

REFLECTION GUIDE

JOHN 18:28-19:16 | BEHOLD YOUR KING

KEY TERMS

Son of God - In the ancient world, *Son of God* could refer to kings, emperors, or exceptional human beings, and in the Old Testament it was applied to Israel, the Davidic king, and even angels. But in John's Gospel, this title is a way of equating Jesus with God. Pilate's response confirms the weight of the claim as he becomes *even more afraid* (19:8), suggesting he understands this is more than an honorific title.

Caesar - Caesar was the title for the Roman emperor—at this time, Tiberius—and any threat to his authority was a serious threat. By invoking Caesar, the religious leaders pressure Pilate and force him to choose between justice and self-preservation.

DID YOU KNOW?

When the Jewish leaders tell Pilate, *We have no king but Caesar* (19:15), it is a stunning reversal. Throughout Israel's history, God alone was Israel's true king (see Judges 8:23, 1 Samuel 8:7). For the religious leaders to publicly declare Caesar as their only king in order to secure the death of Jesus is an irony that John wants his readers to feel.

SYNOPSIS

After Jesus is taken from Annas to Caiaphas, the Jewish leaders bring him to Pilate's headquarters early in the morning (v. 28). John notes that the leaders do not enter so they will not be defiled before Passover. Pilate questions Jesus directly, asking, *Are you the King of the Jews?* (v. 33), and Jesus responds by saying his kingdom is not of this world (v. 36)—not meaning it is irrelevant to this world, but that it does not originate from or operate by this world's power. Jesus tells Pilate he came to bear witness to the truth (v. 37), and Pilate responds, *What is truth?* (v. 38), but then walks away without waiting for an answer.

From here, Pilate repeatedly tries to release Jesus, declaring *I find no guilt in him* (18:38), but the crowd demands Barabbas instead (vv. 39-40). Pilate has Jesus flogged and mocked with a crown of thorns, then presents him saying, *Behold the man!* (19:5), likely hoping the crowd will relent, but they do not. The Jewish leaders then escalate their charge, *He has made himself the Son of God* (19:7). When Pilate still resists, they finally say, *If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend* (19:12). Pilate then caves and hands Jesus over to be crucified (19:16). Throughout this passage, everyone around Jesus is trying to define what kind of king he is, while Jesus has already made it clear that he is a king who came to bear witness to the truth and lead a kingdom that is unlike other earthly political kingdoms.

GOING DEEPER

Read Daniel 7:13-14 and Revelation 1:4-8. How do these passages help you understand the kind of king Jesus is? Where are you tempted to look for power, security, or identity in places other than Jesus' kingdom?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read John 18:28-19:16. Make 5 or so quick observations. How does the drama and tension build?
2. If you were a stranger traveling through and not a believer, how do you think you'd feel about Jesus from watching him in this encounter? How would you explain what you had seen of the behavior of the religious leaders, the political leader, and this man named Jesus?
3. Read John 18:36, 18:37, and 19:11. What is the common theme in these words of Jesus? What do these verses tell us about Jesus (his origin, his authority, his mission)?
4. Who is responsible for Jesus going to the cross? How do all parties play a different role? Note: This is a bit of a trick question. See also John 10:18 and John 19:11.

LIVING THE WORD

5. What do we learn about the failure of leadership in the collusion of the Jewish religious leaders and Roman political leaders? How have you been tempted toward self-protection and expediency when doing the right thing might be costly to your career, reputation, or comfort?
6. The primary theme in these verses is kingdom. It is hard to imagine a more human moment in Jesus' life than these moments of mockery, yet this leads to his ultimate victory and exaltation as the King of Kings. Read Philippians 2 and Revelation 5 for further reflection. How does this scene prove that Jesus is a King worthy of trusting and following with your whole life? How does this grow your love for Jesus?
7. As you consider your faith in the King of Kings who endured so much to die for you, what is one way you can live this week as a follower of Jesus, the True King who gave his life to save you?