



# RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

## THE WEEKLY BRICK

**November 22, 2009.**

*As you come to him, the living Stone, rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. - 1 Peter 2:4-5*

**“Christ the King.”  
“Who’s In Charge Here?”  
John 18:33-37**

### **Context:**

In the liturgical calendar/Christian year this is “Christ the King Sunday.” Christ the King Sunday is the “transition” Sunday from the season of Pentecost to the season of Advent.

Pilate, Jesus, and the “two-kingdoms”

The Setting and its Irony

### **Relevant Scriptures:**

#### **I. Kingdoms in Conflict**

1. Jesus’ Kingdom is based on \_\_\_\_\_ Not \_\_\_\_\_.

*John 18:33-34 Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”<sup>34</sup>“Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”*

2. Jesus’ Kingdom is based on \_\_\_\_\_ Not \_\_\_\_\_.

*John 18:36 Jesus said, “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.”*

3. Jesus’ Kingdom is based on \_\_\_\_\_ Not \_\_\_\_\_.

*John 18:37-38a “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying 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.”<sup>38</sup>“What is truth?” Pilate asked*

### **Prayer/Conclusion**

“In the trial before Pilate...story line and theology completely coalesce...On one level, Jesus is on trial for his life, but on another, and for the Fourth Evangelist, the most important level, the world is on trial for its life. The world thinks it is judging Jesus, but in reality, Jesus is judging it, and he judges the world both by what he says and does and by who he is...Jesus’ mission and identity is most acute.” (Gail R. O’Day. “The Gospel of John,” in *The New Interpreters Bible* Vol. XI. [Nashville: Abingdon, 1995], 826).

*(Answers: 1. 1. Love, Power. 2. Choice, Coercion. 3. Relationship, Fear.)*

## WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

### Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> Read John 18:33; Acts 28:23-31

Kingdoms have a ruler, a reign, and a realm. Adam and Eve were created to live interdependently with God and one another and to trust God day by day. God is the ruler, human life is where God reigns, and the realm is people's hearts. However, the fall of humankind led humanity to seek dominion in all of existence and to place humans in the place of God. Consequently, life has become filled with the pursuit of power, prestige, and possessions—all in an effort to fill the place in our hearts where God should be. Jesus' mission, and consequently the mission of the church, is to proclaim that God has come to restore fallen humanity. Jesus described this mission as the "kingdom of God." The "kingdom of God" describes any type of rulership that God may assert over human lives at any time. Dallas Willard defines the kingdom of God as: "The range and scope of God's effective will, where what God wants done is done." Our choice—daily—is to choose who we will serve. The kingdom of God or the kingdoms of this world.

Pilate's question asking Jesus if He was King of the Jews is recorded by each of the Gospel writers. As Roman governor, Pilate would certainly be interested in the claims of any king. Messianic expectations always ran high at Passover season, and it would be easy for a Jewish pretender to incite the people into a riot or a rebellion against Rome. Pilate no doubt felt himself on safe ground when he asked about Christ's kingship. Pilate's question in v 33 should be understood to mean, 'Do you claim to be the king of the Jews?' The notion of kingship was probably in the Sanhedrin's charge in order to implicate the governor. But Jesus made clear that his concept of kingship differed from Pilate's. If his *kingdom* were really a threat to the empire, surely Jesus would have organized a revolt. The words translated *from another place* (36) means literally, "not from here." The sense is clear; Jesus' kingship was of a different order from this world's kingdoms. A spiritual kingdom does not need to be supported by physical force.

Going Deeper: Joshua 24:15

Going Forward: Is the kingdom of God a reality in your life right now?

### Tuesday, November 24<sup>th</sup> Read John 18:34; Matthew 13

Jesus added a question of His own: "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?" What was Jesus really asking? "What kind of a king do you have in mind? A Roman king or a Jewish king? A political king or a spiritual king?" Jesus was not evading the issue; He was forcing Pilate to clarify the matter *for his own sake*. After all, it was not Jesus that was on trial; it was Pilate! If Pilate had a Roman king in mind, then Jesus could be considered a rebel. If the governor was thinking about a Jewish kind of king, then political matters could be set aside. It is interesting that Pilate called Jesus "king" at least four times during the trial, and even used that title for the placard he hung on the cross (See also John 18:39; 19:3, 14–15, 19).

The kingdom of God is not an action taken by humankind or a realm that we establish. The kingdom is a divine act, not a human accomplishment...Humankind may enter the kingdom (see Luke 16:16) or receive it as a gift (see Luke 12:32). Consequently, the message of the kingdom is the good news...The work of Jesus is a sign of the coming and the presence of the kingdom...The kingdom of God is characterized by grace (see Matthew 20:1-16) and a compassion that binds up the brokenhearted. (Neil T. Anderson. *The Daily Discipler*. [Ventura: Regal Books], 2005).

Going Deeper: Meditate on any of the scriptures passages above.

Going Forward: Do you consider God's control over you a blessing or a burden? Why or why not?

### Wednesday, November 25<sup>th</sup> Read John 18:35-36; Deuteronomy 3:24

Pilate's reply to Jesus showed what the Romans thought of the Jews: "Am I a Jew?" No doubt there was an obvious note of disdain and sarcasm in his voice. Jesus was not a prisoner because Pilate had arrested him, but because His own

nation's leaders had arrested Him! Where there is smoke there must be fire; so Pilate asked, "What have You done?" Graciously, Jesus consented to explain Himself and His kingdom. Yes, He admitted that He is a King; but His kingdom (reign) does not come from the authority of the world. The Jews were under Roman authority, and Pilate was under the authority of the emperor; but Jesus derived His authority from God. His kingdom is spiritual, in the hearts of His followers; and He does not depend on worldly or fleshly means to advance His cause. If His kingdom were from the world, by now His followers would have assembled an army and fought to release Him. Jesus did not say that He had no kingdom in this world, or that He would never rule on earth. He does have a kingdom in this world, wherever there are people who have trusted Him and yielded to His sovereignty. One day He shall return and establish a righteous kingdom on earth (Daniel 7:13–28). Pilate's concern was the source of this kingdom: where did Jesus derive His authority?

God desires to reveal to you the divine nature and the quality of relationship that God desires with you: to be your God, to be your KING! This is not so that you may control or "use" God, but that you may know how much you are loved by God and how intimate God wants to be with you.

Going Deeper: John 14:21

### **Thursday, November 26<sup>th</sup>** *Read John 18:37; Psalm 23*

In John 18:37, Jesus explained who He is and what kind of kingdom belonged to Him. Pilate probably did not grasp the significance of these profound words, but we today can discern some of the meaning Jesus had in mind. He was "born," which indicates His humanity; but He also "came into the world," which indicates His deity. The fact that Jesus came "into the world" means that He had existed before His birth at Bethlehem; and this is an important and repeated truth in John's Gospel (John 1:9–10; 3:17, 19; 9:39; 10:36; 12:46; 16:28; 17:18). But Jesus not only told Pilate of His origin; He also explained His ministry: to bear witness unto the truth. His was a spiritual kingdom of truth; and He won people to His cause, not through force, but through conviction and persuasion. He spoke the truth of God's Word, and all who were His people would respond to His call (see John 8:47; 10:27). Rome's weapon was the sword; but our Lord's weapon was the truth of God, the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17).

In the beloved 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, David expresses the closeness of God and what characterizes the kingdom of God in your life.

Going Forward: Read the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm as a prayer. If a word, phrase, or image comes to mind, stay with that and meditate on it. How does it correspond to your life?

### **Friday, November, 27<sup>th</sup>** *Read Again John 18:38; Deuteronomy 8:11-20*

We do not know with what attitude Pilate asked his now-famous question, "What is truth?" In his classic essay "Of Truth," Francis Bacon wrote, " 'What is Truth?' said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer." But we are not certain that Pilate was jesting. Perhaps he was sincere. For centuries, Roman and Greek philosophers had discussed and debated this very question and had come to no settled conclusions. Whether Pilate was sneering or sighing as he asked the question, we do not know; so it would be unwise to pass judgment. At least he had the courage to face the crowd and declare his verdict: "I find in Him no fault at all." But he did not get the response he desired, for the chief priests and elders only began to accuse Jesus all the more! (see Matt. 27:12–14) Jesus was silent before His accusers (1 Peter 2:21–23) and this silence amazed Pilate. Could this King not even defend Himself? If He did not speak, how could anyone secure any evidence? Pilate faced a dilemma. But the chief priests and elders solved his problem when they shouted that Jesus had stirred up the people even in Galilee (Luke 23:5). Galilee! That was Herod's responsibility, so why not send the prisoner to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem for the feast? Between John 18:38 and 39 you have the events recorded in Luke 23:6–12. Pilate's maneuver did not solve his problem, because Herod sent Jesus back! All that it accomplished was the healing of the breach between these two rulers. Pilate still had to deal with Jesus and the Jews.

As the winter months approach, the weather gets colder and the days get shorter. Even in California, fireplaces will be brought out of their hiatus. I heard of a sign above a fireplace that read: "IF YOUR HEART IS COLD, MY FIRE CAN-

NOT WARM IT!” So true! Fireplaces do not warm hearts. Only the fire of the living God can warm even the coldest heart. The heart grows cold when we forget or ignore the grace and mercy of the living God in our lives. Again and again in the scriptures, the people of God are commanded to remember; remember God’s faithfulness, God’s commands, and God’s promised future. In worship, study, fellowship, and service (our discipleship model!) we practice biblical remembering in order that we never forget our Heavenly Father and His claim upon our lives. This is the path to a warm heart and a changed life.

Going Deeper: Psalm 103:1-14

Going Forward: How would you rate the “temperature” in your heart right now?

### **Saturday, December, 28<sup>th</sup>** *Read Jude 24-25*

December is both the end and the beginning. December is the end of the year, the end of autumn, and the end of the first semester. December is the beginning of the church year: the season of Advent. December is also the beginning of the Christmas planning, programs, parties, and preparations that now begin in earnest. Our lives are full of beginnings and endings as well. In Jude, there is what the church terms a “benediction.” The benediction comes at the end of the service. (The part where you head for the doughnut table!) Notice, however, that even in this ending of Jude’s letter, the benediction, there is a “beginning.” The beginning is the new life we have because Jesus promises that He will: “...keep you from falling and [will] present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.” (vs. 24) This is an incredible promise! No matter what “endings” we may experience in life, with Jesus, they are also “beginnings.”

Going Deeper: Isaiah 46

Going Forward: Are you facing an “end” or a “beginning” in your life? Where do you see the hand of God in these situations?

**Tomorrow’s Key Lessons: Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13; Luke 21:25-36.**

