss and asked, "Shall I crucify your king?" The chief priests responded, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15).

Excuse me. Did they hear what they said? These people who said the Lord their God is one God and there is no other God and that he is the king whom they worship... were now saying that a Roman emperor was king? Some might be tempted to legitimize the crazed mob saying something blasphemous because it was extraordinary circumstances - fight the blasphemy of Jesus saying he was God who'd sit at the right of the mighty God (Mt 26:64, Mk 14:62, Lk 22:69) with their own blasphemy of giving to a person the authority that belonged only to God. Bottom line – they'd say anything as long as it resulted in Jesus being dead.

Pilate caved to their wishes and turned Jesus over to them to be crucified. The crime of the person being crucified was written on a sign and placed above their head. Pilate also needed to have a reason to execute somebody. He had a sign prepared...in three languages: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (John 19:19).

The religious leaders protested. They saying it should say he claimed to be king of the Jews (John 19:21). Pilate didn't care what they thought. "What I have written, I have written" (John 19:22). It may have been one last way to provoke the religious leaders...

The chief priests, teachers the law and elders mocked Jesus, "He saved others, but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe" (Mark 15:31, 32). The soldiers and those crucified alongside Jesus joined in the mockery.

Six hours after the crucifixion started, it was over. Jesus had died. He was buried. The Passover, the special Sabbath, was celebrated. Jerusalem became silent. The silence led to uneasiness among the chief priests and religious leaders. They went to Pilate on the Sabbath because they had a problem: "Sir, we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first" (Matthew 27:63, 64).

Pilate told them "Take a guard. Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." He may have been making fun of them because as religious leaders they didn't know a whole lot about these things, or he admitted they were wiler than the average person. Either way he gave them some Roman soldiers and basically just wanted them to be gone "Go ahead. Go do your thing. Just get outta here."

We're here because we know the end of the story wasn't Jesus laying in some cold tomb. He physically came back to life and rose from the grave. That wasn't the end of it. He appeared to his followers and provided convincing evidence he was alive. That wasn't the end of it. He ascended to the Father to be with him in heaven at the right hand to rule and reign. And even that's not the end of it.

That's the story... and I'm sticking with it. This brings us to the second text on the screen.

Hebrews 1:13.

God the Father speaks about God the Son being greater than angels, with a verse drawn from the book of Psalms (110:1). The depiction of Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven is used four more times in Hebrews (1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2). Jesus had said the same thing to those who wanted to crucify him.

Jesus is in the power position - at the right hand of God the Father. Jesus ascended to that position because the work he performed on the cross was accepted. Though his work on the cross is completed, he isn't finished with the work of ruling and reigning.

Kingship continues to be expressed through his enemies serving as a footstool for his feet (cf. 10:13). It was common in the ancient world for the winning general to use his enemies as a footstool. The victor may sit in a chair or on a rock and put his feet on the backs of the conquered. Other times the victors put their feet on the necks of the defeated enemy who were lying on the ground to publicly humiliate them (Joshua 10:24).

Jesus waits for the time when all his enemies will be subject to him. Another Scripture confirms: "For he (Jesus) must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he 'has put everything under his feet.'" Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ" (1 Cor 15:25-27).

The destiny and hope of people are tied to Jesus. When Jesus fully reigns, those who belong to him will fully reign with him. People were created a little lower than angels. God subjected the world to people so they could have caring dominion over it. But the situation is far from the intended. Now, there's disease. Now, there's danger from animals. Now, there's famine. Now, there's pestilence. Now, there are hurricanes and earthquakes. Now, there's disappointment as we look at the human situation. We are in a waiting period.

Jesus' death enabled him to destroy the devil (2:14). Jesus could have destroyed only death, but then the devil would have been free to do what he wanted. Instead, the Savior destroyed the devil and everything associated with the evil one - sin, evil... and death. The devil is defeated. His fate is sealed. It will be completely sealed when he's thrown into his place of eternal punishment (Revelation 20:10).

Jesus' death, and resurrection and ascension to the right hand of God, gives him the ability to free people who'd been held in slavery by their fear of death (2:15). Curious minds want to know what's behind the curtain, what it'll be like once they draw their last breath. The unknown and fear of the unknown can result in people being held in slavery by the fear of death.

William Randolph Hearst was one of the wealthiest and most powerful men of the 20th century. His home, an enormous castle in California, had more than 90,000 square feet and took 28 years to build. Guests were informed of the one rule, that if they broke it, they'd be immediately escorted off the property and never invited to return. The rule was they could never in Hearst's presence utter the word "death."

Hearst was afraid of death. Jesus declared that didn't need to be the case. He tore the chains of death off people. They can rest in their faith in Jesus Christ that he has prepared heaven and wonderful rewards for them. Physical death isn't the end and full lives can be lived now.

Donald Grey Barnhouse was a noted pastor and radio preacher. He shared an extremely personal story about death. "I was driving with my children to my wife's funeral where I was to preach the sermon. As we came into one small town there strode down in front of us a truck that came to stop before a red light. It was the biggest truck I ever saw in my life, and the sun was shining on it at just the right angle that took its shadow and spread it across the snow on the field beside it. As the shadow covered that field, I said. "Look children at that truck and look at its shadow. If you had to be run over, which would you rather be run over by? Would you rather be run over by the truck or by the shadow?" My youngest child said, "The shadow couldn't hurt anybody." "That's right," I continued, "and death is a truck, but the shadow is all that ever touches the Christian. The truck ran over the Lord Jesus. Only the shadow has gone over mother."

Jesus' death on the cross was God's method to ensure that no one else needed to be run over by eternal death. Physical death is only a shadow that we go through to the real life ahead.

You may be in that situation where you need a Savior. Jesus can be that for you by placing your personal trust in him - admitting you're a sinner, you can't save yourself and need someone outside of you to save you. Jesus is the one who lived the perfect life, died as a payment for your sins and then rose from the dead so he can give eternal life and forgiveness of sins.

Travis believed life was meaningless. People who followed society's rules were sheep and he didn't want to be a sheep. By 8th grade he was a heavy marijuana and harder drug user. It got crazier when his mom died when he was 16. He worked odd jobs while being bombed from drugs and alcohol. Six of his closest friends died from the same lifestyle. Travis kept running, more and more out of control. He broke down when he found himself bawling on a bridge. He was homeless and broke. He went to the Milwaukee Rescue Mission to get something to eat and a place to sleep. He also heard a message about Jesus. He thought it was nonsense but joined the program anyway. Then he began to pay attention and God softened him up. Travis realized he couldn't fix himself and asked Jesus to do it. He placed his trust in Jesus.

Authors Brock and Bodie Thoene ask a challenging question: "If only one person was in charge of your life, should it be you?" They follow up: "You possess the crown of authority over your own life and will. Jesus will never force himself into your life. He waits to be invited. So why not step aside from being #1 in your life? When you think about it, have you really run things that well anyway? Don't you long for the confused elements of your existence to make sense? Don't you want to know for certain that Someone greater than yourself - the King of kings and Lord of Lords - is in charge of the universe?" (Why a Crown? pp. 37, 76, 77).

This applies to salvation but also about allowing him to be the one who rules and controls.

The British, after being in India for 300 years, turned the country over to self-rule in the 1940s. Steve Brown tells of British researchers who studied the impact of the end of British rule, no doubt to show how they had profoundly influenced India and would be missed. They discovered many people in villages had no clue the British had ever been there! The researchers quit after six months and went back to jolly old England.

Many people don't know Jesus, the King, the Son of God, visited the planet while others live as if he hadn't. Some people wait till a crisis or difficulty to "find religion." They look to Jesus as an escape, but it's often short-lived as they go back to life as normal after the crisis has passed.

Jesus didn't come to earth and give his life to be discarded when people feel they don't need him and can do quite well by themselves, thank you. That's what the crowd at the Triumphal Entry did. It was "Jesus is King!" when things were the way they wanted them to be, but when circumstances changed, they dumped him.

Jesus wants to be involved as a caring and compassionate King in the lives of those who've placed their trust in him as Savior. He will protect, preserve, enable, encourage, strengthen, guide as he's allowed to rule and reign, to be in charge and in control.

Jesus showed he was the King by conquering death and rising from the dead. Jesus showed himself to be King by ascending to heaven. Jesus showed himself to be King by being at the right hand of God. Jesus is King over all and the one who is to be the object of worship.