

Jesus the King

John 18:33-38

Just as Jesus repeatedly says he is God, he also confesses that he is a king, but his kingdom is not from this world (vv36-37). Pilate wants to know if Jesus is king of the Jews, and his answer is yes and no. Yes he is a king, but not in the way you think.

The Old Kings & Kingdom

To understand the context of Pilate's question, we need to look at the concept of king and kingdom in the Old Testament. Adam was called to do priestly service protecting the garden, prophetic service learning from God and speaking his word to men, and exercise kingly reign by working in the garden and getting dominion over the earth (Gen. 2:15, 1:28). He tossed his crown away when instead of learning and serving, he obeyed the serpent and grasped for knowledge and power (Gen. 3:5). Israel was supposed to be an exemplary, interceding nation in the world (Ex. 19:6). When they were, the nations came to the Lord (1 Kgs. 10:1, 6-9). Kings were supposed to love God and humbly serve his people throughout their reign. When they didn't, the kingdom fell, followed by exile/captivity, repentance, restoration, and repeat. Faithful "kings" like Joseph and Daniel serve as wonderful examples, but the overall failure of the kings and kingdom of Israel is stark. And so the prophets spoke of a time when nations would flow to the mountain of the Lord and learn the ways of the King (Mic. 4:1-4, 5:2; Matt. 2:6; Jer. 23:5). Israel longed for a messiah-king who would not only be just, but bring justice in a lasting way. This is the strength of the new covenant. After Jesus atoned for sin, he sat down at the right hand of the Father, and sent the Spirit to empower his people (Heb. 8:8-13; 10:12-18).

The New King & His Kingdom

Jesus is a king, but a completely different kind of king than what anyone is used to. Unlike Adam who lusted for knowledge and greatness, Jesus was patient, growing in wisdom and stature (Lk. 2:52). He was humble in his obscurity and his popularity.

- 1) **Kingdom of Strength** His kingdom is here (Mk. 1:15). We pray for it to advance (Matt. 6:10). The strong man has been bound (Matt. 12:28). The kingdom confronts us in a way that our flesh doesn't like.
- 2) **Kingdom of Subtlety** His kingdom isn't seen in external signs, but resides in our midst (Lk. 17:20-21). It's like a field with wheat and tares (Matt. 13:24-30). It's like a grain of mustard seed, very small, that grows slowly (Matt. 13:31-32; 1 Cor. 15:24-25).
- 3) **Kingdom of Surprise** People come from all over to eat in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Matt. 8:5-13). At its culmination, there will be many surprises. Jesus invites us all to this kingdom feast. Those who demand to be there won't be.
- 4) **Kingdom of Service** Jesus is a different kind of king, the kind who uses his authority to serve (Lk. 22:24-27). We must lay down our pride to be served by him; you have to be evil enough to become a Christian (Matt. 9:10-13). Then we are called to strive for greatness through service with the abilities and opportunities God has granted, which is harder than it sounds. You can tell whether someone is a servant by how they react when treated like one.

Jesus is a king like no other, and he calls us to be served by him so that we can serve like him. He invites us into his kingdom now and forever, one of righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.