



## Behold Your King

Pilate scrubbed the sleep from his eyes. “What do they want, Markus?”

His servant shook his head. “They brought someone to be judged by you, sir.”

“Mm... I see... Why so early?”

“Sir, it’s Passover. They want to get everything –“

“Yes, I know. I’ve lived here long enough, I know how it works. Blasted Jews.” Pilate cursed them a few times before straightening his back, taking on a royal stance, and walking out to greet the Jews. “What charges are you bringing against this man?”

“If he weren’t a criminal, we wouldn’t have handed him over to you!”

“Take him yourselves. Judge him by your own law.”

“We have no right to execute anyone.”

Oh. Execution. Pilate actually looked to see the man they had chained between them. He seemed like an ordinary man – beaten, yes, but nothing unusual there. He looked to his own guards. “Bring him.”

The guards set him in the palace. Pilate sat and motioned to a servant to bring him some fruit to break his fast. He looked at the man. “Your name?”

“Jesus.”

Ah. The rabbi. The upstart that was causing riots a week ago. Yes. “Yes. I’ve heard about you. Are you the king of the Jews?”

“Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?”

“Am I a Jew? It was your people, your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you’ve done?”

“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

“You are a king then.”

“You’re right in saying that I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”

Pilate looked up from his fruit. “And what’s truth?” He set down a rind of melon and stalked out to the Jews. “I find no basis for a charge against him. It’s your custom for me to release one prisoner at the time of Passover. Do you want me to release the king of the Jews?”

And Pilate chuckled to himself: a beaten, broken king for a beaten, broken people. It was perfect.

But the Jews responded, “No! Give us Barabbas!”

Barabbas? That upstart? That murderer? They’d rather have him than some vaunted miracle worker? Now, Pilate was no fool. He knew that the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus, but this was something different...

Well, might as well get some fun out of this. He ordered the soldiers to beat Jesus.

And they did. They knew that Jesus was a “king” and they gave him a crown. They took thorns, twisted them together into a halo, and set it upon his head. Lightly, at first. Then they began to beat him on the head. The thorns dug down into his scalp, scraping against bone, until you couldn’t see his face for the blood that dripped over it.

They draped a purple robe over his shoulders. Such a useless, pathetic king. He couldn’t protect anyone.

“Hail, king of the Jews!” the soldiers cried as they beat him and mocked him.

Pilate nodded. A broken and bloody man. A perfect king for such an obstinate people.

But Jesus never cursed the soldiers back. He refused to threaten. He simply took the abuse. There was something special about this man. Pilate shook his head. This sorry specimen was no king, but he was no threat to Caesar.

He went out to the Jews again. “Look. I’m bringing him out to you to let you know I find no basis for a charge against him.”

And Jesus came out wearing that crown of thorns and the purple robe.

“Heh. Here’s the man.”

And as soon as the Jews saw him, they cried out, “Crucify! Crucify!”

Of course they didn’t want a king like this. Full of themselves, they wanted someone full of glory and power. Not this broken man. Pilate smiled. If they wanted a king, they would get one just as broken as they were. He chose to needle the crowd. “You take him. You crucify him! As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him.”

“We have a law!” the answered. “According to that law, he must die, for he claimed to be a son of God!”

Pilate stepped back. He paced into the palace. Son of God? Pilate had seen enough upstarts. He had seen enough wannabe kings, and he had killed plenty of them.

But a son of God? That was something different.

It was fun to needle the Jews. It was fun to mock them. Such pathetic people! But a son of God?

Pilate sat down with Jesus again. Ordered slabs of meat to eat. “Where do you come from?” he asked Jesus.

But the bloody, broken man did not answer.

“You refuse to speak to me? Don’t you realize that I have power either to free you or to crucify you?”

And Jesus answered, “You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.”

So. This was to be it, then.

Pilate stood, went out to the Jews, and insisted that Jesus was innocent.

But they would have none of it. “Crucify! Crucify! If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. We know how it is. You let him go, and you look like you’re allowing a rebellion, and you’ll be removed from your position.”

And Pilate knew: he had no choice. He sat down on the judge’s seat. He summoned Jesus: a broken, bloody king for a pathetic, broken people.

“Here’s your king!”

“Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!”

“Shall I crucify your king?”

“We have no king but Caesar!”

Finally, Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

He washed his hands. He was done with this innocent, bloody king. No more. Done.

One more piece of business. Pilate wrote out the charge: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”

Oh, those Jews objected. “He’s no king of ours!”

“What I’ve written, I’ve written.”

There. The end. Kill the king. End it. A pathetic king for a pathetic people. Then, it’ll be all over.

Pilate went to bed that night secure. That’d be the last he’d ever have to worry or think about Jesus of Nazareth.

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Now, brothers and sisters: this is your King. Broken and bloody on a cross. But he went there to save his subjects. To save you. That’s how he became your King: by purchasing you with his holy, precious blood.

And Pilate was wrong; that wasn’t the end of Jesus as King. The head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned in glory now.

And that is the King that we worship on the cross. And now he reigns in heaven.

And this story is true.

John 18:28-19:22

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