



Behold Your King!

John 19:12-22

1. The Rejection of the King (verses 12-18)

2. The Proclamation of the King (verses 19-22)

The gospel of John is filled with ironies.

We see this irony in the very first chapter of the gospel of John, when Jesus first calls Nathanael. Nathanael says, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). The irony is that the best thing that ever came into the world came out of Nazareth.

We see irony again in chapter 3, when Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus. Jesus says, “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Nicodemus responds, “How can these things be?” (John 3:9). The irony is that Nicodemus is the teacher of Israel, but he doesn’t even understand the first thing about entering the kingdom of heaven.

We see irony again in chapter 4, when Jesus meets the Samaritan woman at the well. Jesus says to her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water” (John 4:10). But the woman thinks that Jesus is talking about well water: “Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep” (John 4:11). The irony is that the one who created the water was offering her eternal life, and all she could think about was her need for physical water.

We see irony again in chapter 6, after Jesus feeds the five thousand. The crowds come looking for him the next day. They want more bread. But Jesus says to them, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). The irony is that the people who had just eaten the miracle still missed what the miracle meant, that Jesus is the one who ultimately satisfies in this life.

We see irony again in chapter 7, when Jesus goes to the Feast of Dedication. There

was an arrest warrant for Jesus, yet no arrests were being made. “So they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come” (John 7:30). The irony is that the authorities want to arrest Jesus, but they cannot lay a hand on him, because even his enemies cannot act one moment sooner than the plan of God allows.

We see irony again in chapter 8, when the Pharisees challenge Jesus. Jesus says, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). Yet, they proudly say, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone” (John 8:33). The irony is that Israel had a long history of slavery in Egypt and Babylon, and even at that very moment, they were under bondage to Rome.

We see irony again in chapter 9, after Jesus healed the man who was blind from birth. Jesus spit on the ground and rubbed some mud in his eyes and told him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (John 9:7). The man came back seeing. The irony is that the Pharisees were utterly blind to the miracle that Jesus did, even after repeatedly interviewing the man and his parents. Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind” (John 9:39).

We see irony in chapter 11, after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. The chief priests and the Pharisees had a problem on their hands. They said, “What are we going to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” (John 11:47-48). So Caiaphas, the high priest, said, “You know nothing at all. Nor do you understand that it is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish” (John 11:49-50). The irony is that Caiaphas himself didn’t understand, but he spoke better than he knew, because Jesus did die for the nation, but not the way Caiaphas meant.

We see irony again in chapter 12, after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. One would think such a miracle would end all opposition. But instead the Pharisees say to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him” (John 12:19). The irony is that their dilemma is actually a prophecy of how Jesus will draw those in the world to himself.

There are many more ironies in the gospel of John, far more than we have time this morning to mention. The one who came “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14) is humiliated and crucified. The people claimed to know where Jesus came from, but they did not know that he came from heaven (John 7:27-28). To do the work of

God is to “believe in him whom he had sent” (John 6:28-29). The shepherd is rejected by his own sheep (John 10:11-18). When the Father speaks from heaven, “the crowd that stood there and heard it said that it thundered” (John 12:29). Life comes through death (John 12:24).

This, by the way, is what makes the gospel of John so interesting. It is not unlike a well-crafted children's shows, which work two levels at once: simple enough for a child to follow the story, but layered with meaning that only adults can fully appreciate. On the one hand, the message is clear and simple: Jesus came into the flesh and lived among us so that whoever believes in him will not perish but will have everlasting life. Yet, on the other hand, the gospel is filled with those who should believe, but don't believe. The teacher of Israel cannot understand the new birth. The crowds, who know where Jesus was born, cannot figure out where he comes from. The Pharisees who claim to see are actually blind. The High Priest prophesies the gospel, that one man must die for the nation, without realizing what he is saying.

Well, this morning, we come to one of the greatest ironies of all: the charge against Jesus when he was crucified. Jesus is condemned, mocked, and crucified for claiming to be the King of the Jews. The irony is that this is exactly who Jesus is! He is the King of the Jews.

The title of my message this morning is “Behold Your King.” This is exactly what Pilate says to the crowds. Let's read our text: John 19:12-22.

This passage breaks down into two parts. We see the first part in verses 12-18, in which Jesus was rejected as king. We see the second part in verses 19-22, in which Jesus was proclaimed to be king.

1. The Rejection of the King (verses 12-18)

Verse 12 begins with these words:

John 19:12a

From then on Pilate sought to release him.

This takes us back to last week, when Pontius Pilate repeatedly said, “I find no guilt in him” (18:38; 19:4, 6). Thus, he tried to set Jesus free over and over again.

Do you remember when Pilate tried to make a deal with the crowds? It was his

custom during the Passover to release a prisoner for the Jews. Pilate offered to release Jesus. But the crowds wanted Barabbas instead (John 18:40).

Do you remember when Pilate tried to make a compromise with the crowds? Pilate had Jesus mocked and flogged (John 19:1-3). Pilate presented a bruised and bloody Jesus to the crowds, hoping that this would satisfy them. But the crowds cried out, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Do you remember how shocked Pilate was? He said to Jesus, “Where are you from” (verse 9). Pilate sensed something different about Jesus. I don't think that Pilate discerned his full deity, but enough to know this man was unlike any other. He saw such intense hatred from the crowds and such quiet dignity from Jesus, and it unsettled him.

Pilate continued on his quest to release Jesus. He knew that Jesus was innocent. He knew that Jesus didn't deserve to be crucified. We aren't told of the further ways in which Pilate tried. But we do know how insistent the Jews were to see that Jesus was not released: “If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.”

Here again, we see the theme of the kingship of Jesus. Back in chapter 18, the very first question that Pilate asks Jesus is about being the king: “So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’” (John 18:33). After a bit of back and forth, Jesus describes his kingdom: “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world” (John 18:36). This established in Pilate's mind that Jesus was a king: “Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’” (John 18:37). That's why, when Pilate first tried to make his deal with the crowds, he asked them, “So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?” (John 18:39).

The crowds again bring up the idea of Jesus being king, totally rejecting it: “If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.” The important point to know here is that Caesar is Pilate's boss. To oppose Caesar would be political suicide.

The crowds put the choice before Pilate. Who are you going to choose? Caesar or Jesus?

It is worth noting that the charge the Jews brought against Jesus in the other

gospels was blasphemy. He was a mere man who called himself the Son of God, the Ancient of Days. That was the religious charge. But blasphemy meant nothing to a Roman governor. When they brought Jesus to Pilate, they shifted to the political charge of kingship, because that was far more effective. The kingship accusation was a tactical move. Yet it was also perfectly, ironically true.

How appropriate it is for us to be looking at this text on March 15, which is known as “The Ides of March.” It was on this date, March 15 in 44 BC, that Julius Caesar was at a meeting in the Roman Senate, surrounded by those in the government, and was stabbed to death by as many as 60 conspirators, the most famous of which was Brutus.

To be simple (though inaccurate), “The Ides of March” simply means “the middle day of March,” in this case, March 15. The story goes that Caesar was warned by a seer that harm would come on the Ides of March. On his way to the meeting, he saw the seer and joked with him, “Well, the Ides of March are come,” as if to say that the prophecy hadn’t come true. To which the seer replied, “Yes, they are come, but they are not gone.” By the end of the day, Caesar was dead.

Shakespeare immortalized this scene of the death of Caesar in his play *Julius Caesar*, giving Caesar the famous dying words, “Et tu, Brute?” (“You also, Brutus?”)

Pilate knew well the story of the death of Caesar, and what the Roman government was capable of doing to those who were not loyal. The assassination of Julius Caesar was about 70 years before the time of Jesus. This is roughly as close to Pilate as Pearl Harbor is to us today. It was not ancient history to him; it was living memory.

So, Pilate caved to the Jewish leaders.. He officially rejected the King of the Jews.

John 19:13-14a

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

This was the place where judgments were made. To those who lived in Jerusalem in that day, they would have known exactly where this place was, and they would have known exactly what happened there. It was the place of judgment, called here

“the judgment seat.”

The time of the verdict is given in verse 14: it was the day of Preparation of the Passover, about the sixth hour. Remember, in Biblical times, the day begins at sun-up, which is the first hour of the day. Sunset is the twelfth hour. So “the sixth hour” places this event at about noon on Friday.

This tells us two things. First, these proceedings with Pilate took a long time. In chapter 18, verse 28, we read that Jesus was brought to the headquarters of Pilate in the “early morning.” Now it is pushing mid-day before the final judgment was announced.

Second, and not coincidentally, this was about the time when the Passover festivities would begin, all across Jerusalem, all across Israel, and all around the world wherever the Jews were gathered. Thousands of lambs were slaughtered in preparation for the evening meal. Here in Jerusalem was the soon sacrifice of the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

John 19:14b

He said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

This is the title of my message. This is the heart and soul of why Jesus was crucified. He was the King of the Jews, who was rejected. “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:11).

Pilate said this of Jesus to the Jews. I say it to you as well: “Behold your King!” I am presenting Jesus to you. Now, we don’t have Jesus physically sitting before us, but I am presenting Jesus to you spiritually. Jesus is the king. He is the King of the world.

When you think of Jesus in terms of being a “king,” so much of his identity and our response falls into place. Many people merely see Jesus as a Savior who came and died for us, and that’s true. Many people think that you intellectually assent to Jesus.

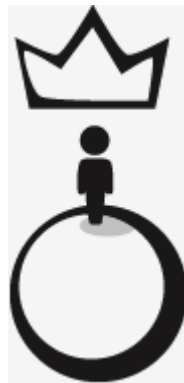
But Jesus didn’t come and save us from a position of weakness. He came from a position of strength. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the sovereign one above all things. To believe in Jesus and embrace Jesus means that we come under his rule and authority in our lives.

Consider Scott Adams, the creator of the comic strip Dilbert. He was not a Christian, but shortly before his death he sent out a message saying he would “accept Jesus” as a hedge against eternity, in case Christianity turned out to be true. That is nothing more than intellectual assent, a calculated bet, not genuine faith. Adams had no acknowledgement of the kingship of Jesus or repentance from his lack of submission for his entire life.[\[1\]](#)

So, what about you? Have you bowed the knee to Jesus as your king? Yes, Jesus is a king, but he’s a good and gracious king as well. He is a forgiving king, to all who receive him. He is a king who will welcome you into his family. “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). Through faith, we become children of the King!

As a king, he demands our all. That’s why we call Jesus “Lord.” Really, all of us have two ways to live: we can either live in submission to King Jesus, or we can be our own kings. I want to share with you a simple gospel tract called “Two Ways to Live,” put out by Matthias Media. I love it because it puts the gospel in terms of the kingship of Jesus, which is a rebuttal to all who would want to follow in the path of Scott Adams.

Here is a summary of the "Two Ways to Live" tract.[\[2\]](#)



The tract begins with God as the loving and ruling creator of the world. the sovereign king over all creation (Psalm 24:1). But then it shows what humanity has done:



We have placed a crown on our own heads, running our lives our own way, in rebellion against the king.



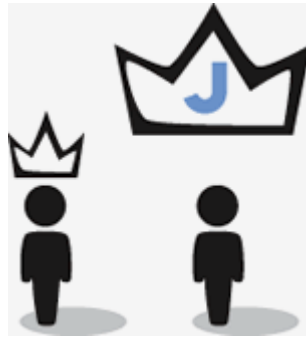
The result of that rebellion is death. But here is the good news: Jesus is the king who came and died for rebels.



And the risen Jesus is now the ruler over all the earth.



The choice before every person is simply this: will you live under the kingship of Jesus, or will you continue as your own king?



This is the gospel using the "kingship" theme. It's helpful for us because it rightly places our submission to Jesus as key for our salvation. We submit to Jesus, the king of the world!

Behold your King!

John 19:15

They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar."

In our small group last Sunday evening, when we gather to pray with and for each other and discuss the morning's sermon and its application into our lives, sometimes we spill over into the message for the next week. I read this to our small group, and there was a physical gasp by a couple of people when I read what the Jews said in verse 15: "We have no king but Caesar."

It should be shocking to us! What an act of betrayal this was! For the Jewish

people to say that they have “no king but Caesar!” The Jews had a king. It was their God!

Think back to 1 Samuel 8, when the Israelites demanded a king from Samuel. God told Samuel, “They have not rejected you; they have rejected me from being king over them.” So they chose the tall, dark, and handsome Saul in 1 Samuel 9. Even then, what Israel truly wanted was an earthly king rather than God as their king.

And now, centuries later, the true King stands before them in the flesh, and they cry out, “We have no king but Caesar.”

The Bible is clear that the Lord is the king over Israel. Psalm 24:7 declares, “Lift up your heads, O gates! ... that the King of glory may come in.” Jesus was born King of the Jews. The Magi came from the east specifically to worship him (see Matthew 2:2). And yet Israel rejected him once again.

It is remarkable that the main contention that the Jews had with the Romans was who would rule over them. They professed that they wanted to live free, free to worship and serve their God apart from the Romans. The Jews were given a measure of freedom to worship the Lord, but they were always under Roman rule, which they hated. Remember when Jesus was asked whether it was lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, the question was loaded with resentment. The Jews despised paying tribute to Rome. But now they say, “We have no king but Caesar,” which was a clear denial of their God.

It shows the hatred within the heart of these Jews, as they again called for his crucifixion: “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” (verse 15). There was no way for Pilate to win with these Jews.

John 19:16

So he delivered him over to them to be crucified.

This is where we see the rejection of Jesus in full measure, that the Jews would gladly see Jesus led away to be crucified.

The crucifixion account is really simple.

John 19:17

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called The Place of a Skull, which in Aramaic is called Golgotha.

The location of his crucifixion is called “Golgotha.” Perhaps you know this best by its Latin name, “Calvary.” The place where Jesus died. The place where Jesus was crucified is also called here “The Place of a Skull.”

We aren't quite sure where this place was in Jerusalem, but we know that it was outside the city walls, as Jesus “went out.” Jesus went out bearing his cross down what is known as the Via Dolorosa (the way of suffering). Tourists still walk this path in Jerusalem today. Jesus was so weakened from the flogging that he stumbled along the way, and Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross for him until they reached Golgotha outside the city gate. This is confirmed by the writer to the Hebrews: "So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood" (Hebrews 13:12).

Though we may not know where Jesus was crucified, we do know that there were three crosses in that place. We are not told exactly who the two men crucified with Jesus were. The other gospel accounts identify them as thieves, but they may have been insurrectionists or murderers as well. It is even possible that all three of these men were originally meant to be executed together, with Barabbas as the ringleader who was released where Jesus was crucified.

John 19:18

There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

This detail reminds us that crucifixion was not a rare event. It was the Romans' standard method of deterring crime, carried out publicly and often in groups. Jesus was not the only man crucified that day. He was simply in the middle cross. While on the cross, Jesus was suffering in our place for us.

While on the cross, Jesus was suffering in our place for us. Consider the following various passages which interpret the death of Jesus:

“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus' cross was the ultimate sacrifice to remove sin.

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). He took the curse that was ours so we could be free.

“And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of

your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:13-14). Notice the picture: Jesus is not merely suspended on the cross by ropes. He is nailed there. Our sins, picturesquely, were nailed to the cross with him.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus took the penalty that rightly belonged to us. “

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24). Every lash, every nail, every insult he endured was for our sake.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21). He became our sin-bearer, though he himself was sinless.

“While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ... God shows his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8). Even before we believed, he bore our suffering.

2. The Proclamation of the King (verses 19-22)

John 19:19-20

Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek.

What I love about John’s account of the crucifixion is that it was a declaration. Pilate wrote the inscription in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek — three languages, so that all could read it. The three languages were not accidental. Aramaic was the language of the Jews, Greek was the language of the broader Mediterranean world, and Latin was the language of Rome. Together, they announced to the whole

world who this man was. The crucifixion of Jesus is not merely a Jewish event. It is for the Greeks, for the Romans, and for all who believe, including Gentiles in the twenty-first century.

John 19:21-22

So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but rather, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

Then I love the interaction between the Jews and Pilate. It could be that there was no room on the sign, but I think that’s a poor explanation. I think it’s because Pilate was fed up with the Jews. They had forced him into doing something that he didn’t want to do, and he didn’t want to bend to them in any way. Matthew’s gospel records that Pilate even washed his hands before the crowd and declared, “I am innocent of this man’s blood” (Matthew 27:24). He had reached his limit with these Jews and was done accommodating them.

“What I have written I have written.” It’s almost an exclamation for us: “What is done is done!” Jesus died for being the King of the Jews. Make no mistake why Jesus died. He died for being the King of the Jews.

Is he your king?

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on March 15, 2026 by
Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Here is the final message from Scott Adams. You can read it in full here:
<https://x.com/ScottAdamsSays/status/2011116140626657458/photo/1>.

A Final Message From Scott Adams

If you are reading this, things did not go well for me.

I have a few things to say before I go.

My body failed before my brain. I am of sound mind as I write this,

January 1st, 2026. If you wonder about any of my choices for my estate, or anything else, please know that I am free of any coercion or inappropriate influence of any sort. I promise

Next, many of my Christian friends have asked me to find Jesus before I go. I'm not a believer, but I have to admit the risk-reward calculation for doing so looks attractive So, here I go:

I accept Jesus Christ as my lord and savior, and I look forward to spending an eternity with him. The part about me not being a believer should be quickly resolved if I wake up in heaven. I won't need any more convincing than that. And I hop I am still qualified for entry.

[2] You can work through the entire presentation here: <https://www.matthiasmedia.info/2wtl/>.