

"Shall I Crucify Your King?"

Thomas Robinson, July 4, 2010

John 19:1-16a

¹ Then **Pilate** took **Jesus** and had him **flogged**.

² The soldiers twisted together a **crown of thorns** and put it on his head. They clothed him in a **purple robe** ³ and went up to him again and again, saying, "**Hail, king of the Jews!**" And they **slapped** him in the face.

⁴ Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "*Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find **no basis for a charge** against him.*"

⁵ When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "**Here is the man!**"

⁶ As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "**Crucify! Crucify!**" But Pilate answered, "**You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.**"

⁷ The Jews insisted, "*We have a **law**, and according to that law **he must die**, because he claimed to be **Son of God**.*"

⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, ⁹ and he went back inside the palace. "*Where do you come from?*" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ "*Do you refuse to speak to me?*" Pilate said. "*Don't you realize **I have power** (authority) to **free** you and **I have power** (authority) to **crucify** you?*"

¹¹ Jesus answered, "*You would have **no power** (authority) over me if it were not **given to you from above**. Therefore the one who handed me over to you has a greater sin.*"

¹² From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "*If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who **claims to be a king** opposes Caesar.*"

¹³ When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha).

¹⁴ It was the day of Preparation of the Passover; it was about noon.

"**Here is your king,**" Pilate said to the Jews.

¹⁵ But they shouted, "**Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!**"

"**Shall I crucify your king?**" Pilate asked.

"*We have **no king but Caesar**,*" the chief priests answered.

¹⁶ Finally **Pilate handed him over** to them to be **crucified**.

John 10:17-18

¹⁷ For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. **I have authority** to lay it down, and **I have authority** to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

John 15:21-24; 16:8

²¹ But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. ²² If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been **guilty of sin**, but now they **have no excuse for their sin**. ²³ Whoever hates me hates my Father also. ²⁴ If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be **guilty of sin**, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.

^{16:}⁸ And when he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ **concerning sin**, because they do **not believe** in me.

Jesus Before Pilate – Ridicule and Truth

We're in the dramatic contest between Pilate and the high priests over Jesus: 8 scenes.

1. The HP insists on Jesus' guilt and need for execution. Pilate refuses, contempt.
2. Pilate questions Jesus: King of the Jews? Not from this world. Testify to Truth.
3. No crime (you're incompetent). Shall I release your King. No. Give us Barabbas.
4. Pilate, frustrated & angry, flogs Jesus, decks him out as king—robe, crown of thorns—humiliates him. Power, disdain for Jews; truth about Jesus. Pilate's fight is with HP. They don't want Jesus. I'll give him to them anyway, with a message: King of Jews. A kingdom not from this world doesn't matter. Truth not backed with force is nothing.

“Behold, the Man!”

5. Pilate announces to the waiting priests: I find no crime. But he then presents Jesus as a flogged, humiliated king, in a crown of thorns. They wouldn't specify a crime. He has made Jesus into their crime, a rebellious people humiliated by Rome.

Pilate announces more than he knows: *“Behold, the Man”* (*anthropos*), *“the human.”*

Here is humanity caught in the vice of the corrupt power struggles of this world.

Here is the one both human and divine, under the weight of religious and political power. The mocked king/true king who is also me. Behold, Humanity! He carries us.

The priests feel the sting: innocent Jewish king humiliated by Rome: No! He's yours!

Crucify! Pilate taunts them: *“You crucify him.”* They can't. But they're ready to trap Pilate in his fears. *“He claimed to be ‘Son of God’”*—some sort of occult power.

Twice they had tried to stone Jesus on such charges (8:59; 10:31) but could not.

“I have Authority” – Real Authority!

6. Pilate questions the humiliated king. Dignified silence. (*“I came to testify to truth.”*)

Frustrated, Pilate struts his authority. I hold your life in my hands! I can crucify you!

The double *“I have authority”* echoes Jesus' statement (10:18) of the deeper reality that is taking place: Jesus has the true authority, from the heart of God and his love for all the world. He is laying down his life for the world and its sin. He will open new life and new hope by taking it up again. This greater authority/greater action of Jesus permeates and surrounds all these events. But Pilate and the HPs are blind to it.

Jesus affirms that Pilate's authority is real but limited. Others have handed Jesus over—Judas, Annas, Caiaphas. Each faced Jesus and failed to see the truth—sin/error (16:9).

Now it is Pilate's turn. He is on trial. The whole world and its power is on trial. Will Pilate recognize Jesus' truth/authority or hand him off; stay within his sin/blindness?

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7. In the final scenes Pilate tragically stays with what he already knows. He wants to thwart the priests, but they're ready for him with the threat of a treason charge. Pilate returns to ridicule, cowardice, cunning power. He sits in formal judgment.

8. The trial has taken all morning. The Priests are anxious to leave for the Passover sacrifices. Pilate presents Jesus as king. The priests renounce Passover's meaning: God's deliverance and rule: *“We have no king but Caesar!”* They choose slavery. In self-serving cowardice and blindness, Pilate hands over the true king to crucifixion.

John leads us through the drama. Where am I? Do I see the truth? Do I hand him over? Is the one who is crucified truly My King? Will I receive his gift of his life for me?