

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK FORTY-ONE: JESUS BEFORE PILATE

READING

28 Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. 29 So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?" 30 "We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted. 31 "Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them. "Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied. 32 (This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die.) 33 Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him. 34 Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?" 35 "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." 37 Pilate said, "So you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true." John 18:28-37 (NLT)

TEACHING

Once the Jewish leaders found Jesus guilty of blasphemy (claiming to be God), they brought him to the headquarters of the Roman governor. They knew that only the Romans were allowed to execute someone and that's what they wanted to happen to Jesus. In this story, Pilate is trying to determine if Jesus is an insurrectionist—someone who wants to become king and overthrow the established government—or if this was just a case of jealousy by the religious leaders. By the end of this investigation, Pilate will realize Jesus is innocent. But at this point, he isn't sure. Jesus' answers to Pilate reveal two important truths about the kingdom of God.

- 1) The kingdom of God doesn't advance the way the kingdoms of this world do. Jesus said an earthly kingdom would have responded by fighting for its king. In the kingdom of God, the king first fights for the people. Jesus came to do for us what we couldn't do for ourselves. As we see Jesus' fighting on our behalf, we receive the confidence and faith to fight for him.
- 2) The kingdom of God is built on the truth. The kings of this world will do anything for power and control – even build their kingdoms on half-truths and lies. Jesus came to build a kingdom on the truth found in God. This is a truth that has the power to confront us and change us.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- What would you do if you were king for a day?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who asks Jesus if he is a king?
- Is God's kingdom built on truth or on lies?

CHILDREN:

- Why did the religious leaders bring Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor?
- What did Pilate ask Jesus?
- How is the kingdom of God different than the kingdoms of this world?

TEENAGERS:

- Why did the religious leaders bring Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor?
- What did Pilate ask Jesus and how did Jesus reply?
- How is the kingdom of God different than the kingdoms of this world?

ADULTS:

- What battles are you fighting that might not be part of God's kingdom's battles?
- What is one example of how your life in the workplace is built on God's truth?

PRAYER

God, thank you for sending Jesus the king. Thank you that Jesus is different from other kings – He didn't come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. Thank you that Jesus left his heavenly throne to come live among us, lay down his power, and lay down his life. Help me to fight the right battles and to trust in what King Jesus has done for me. Spirit, teach me what is true by your Word and your presence. Help me to build my life on the solid foundation of the truth of God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

When you read this story, Jesus seems so meek and so weak. But compare this with what John saw later in his life in a vision of the end of times:

11 Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war. 12 His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself. 13 He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses. 15 From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress. 16 On his robe at his thigh[e] was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords. Revelation 19 (NLT)