

The Gospel of John (111): Jesus before Pilate (4)

Introduction:

This is the fourth and final Sunday that we will have addressed the trial of our Lord before the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, which is recorded for us in John 18 and 19. We have considered that it was in John's purpose to show forth Jesus as not only experiencing and enduring an unjust trial and cruel abuse, but that in doing so He manifested a quiet and regal dignity and deportment before this Roman governor. John recorded this trial before the Roman prefect before his readers showing Jesus Christ as the king over the kingdom of God, a kingdom that would eventually encompass the whole world. Our Lord's kingdom was secured and demonstrated by His faithful witness in the manner that He suffered and died. In this way Jesus conquered and overcame sin, suffering the misery and punishment for sin, conquering all His foes through His death on His cross.

But not only does John record Jesus to have been on trial. He recounts the event in a way that shows others were on trial in their trying of Jesus.

In John's Gospel, Jesus' entire life is a series of trials. Yet the real trial is not the apparent trial. Not Jesus but the Jews who accused and "tried" Jesus are on trial. This becomes most evident in Jesus' trials and death. Speaking of His death after His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus referred to His coming hour of judgment on "this world" (John 12). While the entire world was coming under judgment, that judgment began with the house of God, the people of Israel. Jesus' interpretation of His approaching death is in the background of the trial in John 18-19, where Pilate places Jesus on the judgment seat before the Jews¹, who renounce Jesus in favor of Caesar. Pilate too is on trial, but the trial centers on the people who claim to be the sons of Abraham. By crucifying Jesus, the Jews and the Romans ultimately condemned not Jesus but themselves. Flesh's apparent victory was flesh's defeat. By twisting Torah (God's law) into an instrument to kill the living Word, by boiling the Torah-giver in the milk of the Torah, flesh is self-condemned. In Jesus' death, Yahweh's (God's) persecution of flesh came to its climax.²

Let us read the entire passage to reaffirm the context before us. Here is **John 19:1-16**:

^{19:1}So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. ²And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. ³Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands.

⁴Pilate then went out again, and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him."

⁵Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, "Behold the Man!"

⁶Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!"

Pilate said to them, "You take Him and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him."

¹ We pointed out that the verb of John 19:13, "sat down", could be interpreted as either Pilate seating himself or Pilate seating Jesus on the judgment seat. If Pilate were seating Jesus down on this seat, he would have been mocking the Jews in presenting to them their king. But in John's relaying the account, he is showing forth Jesus as the true king who secured His realm through His suffering and death.

² Peter J. Leithart, **Delivered From the Elements of the World; Atonement, Justification, Mission** (IVP Academic, 2016), p.

⁷The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God.”

⁸Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, ⁹and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.

¹⁰Then Pilate said to Him, “Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?”

¹¹Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.”

¹²From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, “If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar.”

¹³When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. ¹⁴Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

¹⁵But 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!”

¹⁶Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.

The outline we are using to help us with this account contains four sections.

1. The treatment of the King (19:1-3)
2. The presentation of the King: “Behold the Man!” (19:4-7)
3. The authority “from Above” (19:8-11)
4. The Judgment Seat (19:12-16)

We have already addressed in detail the first three of these matters. Today we will give our attention to the judgment seat.

Last time we concluded by pointing out that the language of verse 13 is quite interesting in that it is not clear grammatically whether it was Pilate or Jesus that was seated. Now historically we would say that Pilate sat upon his judgment seat from which he passed sentence upon Jesus. But grammatically, it could be understood that Pilate, in order to mock the Jews for whom he had little regard and respect, sat Jesus on this seat as the Jews’ mock king.

We must remember that we are not interpreting the historical event itself but the account recorded in a text. This is not to deny or even minimize the reality of the event but to suggest that the inspired account may intend to communicate truths beyond what was seen by those present (e.g. Jesus the man is also “the Lamb,” 1:29). In fact, the narrative’s nondescript account may be entirely the point. That is, the narrative wanted to present two coexisting (and competing) realities simultaneously, namely the “authority” of both Pilate and Jesus, which vs. 10-11 made clear was the central issue between them. From the narrative’s perspective, both were sitting on the judgment seat. The historical strand of the Gospel’s plot would suggest Pilate was the one seated, for the seat did belong to his Roman office; yet the cosmological (bigger picture) strand of the Gospel’s plot just as strongly suggests that Jesus was the one seated, for the seat also belonged to the divine office. In order to communicate this, the narrative intentionally makes the sitting of the “judge” explicitly *implicit* so that the scene is presented in the fullness of its historical and cosmological content. If Pilate placed Jesus on the judgment seat, then he was certainly making a mockery of the Jews, as he would do again when Jesus was placed upon the cross (see 19:19-22). But if Pilate himself was sitting on the judgment seat, then the joke was on him, for the place where he sat was given to him by a much higher authority, the very man he was (supposedly) about to judge.³

³ Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 783.

The bottom line is this: though Pilate was passing judgment, actually Jesus Christ was in ultimate control, passing judgment on Pilate, the Jews, indeed, the very world for its rebellion and wickedness.

Stepping aside for consideration: The Judgment Seat of Christ.

I would like us now to consider a somewhat unrelated matter, but one that we may find helpful. This is admittedly a “rabbit trail”, but the account of our Lord Jesus before the judgment seat of Pilate serves to correct a very common claim of those who hold to a wrong view of the Christian standing before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ at the end of this age.

There are many Christians, who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, that have a popular, but we would say, aberrant views of endtime events. They advocate that the second coming of Jesus Christ will take place in two stages--two events, which will be 7 years apart from one another. They claim that there will be a secret rapture of the church, which will include all believers since the Day of Pentecost.⁴ While a seven year tribulation period transpires on earth, the church in heaven will participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb. But first, they say, the members of the invisible church will be called before the judgment seat of Christ in order to be rewarded for their stewardship while they had lived as Christians upon the earth. 2 Corinthians 5:10 is often interpreted to be this unique judgment of Christ for the rewarding of believers for their good works.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. (2 Cor. 5:10)

They argue that this judgment seat of Christ is not to be confused with the judgment of the wicked, that Jesus will convene at the second stage of His coming, when He returns physically to the earth. It is claimed that that judgment will be of those who survived the tribulation on earth. They also say that this judgment seat of Christ that will take place in heaven is not to be confused with the Great White Throne Judgment that they say will take place after a future 1,000 year Jewish millennium at which only unbelievers will be judged. Rather, they claim that at this judgment seat of Christ, Christ will not take give an account of the sins of His people, but only the good that they had done while on earth living as Christians.

One of the main arguments that these folks set forth in promotion of this doctrine of the Judgment Seat of Christ is the use of the Greek word for “judgment”, that they claim specifies and distinguishes this judgment from those in which Christ will judge the wicked for their sins. The Greek word for judgment seat is *bema* (βήμα; *bema*). They say that the New Testament speaks of the *bema seat* of Christ, which was used to depict the seat of judgment of an official of the Olympic games, who did not adjudicate matters of justice, determining guilt or innocence, and to sentence a criminal for punishment, but this “judge” would bestow awards upon those who successfully competed in the games. Below are a few statements of those who advocate such a view.

This is what **Charles Ryrie** wrote:

The judgment seat of Christ. The *bema* (judgment seat) was well known to the Corinthians (see Acts 18:12). Believers will be judged in a review of their works for the purpose of rewards.⁵

Here is the understanding of **The New Scofield Reference Bible**:

The judgment of the believer’s works, not sins, is under discussion here. His sins have been atoned for and are remembered no more forever (Heb. 10:17); but every work must come into judgment (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:10; Gal. 6:7; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:24-25). The result is reward or loss of reward, “but he

⁴ They teach that all true believers during the times of the Old Testament will not be raised from the dead until the end of the tribulation just prior to the establishment of the promised earthly Davidic Kingdom that will be ruled by Jesus Christ from Jerusalem.

⁵ Charles Ryrie, **Ryrie Study Bible; Expanded Version** (Moody Press, 1986, 1994), p.1787.

himself [the Christian] shall be saved” (1 Cor. 3:11-15). This judgment occurs at the return of Christ for His church (1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12).⁶

This is the view of **Paul Benware**:

Immediately after the church is removed from the world at the rapture, the “judgment seat of Christ” will take place (2 Cor. 5:10). What is this “judgment seat”? The Greek word *bema* is used by the apostle Paul to describe this judgment. A *bema* was a seat or raised platform where a judge sat as he made his decision regarding a case (e.g. Matt. 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 18:12). This word was also used in connection with the platform on which the umpire or referee sat during the Olympic games or the Isthmian games at Corinth. This was the place where the winners of the various events received their rewards. The apostle Paul seems to have this idea of reward in mind as he speaks of the “judgment seat of Christ.” This, then, is actually a place of rewarding not punishing.

When will this judgment take place? The fact that the Lord Jesus rewards His servants in connection with His coming indicates that the judgment seat of Christ will take place shortly after the rapture (1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 22:12). Furthermore, the Lord taught that rewarding takes place at the time of the resurrection, which is an important part of the rapture (Luke 14:14). Also, when the Lord Jesus returns to the earth at His second coming with His bride, the church, the bride is already rewarded (Rev. 19:8). This places the rewarding of the church sometime after the rapture but before the second coming. It will take place in the sphere of the heavenlies.

Who will be present at the judgment seat of Christ? This judgment involves the same people who were involved in the rapture, namely, believers from the church age. In the contexts where the judgment seat of Christ is discussed (Rom. 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:10-4:5; 2 Cor. 5:1-10), it is believers who are being encouraged and exhorted. For example, in the 1 Corinthians passage, it is clear those who have built in the foundation of Jesus Christ will be at the “judgment seat.” This clearly is a reference to church age believers. In fact, the only ones who are said to be at the judgment seat of Christ are church age believers. This would mean that unsaved people are not part of this judgment, and it also means that saints from the Old Testament will not participate.⁷

We do not have the time, and you probably do not have the patience, for me to identify and specify the number of faulty reasonings and conclusions that are put forth in these few paragraphs. But he does express what is most commonly believed and proclaimed by most evangelical Christians about the judgment seat of Christ. No, the Bible does not declare that there will be a number of different future judgments each addressing different peoples and for different reasons and ends. There will be one general judgment of mankind at the end of the age in which Jesus Christ will judge the entire human race.

Great emphasis is given to this “*bema* Seat of Christ”, before which Christians will only receive their rewards for their faithful service and stewardship while in this life. The problem with this view is that it is unbiblical to narrowly define and compare the *bema seat* of Christ to the official who arbitrates Olympic games. Here in John 19:13, in which we have read that Pilate “brought Jesus out and sat down in *the judgment seat*”, the Greek word is *bema* (ἐπὶ βήματος; *epi bematos*). Pilate upon his *bema* seat did not judge Jesus in order to award Him for His success in competitive games, but from His judgment (*bema*) seat Pilate pronounced the death sentence upon Jesus Christ. And at the future *bema* seat of Jesus Christ, we read that Jesus Christ will judge all the world in righteousness, separating His sheep from the goats, the metaphor for all those who die in unbelief toward Jesus the Lord. Yes, at this same judgment Jesus will reward His people for their faithful service to Him and His people, but it should not be understood as a different event

⁶ C. I. Scofield, ed., E. Schuler English, ed. of the new edition. **The New Scofield Reference Bible** (Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 1255. Interestingly, the “New Schofield” Bible makes a slight change in this note from Scofield’s original edition. In that edition Scofield declared, “This judgment occurs at the return of Christ”, i.e. after the physical second coming to the earth. But the note in the “New” edition reads, “This judgment occurs at the return of Christ *for His church*”, i.e. after the rapture but before the second second coming.

⁷ Paul Benware, **Understanding End Times Prophecy; A Comprehensive Approach** (Moody Publishers, 1995, 2006), pp. 323f.

separated by a period of time. Besides, the Scriptures specifically and directly set forth both the judgment of the wicked and the rewarding of the righteous to take place at the same occasion of judgment. In **Revelation 11:18** we read,

The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come,
And the time of the dead, that they should be judged,
And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints,
And those who fear Your name, small and great,
And should destroy those who destroy the earth." (Rev. 11:18)

Here we see one judgment in which all people and matters that Jesus will judge will take place.
Let us now return to our passage of John 19 to consider more fully some of its details.

IV. The Judgment Seat (19:12-16)

¹²From then on Pilate sought to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar."

¹³When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. ¹⁴Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, "Behold your King!"

¹⁵But 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!"

¹⁶Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.

We read in verse 13 that Pilate had brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat, "*that is called The Pavement, but in Hebrew Gabbatha.*" We have before described the Roman Fortress of Antonio that sat just outside the northeast temple wall, from which the Romans could look down upon the temple precincts to keep watch over their Jewish vassals. The situation of this fortress was a cause of great consternation to the Jews. Archeologists had discovered a rather large area of paved stones within this fortress, which is approximately 3,000 square feet in size.⁸ If we assume that this trial of Jesus took place before Pilate in the fortress, this is probably the location in which Jesus was formally sentenced, just beside the temple precincts.

"The Pavement", as the place was called, may indicate that the place was paved with mosaic tiles. It was an official setting where Pilate would make his declaration of sentence upon Jesus. John also gives the name of the place in Aramaic, the common language of the Jewish people in the first century. Although the English text says that Gabbatha was in Hebrew, it was actually Aramaic. Aramaic and Hebrew have the same alphabet, but they are different languages. We might illustrate in that both German and English have the same alphabet, but are two different languages. The meaning of the word, Gabbatha, is disputed by scholars, but it may suggest that this was a "raised place", that is, a level, elevated, platform on which Pilate would be seated on his judgment seat to pronounce his official judgment. "Here is the personal representative of Rome offering his judicial decision on the one who alone is the promised Messiah, the one to whom the Father Himself entrusted all (eschatological) judgment."⁹

We next read in **verse 14**, "*Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!'*" John set before his readers that day and time of Pilate's official pronouncement.

⁸ Interestingly, F. F. Bruce sets forth the size of this area not to be 3,000 square feet, but 3,000 square yards. F. F. Bruce, **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 364.

⁹ Donald Carson, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1991), p. 568.

We read that this was “the Preparation Day of the Passover.” This brings into view the dating of the events as recorded in the four Gospels. The accounts in the Synoptics set forth Jesus as having eaten the Passover meal in its entirety at the last supper, when our Lord instituted the Lord’s Supper. But here there are those who argue that John sets forth the day after His gathering with His disciples as “the Preparation Day of the Passover.” The common assertion, therefore, is that while the Synoptics have Jesus eating the Passover lamb the day before the crucifixion of Jesus, John records Jesus being crucified on the day of the Passover, and at the time of the slaying of the Passover lambs. It is believed, therefore, that John set the Passover meal to have been eaten by the Jews the very night that our Lord was crucified.

Another matter that arises because of these details is identifying what day of the week Jesus was crucified. The traditional view is that Jesus was crucified on Good Friday. But a minority view believes that the Gospels record Jesus being crucified on Thursday of Passion Week, not Friday.

Donald Carson (b. 1947) set forth the issues involved:

The precise referent of *day of Preparation (paraskeue)* is disputed. If this refers to the day before the Passover, i.e. the day in which one prepares for the Passover, then John is presenting Jesus as being sent to execution about the same time the Passover lambs are being slaughtered. That would mean that the meal Jesus and His disciples enjoyed the night before was not the Passover supper; and that in turn brings us into sharp contradiction with the Synoptic witness, which makes it clear that Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover (cf. notes on 13:1, 27; 18:28). The attractiveness of this theory, despite the clash with the Synoptists, rests in the assumption that John introduces this time factor here as a symbolic way of saying that the true Passover lamb was none other than Jesus Himself: He was sentenced to be slaughtered just as the slaughter of the lambs began.¹⁰

How are these matters addressed? **William Hendriksen** (1900-1982), a respected, reformed commentator, argued that this “Preparation for the Passover” was actually the weekly preparation for the Sabbath Day. Therefore this is a reference to Friday and that it is not in conflict with the accounts in the Synoptics. Here are his comments on the words, “Now it was the Preparation of the Passover”:

This does not mean, “It was the preparation *for* the Passover,” as if John wanted to indicate that Jesus was sentenced before the Day of the Passover. Such a day of *preparation* (cooking the food to be used on that day, etc.) preceded *sabbaths*, not feasts. The expression simply means that it was the Friday of the Passover-week... One finds a very clear commentary in Luke 23:54, “And it was the day of the Preparation, *and the sabbath drew on*”; and in Mark 15:42, “the Preparation, that is, *the day before the sabbath*.” John, in complete harmony with the other Gospels, teaches that Jesus was sentenced and crucified on Friday, which was the day of Preparation *for* the sabbath. In this particular case it was the day of Preparation *of* (belonging to) Passion-week.¹¹

Herman Ridderbos (1909-2007), another reformed scholar, agreed with the position espoused by Hendriksen:

There is also significant difference of opinion, connected with the dating of the Passover in John, concerning the time reference in verse 14: “Now it was the day of the Preparation for the Passover.” We take “preparation” to be the fixed name for the day before the sabbath, hence “Friday.” The addition of “Passover” then makes this a reference to the Friday of the great feast of liberation itself and is meant to be understood in that context.¹²

Verse 14 introduces another “difficulty” in that the timing of the sentence of Jesus to die is set forth as occurring at the sixth hour. Again, verse 14 reads, “Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, *and*

¹⁰ Carson, p. 603.

¹¹ William Hendriksen, **John**, New Testament Commentary (Baker Academic, 1953), p. 420.

¹² Herman Ridderbos, **The Gospel of John; A Theological Commentary** (William B. Eerdmans, 1997), p. 606.

about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’” If the time of day is reckoned to have begun at sunrise, then the sixth hour would be about noon. However, we read in Mark 15:25 this detail, “Now it was *the third hour*, and they crucified Him.” And so, where John declared that Jesus was sentenced at the sixth hour, Mark has had Jesus already hanging upon His cross for 3 hours, or so it seems. **J. C. Ryle** commented on the difficulty of this matter. On the words, “And about the sixth hour”, he wrote:

This expression raises a grave difficulty, and one which in every age has perplexed the minds of Bible readers. The difficulty lies in the fact that Mark in his Gospel expressly says, “It was the third hour, and they crucified Him” (Mark 15:25); while John in this place says our Lord was only condemned at the sixth hour! Yet both Evangelists wrote by inspiration, and both were incapable of making a mistake. How then are we to reconcile and harmonize these two conflicting statements? The solutions of the difficulty suggested are many and various.¹³

Ryle then gave a summary of six different efforts to explain the matter as have been proposed by notable men through the centuries. He then wrote these words:

The difficulty is one of those which will probably never be solved. God has been pleased to leave it in Scripture for the trial of our faith and patience, and we must wait for its solution. Questions of time and date, like this, are often the most puzzling, from our inability to place ourselves in the position of the writer, and from the widely different manner in which measures and points of time are expressed in the language of different nations and in different ages. This very difficulty before us, perhaps, presented no difficulty to the Apostolic Fathers (2nd c.) such as Polycarp and Clement. Perhaps they possessed some simple clue to its solution of which we know nothing. It is our wisdom to be patient, and to believe that it admits of explanation, though we have not eyes to see it.¹⁴

Personally I think that they explanation that makes most sense is that whereas John was following the Roman manner of counting of hours of a day beginning with midnight, which would place Pilate’s sentence taking place about 6:00 AM. But Mark’s account followed the Jewish manner of reckoning the time of day—the hours began with sunrise. This would place Mark’s “3rd hour” to be about 9:00 AM.

By the way, when we normally think about Good Friday, we consider our Lord hanging upon His cross for a total of 3 hours, from noon until 3 PM.¹⁵ But Mark’s account has Jesus hanging upon His cross for a total of 6 hours. Here are the verses of Mark 15 that speak of this:

²⁵Now it was *the third hour*, and they crucified Him. ²⁶And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

³³Now when *the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.* ³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” which is translated, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

According to Mark’s account, Jesus hung on His cross for six hours, not three hours.

The last sentence of verse 14 contain Pilate’s presentation of Jesus to the Jewish people. “*And he said to the Jews, ‘Behold your King!’*” When Pilate had presented Jesus to them earlier, he had declared, “Behold the Man!” (v. 5). And now He presented Jesus before them, “Behold your King!”

This is but one more instance of irony that was expressed in John’s account of this trial of Jesus.

These words must have been spoken in bitter irony, anger, and contempt. “Behold the Man whom you accuse of setting Himself up as a King and being an enemy to Caesar! Behold this bleeding, weak,

¹³ J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 3 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 319.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 321.

¹⁵ I can remember as a boy in secular northern California all businesses closing during those three hours on Good Friday.

humble, meek, helpless, prisoner!—this wretched, harmless Person you pretend to be afraid of, and want me to crucify! You wish your own King to be put to death? This, I am to understand, is what you desire. Look at Him, and say!”¹⁶

Although Pilate made an ironic declaration, “Behold Your King”, in our honest and sincere declaration of Jesus Christ as King, we should focus on His suffering and death upon His cross. As Pilate declared, “Behold your King”, even as He stood there in His shame and pain, in His humility and acquiescence to His tormentors, so we should proclaim widely and loudly Christ on His cross as our King. We are to proclaim His death to be His glorious display of His regal authority. The Holy Spirit will use this message of Jesus on His cross to inform minds, to melt hearts, and to subdue wills to His royal scepter. Here are the words of **Charles Spurgeon** that emphasize the centrality of the cross of Christ in our proclamation of Jesus as Savior and King.

Missionaries have gone forth to win the heathen for Christ and they have commenced with the uncivilized sons of sin by telling them that there is a God and that He is great and just. The people have listened unmoved, or have only answered, “Do you think we don’t know this?” Then they have spoken of sin and its punishment and have foretold the coming of the Lord to judgment, but still the people stirred not, but coolly said, “‘Tis true,” and then went on their way to live in sin as before. At last these earnest men have let fall the blessed secret and spoken of the love of God in giving His only-begotten Son and they have begun to tell the story of the matchless griefs of Immanuel! Then have the dry bones stirred! Then have the deaf begun to hear! They tell us that they had not long told the story before they noticed that eyes were fastened on them and that countenances were beaming with interest which had been listless before. And they have said to themselves, “Why did we not begin with this?” Yes, why, indeed? For this it is that touches men’s hearts—Christ Crucified is the Conqueror! Not in His robes of Glory does He subdue the heart, but in His vestments of shame! Not as sitting upon the Throne does He, at first, gain the faith and the affections of sinners, but as bleeding, suffering and dying in their place! “God forbid that I should glory,” said the Apostle, “save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And though every theme that is connected with the Savior ought to play its part in our ministry, yet this is the master theme. The atoning work of Jesus is the great gun of our battery! The Cross is the mighty battering-ram to break in pieces the bronze gates of human prejudices and the iron bars of obstinacy! Christ coming to be our Judge alarms, but Christ, the Man of Sorrows, subdues! The crown of thorns has a royal power in it to compel a willing allegiance! The scepter of reed breaks hearts better than a rod of iron and the robe of mockery commands more love than Caesar’s imperial purple! There is nothing like it under Heaven! Victories 10,000 times 10,000 have been achieved by Him whom Pilate led forth to the multitude— victories distinctly to be ascribed to the crown of thorns and vesture of mockery! Are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? There will be more such as He is more frequently set forth in His own fashion and men are bid, in the Man of Sorrows to behold their King.¹⁷

We then read this response of the Jewish crowd to Pilate’s declaration, *‘Behold your King!’*” We read in **verse 15**,

But 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!”

The Jewish people called out with great indignation. *“Away with Him, away with Him!”* This reveals not only their contempt of Jesus, but their maliciousness toward Him. *“Away with Him.”* This displays the wretched unreasonableness and the abject spiritual blindness and hardness of heart that lies in the human soul. Sin had utterly destroyed our race. The manner in which these Jews regarded and treated

¹⁶ Ryle, p. 322.

¹⁷ Charles Spurgeon, **Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit**, 1877, vol. 23 (Pilgrim Publication), pp. 271f.

the Lord Jesus testify to the gravity and enormity of the sin that is in each of us. Here are the words of **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952):

The general neglect and contempt which the Lord Jesus experienced among the people afford a very humbling view of what our fallen human nature is. But the awful depths of human depravity were most plainly evidenced by the scribes and Pharisees, the priests and elders. Though well acquainted with the prophets, and though professing to wait for the Messiah, with desperate and merciless malignity they sought His destruction. The whole course of their conduct shows that they acted *against* their convictions that Jesus Christ was the Messiah. Certainly they had full knowledge of His innocence of all which they charged against Him. This is evident from the plain intimation of the One who read their hearts, and who knew that they were saying within themselves, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him" (Matt. 21:38). They were as untiring as they were unscrupulous in their malice. They, or their agents, dogged Christ from place to place, hoping that in His more unguarded fellowship with His disciples they might more readily trap Him, or find something in His words or actions which they could distort into a ground of accusation. They seized every opportunity to poison the minds of the public against Him and, not content with ordinary aspersions of His character, inferred that He was ministering under the immediate inspiration of Satan.

What was the source of such wicked treatment of the Son of God? What but their corrupt hearts? "They hated me without a cause" (John 15:25), declared the Lord of glory. There was nothing whatever in either His character or conduct which merited their vile contempt and enmity. They loved the darkness and therefore hated the light. They were infatuated by their evil lusts and delighted to gratify them.¹⁸

The Jews cried out voicing their total rejection of any thought or claim that this Jesus was their king. **Matthew Henry** (1662-1714) saw in their reaction and words to Pilate as fulfilling two Old Testament prophecies.

They cried out with the greatest indignation, *Away with Him, away with Him*, which speaks disdain as well as malice, *aron, aron* — "*Take Him*, He is none of ours; we disown Him for our kinsman, much more for our king; we have not only no veneration for Him, but no compassion; *away with Him* out of our sight:" for so it was written of Him, He is one ***whom the nation abhors*** (Isa. 49:7), and they ***hid as it were their faces from Him*** (Isa. 53:2f). *Away with Him from the earth* (Acts 22:22).

Here is the passage of Isaiah 49:7 that Matthew Henry cited:

Thus says the LORD,
The Redeemer of Israel, their Holy One,
To Him whom man despises,
To Him whom the nation abhors,
To the Servant of rulers:
"Kings shall see and arise,
Princes also shall worship,
Because of the LORD who is faithful,
The Holy One of Israel;
And He has chosen You." (Isa. 49:7)

Let us recognize and affirm that what happened to the Lord Jesus is what should happen to every one of us. It also shows us how we are to regard and treat our own sins. Again, Matthew Henry addressed this:

¹⁸ Arthur Pink, **Gleanings from the Scriptures; Man's Total Depravity** (Moody Press, 1969), pp. 160f.

This shows, *first*, how we deserved to have been treated at God’s tribunal. We were by sin become odious to God’s holiness, which cried, *Away with them, away with them*, for God is *of purer eyes than to behold iniquity*. We were also become obnoxious to God’s justice, which cried against us, “*Crucify them, crucify them*, let the sentence of the law be executed.” Had not Christ interposed, and been thus rejected of men, we had been for ever rejected of God.

Secondly, it shows how we ought to treat our sins. We are often in scripture said to crucify sin, in conformity to Christ’s death. Now they that crucified Christ did it with detestation. With a pious indignation we should run down sin in us, as they with an impious indignation ran him down who was made sin for us. The true penitent casts away from him his transgressions, *Away with them, away with them* (Isa. 2:20; 30:22), *crucify them, crucify them*; it is not fit that they should live in My soul (Hos. 14:8).

And then as this trial before Pilate concludes, the Roman prefect acted. We read in **verse 16**, “***Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led Him away.***” John shows that Pilate delivered Jesus “to them”, that is, these Jews, and then they led Him away to His cross. Pilate had sinned against his conscience and had sinned in passing an unrighteous sentence upon a wholly innocent and righteous man. But as Jesus had declared earlier, the Jews were more egregious than Pilate. In ignorance and in maliciousness they led Jesus to Calvary.

John has continued to express a theme throughout his Gospel unto this end, that the Jewish people crucified their promised King, the Son of David, the Son of God. Of this trial of Jesus by Pilate, **Donald Carson** wrote of John’s emphasis:

Even so, throughout this degenerating series of exchanges (18:28-19:16a) between Pilate and “the Jews”, it is the Jewish authorities that are always in view—sometimes explicitly (e.g. ‘the chief priests and their officials’, 19:6), as here (“the chief priests”, and sometimes implicitly. This is part of early Christianity’s most important apologetic, *especially in the evangelization of Jews*. Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, had to explain *to Jews* how it came about that so many Jews, and especially the Jewish leadership, did not accept Jesus, and how this understanding undergirds the Christians’ claim to be the true locus of the people of God. “Writing as a Jew for other Jews, [John] is concerned from the beginning to end to present the condemnation of Jesus, the *true* king of Israel, as the greatest betrayal of the nation by its own leadership” (Robinson, *John*, pp. 273-274.)¹⁹

Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always in every way.
The Lord be with you all. (2 Thess. 3:16)

¹⁹ Carson, p. 606.

ECCE REX

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DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 6, 1877,
BY C. H. SPURGEON,
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“He said unto the Jews, Behold your King.”

John 19:14.

PILATE said much more than he meant and, therefore, we shall not restrict our consideration of his words to what he intended. John tells us considering Caiaphas, “and this spoke he not of himself,” and we may say the same of Pilate. Everything said or done in connection with the Savior during the day of His Crucifixion was full of meaning, far fuller of meaning than the speakers or actors were aware. Transformed by the Cross, even the commonplace becomes solemn and weighty! When Caiaphas said that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not, he little thought that he was enunciating the great Gospel principle of Substitution! When the Jewish people cried out before Pilate, “His blood be on us and on our children,” they little knew the judgment which they were bringing upon themselves which would commence to be fulfilled at the siege of Jerusalem and follow them, hanging like a heavy cloud over their race, for centuries! When the soldier with a spear pierced His side he had no idea that he was bringing forth before all eyes that blood and water which are, to the whole Church, the emblems of the double cleansing which we find in Jesus, cleansing by atoning blood and sanctifying Grace. The fullness of time had come and all things were full. Each movement on that awful day was brimming with mystery. Neither could the Master or those around Him stir or speak without teaching some Gospel, or enforcing some lesson. Whereas on certain days frivolity seems to rule the hour and little is to be gathered from much that is spoken—on the day of the Passion even the most careless spoke as men inspired! Pilate, the undecided spirit, with no mind of his own, uttered language as weighty as if he, too, had been among the Prophets. His acquittal of our Lord, his mention of Barabbas, his writing of the inscription to be fixed over the head of Jesus and many other matters were all fraught with instruction.

It was to the Jews that Pilate brought forth Jesus, arrayed in garments of derision, and to them He said, “Ecce Rex”—“Behold your King!” It was by the seed of Abraham that He was rejected as their King. But we shall not think of them in order to *blame* that unhappy nation, but to remind ourselves that we, also, may fall into the same sin. As a nation favored with the Gospel, we stand, in many respects, in the same privileged condition as the Jews did. To us is the Word of God made known! To our keeping, the oracles of God are committed in these last days and we, though by Nature, shoots of the wild olive, are engrafted into that favored stock from which Israel has, for a while, been cut off. Shall we prove equally unworthy? Shall any of us be found guilty of the blood of Jesus? We hear of Jesus this day—are we rejecting Him? The suffering Messiah will be brought forth, again, this morning, not by Pilate, but by one who longs to do Him honor. And when He stands before you and is proclaimed, again, in the words, “Behold your King!” will you, also, cry, “Away with Him! Away with Him!”? Let us hope that there will not be found, here, hearts so evil as to imitate the rebellious nation and cry, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” Oh that each one of us may acknowledge the Lord Jesus to be his King, for beneath His scepter there is rest and joy! He is worthy to be crowned by every heart! Let us all unite in beholding Him with reverence and receiving Him with delight! Give me your ears and hearts while Jesus is evidently set forth as standing among you. And for the next few minutes let it be your only business to, “Behold your King.”

I. Come with me, then, to the place which is called The Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha, and there, “behold your King.” I shall first ask you to BEHOLD YOUR KING PREPARING HIS THRONE, yes, and making Himself ready to sit upon it. When you look, in answer to the summons, “Behold your King,” what do you see? You see the “Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief” wearing a crown of thorns and covered with an old purple cloak which had been thrown about Him in mockery. You can see, if you look closely,

the traces of His streaming blood, for He has just been scourged and you may, also, discover that His face is blackened with bruises and stained with shameful spit from the soldiers' mouths—

**“Thus trimmed forth they bring Him to the rout,
Who, ‘Crucify Him,’ cry with one strong shout,
God holds His peace at man, and man cries out.”**

It is a terrible spectacle, but I ask you to gaze upon it steadily and see the establishment of the Redeemer's Throne. See how He becomes your mediatorial King. He was setting up a new Throne on Gabbatha, where He would reign as the King of pardoned sinners and the Prince of Peace! He was King before all worlds as Lord of all by right of His eternal power and Godhead. He had a Throne when worlds were made, as King of all kings by creation. He had, also, always filled the Throne of Providence, upholding all things by the Word of His power. On His head were many crowns and to Pilate's question, “Are You a king, then?” He did fitly answer, “You say that I am a king.”

But here before Pilate and the Jews, in His condition of shame and misery, He was about to ascend and, first of all, to prepare the Throne of the heavenly Grace which now is set up among the sons of men that they may flee to it and find eternal salvation! Mark how He is preparing this Throne of Grace—it is by pain and shame endured in our place. Sin was in the way of man's happiness—and a broken Law and justice required a penalty—and all this must be arranged before a Throne of Grace could be erected among men.

If you look at our suffering Lord you see at once the ensigns of His pain, for He wears a crown of thorns which pierce His brow. Pain was a great part of the penalty due for sin and the great Substitute was, therefore, sorely pained. When Pilate brought forth our martyr Prince, He was the very mirror of agony. He was majesty in misery—misery worked up to its full height and stature. The cruel furrows of the scourge and the trickling rivulets of His blood down His face were but the tokens that He was about to die in cruel pangs upon the Cross! And these, together, were incumbent upon Him because there could be no Throne of Grace till first there had been a substitutionary sacrifice. It behooved Him to suffer that He might be a Prince and a Savior. Behold your King in His pains! He is laying the deep foundations of His Kingdom of mercy! Many a crown has been secured by blood and so is this—but it is His own blood! Many a throne has been established by suffering and so is this—but He Himself bears the pain! By His great sacrificial griefs our Lord has prepared a Throne upon which He shall sit till all the chosen race have been made kings and priests to reign with Him. It is by His agony that He obtains the royal power to pardon—by His stripes and bruises He wins the right to absolve poor sinners! We shall have no cause to wonder at the greatness of His mediatorial power if we consider the depth of His sacrificial sufferings! As His misery is the source of His majesty, so the greatness of His pains has secured to Him the fullness of power to save. Had He not gone to the end of the Law and honored Justice to the highest degree, He had not, now, been so gloriously able to dispense mercy from His glorious high Throne of mediatorial Grace. Behold your King, then, as He lays deep in His own pain and death the basis of His Throne of Grace.

Nor is it only pain, for He wears, also, the tokens of scorn. That crown of thorns meant mainly mockery—the soldiers made Him a mimic monarch, a carnival king—and that scarlet robe, too, was cast upon His shoulders in bitter scorn—and thus did this world deride its God! The Evangelists give you the description in brief sentences, as if they stopped between each line to cover their faces with their hands and weep. So there He stands before the crowd, helpless, friendless, with none to declare His generation or give Him a good word. He is deserted by all who formerly called Him, Master, and He has become the center of a scene of rioting and ridicule. The soldiers have done their worst and now the chief men of the nation look at Him with contempt and are only kept back from the most ribald scorn by a hate too furiously eager for death to afford them leisure for their scoffs. His enemies had done everything in their power to clothe Him with scorn and they were asking for permission to do more, for they cried, “Let Him be crucified.” Behold how He has left all the honor of His Father's house and His own Glory among the angels—and here He stands with a mock robe, a mimic scepter and a thorny crown—the butt of ridicule, scoffed at by all! Yet this must be, because sin is a shameful thing and a part of the penalty of sin is shame, as they will know who shall wake up in the Day of Judgment to everlasting contempt! Shame fell on Adam when he sinned and then and there he knew that he was naked. And now shame has come down in a tremendous hail upon the head of the

Second Adam, the Substitute for shameful man, and He is covered with contempt. "All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn." It is hard to say whether cruelty or mockery had most to do with the Person of our Lord at Gabbatha, but by enduring these two things together He laid on an immovable Foundation the cornerstone of His dominion of love and Grace. How could He have been the King of a redeemed people if He had not thus redeemed them? He might have been Lord over a people doomed to die—the stern Ruler of a people who continued in sin and would so continue till they perished forever from His Presence. But He not seek such a kingdom. He sought a kingdom over *hearts* that should eternally be under obligation to Him. Hearts that, being redeemed from the lowest Hell by His atoning death, would forever love Him with the utmost fervency. His sorrow secured His power to save! His shame endowed Him with the right to bless!

"Behold your King." Look at Him with steady eyes and see what a King He now is by right of benefit conferred. Behold, He has put away sin, forever, by the sacrifice of Himself and, therefore, all the ransomed ones agree that He should be king who smote the great dragon which devoured the nations. Behold, by His stooping to shame, He has dethroned Satan who was the prince of this world! And who should occupy the Throne but He who has won it and cast out the strong one who ruled before? Christ has done more for men than the Prince of Darkness could or would, for He has died for them and so He has earned a just supremacy over all grateful hearts. As for death, Jesus, by yielding to death, has conquered it. Let Him be crowned with the victor's wreath who has destroyed the world's destroyer! In His shame you also see the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilling the Law and making it honorable. He who could honor that Law which otherwise would have cursed us, deserves to have all honor and homage paid to Him by the sons of men whom He has rescued from the curse! You see, then, our Lord, when He put on the old red cloak and submitted His brow to be pierced with thorns, was really establishing for Himself an empire—the foundations of which shall never be shaken! He was performing that saving work which has made Him King among sinners whom He saves and Lord of the Kingdom of Grace which through His death is bestowed upon men!

Note this, too, that men are kings among their fellows when they can show deep sympathy and give substantial succor. He who can sympathize wins power of the best sort, not coarse force, but refined spiritual influence. For this cause our Lord was afflicted, as you see Him afflicted, that He might have sympathy with you in your direst grief and in your most grievous dishonor. As the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He, Himself, also took part of the same. And as they must suffer, so the Captain of their salvation was made *perfect* by suffering. This gives Him His glorious power over us. He is a faithful High Priest, for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And this ability to enter into our infirmities and sorrows makes Him supreme over our hearts. Look at your King in pain and mockery—and see how royal He is to your heart! How sovereignly He commands your heart to rejoice! With what regal power He commands your fears to lie still and how obediently your despondency yields to His Word! Now, as it is with you, so is it on a larger scale in the world. The suffering nations will yet see their true Deliverer in their suffering Lord. That scepter of a reed will secure Him power far greater than a rod of iron. His love to man is proved by His suffering to the death on their behalf and this, when the Holy Spirit has made men wise, shall be to the myriads of our race the reason for proclaiming Him Lord of all! The kings and princes who rule mankind by reason of their descent or by the force of arms, have but the *names* of kings. The true kings are the great benefactors. The heroes are our kings, after all. We look upon those as royal who can risk their lives for their fellow men to win them liberty, or to teach them truth. The race forgets its masters but it remembers its friends. Earth, but for Jesus, had been a vast prison and men a race of condemned criminals. But He who stands before us in Gabbatha, in all His shame and grief, has delivered us from our lost estate and, therefore, He must be King! Who shall say no to Him? If love must ultimately triumph—if disinterested self-sacrifice must obtain homage—then Jesus is and shall be King! If eventually, when the morning breaks and man's heart is purged from the prejudice and injustice occasioned by sin, the might shall be with the right and truth must prevail! Then Jesus must reign! The eternal fitness of things demands that the best should be highest, that he who does men most service should be most honored among them! In a word, that He who was made nothing of for man's sake should become everything to him. See, then, how the crown of thorns is mother to the crown which Jesus wears in His Church! The scarlet robe is the purchase price of the vesture of universal sovereignty and the mock scepter of reed is the precursor of the rod of nations with which the whole earth will yet be ruled! "Behold your King," and see the sources of His mediatorial power!

II. O you who see in your bleeding and rejected Lord, “the King in His beauty,” come here, yet again, and BEHOLD HIM CLAIMING YOUR HOMAGE. See in what way He comes to win your hearts. What is His right to be King over you? There are many rights, for on His head are many crowns—but the most commanding right which Jesus has over any of us is signified by that crown of *thorns*—it is the right of supreme love! He loved us as none other could have loved us. If we put all the loves of parents and of wives and children all together, we can never rival, even for a moment, the love of Christ to us! And whenever that love touches us, so that we feel its power, we crown Him King at once. Who can resist His charms? One look of His eyes overpowers us! See with your heart those eyes when they are full of tears for perishing sinners and you are a willing subject. One look at His blessed Person subjected to scourging and spitting for our sakes will give us more idea of His crown rights than anything besides. Look into His pierced heart as it pours out its life flood for us and all disputes about His Sovereignty are ended in our hearts. We acknowledge Him Lord because we see how He loved! How could we do otherwise? Love in action, or rather love in suffering, carries an Omnipotence about it! Behold what His love endured and so, “Behold your King.”

Jesus, in the garb of mockery, marred with traces of His pain, also reminds us of His complete purchase of us by His deeds and death. “You are not your own, you are bought with a price.” Behold your King and see the price! It is the price of immense suffering, of most cruel shame! It is an incalculable price, for the Lord of All is set at nothing! It is an awful price, for He who only has immortality yields Himself to die! It is the price of blood. It is the scourging and bleeding and woe of Jesus—no, it is Himself! If you would see the price of your redemption, “Behold your King.” ‘Tis He that has redeemed us unto God by His blood! It is He that “made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a Servant; and being found in fashion as a Man, humbled Himself; and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.” You acknowledge that claim—the love of Christ demands it—you feel that from now on you live for Him, alone, and count it joy that in all respects He should reign over you with unlimited sway.

Jesus, because He suffered, has acquired a power over us which is far superior to any which could be urged in courts of law, or enforced by mere power, for our hearts have voluntarily surrendered to Him and given Him the right of our free submission, charmed to give allegiance to such imperial love! Is it possible for a Believer to look at the Lord Jesus Christ without feeling that he longs to be more and more His servant and disciple? Do you not thirst to serve Him? Can you behold Him in the depth of shame without pining to lift Him up to the heights of glory? Can you see Him stooping thus for you without pleading with God that a glorious high Throne may be His and that He may sit upon it and rule all the hearts of men? There is no need to argue out the right of King Jesus, for you feel it—His love has carried you by storm and it holds fast its capture. You cannot have a Savior without His being your King. And seeing such a Savior in such a condition, you cannot even think of Him without delighting to ascribe to Him all power and dominion! Could we escape His sway it would be bondage to us—and when we, at any time fail to admit it, it is our worst affliction! “Behold your King,” then, for He Himself is His own claim to your obedience! See what He suffered for you, my Brothers and Sisters, and from now on never draw back from any labor, shame, or suffering for His dear sake.

“Behold your King,” and reckon to be treated like He. Do you expect to be crowned with gold when He was crowned with thorns? Shall lilies grow for you and briars for Him? Never again be ashamed to carry His glorious name, unless, indeed, you can be so vile as to prove a traitor to such a Lord! See to what shame He was put and learn from Him to despise all shame for His Truth’s sake! Shall the disciple be above his Master, or the servant above his Lord? If they have thus maltreated the Master of the house, what shall they do to the household? Let us reckon upon our share of this treatment and, by accepting it, prove to all men that the despised and rejected of men is really the King over us and that the subjects blush not to be like their Monarch! Even though the cost is all the shame the world can possibly pour upon us, or all the suffering that flesh and blood can, in any condition, endure, let us be faithful in our loyalty and cry, “Who shall separate us? Shall persecution, or distress, or tribulation divide us from our King? No! In all these things we are more than conquerors! King of Grievs, you are King of my soul! O King of Shame, you are absolute Monarch of my heart! You are King by Divine right and King by my own voluntary choice! Other lords have had dominion over us, but now, since You have revealed Yourself after this fashion, Your name, only,

shall govern our spirit!" Do you not see, then, that Jesus, before Pilate, reveals His claim in the appearance which He wears? "Behold your King."

III. "Behold your King," for a third time, that you may see Him SUBDUING HIS DOMINIONS. Dressed in robes of scorn and with a visage marred with pain, He comes forth conquering and to conquer! This is not very apparent at a superficial glance, for He is not arrayed like a man of war. You see no sword upon His thigh, nor bow in His hand. No fiery threats fall from His lips, nor does He speak with eloquent persuasion. He is unarmed, yet victorious! He is silent, but yet conquering! In this garb He goes forth to war. His shame is His armor and His sufferings are His battle-axe. What do you think? How can it be so? I speak no fiction, but sober fact—and it shall be proven.

Missionaries have gone forth to win the heathen for Christ and they have commenced with the uncivilized sons of sin by telling them that there is a God and that He is great and just. The people have listened unmoved, or have only answered, "Do you think we don't know this?" Then they have spoken of sin and its punishment and have foretold the coming of the Lord to judgment, but still the people stirred not, but coolly said, "'Tis true," and then went on their way to live in sin as before. At last these earnest men have let fall the blessed secret and spoken of the love of God in giving His only-begotten Son and they have begun to tell the story of the matchless griefs of Immanuel! Then have the dry bones stirred! Then have the deaf begun to hear! They tell us that they had not long told the story before they noticed that eyes were fastened on them and that countenances were beaming with interest which had been listless before. And they have said to themselves, "Why did we not begin with this?" Yes, why, indeed? For this it is that touches men's hearts—Christ Crucified is the Conqueror! Not in His robes of Glory does He subdue the heart, but in His vestments of shame! Not as sitting upon the Throne does He, at first, gain the faith and the affections of sinners, but as bleeding, suffering and dying in their place! "God forbid that I should glory," said the Apostle, "save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." And though every theme that is connected with the Savior ought to play its part in our ministry, yet this is the master theme. The atoning work of Jesus is the great gun of our battery! The Cross is the mighty battering-ram to break in pieces the bronze gates of human prejudices and the iron bars of obstinacy! Christ coming to be our Judge alarms, but Christ, the Man of Sorrows, subdues! The crown of thorns has a royal power in it to compel a willing allegiance! The scepter of reed breaks hearts better than a rod of iron and the robe of mockery commands more love than Caesar's imperial purple! There is nothing like it under Heaven! Victories 10,000 times 10,000 have been achieved by Him whom Pilate led forth to the multitude—victories distinctly to be ascribed to the crown of thorns and vesture of mockery! Are they not written in the book of the wars of the Lord? There will be more such as He is more frequently set forth in His own fashion and men are bid, in the Man of Sorrows to behold their King.

Has it not been so *at home* as well as among the far-off heathen? What wins men's hearts to Christ today? What but Christ in shame and Christ in suffering? I appeal to you who have been newly converted—what has bound you as captives to Jesus' chariot? What has made you, from now on, vow to be His followers, rejoicing in His name? What but this—that He bowed His head to the death for your sake and has redeemed you unto God by His blood? You know it is so!

And oh, dear *children of God*, if ever you feel the power of Christ upon you to the fullest—till it utterly overcomes you—is it not the memory of redeeming grief which does it? When you become like harps and Jesus is the minstrel and lays His finger among your heartstrings and brings out nothing but praise for His dear name—what is it that charms you into the music of grateful love but the fact of His condescension on your behalf? Is not this your song, that He was slain and has redeemed you unto God by His blood? I confess I could sit down at the foot of His Cross and do nothing else but weep until I wept myself away, for His suffering makes my soul to melt within me. Then, if the call of duty is heard, I feel intensely eager to plead with others. At that time I am ready to make *any* sacrifice to bring others under my Lord's dominion! Then, by His Grace, I am full of a holy passion that even death could not quench—all this, I say, if I have but just come from gazing on the Redeemer's passion and drinking of His cup and being baptized with His Baptism!

The scepter of reed rules as nothing else ever did, for it awakens enthusiasm. The crown of thorns commands homage as no other diadem ever did, for it braces men into heroes and martyrs. No royalty is so

all-commanding as that which has for its insignia the crown of thorns, the reed, the red cloak and the five wounds! Other sovereignties are forced and feigned. They are hollow compared with the Sovereignty of “the despised of men!” Fear, or custom, or self-interest make men courtiers elsewhere, but fervent love crowds the courts of King Jesus! We do not merely say that the marred Countenance is the most majestic ever seen, but we have *felt* it to be so on many an occasions. Yes, and feel it to be so now. Do you want to make our hard hearts soft? Tell us of Jesus’ grief! Would you make us, strong men, into children? Set the Man of Sorrows in our midst! There is no resisting Him.

Look, also, at *backsliders* if you would see the power of the despised Nazarene. If they have gone away from Christ. If they have become lukewarm. If their hearts have become obdurate to Him who once could charm them—what can bring them back? I know but one magnet which, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, will attract these sadly fallen ones—it is Jesus in His shame and pains! We tell them that they crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame—and they look on Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him! O you, who, after having sipped of the communion cup, have gone to drink at the table of Bacchus! You, who, after having talked of love to Christ, have followed after the lusts of the flesh! You, who, after singing His praises, have blasphemed the sacred name with which you are named—may His Omnipotence of love be proven in you, also! What can ever bring you back but this sad reflection, that you, also, have twisted for Him a crown of thorns and caused Him to be blasphemed among His enemies? Still the merit of His death is available for you! The power and efficacy of His precious blood have not ceased, even for you! And if you come back to Him—and oh, may a sight of Him draw you—He will receive you graciously as at the first. I say to you, “Behold your King,” and may the Sovereignty of His humiliation and suffering be proven, this morning, in some of you as you shall come bending at His feet, conquered by His great love and restored to repentance and faith by His marvelous compassion! A sight of His wounds and bruises heals us, so that we grieve at our rebellions and long to be brought home to God, never to wander more.

Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, we shall always find, as long as the world stands, that among saints, sinners, backsliders and all classes of men, Jesus Christ’s power is most surely felt when His humiliation is most faithfully declared and most believably known! It is by this that He will subdue all things to Himself. If we will but preach Jesus Christ to the Hindu, it will not be necessary to answer all his metaphysical subtleties—the sorrows of Jesus are as a sharp sword to cut the Gordian knot. If we will go down among the degraded inhabitants of Africa, we shall not need, first, to civilize them—the Cross is the great lever which lifts up fallen men—it conquers evil and establishes truth and righteousness. The most depraved and hardened learn of His great love and hearts of stone begin to beat—they see Jesus suffering to the death out of nothing else but love to them—and they are touched by it! And they eagerly enquire what they must do to be saved by such a Savior. The Holy Spirit works in the minds of many by setting forth the great love and grief of Jesus. May we who are His ministers have great faith in His Cross and from now on say, as we preach the suffering Jesus, “Behold your King.”

IV. In the fourth place I beg you to “Behold your King” SETTING FORTH THE PATTERN OF HIS KINGDOM. When you look at Him, you are struck, at once, with the thought that if He is a king He is like no other monarch, for other kings are covered with rich apparel and surrounded with pomp, but He has none of these. Their glories usually consist in wars by which they have made others suffer. But His Glory is His *own* suffering! No blood but His own has flowed to make Him illustrious! He is a King but He cannot be put in the list of sovereigns such as the nations of the earth are compelled to serve. When Antoninus Pius set up the statue of Jesus in the Pantheon as one of a circle of gods and heroes, it must have seemed strangely out of place to those who gazed upon its visage if the sculptor was at all true to life. It must have stood apart as one that could not be numbered with the rest! Neither can you set Him among the masters of the human race who have crushed mankind beneath their iron heels! He was no Caesar—you cannot make Him appear like one! Call Him not autocrat, emperor, or czar—He has an authority greater than all these—yet not after their kind. His purple is different from theirs and His crown, also. But His *face* differs more and His *heart* most of all. “My kingdom,” He says, “is not of this world.” For troops, He has a host of sorrows. For pomp, a surrounding of scorn. For lofty bearing, humility. For adulation, mockery. For homage, spit. For glory, shame. For a Throne, a Cross. Yet there was never a truer King! Indeed, all kings are but a name, save this

King, who is a real Ruler in Himself and of Himself—and not by extraneous force. Right royal, indeed, is the Nazarene! But He cannot be likened unto the princes of earth, nor can His Kingdom be reckoned with theirs. I pray that the day may soon come when none may dream of looking upon the Church as a worldly organization capable of alliance with temporal sovereignties so as to be patronized, directed, or reformed by them. Christ's Kingdom shines as a lone star with a brightness all its own! It stands apart like a hill of light, sacred and sublime—the high hills may leap with envy because of it—but it is not of them nor like unto them. Is not this manifest even in the appearance of our Lord as Pilate brings Him forth and cries, “Behold your King!”?

Now, as He sets before us in His own Person, the pattern of His Kingdom, we may expect that we shall see some likeness to Him in His subjects. And if you will gaze upon the Church, which is His Kingdom, from the first day of her history until now, you will see that it, too, is wearing its purple robe. The martyrs' blood is the purple vesture of the Church of Christ. The trials and persecutions of Believers are her crown of thorns. Think of the rage of persecution under Pagan Rome—and the equally inhuman proceedings of Papal Rome—and you will see how the ensign of Christ's Kingdom is a crown of thorns—a crown and yet thorns—thorns but still a crown! The bush is burning, but it is not consumed! If you, Beloved, are truly followers of Jesus, you must expect to take your measure of shame and dishonor. And you may reckon upon your allotment of griefs and sorrows. The “Man of Sorrows” attracts a sorrowful following. The Lamb of God's Passover is still eaten with bitter herbs. The child of God cannot escape the rod, for the elder Brother did not and to Him we are to be conformed. We must “fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church” (Col. 1:24).

Remember, however, that Christ's sufferings, as a pattern, were not for His own sins, nor brought upon Him as a chastisement for His own faults. The sufferings which belong to His Kingdom are those which are endured for His name and for His Glory's sake, and for the good of others. If men lie in prison for their own crimes, that has *nothing* to do with His Kingdom. If we suffer for our sins, that is no part of His Kingdom. But when a man loses of his substance for Christ's cause, lays out himself to toil even unto death, bears contempt and suffers hardness as a Christian—this is after the type of Christ's Kingdom. When the missionary goes forth with his life in his hand among the heathen, or when a Believer in any way divests himself of comfort for the good of others, it is *then* that he truly copies the pattern set him in Pilate's Hall by our great King. I say to you Christians who court ease, to you who are hoarding up your gold, to you who will do nothing that would bring you under the criticism of your fellow men, to you who live unto yourselves—would it not be irony of the severest kind if I were to point to Jesus before Pilate and say, “Behold *your* King”? Living in undue luxury, amassing wealth, rolling in ease, living to enjoy yourselves! Is that *your* King? Poor subjects, you—and very unlike your Lord! But if there are among us those who, for His sake, can make sacrifices, we may look upon our King without fear. You who are undaunted by contempt and who would give all that you have, yes, and give *yourselves* to know Jesus—and are doing so—to such I say, “Behold your King,” for you *are* of His Kingdom and you shall reign with Him! In your conquest of yourselves you have already become kings! In reigning over your own desires and carnal inclinations for the sake of His dear love, you are already kings and priests unto God and you shall reign forever and ever!

He who is ruled by his passions in any degree is still a slave. But he who lives for God and his fellow men has a royal soul. The insignia of a prince unto God are still shame and suffering—which adornments are readily worn when the Lord calls him to do so. In Christ's Kingdom those are peers of the highest rank who are most like their Lord and are the lowest and humblest in mind—and most truly the servants of all. The secondary princes of His Kingdom approximate less closely to Him and the lower you descend in the scale the less you are like He is in those respects. The Christian surrounded with every comfort who never endured hardness for Christ, who never knew what it was to be sneered at for Jesus' sake, who never made a sacrifice which went so far as to pinch him in the least—if, indeed, he is a Christian—is least in the kingdom of Heaven.

Proud, rich men who give but trifles to Christ's cause are pariahs in His Kingdom! They who are who are willing to be least of all, are the chief—they are princes who make themselves the offscouring of all things for His name's sake, such as were the Apostles and first martyrs and others whom His love has greatly constrained.

V. Our concluding remark shall be, “Behold your King”—PROVING THE CERTAINTY OF HIS EMPIRE—for if, Beloved, Christ was King when He was in Pilate’s hands, after being scourged and spit upon, and while He was wearing the robe and crown of mockery, when will He *not* be King? If He were King at His worst, when is it that His Throne can ever be shaken? They have brought Him very low. They have brought Him lower than the sons of men, for they have made Him a worm and not a man, despised of the people, and yet He is King! Marks of royalty were present on the day of His death. He dispensed crowns when He was on the Cross—He gave the dying thief a promise of an entrance into Paradise. In His death He shook the earth, He opened graves, He split the rocks, He darkened the sun and He made men smite on their breasts in dismay! One voice after another, even from the ranks of His foes, proclaimed Him to be King, even when dying like a malefactor! Was He a King then? When will He *not* be King? And who is there that can, in any way, shake His Throne? In the days of His flesh, “the kings of the earth stood up and the rulers took counsel together, saying, Let us break His bonds asunder, and cast His cords from us,” but He that sat in the heavens did laugh—the Lord did have them in derision and Christ on the Cross was acknowledged, in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, to be, still, the King of the Jews. When will He not be King? If He was King before He died and was laid in the grave, what is He, now, that He has risen from the dead? What is He, now, now that He has vanquished the destroyer of our race and lives no more to die? What is He now? You angels, tell what glories surround Him now! If He were King when He stood at Pilate’s bar, what will He be when Pilate shall stand at His bar, when He shall come on the Great White Throne and summon all mankind before Him to judgment? What will be His acknowledged sovereignty and His dreaded majesty in the day of the Lord? Come, let us adore Him! Let us pay our humble homage in the courts of the Lord’s house this day! And then let us go forth to our daily service in His name and make this our strong resolve, His Spirit helping us, that we will live to crown Him in our hearts and in our lives—in every place where our lot may be cast—till the day breaks and the shadows flee away and we behold the King in His beauty and the land that is very far off. None can overturn a kingdom which is founded on the death of its King! None can abolish a dominion whose deep foundations are laid in the tears and blood of the Prince, Himself. Napoleon said that he founded his empire by force and, therefore, it had passed away. “But,” he said, “Jesus founded His Kingdom upon love and it will last forever.” So it must be, for whatever may or may not be, it is written—“*He must reign.*”

As for us, if we wish to extend the Redeemer’s Kingdom we must be prepared to deny ourselves for Christ. We must be prepared for weariness, slander and self-denial. In this sign we conquer! The *Cross* will have to be borne by us as well as by Him if we are to reign with Jesus. We must both teach the Cross and bear the Cross. We must participate in the shame if we would participate in the Glory! No thorn, no Throne! When again shall be heard the voice, “Behold your King,” and Jew and Gentile shall see Him enthroned and surrounded with all His Father’s angels—with the whole earth subdued to His power happy shall he be who shall then, in the exalted Savior, behold his King! The Lord grant us this day to be loyal subjects of the Crucified that we may be favored to share His glory.
