

Through the looking glass

Notes on the Bible readings

- John arranges the trial of Jesus carefully into scenes. Earlier in chapter 18, Jesus is arrested and questioned by the high priest before being handed over to Pilate, as the representative of imperial Rome. In 18.33-37 there is a dialogue between Jesus and Pilate on the nature of Jesus' kingship. In a sense, this discussion continues until chapter 19, when Pilate asks the Jews whether he should crucify their king, and they respond that they have no king but the emperor.
- Jesus is presented as 'the king of the Jews', a pretender to the throne of David, but Jesus presents himself as one who exercises a very different kind of kingship, not dependent upon earthly authority. The relationship between Pilate and the Jewish religious authorities is difficult, so Pilate uses Jesus as a pawn in a political power game.
- Daniel chapter 7 contains a description of a heavenly vision in which four world kingdoms are replaced by the kingdom of God. 'One like a human being', sometimes translated as the Son of Man (a title Jesus used for himself), is presented to the Ancient One and receives eternal kingship.
- Jesus doesn't deny his kingship, but alludes to it in an unusual way. He says that his kingship is 'not from this world' – it is based on authority from God and transcends time and space. Pilate is blind to the truth and agrees to Jesus' crucifixion, but he is unable to prevent Jesus' heavenly kingship, which continues to this day.

For reflection and comment linking this week's Bible reading to the news, current issues and events, go to www.rootsontheweb.com and click on PostScript.



Questions for reflection

- ▶ What qualities are desirable in a monarch today?
- ▶ What is the nature of Jesus' kingship?
- ▶ How might you help God's kingdom come?



A gathering prayer

Loving God, in your son Jesus you show us the reality of power and the truth of love. May we never confuse dominance and kingship, never accept authority but refuse responsibility, but may we work together with vision, compassion and integrity. that your kingdom may come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

A prayer of praise

We praise you, Lord Jesus, that in a world of fake news, you are our truth; in a world of false gods, you are our true Saviour; in a world of dominant powers, you are our peace; in a world of false dreams, you are our reality; in a world that is hurting, you are our hope. For all the world, you are a glimpse of heaven and a bringer of life, and we praise you, Lord Jesus, we praise you. Amen.

A personal prayer

Lord Jesus, you appeared powerless before Pilate, and yet in you is all power and all truth. Help me to discern your truth in my own life, and in the life of the world, that I may be confident, compassionate and committed to the causes of justice and peace. In your name, I pray. Amen.

Live your faith

Make an effort to pay attention to how power is used and abused, in every aspect of the world around you. Pray for those who exercise power.