

Kingdom Not of This World

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[0 : 00] We're in the rising action of the entire gospel story. And soon it will climax with Jesus on the cross. And the story will resolve.

And so verse 1, it says, When Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the brook hydron, where there was a garden which he and his disciples entered.

Matthew and Mark, in their gospels, called this garden Gethsemane, which literally means oil press. So it's an olive garden. And that's the garden that is in view.

And then in verse 2, Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas has an intimate knowledge of Jesus and his disciples' whereabouts and how they travel, what they do.

And it seems that customarily at this time of the year, they met, they gathered at Gethsemane, at the olive garden, so that maybe to pray, to prepare for how they're going to spend the rest of the feast.

[1 : 05] And so knowing this, and knowing that it will be secluded enough just outside the city, and knowing that there will be cover of night, he comes with soldiers. It says, verse 3, Judas, having procured a band of soldiers, and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

And the band of soldiers is a technical word that refers to a division of the Roman army. It's the Roman cohort, which could have up to 600 soldiers, 300 to 600 Roman soldiers.

And so the implication is, and they came with weapons, this is a pretty sizable crowd, right? Jesus and his disciples, I mean fishermen, 12 people, they don't have a chance, 11 people without Judas, they don't have a chance against these people.

And it's not just the Roman soldiers, but they come with the Jewish officers. They don't really get along, right? Historically, but with the common foe in Jesus, they become strange bedfellows.

They partner together to come. And the whole world, as a result, is implicated in what's about to happen. So the Jews, Gentiles, the whole world, and not just others, but also his, even, even his own disciples.

[2 : 25] And as we go through this passage, I'm going to kind of do an unusual outline, and just look at four portraits of people in this story. So we're going to look at Peter, and how he denies the Lord.

We're going to look at Caiaphas, and the other Jewish leaders. And then we're going to look at Pilate, the Gentile leader. And then we're going to look at, finally, Jesus, and the portrayal of him throughout this passage.

And in John 13, if you might recall, Peter had told Jesus that he would even die for him. But Jesus told him, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times.

And up to this point, Peter's doing well. He seems to be keeping his word. And so when Judas comes with the band of soldiers, it says in verse 10, that Peter took his sword, which is probably not like a full-length sword, but more like a dagger that people typically carry in this day and age.

And then he cuts off the servant of the high priest's ear, the right ear, he says. His name is Malchus. But it turns out that this is not only brash of Peter, but also futile, considering that they are hopelessly outnumbered.

[3 : 37] And he's also rebuked by Jesus, who says to him in verse 11, put your sword into its cheek, that shall I not drink the cup that the Father has given me. Right? So Peter is not only acting, you know, rationed up, but he's also contradicting the very will of the Father in wanting Jesus to go through this.

Thankfully, Jesus comes to his rescue, and Peter doesn't get arrested for cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. And we know from the other Gospels, it's because Jesus diffuses the situation by healing the servant's right ear.

And so that's why Peter's okay here, doesn't get arrested or anything like that. And so Jesus comes to the rescue, and then he's bound and taken away by this entourage.

And in verse 15, it says that Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple. And since that disciple was known to the high priest, he entered with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest.

And this unidentified disciple is most likely the beloved disciple mentioned throughout the Gospel of John, which is John, Apostle John himself. It's kind of an oblique way of referring to himself instead of mentioning his own name.

[4 : 50] And so the disciple whom Jesus loved, and he apparently has a close connection with the high priest or his family, so he's able to get into the courtyard where the trial with the Sanhedrin is taking place.

And this is not as far-fetched as it might sound, because John's family is a fisherman, but this is a day and age where social hierarchies are not as strictly divided. Even people of the educational class or the priestly class were expected to have some kind of trade.

So Apostle Paul, for example, was a tent maker, as you might recall. So he had some connection, so he's able to go in, and he has enough connection to be able to get Peter into the courtyard as well.

So that's what he does. And as Peter's getting in, this is verse 16, but Peter stood outside at the door, and so the other disciple who was known to the high priest went out and spoke to the servant girl who kept watch at the door and brought Peter in.

And as he's coming in, the servant girl makes a sensible connection, right? Because she knows, because John's known in this household, John's a disciple of Jesus, and John just came in, and he came out to grab Peter.

[5 : 55] So she assumes, oh, so maybe he's a disciple also. And so she asks him this question in verse 17, you also are not one of this man's disciples, are you? The question is phrased in an intentionally pointed way.

It expects a negative answer. It says, you also are not one of this man's disciples, are you? So there's a hint of disdain and disbelief in her question. And so Peter senses that, feels that, and he's also, I mean, to give him, a lot of us might do the same when we're in his situation, because he's a nerd by what's happened, right?

A shocking turn of events. His master, his teacher, who he thought was going to come into his kingdom and take over this, repel the Roman Empire and restore the Jewish kingdom.

This king, this messiah, has been arrested. And not only are he in an environment he's never been in, right? He doesn't have such connections that John did. So he's never been to the courtyard of the high priest himself, right?

And so he's, and he's also probably thinking back to what he did in cutting off that servant's right ear. So he's guilt-stricken and he's probably a little fearful and worried about what might happen.

[7 : 07] And so Peter answers very defensively, I am not. And sin and denial of our Lord, like any other sinful deed, shameful deed, really becomes easier and easier the more you do it.

And so the second and third denial come subsequently and he becomes actually all the more animated as it comes. Verses 25 to 27. Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself.

So they said to him, you also are not one of his disciples. Are you? Again, that pointed question, same phrasing. He denied it and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, did I not see you in the garden with him?

Peter again denied it. And at once a rooster crowed. Right. So it escalates, right? In the last instant, the man who asked him the question thinks he's seen him, right?

Well, I was there. I'm the relative of the guy whose ear you cut off, right? I think I saw you there. And still Peter insists and lies flatly to his face. No, I'm not the guy. And notice what leads Peter to these shameful denials, right?

[8 : 18] He's not facing any judicial threat, right? He's not, he hasn't been arrested. John's clearly there. He's fine, right? He's a disciple also. So there's no real threat to him, but he's cowed by the atmosphere that he is in, right?

That question of disdain, disbelief. You also are not one of this man's disciples, are you? That feeling of marginalization, that air of disdain, that cows him to these denials.

And it's a pointed question, right? You're not one of this man's disciples, are you? This man, the one that's being tried by the Sanhedrin right now, you're not this man's disciple, are you? And we live in a generation that can identify with this because we think with our feelings.

That's how our generation operates nowadays. And nowadays what wins debates is not solid arguments, but sneers and snarky remarks.

You also are not one of those Christians, are you? You actually believe that God created the world?

[9 : 29] Do you really believe that Jesus rose again from the dead? None of these remarks, as you may have noticed, are actual arguments, right?

They simply are assertions that generate a powerful feeling of shame. And it preys on people's insecurities. You really believe that?

You're really one of his disciples? They make you feel like what you believe is ridiculous without actually making any arguments to prove that it is ridiculous. And I want to urge you guys, and this is going to happen more and more, and I can recall a time when Steve and I were sitting in a coffee shop talking about the Bible, pizza pies down the street, and a woman who was talking to her boyfriend just right next to us on the table says, oh, hey, you want to believe in Jesus too?

Just making fun of us. And we hadn't said anything to her at all, right? I mean, that's the kind of environment we're in, right? And I want to urge you to don't be cowed by the circumstances. When people, don't give people freebies like that.

Stand up for what you believe and make them tell you why they think what you believe is untenable instead of just believing that just because they make you feel that way, that it's ridiculous.

[10 : 50] And if you are not yet a follower of Jesus, be aware of the same hindrance to your belief in Jesus. Don't accept the assumptions of the spirit of the age without examining them.

Consider Jesus on his own terms, on his own right. Be open-minded. Don't deny Jesus simply because you're afraid of admitting that you believe in him.

Don't fall to the trap that Peter fell into. Now let's turn to a different character narrative. Caiaphas, the high priest, and the other Jewish leaders.

After they arrest Jesus, it says in verses 13 and 14, First they led him to Annas, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jews that it would be expedient that one man should die for the people. You guys might remember this from chapter 11. Caiaphas saying, Hey, let's make Jesus the scapegoat, make him bear the wrath of the Roman Empire, and in doing so we'll simultaneously quell this messianic frenzy, and we will appease the Roman Empire.

[12 : 01] So let's use him as a scapegoat. And now that's so Caiaphas has said that it would be expedient for them to do so. So the verdict was already out, and from that time on, they had already resolved to kill Jesus, and that's what they've been doing up to this point.

Now you might ask at this point, Why do the Jews bring Jesus first to Annas, the high priest's father-in-law? That seems a little unusual.

Why don't you take him to the high priest? Why don't you take him to his father-in-law? And then if you are an unusually careful reader, you may have noticed that there's a slight contradiction, well, it might be a contradiction.

Verse 19, it says, The high priest, it says, then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching, in verse 19. And that's when Jesus had been brought to Annas, not Caiaphas, but he's called him, later he calls Annas the high priest.

And then afterward he says in verse 24 that Annas then sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. So it's Annas that's been questioning Jesus, and he's called the high priest, and then later he says that he sent Jesus to the high priest, Caiaphas.

[13 : 03] So who is the high priest? Because there are only supposed to be one. And so this might seem contradictory at first, but if you understand the complex political and religious situation on the ground at the time, this makes a lot more sense.

Because Annas was in fact the high priest from AD 6 to 15. But then the emperor, or actually not the emperor, but Pilate's predecessor, who was Valerius Gratus, he deposed Annas by force, and then put Pilate in his, not Pilate, Caiaphas in his place.

And because of that, a lot of the Jews, the pious Jews, held that Annas was the rightful high priest. He was the one that was appointed by God to be high priest. And so even though Caiaphas held the actual authority, the official function according to the Romans, Annas was kind of, was considered a high priest as well.

And so, and not only that, Annas' sons, actually five of them in fact, all will at some point become high priests. And his father-in-law Caiaphas, I mean his son-in-law Caiaphas also obviously.

So, so he's kind of like the patriarch of the high priest family. So, that's why Luke writes in chapter 3 verse 2 of his gospel, that Jesus, that John the Baptist ministered during the time, during the priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas.

[14 : 21] So he's already commenting on this situation, the reality, that both of them are prominent high priests. And so, they probably arranged this already beforehand, with Caiaphas and with the Roman authorities. So they first take him to Annas to hear the verdict, and then they take him to Caiaphas, for the official stamp of approval.

And why did the Jewish religious authorities oppose Jesus so fiercely? Right? The content of Annas' interrogation of Jesus in verses 19 to 24, reveals some of this. So read verse 19 with me.

It says, the high priest then questioned Jesus, about his disciples, and his teaching. So, those are the two things that they're up in arms about, that they're questioning Jesus.

But his disciples, which may reflect their concern, preoccupation with how large his following is. Because if it's large, then maybe he could be, he could lead a popular uprising.

And they're concerned about that. And secondly, they're concerned about his teaching. So, even though, later as you will see, they present the matter to Pilate, in primarily political terms, because they know that that's, Pilate's vulnerable spot, and that's the language he understands.

[15 : 22] But for them, the concern is religious. Right? So they say, well, politics also is a part of it. But they disagree, with people's assessment, that Jesus is the Messiah. That Jesus claimed to be the Son of God, and had told them, that they do not belong to the Father, and that that's why they are rejecting Jesus.

So Jesus had told the Pharisees, and the Jewish leaders to their face, of this reality, and they resent that fact. And so they question him, and it's questions about his teaching.

And then Jesus responds, in verses 20 to 21. I've spoken openly to the world. I've always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all Jews come together.

I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me, what I said to them. They know what I said.

Jesus is saying, he taught out in the open. This doesn't mean that he didn't have any private lessons he did with his disciples. But he's saying that what he said out in the open, in public, was one and the same as what he taught in private.

[16 : 27] There were not two different messages. He was not saying something in secret, and plotting something. No, he said everything openly. And in contrast, look at these Jewish leaders. They came in the cover of night, in seclusion, to arrest him away, while the rest of the Jews are preoccupied with celebrating the Passover feast.

And they conduct this trial at night, and we know this, due to the presence of the lanterns and torches mentioned in verse 3, also the charcoal fire by which the people are warming.

So this is taking place that night, and according to Jewish legal procedure, the court was not supposed to be in session at night. This is illegal for them to do, yet they're doing this.

Jesus, and there's a stark contrast, Jesus speaks out there in the open, and these Jews are doing something illegal, contrary to the law, in secret.

And not only that, Jesus asks them, why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them, they know what I said. This again is a statement that has bite, because according to Jewish legal procedures, you're not supposed to question the subject.

[17 : 36] You're not supposed to question the defendant. You're supposed to question the witnesses that are produced on behalf of the defendant. That's proper Jewish legal proceeding. And not only that, the witnesses, you're supposed to first bring up the witnesses in support of the defendant, and then listen to the witnesses that are coming up against the defendant.

But nothing like that is taking place. They come merely to question Jesus himself, with no witnesses for him. So Jesus is saying, why do you ask me?

He's exposing the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. And after being taken to Caiaphas after Annas, Jesus is then taken to the Roman governor's headquarters.

This is Pilate's headquarters. In the morning, and so this would be the morning of Good Friday. And in order to be, so it says in verse 28, that the Jews themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.

I mean, that just drifts with irony, right? I mean, they are concerned about eating the Passover meal while they are illegally prosecuting and killing the true Passover lamb that God sent to rescue them and save them.

[18 : 54] Right? They're concerned about eating the Passover. So they won't even go into the governor's headquarters. And I want to keep going on this train, but I need to digress for a little bit in case you guys notice these seeming inconsistencies.

And not because these are important in themselves, in their own detail, but because I believe it's important for you to have confidence in God's word that it's trustworthy. Because you might be wondering, well, didn't Mark and Luke and, you know, Matthew, right?

And didn't we see earlier that Jesus already had the Passover meal with his disciples? So that was on Thursday. So what does it mean here that they want to eat the Passover?

Does that mean the Passover hasn't happened yet? Right? So the reason why it could appear to be contradictory is because the word Passover is used in multiple senses.

And the first sense, of course, is to refer to the Passover feast proper, that meal, or that meal that takes place on Thursday. Right? And so it could refer to that meal and that's how Matthew and Mark primarily use the word.

[20 : 08] Actually, that's the exclusive way they use the word. But Passover could also, the word can also be referring to the whole feast which lasts seven days, not just to the Passover meal proper.

And that's how John uses the word. He goes back and forth between the two. And you could tell that this is the case because in Matthew and Mark, they always distinguish the Passover from the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And they're one and the same. Passover is the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But they distinguish the two because to use the term Unleavened Bread to refer to the feast and the word Passover to refer to the Passover proper, to the meal.

But John doesn't do that. He doesn't, the word Unleavened Bread doesn't even occur in the entire Gospel. So that tells you he has to use the word Passover in multiple senses. And here he's referring to the feast.

So they're saying, no, they had the Passover meal already but the feast continues to have special meals and they want to be able to continue to participate in that feast. It's not, you know, unlike how we have, I mean, there's, some of us are Chinese American and we celebrate the Chinese New Year.

[21 : 13] There's a big festival in Boston, right? And the Chinese New Year is, was this year, was actually on January 28th, right? But the celebration of the Chinese New Year lasts 15 days, not one day, right?

And so the Chinese New Year parade in Chinatown was actually on February 12th, almost two weeks after the fact, after the actual Chinese New Year day. It's kind of like that, right?

So someone could say, well, I need to go celebrate the Chinese New Year two weeks after the fact. So right, this here, it's the day after the Passover, they're saying, no, they need to continue to celebrate the Passover feast, right?

And this also explains kind of a thorny question later in chapter 19, verse 14, where it says, now it was the day of preparation of the Passover. Again, that's not referring to the fact that it's the day when they prepare for the Passover proper, which would be the Wednesday in preparation for Thursday, but it's referring to the preparation of the Passover, which actually, throughout the gospel, the word preparation is used in only one way, and it's referred to the preparation for the Sabbath.

That's how the word is typically used. And so it's talking about that that was the day of preparation for the Sabbath of the Passover feast is what it's talking about there, right? And you can see that clearly in chapter 19, verse 31, where John notes that since it was the day of preparation and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath, for the Sabbath was a high day, it's a special Sabbath because it's during the feast, the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away.

[22 : 49] So again, so if you look at these, then you could see a remarkable harmony arises in the gospel narratives of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. So getting back to the main point here.

So while they are trying to get Jesus, the ultimate Passover lamb, killed, they're concerned about eating all the meals in the Passover feast. But what made them so blind? Right?

Because they were so set in their ways and so settled in their expectations of who Jesus, who the Messiah would be, they missed God's purposes and plans even though He was right before their eyes.

they expected a Messiah that would lead them militarily to establish a physical kingdom on earth. And we know that that's what they expected not only from the gospel narratives but also from historical records.

Not too long after, just over 30 years after Jesus' crucifixion, the Jews will actually revolt, start the first Jewish-Roman war. They wanted to take over.

[23 : 56] They wanted to further their political ambitions. And so that's why they took exception to Jesus. And we see this clearly in chapter 19, verse 7. Read it with me. We have a law and according to that law He ought to die because He has made Himself the Son of God.

They can't come to terms with the fact that Jesus might actually be the Son of God. And because they're so settled in their expectations, they want to get rid of Him instead.

And I want to ask ourselves this morning as well because we might also be missing God's purposes and plans right before our eyes because we're so settled in our own faulty expectations of God.

Ask this question to yourself honestly. In what ways are we trying to make God fit into our plans rather than trying to make your life and your priorities fit into God's plan?

Maybe some of us expected a Savior who would say to us, Daughter, neither do I condemn you, but a Savior who would not say, And from now on, sin no more. Maybe you expected a Savior who would say, Whoever hears my word and believes in me has eternal life.

[25 : 13] He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life. But maybe not a Savior who would say, Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. These are all from the Gospel of John, what Jesus said, his words.

Maybe you expected a Savior who would give you health and wealth and prosperity but never sickness, poverty, and suffering for your good and God's glory. Maybe you expected a God who would fit neatly into your theological paradigms and worldviews but not one who declares his untrammelled sovereignty and defies your restrictions of his deity.

Maybe we expect a God who would make us the center of the universe, not a God who says he is the center of the universe. Our duty as Christians is to humble ourselves before God, die to our own wills and plans and then submit to the revealed will of God in Scripture in every aspect of life.

That's what we are called to. And if you are not a follower of Jesus, I ask you also to examine yourself at this time. Do aspects of Jesus and his teaching offend your sensibilities?

[26 : 35] Do you find yourself saying God wouldn't do such a thing? He wouldn't say such a thing? Do you find yourself saying things like that? Oh, God would never say something like that. God would never do something like that. How do you know?

Don't we make faulty judgments about people and situations all the time in our lives? We all do. What makes you so sure that your subjective expectation of what God should be is correct?

I implore you to look at Jesus and his claims today with fresh eyes because he's the only true savior and we must accept him, submit to him on his terms. So we've seen Peter succumb to peer pressure in a way and Caiaphas and other Jewish leaders to the religious pressures that they feel and we see now here we turn to Pilate who succumbs to political pressure.

Read with me verses 29 to 32 of chapter 18. So Pilate went outside to them and said, what accusation do you bring against this man? and they answered him, if this man were not doing evil we would not have delivered him over to you.

Pilate said to them, take him yourselves then and judge him by your own law. The Jews said to him, it is not lawful for us to put anyone to death. So Pilate opens up trial by asking, what accusation do you bring against this man?

[28 : 00] And interestingly enough, the Jews don't bring a single accusation. They just say, hey, if you didn't do anything bad we wouldn't have brought him to you. And so the fact that they respond that way suggests that there was already a prior understanding and the fact that Roman guards, the detachment of soldiers came with Judas to arrest Jesus shows that the Roman authorities already had an idea of what was going on.

So Pilate probably already knew this. He's just kind of on a power trip. He's saying, hey, let's open up this trial. Let's see what you do. And he threw out this passage who will mock the Jews.

And we know that Pilate knew something of what was going on because later when he takes Jesus aside he asks him, are you the king of the Jews? The Jews didn't tell him anything about that to this point so he already knew what was going on.

And Pilate senses their insolence when they respond that way and he responds in kind. Well, take him yourselves then, judge him by your own law. If you're so certain of your judgments then you do it yourself.

And he's displaying his power saying, well, you can't do that, can you? Because they have no power to execute criminals. Only the Roman authorities had that power.

[29 : 09] And that had been the case since 6 AD when the Roman Empire established the prefect to rule over Judea, over all the Jews. And so after this Pilate takes Jesus into his headquarters to question him.

In verse 33 he asks, are you the king of the Jews? So that's how the Jews had framed Jesus' you know, their accusation toward Jesus.

Of course, Pilate doesn't care whether Jesus is, you know, Messiah or what he claimed to be or teach for the Jews but he cares when someone claims to be king.

Because his job is to uphold the authority of Caesar. So they told him he claims to be the king of the Jews and so Pilate asks Jesus this question. And then Jesus says, do you say this of your own accord or did others say it to you about me?

And then Pilate responds, am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done? Right? So his question is contemptuous.

[30 : 14] Am I a Jew? He's, that's derogatory. He's saying, no, I'm not a Jew. So why are you asking me that question? I'm not the one that brought you here. Your own people brought you here and I know these people are being hypocritical because they never once wanted to uphold Caesar's rule before and all of a sudden they're interested in ratting out this guy, this Christ who claims to be the king of the Messiah.

And so you did something. What have you done? He's asking. And Jesus answers in verse 36, my kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting that might not be delivered over to the Jews.

But my kingdom is not from the world. So by speaking of his kingdom, Jesus freely acknowledges his kingship. But rather than simply accepting the Jewish authorities and the Roman authorities definition of kingship, he defines it in his own way.

He says, it's not of this world. If it were, his servants would be fighting for him. But because it's not, he's all alone, forsaken even by his own disciples.

Pilate then follows up, so you are a king. And Jesus says, you say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth.

[31 : 36] Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. So when he says, you say that I am a king, he's not saying, well, that's not what I said, but that's what you're saying. That's not what Jesus is saying at all. This is the typical Jewish way of affirming what the person said.

It's saying, it is as you said, it is as you said, it is as you say so. That's what he's saying. And you know that you can compare it to Luke 22, 70 to 71 where a similar question is asked of Jesus and Jesus responds in the same way, you say that I am.

And then they take that as blasphemy. So it's clearly an affirmation. It's not a denial of what Pilate is saying. And the purpose, he says, in fact, he's such a king that he is so, by his nature, a king that it's the very purpose for which he was born.

That's the reason why he was born. And that's the reason why he came into the world. And he explains it. He says, to bear witness to the truth. And Jesus, as he said earlier, he is the truth.

He's the way, the truth, and the life. And because Jesus is the ultimate revelation of God the Father, he's the one that's sent by God to reveal the truth about God. Because of that, to become a king, he was born to be a king, is the same thing as him being born to bear witness to the truth.

[32 : 50] They're one and the same. And there's an implicit invitation in Jesus' last statement, isn't there? Verse 37, everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.

Will you listen to my voice, Pilate? Will you listen to my voice? But Pilate says, dismissively, verse 38, what is truth?

And we know he's being dismissive because he doesn't wait around for an answer. He just storms right out to continue the trial and to talk to the Jews. And in doing so, he proves that he is not of the truth.

But nevertheless, Pilate is probably at this point a little bit fearful already about who Jesus might truly be. the pagan rulers during this time were very superstitious, right?

And they liked to appease all the gods that they can. And they had a category for divine men, men who were spiritual, men whom gods had endowed with spiritual gifts.

[33 : 57] And so perhaps that's what's going on. But he definitely, he knows that Jesus is innocent with regard to the claim that the Jewish authorities are bringing. So he tells them, I find no guilt in him.

And if Pilate were truly a man of integrity, that would be the end of the discussion, wouldn't it? I find no guilt in him. End of trial. Leave. That's what he should have done, but he doesn't. He wants to appease the Jews.

So the story continues in chapter 19. Read verses 1 to 5 with me. Chapter 19, verses 1 to 5. Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him.

And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him saying, Hail, King of the Jews, and struck him with their hands.

Pilate went out again and said to them, See, I am bringing him out to you that you may know that I find no guilt in him. So Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe and Pilate said to him, Behold the man.

[34 : 59] The flogging that takes place at this point is not the flogging that Matthew and Mark write about. So we know because that flogging takes place after Jesus sentenced to death.

This happens before Jesus sentenced to death. And the Jews had three types of flogging. The mildest kind was reserved for petty crimes and they used it as a warning.

Hey, don't do this again and they'll let them go. That was the mildest form of flogging. And then they had the moderate kind and then they had the severest kind of flogging which involved tying, taking the clothes off the person, tying them to a post and then whipping them with a leather whip that was retrofitted with bones and metals.

And it was so severe that many people died from just being flogged. And that treatment was connected to capital punishment. And so Jesus, this is not that kind of flogging that he's referring to.

That happens to Jesus later and Matthew and Mark write about that. So he's going through a whole ordeal here. And so in order to appease the Jews, he flogs them and he wants to let them go with the warning and says, I find no guilt in him but the Jews are stubborn and unyielding the Jewish leaders in their demand of the capital punishment.

[36 : 10] So verse 6 to 11, it says, When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, Crucify him! Crucify him! Pilate said to them, Take him yourselves and crucify him for I find no guilt in him.

And the Jews answered him, We have a law and according to that law he ought to die because he has made himself the son of God. And when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid. He entered his headquarters again and said to Jesus, Where are you from?

But Jesus gave him no answer. So Pilate said to him, You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you? Jesus answered him.

You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.

So when finally the Jewish authorities come to the crux of their accusation that he claimed to be the son of God, Pilate hears this and is even more afraid. He says, Maybe this really is a spiritual person.

[37 : 17] And so he tries to manipulate Jesus into answering his questions. He says, I have the authority to release you or crucify you, but Jesus would have none of it. He wouldn't answer.

And he tells him, You would not have authority over me unless it was given to you from God. And he says that, Therefore he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.

So he's not saying that Pilate is without guilt because God was sovereign over this process. He is guilty of what he did. But his sin is less grave compared to the sin of those who handed him, the one who handed him over.

Because his is passive. He received Jesus as he came into his jurisdiction. But Judas, who's probably, this John is referring to here because the word betrayer is attached to him throughout the gospel, which is the same word as the word delivered.

So it seems that he's referring to him. He is guilty of the greater sin. And so he says, From then on, Jesus seeks to release him in verse 12. And then the Jews pull out their final card, their biggest weapon, their leverage.

[38 : 24] Verse 12, If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.

Now that's his sensitive spot, isn't it? Right? He's subject to Caesar. And Caesar at this time was known, Tiberius was known for being suspicious of his subordinates.

And he was known for brutally wiping out any people that he has suspicions against. And earlier, we know from history, the Jewish authorities had actually kind of told on him before.

They had come and went to the emperor and complained to him about Pilate before. So he knows they're not bluffing at this point. So he's fearful. And so even though he had clearly said, I find no guilt in him, and from this point on, he settled on the decision what he's going to do.

So when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called the Stone Pavement in Aramaic Gabbatha. Now it was the day of preparation of the Passover.

[39 : 33] It was about the sixth hour. He said to the Jews, Behold your king. So the timing is slightly off from the other Gospels. They say in the Gospels, six hour is about noon, according to Jewish reckoning.

But in other Gospels, it says that Jesus was crucified around 9 a.m. But let me remind you, they didn't have watches or clocks during this time, and people are not carrying sundials around. So it was acceptable for them to have approximate knowledge of time, and it was considered truthful when they wrote that way.

So that's, I don't want you guys to be bothered by that when you find it. And the Jews continued to clamor violently, Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! And Pilate now knows that he is trapped, but he does not miss the last opportunity to mock the Jews.

He says, Shall I crucify your king? And then they answer in unison, We have no king but Caesar. So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

What? An apostasy, right? Just, the Jewish leaders who ought to be serving God as their king says, We have no king but Caesar. And let me ask you this morning, What are the fears that prevent you from accepting Jesus as your God and Savior?

[40 : 53] Are there any allegiances in your life that preclude your supreme and exclusive allegiance to God? Perhaps you feel, your fear that you will damage your reputation if you tell people about Christ.

Maybe your primary loyalty maybe lies to your employer or your political party or your country and not to God. Are we in any way seeking to preserve our status quo to protect ourselves and to advance our causes rather than aligning ourselves unreservedly with Jesus and his cause?

Now that brings us to my final point because this narrative is not at all about Peter or Caiaphas or Pilate but it's about Jesus.

And we see Jesus from the beginning to the end in full control of what is happening. Right? Chapter 18 verse 4 Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and then said to the band of soldiers who would come to arrest him, Whom do you seek?

They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth and Jesus said to them, I am he. And when Jesus said to them, I am he, they drew back and fell to the ground. Jesus is not caught unaware.

[42 : 08] He knows exactly what's going on and because of that he comes forward and he self-identifies. He says, no, I am the Jesus of Nazareth that you're looking for. And when he says that he says, I am, literally.

That's what's behind the translation, I am he. He literally says, I am. And he's, which is again, reminiscent of God's revelation of himself to Israelites in Exodus 3 when he said, I am who I am.

Say this to the people of Israel. I am has sent me to you. And when God so discloses himself to people, the only appropriate response is for them to fall prostrate.

And so these Roman guards, the cohort, 300, secondary soldiers, they draw back and they fall to the ground. Some people say that, you know, they were just physically inept, you know, started, they're so surprised by Jesus' self-exclusion they're just kind of stumbling back and then they trip and fall, right?

But I mean, even if that's what happened, John Curry intends something more than that. If that's what happened then they act better than they know because that's in fact what they should have done in the presence of God, the great I am.

[43 : 26] And so Jesus is in full control and he secures the safety of his followers. He says, if you seek me let these men go and John notes that this is in fulfillment of scripture of those whom you gave me I have lost, not one.

That of course refers to spiritual salvation but in order to save his disciples spiritually he needs to preserve them physically because he hasn't died and rose again yet. So he secures their safety and when Peter tries to play the hero he says, this is the cup that he must drink because the father has given it to him.

So he's in full control during his arrest and he's in full control during the trial, right? That's why John intentionally juxtaposes Peter's shameful denials along with Jesus' bold witness, right?

He kind of interweaves them and puts them right next to each other because in order to highlight the context Jesus is bold as a witness. He tells the truth as a witness. He does not cowering because of the environment.

And John reminds us in 1827 that after Peter's third denial at once a rooster crowed to remind us that Jesus knew this was going to happen all along. Nothing that's happened so far has happened outside of God's sovereign plan is what he's telling us.

[44 : 45] and even the Jewish leaders decision to bring him to Pilate so that he can be executed by the Roman proper Roman authorities. Even that is in fulfillment of scripture.

So John notes in 1832 this was to fulfill the word that Jesus had spoken to show by what kind of death he was going to die. And this wasn't even intentional but I think this is really cool that it happened.

the preaching from this Friday the tentative was from Psalm 22 during our prayer service which prophesies about Jesus' crucifixion.

Verses 16 to 18 of Psalm 22 says dogs encompass me a company of evildoers encircles me they have pierced my hands and feet I can count all my bones they stare and gloat over me they divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots.

So this is all going to be fulfilled in the next chapter. Jesus is going to be pierced he's going to be crucified. Every single turn of event here in this passage happens due to God's sovereign knowledge and plan and Jesus is in full control.

[45 : 57] But that raises the burning question for us what's in it for us? God is clearly orchestrating these turn of events but why why is he doing that?

and that brings us to the truth that we should never become too familiar with and that is the main point of this passage. Christ the king is condemned according to God's sovereign plan so that those who believe in him might be justified.

Christ the king is condemned according to God's sovereign plan so that those who believe in him might be justified and we see this truth in the manner of Jesus' suffering throughout the gospel because Pilate asks him what is truth and we know from what Jesus said before that he is the truth and yet he misses the truth right before his eyes.

The Jews accuse him of having claimed to be the son of God and then they ask Pilate to release instead of him so this is kind of an equivalent to a presidential pardon right so Pilate had the right and it traditionally released one prisoner for the Jews during the Passover feast as during their biggest feast of the year and so the Jews asked instead when Pilate said should I release to you the king of the Jews they say no release to us Barabbas and how ironic his name means Barabbas a son of the father so they will take a son of the father Barabbas who was actually an insurrectionist so that they can kill Jesus who was not an insurrectionist at all and who is the true and only son of God they will kill him instead and they humiliate him the soldiers twist together a crown of thorns to mock him put him on his head put a purple robe on him and say and jeer hail king of the

Jews but again they speak better than they know because he is as John has said over and over and over again he is the true king that God sent for us this is all in fulfillment of what John had said in chapter one his prologue when he gave us a foretaste of what is to come he said he was in the world and the world was made through him yet the world did not know him he came to his own and his own people did not receive him but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God this is the reason why Jesus must head to the cross to his death this is the reason why Jesus is suffering this is not just a good story for you to listen to and think back to it once a year this is a summons from the God of heaven calling you to be a part of this story he came that he might die for you because we are rebels seeking to be king of our own lives seeking to do our own will and to do our own bidding

[49 : 06] Jesus had to come and die a rebel's death on the cross so we can be reconciled to him and brought into his kingdom and that my friends that's that's the fountain of all Christian blessing that's the source of all Christian strength so don't let yourself be too familiar with that help ask God for help to pray that you would see the beauty and the glory of Jesus on the cross with fresh eyes this Easter Christ the king is condemned according to God's sovereign plan so that those who believe in him might be justified so that you might believe in him and be justified let's pray together God that is our prayer we pray that you would bring us back to our first love rather than being so preoccupied with all that is ours all that you've given us all that you've called us to do that before all of those things we would be able to sit at your feet at the foot of the cross worship you to love you to adore you to believe in you for that is why you came so help us to believe in Jesus name we pray amen we or we it you