

Lesson 4 – The King of Israel

(Isaiah 11:1-2; Jeremiah 23:5-6)

Nathanael was challenged by Phillip to “*come and see*” Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph who was the one whom Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote (John 1:45, 46). This encounter with Jesus concluded in Nathanael’s proclamation, “*Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.*” (John 1:49). Nicodemus came to Jesus seeking the nature of Kingdom of God (John 3: 3, 5). After Jesus arrest by the Jewish authorities, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching (John 18:19). Jesus’ teachings were openly proclaimed so all could hear (John 18:20). After Jesus is brought to the Roman governor, Pilate, charges are made concerning the crimes of Jesus by the Jewish leaders. Although these charges are not mentioned, Pilate’s first question to Jesus is, “*Are you the king of the Jews?*” (John 18:28-33). Jesus infamous reply, “*My kingdom is not of this world. . .*” truly proclaims the nature of Jesus’ kingship (John 18:36). Jesus adds, “*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. . .*” (John 18:37).

Jesus’ teachings were so clear about his right to the throne of Israel, and his works so powerful, that the common people were ready to acknowledge him as their king (John 6:15). Following the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus returns to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. The people hear about Jesus’ return to Jerusalem and honor him as their king. “*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!*” (John 12:12-15). Although the people understand the significance of Jesus as king they nor his disciples, understand the nature of his kingdom (John 12:16). Jesus, himself, completes the signification by choosing to enter Jerusalem upon the foal of a donkey (Zechariah 9:9; John 12:14).

The reader of John’s gospel, if not familiar with Jewish prophecies or customs, is pointed to these historical records as a source to understanding the nature of Jesus’ ministry (John 1:45; 5:39, 46; 7:38, 42) and hence the author’s note, “*as it is written*” (John 12:14). Jesus states that those sources were readily available for those who sought to understand God’s plan for the salvation of mankind (John 5:39). Therefore, John the Baptist and Nathanael would know about Isaiah’s prophecy concerning the signification of the Spirit of the Lord upon the anointed one who will judge people by righteousness (Isaiah 12:2-4; John 1:32-34). This Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples and reclaim the remnant of the Lord’s people throughout the world (Isaiah 12: 10, 11).

The days were coming when God would raise up a King who would reign wisely and justly throughout the land. It would be in those days that Judah would be saved and Israel would live again in safety (Jeremiah 23:5, 6). After years of occupation and corrupt government rule by foreign authorities, the Jews were ready for the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is with this idea that the Jewish leaders made inquiry about who John the Baptist was (John 1:19, 20). He openly proclaimed he was not the king they sought, but Jesus was the prophesied one (John 1:34; 3:25-35). “*That man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan – the one you testified about – well, he is baptizing and everyone is going to him.*” It is clear that the Jews and the people understood the superiority of Jesus to John and who he claimed to be (John 3:25, 26).

Questions:

1. In Pilate's brief discussion with Jesus the conversation centered upon the charge that the Jews had made against Jesus, "that he claimed to be a king." (John 18:33; 19:12) In this brief episode of the Roman governor's duty, he becomes even more afraid (John 19: 7, 8). Is there a significance between Pilate's desire to release Jesus and his determination to place a sign upon Jesus' cross which read "Jesus of Nazareth, The King of the Jews" (John 19: 12; 19-22)?

2. Deuteronomy 18:17-18 proclaims that a future prophet will come from the Israelites, like Moses. Moses, the God appointed leader of the Israelites, led them from Egyptian captivity, and was the catalyst through which the Israelites became recognized as a mighty nation (Deuteronomy 34:10-12). Jesus identifies himself with the prophecy of Moses (John 5:45-47). Explain why the people were ready to make Jesus their king in John 6:14-15 and why Jesus withdrew again for the solitude of the mountain.

3. It took phenomenal signs from God through Moses to convince the Israelites to leave Egypt and follow Moses into the wilderness. The final sign was the death of the firstborn, which finally broke the will of Pharaoh, and gave Israel their freedom (Exodus 12: 31-33). Describe the event, which John records in detail, which confirms Jesus authority as Israel's king and explain Jesus' authority, as king, when he commands Peter to follow him (John 21:22; Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:4-6).

4. Although this book was written to promote belief in Jesus as the Son of God and the giver of eternal life (John 20:30, 31), many who saw Jesus' miraculous signs rejected him. Explain the position the Jewish leaders held with regard to Jesus' kingship (John 11:47-53; 12:37-43).
