

John 18:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?

Analysis

Art thou the King of the Jews? (Σὺ εἰ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων;)—Pilate's question uses the emphatic pronoun *sy* (you), expressing incredulity: "You—this bound prisoner—are a king?" The term *basileus* (king) carried political weight; Roman governors executed those claiming kingship as insurrectionists against Caesar.

The **judgment hall** (πραιτώριον, *praitōrion*) was the governor's official residence, likely Herod's former palace. Pilate entered privately, away from the Jewish leaders who remained outside to avoid ceremonial defilement before Passover (v. 28)—a tragic irony, maintaining ritual purity while engineering judicial murder. This interrogation reveals the collision between earthly political power and Christ's spiritual kingdom, foreshadowing his declaration: "My kingdom is not of this world" (v. 36).

Historical Context

Pontius Pilate served as Roman prefect of Judea (AD 26-36). Roman law reserved capital punishment for the governor; the Sanhedrin needed Pilate's authority to execute Jesus. The charge shifted from blasphemy (religious, v. 30) to sedition (political)—claiming kingship threatened Roman order.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does Jesus's kingship challenge both religious hypocrisy and political power in your context?
2. What does Pilate's private interrogation reveal about his conscience versus his political calculation?
3. In what ways do you maintain "ritual purity" while compromising moral integrity?

Interlinear Text

Εἰσῆλθεν οὖν εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον πάλιν ὁ Πιλᾶτος
entered Then into the judgment hall again Pilate
G1525 G3767 G1519 G4232 G3825 G3588 G4091

καὶ ἐφώνησεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Σὺ εἰ
and called Jesus and said unto him thou Art
G2532 G5455 G2424 G2532 G2036 G846 G4771 G1488

ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων
the King of the Jews

Additional Cross-References

Mark 15:2 (Kingdom): And Pilate asked him, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answering said unto him, Thou sayest it.

Zechariah 9:9 (Kingdom): Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Matthew 27:11 (Kingdom): And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.

John 12:13 (Kingdom): Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.

John 19:3 (Kingdom): And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.

John 18:37 (Kingdom): Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

John 19:12 (Kingdom): And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

Jeremiah 23:5 (Judgment): Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

John 19:9 (Judgment): And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.

John 12:15 (Kingdom): Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.