

King in Question

John 18:28-40

Pierre Cannings, Ph.D.

I. King Accused vs. 28-32

a. Praetorium

- i. Praetorium - The name given to the headquarters of the *praefectus praetorii*, a Roman official who resided as the supreme administrator and judge of a region. The praetorium was usually, but not necessarily, also the living quarters (Gk *oikia*) of the prefect or governor.
- ii. Early in the Morning
 1. Moreover, if the Jewish leaders were to carry through their plan of expediting the execution of Jesus before the passover festival, there was no time to be lost.
 2. The praetorium where they led Jesus was the official headquarters, judgment seat, and command center of the military leader in an area
- iii. Jews did not enter
 1. *You take him and judge him,*” assumes that “they” are prominent members of the Sanhedrin, some of whom were quite certainly of high-priestly rank (so explicitly 19:6, 15).
- iv. Defile - to cause someth. to be ritually impure, *stain, defile*
 1. The Jewish deputation refuse to enter the governor’s residence in order to avoid contracting defilement, and thereby disqualify themselves from sharing in the passover meal. They are acting in accordance with the dictum, “The dwellings of non-Jews are unclean,”. The precise ground for this uncleanness is uncertain, but it appears to be founded on the fear of Jews that abortions and premature babies who die may be buried within the area of Gentile houses, so rendering the homes subject to the uncleanness of the dead. It is stated in Num 9:6–12 that anyone who comes into contact with a corpse may not celebrate the passover at the appointed time (since such contact renders a person unclean for seven days, Num 19:11), but must celebrate it a month later
 2. In the second half of this verse the evangelist provides an ironic contrast between the Jews who were seeking Jesus’s death and

their unwillingness to enter the praetorium for fear of defiling themselves lest they would not be able to eat the Passover

3. These men were about to pollute their souls by unscrupulous testimony which was to bring Jesus to a horrible death, yet were unwilling to incur technical or ceremonial uncleanness while giving that testimony. There is no perversion so sinister as that of the human conscience.
- v. But might eat the Passover
1. high priests on maintaining it in this circumstance entails the extreme of irony; they hold fast to the ceremonial law while they seek the execution of the promised Deliverer of Israel, the Son of God and Savior; and in their zeal to eat the passover lamb they unwittingly help to fulfill its significance through their demanding the death of the Lamb of God, at the same time shutting themselves out from its saving efficacy.
 2. No more eloquent example than this can be found of the ability of religious people to be meticulous about external regulations of religion while being wholly at variance with God
 3. Although the laws of clean and unclean in respect to eating the Passover were complex, it seems that entering the residence of a Gentile would have been a major problem and would likely have rendered a Jew unclean for at least seven days and required the postponement of eating Passover for a month. The basic logic seems to have grown out of an interpretation of the rule of contamination from the dead in Num 19:11–13.

b. Pilate

- i. Accusation
- ii. Evildoer - τὸ κακόν *evil, wrong* what is contrary to custom or law
 1. Would not have delivered him to you
 - a. In “delivering” or handing over Jesus to Pilate, the Jewish authorities would have been expected to provide a charge or accusation (*katēgorian*) against Jesus. The use of this term by John probably strengthens the view that the “hearing” by Annas served to provide an indictment, although it is not clear, according to John
 - b. In Luke the earlier hearing is clearly defined as a meeting of the Sanhedrin (22:66), and the charge in that scene would be akin to blasphemy (Luke 22:70–71; cf. Matt 26:65). But then Luke says the whole Sanhedrin came over to Pilate, and there they introduced the entire situation with a shift in the charge to treasonable offenses (Luke 23:1–2).
 - c. Pilate in this Gospel asked for the charge. The immediate response is not a statement of the charge but an

accusation of Jesus being a criminal or literally “one who does evil.”

2. Take Him yourself
 - a. Pilate’s reply, accordingly, was both ironic and humiliating for the Jewish leaders. If by their answer they wished to give the impression that Jesus was offending against their laws, let them judge him according to those laws
3. Judge Him according to your law
 - a. He was fully aware that had the Jews been given an exceptional permission to put Jesus to death on the basis of a serious breach of their law, they would have done it by stoning. But the Jews expressly wanted Jesus to die at the hands of the Romans’
 - b. This rejoinder disconcerts the Jewish accusers of Jesus, who are bent upon His death, although they are not sure of their legal position as regards evidence; so they can only say, “It is not lawful *for us* to put any one to death.”
 - c. No doubt, violent and highhanded action on the part of the Sanhedrim may have been occasionally winked at by the Roman authorities, for political reasons. If Jesus had been killed by the agents of the Sannedrim before He had gained the ear of the Jerusalem populace (cf., *e.g.*, 7:1, 25), it might have been overlooked by the procurator; but the chief priests were not sure now that they had the people with them, and their only safe course was, having examined Jesus themselves, to bring Him to Pilate for sentence.

c. Jews

- i. We are not permitted to put anyone to death
 1. for *their* mode of execution entailed the curse of the Law: “Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deut 21:23). The chief priests clearly wished to ensure that Jesus was not viewed as a martyr for God’s cause, but as an impostor who died under the curse of God.
 2. If the Jews had put Jesus to death by stoning, His death by crucifixion, of which He had already spoken (12:33), would not have taken place; and stoning was the Jewish penalty for blasphemy, of which the Sanhedrim had found Him guilty. Jn. has told nothing as yet of the charge of blasphemy, and he gives no particulars of it, merely indicating at a later point in the narrative (19:7)

d. Jesus

- i. To fulfill the word of Jesus
 1. Fulfill - of the fulfillment of divine predictions or promises

2. Signifying the kind of death
3. The idea of lifting up and hanging on a tree would obviously be interpreted in reference to the Roman punishment of crucifixion rather than the Jewish punishment of stoning.
4. Although this statement could well refer to verses like John 3:14 and 12:32, where Jesus predicted that he would be lifted up, the Old Testament reference behind it, Beasley-Murray and Morris think, could easily have been Deut 21:23, where it is said that anyone who was hung on a tree would be under the curse of God

II. King in Question vs. 33-37

- e. Pilate
 - i. Questioning
 - ii. In each Gospel the question begins with the emphatic Greek *su* (you!): “Are you ...?” which suggests that Pilate could well have been astonished that Jesus was claiming such a title.
- f. Jesus
 - i. Who
 - ii. Kingdom - one who possesses unusual or transcendent power
 - a. that βασιλεία, like the Hebrew *malkûth* and the Aramaic *malkûtha*, means “sovereign rule
 - b. But the moot word there is “directly”; for if Jesus talks about his “kingdom” he really means his sovereign rule, his kingly activity, i.e., his action in his capacity as the king who brings salvation.
 - c. Time and again in our study of this Gospel we have observed that the “signs” of Jesus and the teaching related to them set forth the saving sovereignty of God manifest in Jesus; hence despite the fact that the expression βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, “kingdom of God,” occurs only in John 3:3 and 5, the whole Gospel is concerned with the kingship of God in Jesus. And that is what Jesus was referring to in his utterance to Pilate; his kingship is the sovereign action of the Son through whom God performs his saving works and speaks his saving words.
 - d. kingdom includes kingship and the kingly reign of Jesus similar to the concept of *malkuth* in the Hebrew Bible. Jesus’ kingdom is directly related to the concept of the kingdom of heaven and the reign or authority of God
2. Not of this world
 - a. Jesus’ answer (note that Mark 14:62 expounds the affirmation of Messiahship in terms of the Son of Man of

- Dan 7:13, who is to come in theophanic glory, and to be revealed as the Lord at God's right hand of Ps 110:1
- b. If the sovereignty of Jesus does not originate in this world it is self-evidently not like the kingdoms of this world, as Jesus proceeds to state: if his rule were exercised in the manner of the kingdoms of this world he would have an army, as they do, and his followers would do battle to prevent him from falling into the hands of his enemies, whether Jews or Romans; but he has no army! Pilate therefore must recognize that his rule is wholly different from that of the political powers of this world, and wholly different from anything that Pilate has experienced; hence *he constitutes no threat to Roman authority.*
 - c. But Jesus does not answer this question. He goes back to the charge that He had claimed to be "King of the Jews." He had refused such a title already (6:15), but He had often spoken of a coming kingdom. It was the kingdom of which Daniel had written (Dan. 2:44, 7:14, 27), a spiritual kingdom of which the saints were to be citizens
3. My servants would be fighting
 - a. I would not handed over to the jews
 - b. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my officers (ὑπηρέται) be striving, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews," *i.e.* the hostile Jews, as regularly in Jn. (see on 5:10).
 - c.
 4. Kingdom not of this world
- iii. King
 1. Born King
 2. Come to this world
 - a. To Testify
 - i. But his kingship was intimately tied to his mission. His coming into the world was to be a witness or testifier to the truth.
 - b. The Truth
 - i. Accordingly, we misunderstand Johannine truth if we merely speak of the truth about Jesus or doctrinal formulations about Jesus. Jesus is himself truth as he states: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (14:6).
 - ii. Jesus' mission was to integrate truth into life. That is the reason the text here defines people who are of truth as those who hear the voice of Jesus.

Hearing or obeying Jesus is not the same as affirming correct ideas

- c. Who is of Truth
 - i. Hears My Voice
 - ii. Manifestly, Jesus is not speaking of truth in an abstract, or even general way, but specifically in relation to his ministry. He came among men with a mission from God to bear witness to the truth of God's saving sovereignty, and to reveal it in word and deed
 - iii. Jesus' positive statement to Pilate about the kingdom of truth does more than describe the subjects of his kingdom; it implicitly conveys an invitation to join their number; accordingly it placed Pilate in a situation of decision as to the truth that gives men a part in the kingdom of salvation.

III. True King vs. 38-42

- g. What is Truth
- h. I find no guilt
 - i. But it is also most probable that he was at that point convinced that this Jesus offered no threat to Roman political authority in that region. That was hardly the point of the Jewish leadership's concern.
- i. Jewish Custom
 - i. Release for you at Passover
 - ii. Wish to release the King of the Jews
 - 1. Pilate developed what he thought would be a successful plan to release Jesus and dismiss the interrogation. Accordingly, he went outside the Praetorium (judgment hall) and rendered his verdict of Jesus' innocence.
- j. Not this Man
 - i. But the robber Barabbas
 - ii. Lk. 23:19, 25 says that Barabbas was an insurgent and a murderer (cf. Acts 3:14); Mk. 15:7 saying that he was an associate of such. Mt. 27:16 only says that he was a "notable" prisoner (δέσμιον ἐπίσημον), and the article here, τὸν Βαρ., would agree with this, "the well-known Barabbas

Word Studies

PRAETORIUM [Gk *praitōrion* (πραιτωριον)]. The name given to the headquarters of the *praefectus praetorii*, a Roman official who resided as the supreme administrator and judge of a region. The praetorium was usually, but not necessarily, also the living quarters (Gk *oikia*) of the prefect or governor.¹

Evildoer- τὸ κακόν *evil, wrong* what is contrary to custom or law²

Defile - to cause someth³. to be ritually impure, *stain, defile*⁴

Fulfill - of the fulfillment of divine predictions or promises⁵

Kingdom - one who possesses unusual or transcendent power⁶

Commentary Studies

28 The laconic “They bring Jesus ... to Pilate” does not mention the identity of those who bring Jesus to the governor. While the temple police will naturally be included, Pilate’s statement in v 31, “*You take him and judge him,*” assumes that “they” are prominent members of the Sanhedrin, some of whom were quite certainly of high-priestly rank (so explicitly 19:6, 15). *They came “early in the morning,” and that of necessity. Pilate, as all Roman governors, will have begun his day very early, as judged by modern customs, and will have concluded it at a fairly early hour.* (Sherwin-White illustrates: “The emperor Vespasian was at his official duties even before the hour of dawn, and the elder Pliny, most industrious of Roman officials, had

¹ Bargil (Virgil) Pixner, “[Praetorium.](#)” ed. David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 447.

² William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 501.

³**someth. someth.** = something

⁴ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 650.

⁵ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 829.

⁶ William Arndt et al., [A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 170.

completed his working day, when Prefect of the Fleet, by the end of the fourth or fifth hour. In Martial's account of daily life at the capital, where two hours are assigned to the protracted duty of *salutatio*, the period of *labores* ends when the sixth hour begins. Even a country gentleman at leisure begins his day at the second hour": *Roman Law in the New Testament*, 45). Moreover, if the Jewish leaders were to carry through their plan of expediting the execution of Jesus before the passover festival, there was no time to be lost.

Bultmann, following a suggestion of H. Schlier, saw a further, symbolic significance in the term *πρωί*, "early." "If the ἦν δὲ νύξ ("It was night") of 13:30 is pondered, one could well suppose that the mention of the time could have a deeper meaning here also: the day of victory of Jesus over the world is breaking" (651). So also J. Blank, "Die Verhandlung vor Pilatus ...," 66. The thought is interesting, but it may credit too much to the solitary word of time here, in contrast to the dramatic utterance of 13:30.

The Jewish deputation refuse to enter the governor's residence in order to avoid contracting defilement, and thereby disqualify themselves from sharing in the passover meal. They are acting in accordance with the dictum, "The dwellings of non-Jews are unclean," *Oho*⁷⁸. 18:7. The precise ground for this uncleanness is uncertain, but it appears to be founded on the fear of Jews that abortions and premature babies who die may be buried within the area of Gentile houses, so rendering the homes subject to the uncleanness of the dead (see Str-⁹B 1:838–39). It is stated in Num 9:6–12 that anyone who comes into contact with a corpse may not celebrate the passover at the appointed time (since such contact renders a person unclean for seven days, Num 19:11), but must celebrate it a month later. On the basis of Levitical ceremonial law the regulation is comprehensible, but the insistence of the high priests on maintaining it in this circumstance entails the extreme of irony; they hold fast to the ceremonial law while they seek the execution of the promised Deliverer of Israel, the Son of God and Savior; and in their p 328 zeal to eat the passover lamb they unwittingly help to fulfill its significance through their demanding the death of the Lamb of God, at the same time shutting themselves out from its saving efficacy.

No more eloquent example than this can be found of the ability of religious people to be meticulous about external regulations of religion while being wholly at variance with God. One result of this decision of the Jewish leaders, however, should be noted: by remaining outside the praetorium they occasion the interchange of scenes wherein Pilate goes into his residence to speak with Jesus and comes out to confer with them. The trial of Jesus before the governor thus is played out like a drama on two stages, front and back (Dodd's imagery, *Historical Tradition*, 96). The effect of this is not only to enhance the dramatic quality of the narrative, but to exclude the Jewish leaders from the revelation of truth given to the Roman governor.

29–30 While it may be assumed that some conversation had taken place between the Jewish leaders (Caiaphas?) and Pilate concerning Jesus (cf. the assistance of Roman soldiers at the arrest of Jesus), Pilate naturally asks for the official charge to be presented against Jesus by

⁷*Oho* Oholot

⁸. Oholot

⁹Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck'sche, 1926–28)

the high priests. Their response is extraordinarily vague (Brown regards it as insolent, 866). It is possible that, having already consulted Pilate concerning Jesus, they anticipated that he would not trouble to investigate further, but would simply rubber-stamp their decision. If such was their hope they were mistaken. Pilate decided to make an investigation of his own. Bruce rightly concludes, “It was evident that Pilate was in effect opening a new trial, instead of simply confirming the death penalty which, as they had maintained, Jesus had incurred in terms of Jewish law” (350).

18:31 Pilate’s reply, accordingly, was both ironic and humiliating for the Jewish leaders. If by their answer they wished to give the impression that Jesus was offending against their laws, let them judge him according to those laws. If however they wanted to bring about his death they must speak up and state their case clearly, for, as they themselves acknowledged, they had no power to carry out the death penalty; that authority lay in the hands of the governor alone. (For further discussion on this issue see the *Introduction to the Passion Narrative*, 308–10.)

32 With the Evangelist’s comment cf. his similar one in 12:33. He was fully aware that had the Jews been given an exceptional permission to put Jesus to death on the basis of a serious breach of their law, they would have done it by stoning. But the Jews expressly wanted Jesus to die at the hands of the Romans (cf. the later cries of “*Crucify him!*”); for *their* mode of execution entailed the curse of the Law: “Anyone who is hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deut 21:23). The chief priests clearly wished to ensure that Jesus was not viewed as a martyr for God’s cause, but as an impostor who died under the curse of God. By contrast the Evangelist sees in the death of Jesus by crucifixion God’s way of fulfilling his purpose to “lift up” Jesus in the glory of divine love to enthronement with himself; thereby the saving sovereignty is opened for all the world, and the exalted Lord can draw all who will into the eternal life of the kingdom of God. (See further the Comment on 12:31–32).

p 329 Pilate’s First Interrogation of Jesus (18:33–38a)

33 Pilate’s first words to Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” appear in all four Gospels. In the three synoptics Jesus replies at once, “You say it” (σὺ λέγεις), whereas our Evangelist delays that till v 37; the intervening passage supplies a crucial exposition of the nature of Jesus’ kingship, an exposition which finds yet further expansion after the σὺ λέγεις of v 37a. The governor’s question manifestly reflects a fresh formulation by the Jewish leaders, after the dismissal of their inadequate statement in v 30; their charge is based on the confession of Jesus in response to Caiaphas’ demand, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” to which Jesus gave an affirmative answer (Mark 14:61–62 par¹⁰). While our Evangelist is silent about the latter episode, he clearly links Pilate’s question with the allegations of the chief priests (v 35), and probably alludes in 19:7 to Caiaphas’ question and Jesus’ answer (note that Mark 14:62 expounds the affirmation of Messiahship in terms of the Son of Man of Dan 7:13, who is to come in theophanic glory, and to be revealed as the Lord at God’s right hand of Ps 110:1, a status indistinguishable to Jewish ears from that of Son of God, except that it implies being more exalted than is suggested by their usual concept of the title). The expression “King of the Jews” is a translation for the benefit of the Roman governor, not unknown in Jewish recent

¹⁰par. parallel or paragraph

history (according to Josephus, Herod the Great had the title, *Ant*¹¹*t*¹².14.385); Pilate naturally could interpret it only in political terms, as was intended by the Jewish authorities. His question to Jesus, accordingly, was to elicit whether or not he claimed to be such: was he guilty, or not guilty? (So Bruce, 352.)

Expositors have frequently noted that in all four Gospels Pilate's question begins with the pronoun, Σὺ, which is unnecessary in Greek and could indicate emphasis, as though to ask, "Are *you* the king of the Jews?" That could express surprise, not to say astonishment. Pilate already had one revolutionary on his hands, Barabbas, a murderer; one alleged to call himself *king* of the Jews must be an even more extreme example of the same kind! But the instant impression made on him by Jesus was of an altogether different kind of person; hence his astonished question. While one must acknowledge the nuance as possible, it is at least doubtful. N. Turner, in Moulton-Turner's *Grammar of NT Greek* 3:37, points out that the use of nominative pronouns for emphasis is not strictly observed in the NT and papyri, and he includes the σὺ εἶ of v 33 an example of this tendency. In the synoptic Gospels the question introduced by σὺ εἶ is answered by σὺ λέγεις, where again the pronoun is unlikely to indicate emphasis (the same applies to John's v 37, despite arguments to the contrary; see *Note*¹³s on the latter passage). Pilate's question is best understood as a straightforward commencement of interrogation of the prisoner, in accordance with Roman trial procedure (see Sherwin-White, "The Trial of Christ," 105, who alludes to the usage by which the direct

¹¹*Ant* Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*

¹² Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*

¹³*Notes* The precise significance of σὺ λέγεις has been disputed. C. H. Dodd affirmed, "That 'You say' is either in Greek or Aramaic a recognized form of expression for an affirmative reply to a question is a theory for which I have been able to find no sufficient support in actual examples" (*Historical Tradition*). On the contrary, the reply of Jesus to Judas in Matt 26:25 appears indubitably to mean "Yes." So also the σὺ εἶπας in Matt 26:64 for ἐγὼ εἶμι in Mark 14:62 has a clearly affirmative intention, even if it implies that the confession has a greater significance than the questioner realizes (the rest of the saying explains that deeper significance). The single parallel to the expression that Str-B found is, despite its singularity, quite clear: A certain Simeon the virtuous told R. Eliezer (ca. A.D. 90) that he had gone between the porch and the altar of the Temple without having washed his hands and feet. Eliezer answered, "Who is more esteemed, you or the High Priest?" Simeon was silent. Eliezer continued, "Are you not rightly ashamed to say that the very dog of the High Priest is more esteemed than you?" Simeon replied, "Rabbi, you have said it," i.e., *You are right* (Str-B 1:990). So also the context in John 18:37 shows that an affirmation is intended in the σὺ λέγεις of Jesus; he has just spoken of the nature of his kingdom, which led Pilate to exclaim, "So you are a king, then?" Jesus proceeds to explain further the nature of his sovereignty in terms of his vocation to bear witness to the truth (so Bultmann: "The continuation shows that in Jn 18:37 σὺ λέγεις = 'Yes,' for the continuation becomes senseless if one attempts to understand it otherwise," 654 n. 6).

question was put to the defendant three times before his case was allowed to go by default, and who sees the custom observed in vv 33–37).

34–35 Jesus asks whether Pilate’s question proceeds from “a spontaneous recognition that he is in the presence of royalty,” or whether he is simply echoing the Jewish accusations (Hoskyns, 520). Pilate responds with an indignant, not to say contemptuous, exclamation, “I’m not a Jew, am I?” He at once disclaims any interest in peculiar Jewish notions and denies any reason p 330 to know anything about Jesus other than what people have told him. Both persons in this confrontation wish to get behind the façade. Jesus wants to know whether Pilate has any insight of his own which he can lead on to further understanding; if he has merely received the complaints of the Jewish leaders, he is already on the wrong track and has no understanding of what kingship in its ultimate sense (i.e., as applied to Jesus) means. Pilate, on the other hand, by his further statement about Jesus’ being handed over to him by the representatives of his nation and his further question, indicates that he is dissatisfied with the Jewish accusations. What has Jesus done to make the rulers so intent on his execution? Is his offense simply against Jewish traditions, or has he actually committed a crime that Roman law must punish? (On this see Morris, 769.)

36 Jesus takes up Pilate’s question (v 33) and answers it by defining *negatively* the nature of his kingdom. Bultmann is right when he observes, “Jesus does not speak directly about himself; rather he speaks about his βασιλεία,” i.e., his kingdom (654; so also Brown, 868). But the moot word there is “directly”; for if Jesus talks about his “kingdom” he really means his sovereign rule, his kingly activity, i.e., his action in his capacity as the king who brings salvation. Schnackenburg, curiously (for he is as well informed as anyone about the eschatology of Jesus), writes: “Jesus’ βασιλεία does not signify his ‘kingdom’ but, in accordance with Pilate’s question, it is a designation of function, ‘kingship’ ” (3:249). By this Schnackenburg wishes to distinguish the term here from its use in John 3:3, 5. One is constrained to ask, however, where in the four Gospels βασιλεία, when referring to God’s kingdom, means anything other than “kingship.” It is commonplace that βασιλεία, like the Hebrew *malkûth* and the Aramaic *malkûtha*, means “sovereign rule.” K. G. Kuhn stated that when contemporary Jews spoke of “the kingdom of heaven” (in which “heaven” is a periphrasis for God) they really meant, “God is king” (*TDN*¹⁴T 1:571). In the synoptic Gospels the kingdom of God in the proclamation of Jesus denotes the dynamic activity of the sovereign Lord for the salvation of men and women; characteristically it relates especially to the saving sovereignty of God operative in and through Jesus himself. Time and again in our study of this Gospel we have observed that the “signs” of Jesus and the teaching related to them set forth the saving sovereignty of God manifest in Jesus; hence despite the fact that the expression βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, “kingdom of God,” occurs only in John 3:3 and 5, the whole Gospel is concerned with the kingship of God in Jesus. And that is what Jesus was referring to in his utterance to Pilate; his kingship is the sovereign action of the Son through whom God performs his saving works and speaks his saving words.

It is worthy of note that the original meaning of the English term “kingdom” was identical with that of the Hebrew *malkûth* and the Greek *basileia*. The first definition of

¹⁴*TDNT* G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., tr. G. W. Bromiley *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ET (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–76)

kingdom in the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as “kingly function, authority or power; sovereignty, supreme rule; the position or rank of a king, kingship.” An illuminating illustration of its use is given from Hobbes, *Rhet* 8 (1681) 19, wherein monarchy is referred to as “... which Government, if he limit it by law, is called *Kingdom*; if by his own will *Tyranny*.” The contrast of “kingdom” and “tyranny” perfectly illustrates the active force of the former term. The translators of the $\kappa\upsilon^{15}$ v/A^{16} v labored half a century before Hobbes, and would p 331 have been conscious of this significance of the word “kingdom” when they used it in their rendering of the Gospels.

In Jesus’ statement to Pilate his sovereignty is defined in a negative fashion through the necessities of the situation. The meaning of the opening clause is made clear through its repetition in the final clause of the sentence: “My kingdom is not of this world... My kingdom is not ἐντεῦθεν,” i.e., “from here” (so Bauer in his *Lexicon*, 536); the Kingdom of Jesus, that is, does not have its *origin* in this world, defined by Barrett as “the field in which humanity and the spiritual world are organized over against God” (536). If the sovereignty of Jesus does not originate in this world it is self-evidently not like the kingdoms of this world, as Jesus proceeds to state: if his rule were exercised in the manner of the kingdoms of this world he would have an army, as they do, and his followers would do battle to prevent him from falling into the hands of his enemies, whether Jews or Romans; but he has no army! Pilate therefore must recognize that his rule is wholly different from that of the political powers of this world, and wholly different from anything that Pilate has experienced; hence *he constitutes no threat to Roman authority*.

It is essential that Jesus’ statement should not be misconstrued as meaning that his kingdom is not *active* in this world, or has *nothing to do with* this world. The utterance attributed to the grandsons of Jude, the brother of Jesus, to the emperor Domitian comes close to that position; according to Eusebius (*Hist*¹⁷*t*¹⁸. 3.29.4) “they said that it was not worldly, nor on earth, but heavenly and angelic, and that it would be established at the end of the world.” The fundamental concept of the kingdom of God in the Bible is that it denotes God’s “coming” *to this world* to bring judgment and salvation to humankind. When the Gospels depict Jesus powerfully active among people, delivering them from Satan’s thrall and bringing to them the blessings of God’s beneficent rule, they purpose to describe the kingdom of God in action in this world. Such is the import of the crucial utterances of Jesus about the kingdom of God, like Matt 11:5, 12–13; 12:28; 13:16–17; Mark 4:11–12, in conjunction with the parables of the kingdom; Luke 4:16–20; 17:20–21. That the Fourth Gospel is one with the rest in this respect is seen in its accounts of the signs of Jesus and their interpretations. Brown’s comment, accordingly, is pertinent: “Jesus does not deny that his kingdom or kingship affects this world, for the world will be conquered by those who believe in him (1 John 5:4). But he

¹⁵ $\kappa\upsilon\upsilon$ v King James Version (1611) = AV

¹⁶AV Authorized (King James) Version = KJV

¹⁷*Hist Historia* (e) (Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Diodorus, Livy, Tacitus, Dio Cassius)

¹⁸. *Historia* (e) (Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, Diodorus, Livy, Tacitus, Dio Cassius)

denies that his kingdom belongs to this world; *like himself, it comes from above*" (869; see further *Bultmann's strong statement*, 657).

37 Pilate rightly perceives that when Jesus declares that his kingdom is not of this world, then he is claiming to be a king of some sort, hence his exclamation, "So you are a king, then?" Jesus' reply, "You say that I am a king," affirms the rightness of Pilate's perception; in no way does it constitute a diminution or evasion of the governor's statement (not even as Dodd would paraphrase it: "'King' is *your* word, not mine," *Historical Tradition*, 99; see our *Note*¹⁹s on σὺ λέγεις). Naturally Pilate's understanding of "king," as applied to Jesus, falls far short of reality. Jesus therefore, having explained what his kingdom is *not*, now declares what it *is*: his kingdom is *the Kingdom of Truth*. He was born and came into the world (a double expression to signify his coming from the presence of God, in incarnation) to bear witness to this kingdom. Manifestly, Jesus is not speaking of truth in an abstract, or even general way, but specifically in relation to his ministry. He came among men [p 332](#) with a mission from God to bear witness to the truth of God's saving sovereignty, and to reveal it in word and deed. This kingdom-mission of his entails bearing witness to judgment and salvation, differing in application to people accordingly as they "listen," i.e., give heed to his testimony. At this point, however, the positive aspect of his mission alone is stated. As Lagrange pointed out, "To reveal the truth was a way of making subjects (French, *partisans*) and of creating a kingdom" (477).

The same balance of emphasis on the saving sovereignty of God that brings life eternal in the kingdom of God or judgment for the rejectors of the Redeemer Son of God, and the authoritative witness to the truth that he brings who has come from God, is observable in the two kerygmatic passages of John 3:16–21 and 3:31–36; the first

¹⁹*Notes* The precise significance of σὺ λέγεις has been disputed. C. H. Dodd affirmed, "That 'You say' is either in Greek or Aramaic a recognized form of expression for an affirmative reply to a question is a theory for which I have been able to find no sufficient support in actual examples" (*Historical Tradition*). On the contrary, the reply of Jesus to Judas in Matt 26:25 appears indubitably to mean "Yes." So also the σὺ εἶπας in Matt 26:64 for ἐγὼ εἶμι in Mark 14:62 has a clearly affirmative intention, even if it implies that the confession has a greater significance than the questioner realizes (the rest of the saying explains that deeper significance). The single parallel to the expression that Str-B found is, despite its singularity, quite clear: A certain Simeon the virtuous told R. Eliezer (ca. A.D. 90) that he had gone between the porch and the altar of the Temple without having washed his hands and feet. Eliezer answered, "Who is more esteemed, you or the High Priest?" Simeon was silent. Eliezer continued, "Are you not rightly ashamed to say that the very dog of the High Priest is more esteemed than you?" Simeon replied, "Rabbi, you have said it," i.e., *You are right* (Str-B 1:990). So also the context in John 18:37 shows that an affirmation is intended in the σὺ λέγεις of Jesus; he has just spoken of the nature of his kingdom, which led Pilate to exclaim, "So you are a king, then?" Jesus proceeds to explain further the nature of his sovereignty in terms of his vocation to bear witness to the truth (so Bultmann: "The continuation shows that in Jn 18:37 σὺ λέγεις = 'Yes,' for the continuation becomes senseless if one attempts to understand it otherwise," 654 n. 6).

illuminates the Nicodemus discourse on life eternal and the second the witness of John the Baptist to the Bridegroom of the kingdom. The close link between Truth and Kingdom in revelation is succinctly expressed in Jer. Sanh. 18a: "The seal of God is truth. What is truth? that he is the living God and the King eternal" (cited by Schlatter, 341: also by Westcott, from Lightfoot, 2:285).

38 Jesus' positive statement to Pilate about the kingdom of truth does more than describe the subjects of his kingdom; it implicitly conveys an invitation to join their number; accordingly it placed Pilate in a situation of decision as to the truth that gives men a part in the kingdom of salvation. Jesus the prisoner sets his judge in the dock! Pilate's answer indicates that he has no intention of occupying that position: "Truth, what is that?" His turning on his heel without waiting for an answer shows that he doesn't believe that Jesus, or anyone else for that matter, could give one. And that means that he foreclosed the possibility of his coming under the Kingdom of truth and life. As Haenchen observed, "If Pilate, face to face with this Truth standing before him, asks, 'What is truth?' it is evident that he does not belong to 'those whom the Father has given to Jesus' " (536–37). Nevertheless one fact was made clear to Pilate from this interview with Jesus: this man was not the threat to Roman rule that the Jewish leaders made him out to be. His kingdom, in truth, was not "of this world."

Pilate's Declaration of the Innocence of Jesus (18:38b–40)

38–39 Pilate goes outside the praetorium to address "the Jews." In light of the shouting described in vv 40; 19:6, 12, 14, 15, and the mention of the "officials" in 19:6, we are to assume that the Jewish leaders had been joined by supporters whom they had summoned (we do not hear of any sympathizers with Jesus present also). The declaration of Pilate in v 38b should have brought to a close the business at hand. If the governor, after interrogation of Jesus, had really found no ground for a charge against him he should have dismissed the case forthwith—and the Jewish leaders also. But he made a grave mistake: after referring to the custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover festival he asked them if *they* wished him to release "the king of the Jews" (possibly an ironic use of the title, since it was obvious that Jesus was no aspirant to political rule). Why did Pilate resort to this expedient? It has been suggested [p 333](#) that he wanted to make it possible for the Jewish leaders to save face, for by acting on this custom Jesus would not have been formally acquitted of the charges they had brought against him, but he would have been given an amnesty. A. Bajsic thought otherwise. He considered that Pilate, on the one hand, took the kingship of Jesus seriously, in the non-political sense, and hoped that the people would recognize the compliment; and on the other hand, he saw in Barabbas a dangerous rebel, whose supporters had already arrived to seek the customary release in his favor. He hoped that sufficient support for Jesus would be forthcoming to justify releasing Jesus, an action which would entail the execution of Barabbas. On that basis the Jewish rulers would have no ground for complaint to higher authority through his release of "the king of the Jews," since the people would have been responsible for the choice, and it would have rid the nation of the really dangerous revolutionary ("Pilatus, Jesus und Barabbas," 7–28). The thesis is by no means impossible, but if Pilate acted on such a motivation he underestimated the ability of the

Jewish leaders to outwit him, for as the trial proceeded they set him in the very position of danger that he had wished to avoid.

40 The chief priests had no intention of letting Pilate get away with his scheme, and the crowd had no intention of leaving Barabbas to his fate; together they clamored for the release of Barabbas. So it came about that the leaders of Israel, their henchmen, and the supporters of the popular hero asked for the release of one who had been guilty of violent political assault against the state, entailing murder, and demanded the death of him who came to realize the nation's true destiny through the almighty but peaceful divine love.

The tragic irony of the situation runs deeper, the more it is examined, for the term used in description of Barabbas (ληστής, lit²⁰. "one who takes booty") was used especially of violent men, whether robbers, or pirates, or rampaging soldiers on the loot. Josephus consistently uses it of the Zealots. From the Roman point of view these latter were guerrillas who had to be exterminated; from the popular Jewish point of view such men were heroic freedom fighters. In Mark 15:7 Barabbas is said to be one of "the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising." He will have been a leader among those who sought to make way for the kingdom of God through violence (some versions in v 40 called him an ἀρχιληστής, i.e., a leader of freedom fighters). The very name of the man is intriguing. "Barabbas" is a patronymic, meaning "son of the father" (*abba*), though some early exegetes interpreted it as "son of the rabbi," reading the name as though it were *Barrabbas*. There is a variant reading in Matt 27:16–17 which gives his name as *Jesus Barabbas*; the omission of the first name, as indeed its presence, could be accidental (through contracting Ἰησοῦν to IN); but the comment of Origen, who knew the reading, gives a clue as to its absence in most MS²¹s: "In the whole range of the scriptures we know that no one who is a sinner is called Jesus." The Bible Societies' committee concluded that the full name, *Jesus Barabbas*, was original, and that the name Jesus was suppressed on theological grounds (see Metzger, 67–68). So the Jews, at the instigation of the high priests, who normally repudiated the Zealots and all like them, asked for the release of Jesus Barabbas, the epitome of messianic Jewish nationalism, and called for the death of Jesus of Nazareth, whose fulfillment of the messianic promises was through the redemptive path of the Servant of the Lord and the Son of Man. It was the greatest tragedy of the ancient people of God for all time. (On the significance of Barabbas see the article of J. J. Twomey, "Barabbas Was a Robber," 115–19.)

As to the custom of setting free a prisoner at the Passover feast, scholars have been perplexed at being unable to trace reference to it in secular or Jewish literature, and it has led some to suppose that there never was any such custom. For some time, however, an ambiguous passage in the Talmud, *Pesah*. 91a, has been cited as of uncertain significance; but C. B. Chavel appears to have succeeded in demonstrating from it Jewish acquaintance of the custom and its probable origin. The passage reads: "A mourner, and one who is removing a heap (of debris which had fallen upon a person,

²⁰lit. literally

²¹MS manuscript(s)

without knowing whether he is dead or alive), and *one who has received a promise to be released from a prison*, and an invalid, and aged person who can eat as much as an olive, one slaughters (the lamb) on their behalf. Yet in the case of all these, one may not slaughter for them alone, lest they bring the Passover-offering to disqualification.” It may, of course, happen that for various reasons none of these may be able to participate in the Passover feast (in particular, the hoped-for release from prison might not materialize), and so they must be registered for the Passover-offering with others. A comment follows in *Pesahim* on the reference to one promised release from prison. “The Sages learned this only of a heathen prison, one slaughters for him separately, since he was promised, he will (definitely) be released, as it is written, ‘The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies.’” Here two different conditions are in view: the situation when Roman power operated through the criminal courts of Palestine, and that when Jews exercised that power for themselves. So the release of a prisoner on the eve of the Passover applied both to the period of Roman rule and to the earlier time when the Jews were independent, i.e., under the Hasmonean rulers. Chavel suggested that the custom in question arose in that earlier period. The Jewish ruler released a political prisoner when Jews assembled for the Passover from all parts of the land and from the diaspora to placate the people and as a gesture of goodwill that was to characterize the festal season. The Roman administration continued the custom for a similar purpose—to give a token assurance to the people that they would not be molested during the feast (Chavel: “The Releasing of a Prisoner on the Eve of Passover in Ancient Jerusalem,” *JB²²L* 60 [1941] 273–78; Str-²³B thought the association of Pes 91a likely; so also Blinzler, *Prozess*, 317–20; Barrett, 538; Schnackenburg, 3:252, strongly so; Bruce, 355). That Mark 15:8 mentions that *the crowd* asked Pilate to make a release according to custom, while John tells of *Pilate* reminding them of it is of small consequence; a request could have been made to Pilate prior to his public statement. The important matter is that in all the Gospel traditions Pilate makes the offer of releasing Jesus and the crowd ask for Barabbas.²⁴

²²*JBL Journal of Biblical Literature*

²³Str-B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, 4 vols. (Munich: Beck'sche, 1926–28)

²⁴George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 327–334.

18:28 The transfer of Jesus from [the place] of Caiaphas (the Greek here is not specific but probably refers to his palace) to the praetorium probably took place sometime during or at the end of the fourth night duty watch (the Greek is *prōi*). The transferring of Jesus to Pilate was done by the vague “they” in Greek, even though the NI²⁵V states that it was “the Jews.”

The praetorium where they led Jesus was the official headquarters, judgment seat, and command center of the military leader in an area. In the sub-province of Judea and Samaria the governor’s headquarters was normally at Caesarea Maratima (by the sea), but during festival periods, which attracted flocks of visitors to Jerusalem, the governor moved his command center to Jerusalem, either to the Antonio Fortress north and next to the Temple or to the site of Herod’s palace with its three great towers that served as part of the defense system for the Western (Jaffa) Gate. The most likely site for this stay by Pilate was not the Antonio (and the Lithostroton) but the great triple tower fortress palace.⁵²⁶⁶

In the second half of this verse the evangelist provides an ironic contrast between the Jews who were seeking Jesus’s death and their unwillingness to enter the praetorium for fear of defiling themselves lest they would not be able to eat the Passover.⁵²⁷⁷ The Mishnah *Ohol.*, 7–10 suggests that courtyards and some other outlying buildings did not always come within the definition of Gentile places where Jews would be contaminated and rendered religiously unclean. Although the laws of clean and unclean in respect to eating the Passover were complex, it seems that entering the residence of a Gentile would have been a major problem and would likely have rendered a Jew unclean for at least seven days and required the postponement of eating Passover for a month. The basic logic seems to have grown out of an interpretation of the rule of contamination from the dead in Num 19:11–13. It was widely

²⁵NIV New International Version

²⁶⁵⁶ For varying opinions see examples in R. Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 1.706–10; Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3.243; Carson, *John*, 586; etc. Emotionally I would probably be attached to the Antonio and the Sisters of Zion site, but intellectually I would have difficulty not choosing the old Herodian palace. But that phenomenon of heart and mind preferences often affects people who know Jerusalem well because “tradition” is deeply imbedded into the ancient sites. For some support of the view here see Philo, *Legatio ad Garium*, 299; and Josephus, *War*, 1.21.1; 2.14.8. For an excellent summary of the issues see P. Benoit, “Praetorium, Lithostraton and Gabbatha,” in *Jesus and the Gospels* (New York: Herder, 1973), 1.170–76.

²⁷⁵⁷ See P. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 127–28. C. Story, in attempting to make sense of the confusing dating in John, argued that Jesus had eaten the Passover meal on the Thursday but that the arresting Jewish officers had not yet eaten the meal. So, using Exod 12:10, he proposed that they had until the conclusion of the fourth night watch (6:00 a.m.) to do so, and they still had the time to eat the meal. But such an argument seems to me to stretch all logic. The issue in John is not time but their possible defilement. See C. Story, “The Bearing of Old Testament Terminology on the Johannine Chronology of the Final Passover of Jesus,” *NovT* 31 (1989): 316–24.

believed that Gentiles aborted babies in their homes and either buried them within their homes or ran them down through their sewers.⁵²⁸⁸ The uncleanness here was hardly the usual uncleanness of public encounter that could by sunset have been removed through a regular lustration or bath as an appropriate purification rite (cf. Lev 15:5–11).

18:29–30 In “delivering” or handing over Jesus to Pilate, the Jewish authorities would have been expected to provide a charge or accusation (*katēgorian*) against Jesus. The use of this term by John probably strengthens the view that the “hearing” by Annas served to provide an indictment, although it is not clear, according to John, what may have occurred with Caiaphas (but contrast the reference to Caiaphas in Matt 26:57 at the beginning of the hearing scene in that Gospel).

In Luke the earlier hearing is clearly defined as a meeting of the Sanhedrin (22:66), and the charge in that scene would be akin to blasphemy (Luke 22:70–71; cf. Matt 26:65). But then Luke says the whole Sanhedrin came over to Pilate, and there they introduced the entire situation with a shift in the charge to treasonable offenses (Luke 23:1–2).

In John the story seems to be crafted by the evangelist in stages so that the reader is engaged by the movement of the story. Pilate in this Gospel asked for the charge. The immediate response is not a statement of the charge but an accusation of Jesus being a criminal or literally “one who does evil.”

18:31 Obviously the prefect Pilate was aware of the fact that the Jews were upset, otherwise why would they disturb him at a high feast time? But John seems to picture Pilate as not wanting to get involved in a mere Jewish problem. Could Pilate have been trying to “toy” with the Jews? We know from Josephus and others that Pilate and the Jews were not on very friendly terms.⁵²⁹⁹ So Pilate tried to deflect their concern by reminding them that they were given the rights of an *ethos* during the time of Herod and that they could handle most criminal cases. Therefore his opinion was to let them follow their legal system with this apparent Jewish misfit in their society. The Jewish leaders probably expected that if the Romans had helped in Jesus’ arrest (cf. 18:3, 12) Pilate would accept any decision they would make concerning him and “rubber stamp” their views.

Accordingly, the Jewish leaders would not be put off by this dismissive attempt of Pilate. Instead, they called for dealing with Jesus by means of Roman law because their hostility against him could only be assuaged by a sentence of death. Although Barrett seems to have little regard for the historicity of the Johannine account of Pilate in relation to Roman court rules of the time, his views have been followed only by the most skeptical scholars.⁶³⁰⁰

²⁸⁵⁸ For further references see *Str-B*, 1.838–39. Cf. Beasley-Murray, *John*, 327.

²⁹⁵⁹ Pilate was appointed by Tiberius as Prefect of Judea and Samaria in A.D. 26 shortly before the death of Jesus (cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44) and frequently had difficulties with the Jewish leadership. They finally petitioned to have him removed. For further references see B. McGing, “Pontius Pilate and the Sources,” *CBQ* 53 (1991): 416–38; E. Smallwood, “The Date of the Dismissal of Pontius Pilate from Judea,” *JJS* 5 (1954): 12–21. See Josephus, *War*, 2.9.1–4 and *Ant*, 18.3.1. See also J. Blank, “Die Verhandlung vor Pilatus Joh 18, 28–29, 16 im Lichte johanneischer Theologie,” *BZ* 3 (1959): 60–81.

³⁰⁶⁰ Barrett, *St. John*, 443.

Moreover, while some have attempted to argue that the Romans gave the Jewish leadership powers to execute even Gentiles, this rule was hardly the situation in effect during the period of the prefects and procurators of Judea and Samaria.⁶³¹¹

18:32 This verse brings to a conclusion the initial encounter of Pilate with the Jewish leadership outside the praetorium. It concludes with one of the few Johannine fulfillment sayings. Although this statement could well refer to verses like John 3:14 and 12:32, where Jesus predicted that he would be lifted up, the Old Testament reference behind it, Beasley-Murray and Morris think, could easily have been Deut 21:23, where it is said that anyone who was hung on a tree would be under the curse of God.⁶³²² The idea of lifting up and hanging on a tree would obviously be interpreted in reference to the Roman punishment of crucifixion rather than the Jewish punishment of stoning.

(2) *The First Interrogation of Jesus in the Praetorium (18:33–38a)*

³³ Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

³⁴ “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?”

³⁵ “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?”

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.”

³⁷ “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.”

³⁸ “What is truth?” Pilate asked.

The direct examination of Jesus by the Roman governor focuses attention on one of the major themes of the Death Story in John: the fact that Jesus is the King of the Jews. The Johannine Death Story brings together the two ideas of this King of Jews dying as the Lamb of God.

³¹⁶¹ Josephus, *War*, 2.8.1. For a helpful review see Blinzer, *Trial*, 157–63; see also Sherwin-White, *Roman Society*, 25–39 for a strong affirmation of the Johannine understanding of the situation. For a confirmation of the death penalty in the hands of the Romans at this time see the Jerusalem Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 1.1 and 7.2. For a counterargument see Barrett, *St. John*, 445–46.

³²⁶² See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 328 and Morris, *John*, 677. Some scholars have argued that the Jews used crucifixion as a means of execution; but when Alexander Jannaeus, the Sadducee, used this means during the Hasmonean period against the Pharisees, he was severely castigated (cf. Josephus, *War*, 1.4.6), and there is no further record of such use by Jews.

18:33 All four Gospels indicate that Pilate's opening question to Jesus was: "Are you the king of the Jews?"⁶³³ So deeply imbedded into the traditions of the early church was this question that it could hardly be omitted from a legitimate canonical testimony of the Death Story of Jesus. While this question had not been noted earlier in the Jewish hearing reported by John, it must be assumed that this was in fact the charge or indictment the Jews leveled against Jesus. Such a charge was undoubtedly intended to gain the attention of the Roman governor. Messianic claims swirled around Israel in the post-Maccabean period and were only put to rest after the second Jewish uprising with the defeat of Simon Bar Kokhba (A.D. 135).

In each Gospel the question begins with the emphatic Greek *su* (you!): "Are you ...?" which suggests that Pilate could well have been astonished that Jesus was claiming such a title. Jesus hardly had an army, and he certainly had not led an uprising against the Romans as a rebel king might have been tempted to do. What kind of a king was this?

18:34–35 With v. 34 there begins an interplay of questions that reveals the genuine skill of the evangelist in presenting the story of the interrogation. Jesus parried the opening question of Pilate with his own question concerning the source of Pilate's question. A journalist learns to look behind people's questions for the reasons they are asking them. That is exactly what Jesus was doing when he questioned Pilate about the source of his question. As a result Jesus' question was not basically a question for information. It was actually a challenge concerning the basis for the interrogation.

Pilate's response indicates that as a governor, who was responsible for the "just" conduct of trials, he recognized he was being challenged by the defendant. He was disturbed by the way the interrogation was going; and he replied sharply, "Am I a Jew?" Such an idea was obviously from Pilate's point of view unthinkable.

Moreover, he countered with an additional statement of fact to the effect that Jesus' own people and leadership had "delivered" or "handed over" (*paredōkan*) Jesus to him. By now readers should be realizing that in John "handing over" is a recurrent theme that includes Judas's "betraying" (*paradidous*) of Jesus (18:5). It will conclude with Pilate "handing over" Jesus to be crucified (19:16). The progression to death involves a series of people who participate in this great conspiracy.

Finally, Pilate is forced to ask the question he should have asked at the outset of the interrogation. It is only fair to ask: Why are you here? Or, what have you done? Coming where it does in this investigation, however, it seems to be less of a genuine question of seeking the facts and more of a question of why there is so much pressure to dispose of this case.

The way the questioning proceeded, however, indicates that Pilate did not simply rubber stamp Jewish hostility. He did seek for some answer to this Jesus that might satisfy the logic of his judgment.

18:36 Pilate's statement attached to the question in the previous verse certainly warranted a response, and thus Jesus departed from countering question with question. He answered

³³⁶³ The idea of the kingship of Jesus is a major theme in the Johannine Gospel. The term is used twelve times in the Death Story, whereas it appears four times in Matthew and Mark. The expression "King of the Jews" is clearly a non-Jewish, Roman way of speaking. The Jews would have used the expression "King of Israel." Cf. Garland, "John 18–19," 489–90, 498.

Pilate's concern by introducing the concept of his kingdom. The fundamental attribute of Jesus' kingdom is that it is not derived from or out of this world. Accordingly, it would not do battle with the Romans by means of earthly weapons. Jesus' kingdom had its origin and strength external to the world, and therefore his followers would not take up arms to prevent his being "handed over." Peter's way in 18:10 was not the way of Jesus. Jesus' kingdom is not a piece of land on earth or involved in earthly power and domination. Schnackenburg argued further that *basileia* here does not even refer to kingdom but is "a designation of function ('kingship')." Thus he proposed that it should be distinguished from the concept of kingdom in John 3:3, 5 and generally in the Synoptics.⁶³⁴⁴ But Beasley-Murray is undoubtedly correct that the concept of kingdom includes kingship and the kingly reign of Jesus similar to the concept of *malkuth* in the Hebrew Bible.⁶³⁵⁵ Jesus' kingdom is directly related to the concept of the kingdom of heaven and the reign or authority of God. It is both a proleptic reality now and a future expectation yet to come in its fullness.⁶³⁶⁶ Although this kingdom does not have its source in the world, it is nonetheless active in the world. But since it is related to God, it draws its power from a source external to the world. Moreover, its task is one of transformation in the world (cf. 20:31) so that its citizens will authentically represent God or Heaven here on earth.

18:37 This answer of Jesus elicited from Pilate an ensuing reply: "You are a king, [then! or?]," which might be a statement as in the NI³⁷V or more likely a summarizing question as in the KJ³⁸V, RS³⁹V, NRS⁴⁰V, and NL⁴¹T.

Pilate's question went to the heart of John's proclamation of who Jesus is, and therefore Jesus did not parry the question. Instead, he thrust his response directly at Pilate. The response literally is: "You say that I am a king," which Dodd reshaped and interpreted as "king is your word, not mine."⁶⁴²⁷ Dodd's influence was very strong, and his rendering was followed in both the NE⁴³B and NA⁴⁴B. Newman and Nida, therefore, consider there to be "no scholarly consensus" on the meaning,⁶⁴⁵⁸ but the point is certainly clarified in Jesus' next statement.

³⁴⁶⁴ See Schnackenburg, *St. John*, 3.249.

³⁵⁶⁵ See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 330–31.

³⁶⁶⁶ For further discussion of kingdom see G. von Rad, *TDNT*, 1.565; Kuhn, *TDNT*, 1.571–74 and K. Schmidt, *TDNT*, 1.579–90. See also G. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).

³⁷NIV New International Version

³⁸KJV The King James Version

³⁹RSV Revised Standard Version

⁴⁰NRSV New Revised Standard Version

⁴¹NLT New Living Translation

⁴²⁶⁷ See Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 99. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 353–54, employs this rendering, but he clearly does not intend it to mean that Jesus was evading the question. Cf. also Morris, *John*, 680–81.

⁴³NEB New English Bible

⁴⁴NAB New American Bible

⁴⁵⁶⁸ Cf. B. Newman and E. Nida, *A Translator's Handbook on the Gospel of John* (London: United Bible Societies, 1980), 571.

There was no doubt what Jesus' answer was intended to be. He certainly was a king! Indeed, he was born to be a king, even though he was not a king in the earthly sense. But his kingship was intimately tied to his mission. His coming into the world was to be a witness or testifier to the truth.

The theme of truth is a foundational idea in John. For Jesus and for John truth is not merely some intellectual concept of correct facticity. It also involves life-oriented integrity. Accordingly, we misunderstand Johannine truth if we merely speak of the truth about Jesus or doctrinal formulations about Jesus. Jesus is himself truth as he states: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (14:6). Jesus was not proposing to give the disciples a map or "triptik" to heaven or a theological description about himself. Jesus gave them himself. There is no doubt that truth is related to ideas and matters of facticity, but Jesus' mission was to bring people to himself and to God and in the process thereby bring them to integrity of life. It is clearly possible to be academically right and theologically correct but still lack integrity in life.

Jesus' mission was to integrate truth into life. That is the reason the text here defines people who are of truth as those who hear the voice of Jesus. Hearing or obeying Jesus is not the same as affirming correct ideas. The Pharisees and legalists in Jesus' day were very precise in their theological formulations, but God was remote for them. Moreover, they schemed his crucifixion in their correctness because they missed hearing the voice of God. That can still happen today. What Jesus did in this story was confront Pilate with himself and with the genuine nature of truth.

18:38a For politically motivated people, truth is frequently sacrificed on the altar of expediency. Many politically oriented people pretend they are interested in truth. But Pilate summarizes his politically oriented life pattern with the haunting question: "What is truth?" The implications of that question are exceedingly far reaching for any person.

For Pilate that question was an attempt to resist taking Jesus' statement seriously in his own life,⁶⁴⁶⁹ but it did make an initial impact on his view of Jesus during this first interrogation session.

(3) Pilate's First Verdict and the Jewish Reaction (18:38b–40)

With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him.

³⁹ But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰ They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

⁴⁶⁶⁹ Haenchen concludes that by his question Pilate reveals that he is not one of Jesus' elect people (*John*, 2.180). He has been often referred to as a sceptic, yet E. Hirsch argued that Pilate was not the usual type of sceptic, but a clear pagan who was driven by the desire to succeed and not by inner motivations of some undisclosed power (*Das vierte Evangelium in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt* [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1936], 416).

18:38b Strategically John does not include any response on Pilate's part. Pilate has revealed himself by his question in the last exchange of 18:38a to be an advocate of expediency, just as the Jewish high priest Caiaphas had done earlier (cf. 11:49–50). Whether to outfox the Jewish leadership or because he actually believed Jesus to be innocent, Pilate developed what he thought would be a successful plan to release Jesus and dismiss the interrogation. Accordingly, he went outside the Praetorium (judgment hall) and rendered his verdict of Jesus' innocence.

Pilate probably recognized that the Jewish leaders were simply trying to use him to dispose of someone who threatened their religious prestige (cf. John 12:18–19). It is also highly unlikely that Pilate would have been uninformed about Jesus' popularity with the people. But it is also most probable that he was at that point convinced that this Jesus offered no threat to Roman political authority in that region. That was hardly the point of the Jewish leadership's concern.

18:39–40 Instead of simply dismissing the case as a good judge interested in integrity should have done following his verdict of innocence, Pilate devised a scheme using Barabbas to deal with any potential fallout he thought might occur as a result. It may be that Pilate thought he could gain popularity points with the Jewish people and at the same time score a blow against the manipulative Jewish leadership. Whatever he may have thought, it is obvious that he had not judged the situation correctly. Pilate's scheme involved giving the people a predetermined choice he thought they could not refuse. Matthew (27:15) and Mark (15:6) indicate that the governor had developed a custom of releasing a prisoner to please the crowd.⁷⁴⁷⁰ Mark indicates it was at "the feast." John here identifies the custom with Passover and indicates that it was their [Jewish?] custom, but it is difficult to know when such a custom arose or its source.⁷⁴⁸¹

So Pilate offered a choice that seemed obvious, yet even the choice contained a hook that clearly would have irritated the Jewish establishment. The choice was either to release Jesus, whom he knowingly called "the King of the Jews," or the scoundrel and thief, Barabbas.⁷⁴⁹² Mark goes further in 15:7 and identifies Barabbas as a murderer and an insurrectionist. This Barabbas was hardly the kind of person Pilate thought the Jews would desire to have loosed on their society.⁷⁵⁰³ The obvious alternative from his point of view was the healer, wonder worker, and

⁴⁷⁷⁰ A similar statement in Luke 23:17 is obviously a later insertion into the text in a harmonizing attempt to explain the cry for the release of Barabbas. Cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 179–80.

⁴⁸⁷¹ C. Chavel thought he had located the tradition in the Mishnah *Pesah*. 8.6. It may have been adopted from the post-Maccabean Hasmonean rulers, but the sources and connections in such arguments are very tenuous ("The Releasing of a Prisoner on the Eve of Passover in Ancient Jerusalem," *JBL* 60 [1941]: 273–78). Cf. also R. Merritt, "Jesus, Barabbas and the Paschal Pardon," *JBL* 104 (1985): 57–68.

⁴⁹⁷² Scholars have tried to identify Barabbas. Some have suggested he was the son of a "rabban" or esteemed rabbi. Others have proposed that his name merely is an illusive designation "son of the father," whoever that might be. R. Brown thinks that he was the son of someone named Abba (*Death of the Messiah*, 2.799–800). But we really do not know much about him.

⁵⁰⁷³ In his article on thief or robber K. Rengstorf, *TDNT*, 4.258 notes that Josephus used the term to refer to Zealots whose aim was to remove the Romans and their

prophet-type king. He must have smirked at the choice he gave to the people. But Pilate had not calculated on the scheming way in which the Jewish leadership had readied the group outside the Praetorium to answer him. Pilate's shrewd plan was undone by the leadership when the people chose the scoundrel and rejected the King.⁵¹

28. ἄγουσιν οὖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ Καϊάφα κτλ. We have in v. 24 the statement that Jesus was "sent to Caiaphas," *i.e.* to the formal meeting of the Sanhedrim, not necessarily or probably held in the house of Caiaphas, over which Caiaphas would preside. Nothing is told here of the proceedings (see on v. 13, and cf. Mk. 15:1, Mt. 27:1), which were only formal, as the decision had been already reached at the irregular meeting in the house of Annas. But as the Sanhedrim could not execute the sentence of death (see v. 31) without the sanction of the Roman authorities, they had now to bring Jesus before Pilate, that he might give the necessary orders.

ἀπὸ τοῦ Καϊάφα need not mean "from the house of Caiaphas" (cf. Mk. 5:35, Acts 16:40), but more naturally means "from Caiaphas," *i.e.* from the ecclesiastical court over which he presided. Some O.L. codices, e.g. *e ff₂ g*, etc., have *ad Caiphan*, a reading due to a misunderstanding of the sequence of events. See Introd., pp. xxvi–xxviii.

εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον. πραιτώριον signified a praetor's or general's quarters in a camp, and the word came to be used of the official residence of a governor (cf. τὸ πραιτώριον of Herod at Caesarea, Acts 23:35). It is not certain where the *praetorium* at Jerusalem, that is, Pilate's house, was situated; but it is probably to be identified with Herod's palace on the Hill of Zion in the western part of the upper city. Pilate was certainly lodged there on one occasion, for Philo (*ad Caium*, 38) reports that he hung up golden shields ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὴν ἱερόπολιν Ἡρώδου βασιλείοις. Further, Gessius Florus, who was procurator of Judaea about thirty-five years after Pilate, had at one time Herod's palace as a residence, for Josephus says so in a passage so illustrative of the Passion narratives that it must be quoted: Φλῶρος δὲ τότε μὲν ἐν τοῖς

collaborators from the land. In an oppressed society scoundrels often gain a hearing and support from people when those who are not oppressed would never give them the time of day.

⁵¹ Gerald L. Borchert, [John 12–21](#), vol. 25B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 237–245.

βασιλείοις αὐλίζεται, τῇ δ' ὑστεραία βῆμα πρὸ αὐτῶν θέμενος καθέζεται, καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ τε ἀρχιερεῖς ... παρέστησαν τῷ βήματι (*Bell. Jud.*, ii. 14, 8). And in ii. 15, 5, Josephus explicitly calls the Procurator's residence ἡ βασιλικὴ αὐλή; cf. Mk. 15:16, ἔσω τῆς αὐλῆς, ὃ ἐστὶ πραιτώριον. The mention of the βῆμα placed in full view of the high priests and the notables who came before Florus for judgment is noteworthy (cf. 19:13 below).

The other site suggested for the Prætorium is the Castle of Antonia, to the north of the Temple area, a fourth-century tradition placing Pilate's house in this neighbourhood. That a large part of the garrison lived here is admitted, but that does not favour the idea that it was the Procurator's residence. The course of the Via Dolorosa, as now shown, favours Antonia as the place of condemnation of Jesus; but there is no real authority behind this tradition.⁵²¹

πρωῖ, *i.e.* early in the morning of Friday, 14 Nisan (see on v. 27). Pilate must have known already that Roman soldiers had been sent to arrest Jesus the night before (v. 3), and he may have been warned to be ready at an early hour. The Jewish ecclesiastics who accompanied Jesus to the Prætorium did not enter ἵνα μὴ μιανθῶσιν ἀλλὰ φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα. See on 11:55. By going into a house from which the leaven had not been removed (Ex. 12:15), they would have been incapacitated from eating the Passover that evening. Ceremonial uncleanness in many cases lasted until sunset only (Lev. 11:24, 14:25, Num. 19:7, Deut. 23:11, etc.); but in the case of the Passover one who was unclean had to postpone its observance for a whole month (Num. 9:6, 11; cf. 2 Chron. 30:2, 3). This would have been inconvenient for the priests, and so they remained outside the house, Pilate having to come out to ask for the charge against Jesus, and to go back again into the Prætorium to question Him as to His defence.

For ἀλλὰ φάγωσιν (⁵³κ⁵⁴Α⁵⁵Β⁵⁶С*⁵⁷Д⁵⁸Ν⁵⁹W⁶⁰Θ), the rec. has ἀλλ' ἵνα φάγωσι. For φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα, which must mean the eating of the Passover meal itself, cf. Mk. 14:12, Mt. 26:17.

The scruple of the priests about entering the Prætorium is recorded by Jn. only. It is an instance of his "irony" (see on 1:45) that he does not comment upon it. These men were about

⁵²¹ See G. A. Smith, *Jerusalem*, ii. 573 f.; G. T. Purves in *D.B.*, s.v. "Prætorium"; Sanday, *Sacred Sites*, p. 52 f. Westcott and Swete favour Antonia.

⁵³κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

⁵⁴Α *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

⁵⁵Β *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

⁵⁶С *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

⁵⁷Д *Bezae* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

⁵⁸Ν *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (1899).

⁵⁹W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

⁶⁰Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

to pollute their souls by unscrupulous testimony which was to bring Jesus to a horrible death, yet were unwilling to incur technical or ceremonial uncleanness while giving that testimony. There is no perversion so sinister as that of the human conscience.

29. The narrative of Pilate's action in regard to Jesus is told with more fulness in Jn. than in the Synoptists (cf. Mk. 15:2f., Mt. 27:11f., Lk. 23:2f.).

ἐξῆλθεν οὖν ὁ Πειλᾶτος ἔξω. As the Jews would not enter the Prætorium, Pilate came outside. This is the force of οὖν, "therefore" ... The redundant ἐξῆλθεν ... ἔξω is for the sake of explicitness "he came out, outside"; cf. 19:4, 5 and see on 4:30. The rec. text, with ⁶¹A⁶²C³⁶³D^{supp} om. ἔξω, but ins. ⁶⁴κ⁶⁵B⁶⁶C*⁶⁷L⁶⁸N⁶⁹W.

Abbott points out (*Diat*⁷⁰. 1969) that Jn.'s habit is to introduce a personal name *without* the article; but here we have ὁ Πειλᾶτος, as at Lk. 23:1.

For φησὶν (⁷¹κ⁷²B⁷³C*⁷⁴L), the rec. has εἶπε.

Τίνα κατηγορίαν φέρετε κτλ. Pilate (see on v. 28) knew something of the case already; but it was necessary for him to be notified formally of the nature of the accusation brought against the prisoner.

⁶¹A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

⁶²C *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

⁶³D *Bezæ* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

⁶⁴κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

⁶⁵B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

⁶⁶C *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

⁶⁷L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

⁶⁸N *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (1899).

⁶⁹W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

⁷⁰*Diat.* E. A. Abbott's *Diatessarica*, including his *Johannine Vocabulary* and *Johannine Grammar*, Parts I.–X. (1900–1915).

⁷¹κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

⁷²B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

⁷³C *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

⁷⁴L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

The rec. has κατὰ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τούτου, with ⁷⁵κ^{a76}A⁷⁷C⁷⁸D^{supp79}L⁸⁰N⁸¹W⁸²Θ, but ⁸³κ* Be om. κατά. Cf. Lk. 6:7, ἵνα εὕρωσιν κατηγορίαν αὐτοῦ.

30. The Jews are not sure of their case, and so they hesitate to specify the charge in explicit terms. They say, in effect, “That is our business; we would not have brought the prisoner for sentence, if we were not satisfied with His guilt.”

Εἰ μὴ ἦν οὗτος κακὸν ποιῶν κτλ. “If this person were not doing wrong, we should not have delivered Him up to thee.” For κακὸν ποιῶν (⁸⁴κ^{c85}B⁸⁶L⁸⁷W e), the rec., with ⁸⁸A⁸⁹C³⁹⁰D^{supp91}N⁹²Γ⁹³Δ⁹⁴Θ, has κακοποιός, a word found in N.T. only in 1 Pet. 2:12, 14, 3:16,

⁷⁵κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

⁷⁶A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

⁷⁷C *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

⁷⁸D *Bezæ* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

⁷⁹L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

⁸⁰N *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (1899).

⁸¹W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

⁸²Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

⁸³κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

⁸⁴κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

⁸⁵B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

⁸⁶L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

⁸⁷W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

⁸⁸A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

⁸⁹C *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

⁹⁰D *Bezæ* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

⁹¹N *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (1899).

⁹²Γ (ε 70) Oxford and Leningrad. ix–x. Contains cc. 1:1–6:13 8:3–15:24 19:6 to end.

⁹³Δ *Sangallensis* (ε 76). St. Gall. ix–x. Græco-Latin.

⁹⁴Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

4:15. Perhaps ἦν followed by the pres. part. suggests a *habitual* evil-doer (cf. Abbott, *Diat*⁹⁵. 2277).

οὐκ ἄν σοι παρεδώκαμεν αὐτόν. σοι *may* be emphatic, “we should not have delivered Him up to *thee*” (cf. Abbott, *Diat*⁹⁶. 2566*b*). In any case, the reply of the Jews is an insolent one.

31. Pilate, however, knew how to deal with insolence of this kind: “Very well; take Him yourselves (ὑμεῖς being emphatic) and judge Him according to your own law,” an answer not unlike that of Gallio in Acts 18:14. Pilate repeats this Λάβετε αὐτόν ὑμεῖς at 19:6; throughout he is unwilling to take any responsibility, and he knows that if the Jews take over the case for final settlement, they cannot inflict the death penalty. On the other hand, if they wish *him* to send Jesus to death, they must satisfy him that their sentence was a just one.

This rejoinder disconcerts the Jewish accusers of Jesus, who are bent upon His death, although they are not sure of their legal position as regards evidence; so they can only say, “It is not lawful *for us* to put any one to death.”

This was, in fact, the law from the time that Judæa became a Roman province. The *jus gladii* was reserved to the procurator (Josephus, *B.J.* II. viii. 1). Josephus tells of a case in which the high priest had sentenced some persons to death by stoning, a sentence against which some citizens successfully protested as *ultra vires*, the high priest being deposed for his presumption (*Antt.* XX. 9. 1). No doubt, violent and highhanded action on the part of the Sanhedrim may have been occasionally winked at by the Roman authorities, for political reasons. If Jesus had been killed by the agents of the Sanhedrim before He had gained the ear of the Jerusalem populace (cf., *e.g.*, 7:1, 25), it might have been overlooked by the procurator; but the chief priests were not sure now that they had the people with them, and their only safe course was, having examined Jesus themselves, to bring Him to Pilate for sentence.

32. In this, the evangelist, as is his wont, sees the fulfilment of a saying of Jesus. If the Jews had put Jesus to death by stoning, His death by crucifixion, of which He had already spoken (12:33), would not have taken place; and stoning was the Jewish penalty for blasphemy, of which the Sanhedrim had found Him guilty. Jn. has told nothing as yet of the charge of blasphemy, and he gives no particulars of it, merely indicating at a later point in the narrative (19:7) that it was reported to Pilate (see on v. 19 above).

ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πληρωθῆ. Cf. v. 9 for the phrase ἵνα πληρωθῆ, introducing another saying of Jesus, and see *Introd.*, p. clv, for Jn.’s doctrine that the words of Jesus were predestined to fulfilment, even as the words of the O.T. Scriptures. The saying to which allusion is made here is, “I, if I be *lifted up* from the earth, etc.” (12:32, where see note). There, as here, Jn. adds the comment σημαίνων ποίω θανάτῳ ἡμελλεμν (see on 6:71 for this verb) ἀποθνήσκειν. See *Introd.*, p. clv, for the comments which Jn. is accustomed to make on his narrative; and cf. 3:14 for the predictions by Jesus of His death.

The First Examination of Jesus by Pilate (vv. 33–37)

⁹⁵*Diat.* E. A. Abbott’s *Diatessarica*, including his *Johannine Vocabulary* and *Johannine Grammar*, Parts I.–X. (1900–1915).

⁹⁶*Diat.* E. A. Abbott’s *Diatessarica*, including his *Johannine Vocabulary* and *Johannine Grammar*, Parts I.–X. (1900–1915).

33. The Roman soldiers, at this point, took charge of Jesus. Pilate retired from the open court, where he had met the Jewish leaders, and went back into his palace, summoning Jesus to come before him for private examination.

είσηλθεν οὖν εἰς τὸ πραιτώριον πάλιν. So ⁹⁷κ⁹⁸Α⁹⁹Γ¹⁰⁰Δ¹⁰¹Θ (cf. 19:9), but ¹⁰²Β¹⁰³С*¹⁰⁴Д^{supp}¹⁰⁵Л¹⁰⁶W support πάλιν εἰς τὸ πραιτ. For πάλιν, which here signifies “back” to the place where Pilate was before, see on 1:35.

For ἐφώνησεν, see on 1:48. The disciple who seems to have been present at the examination of Jesus by Annas (see on v. 15) may also have been a witness of the scene in Pilate’s palace which is here told so vividly. The priestly accusers of Jesus could not follow Him inside the house, because of their scruples about ceremonial uncleanness (v. 28); but it is not likely that admission to the chamber of inquiry was forbidden to others duly introduced who wished to hear what was going on.

Σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; This question was immediately put to Jesus by Pilate,¹⁰⁷¹ as all the evangelists tell (Mk. 15:2, Mt. 27:1, Lk. 23:3); but it is only Lk. who explains that Jesus had first been accused *to* Pilate of claiming to be a King (Lk. 23:2). Pilate fixes upon this point as one which it was necessary for him as procurator to examine, and he puts his question in a form which suggests that he expected a negative answer. “Thou! (σὺ is emphatic) art *Thou* the King of the Jews?” Evidently, Pilate did not believe that Jesus was a revolutionary leader, as he had been informed (Lk. 23:2). There was nothing in His appearance or His demeanour to make such a charge plausible.

⁹⁷κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

⁹⁸Α *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

⁹⁹Γ (ε 70) Oxford and Leningrad. ix–x. Contains cc. 1:1–6:13 8:3–15:24 19:6 to end.

¹⁰⁰Δ *Sangallensis* (ε 76). St. Gall. ix–x. Græco-Latin.

¹⁰¹Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

¹⁰²Β *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹⁰³С *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

¹⁰⁴Д *Bezæ* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

¹⁰⁵Л *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹⁰⁶W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

¹⁰⁷¹ The language in which the conversation with Pilate was carried on was probably Greek; but it is, of course, possible that Pilate was able to speak the vernacular Aramaic sufficiently for the purposes of a judicial inquiry.

34. ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς. The rec. has ἀπεκρ. αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰης., but αὐτῷ is om. by ¹⁰⁸A ¹⁰⁹B ¹¹⁰C ¹¹¹D^{supp}¹¹²L and ὁ by ¹¹³B¹¹⁴L. ἀπεκρ. Ἰησοῦς is a frequent Johannine opening (see on 1:29, but cf. v. 37 and 19:11). ¹¹⁵W¹¹⁶Θ have ἀπεκρίνατο (see on 5:17).

Ἄπὸ σεαυτοῦ is the better reading (¹¹⁷κ¹¹⁸B¹¹⁹C*¹²⁰L¹²¹N) as against the rec. Ἄφ' ἑαυτοῦ (¹²²Θ).

The answer of Jesus is to put another question, viz. whether Pilate has any reason of his own, apart from the accusation just now made by the Jewish leaders (ἢ ἄλλοι εἶπον σοι περὶ ἐμοῦ;), for supposing that Jesus had claimed to be “King of the Jews.”

35. But Pilate will not bandy words with an accused prisoner. What could he know about Jesus except what he had been told? “Am I a Jew?”

For the form of the question Μῆτι ἐγὼ ...; see on 4:29.

“Thy nation (for ἔθνος, cf. 11:48–52) and the chief priests have delivered Thee to me,” the chief priests representing the leaders of the Sanhedrim (cf. 11:57, 12:10).

τί ἐποίησας; “What did you *do*?” That was the point which Pilate wished to find out. What action of Jesus had provoked this fierce hostility? Was it an action which ought to be punished, from Pilate’s point of view, with death?

¹⁰⁸A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

¹⁰⁹B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹¹⁰C *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

¹¹¹D *Bezae* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

¹¹²L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹¹³B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹¹⁴L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹¹⁵W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

¹¹⁶Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

¹¹⁷κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

¹¹⁸B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹¹⁹C *Ephræmi* (δ 3). Paris. v. Palimpsest. Contains considerable fragments of Jn.

¹²⁰L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹²¹N *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (1899).

¹²²Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

36. But Jesus does not answer this question. He goes back to the charge that He had claimed to be “King of the Jews.” He had refused such a title already (6:15), but He had often spoken of a coming kingdom. It was the kingdom of which Daniel had written (Dan. 2:44, 7:14, 27), a spiritual kingdom of which the saints were to be citizens. And this He states before Pilate, that there may be no ambiguity in His position. When cross-examined by the priests, as the Synoptists tell, He had accepted their statement that He claimed to be Messiah (Mk. 14:62, Mt. 26:64, Lk. 22:70), and so far there was some plausibility in their accusation of Him before Pilate. But He did not interpret the title of Messiah as implying earthly domination and national leadership against the suzerainty of Rome; and this was the gravamen of the charge brought against Him, so far as Pilate was concerned. Hence He tells the procurator that His kingdom is not “of this world” (cf., for the phrase ὁ κόσμος οὗτος, 8:23, 14:30). He does not claim to be “King of the Jews” in any sense that was treasonable to Rome.

εἰ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου κτλ., “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my officers (ὑπηρέται) be striving, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews,” *i.e.* the hostile Jews, as regularly in Jn. (see on 5:10).

Except in this passage, ὑπηρέται in Jn. is always used of the Temple police, the “officers” of the Sanhedrim. ὑπηρέτης occurs only 4 times in the LXX (Prov. 14:35, Wisd. 6:4, Isa. 32:5, Dan. 3:46), and always means the minister or officer of a king, as here. Jesus tells Pilate that He, too, has His ὑπηρέται, as well as the high priests, but that just because His kingdom is of the spirit they are not defending Him by force.

Who are meant here by the ὑπηρέται of Jesus? Certainly not the small and timid company of His disciples, who made no attempt to prevent His arrest, with the sole exception of Peter, whose action only showed the uselessness of trying to resist the police and the soldiers. Jesus, indeed, according to Mt. (26:52) as well as Jn. (18:11), forbade Peter to employ force; but He did not suggest that the resort to arms by the disciples would have been of any practical use. Pilate knew very well that the followers of Jesus were not numerous enough to resist by force the carrying out of any sentence of his.

The ὑπηρέται of Jesus upon whom He might call, if He would, were mentioned by Him, according to Mt. 26:53, at the moment of His arrest: “Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and He shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?” These were the ὑπηρέται of the kingdom which Jesus had come to establish.

ἡγωνίζοντο. The verb does not occur again in Jn.; cf 1 Tim. 6:12.

νῦν δέ κτλ., “but now, as things are, my kingdom is not from hence,” *sc.* of this world. For νῦν δέ, cf. 8:40, 9:41, 15:22.

37. Οὐκοῦν βασιλεὺς εἶ σύ; Pilate fastens on this mention of Jesus’ kingdom: “Well then, are you a king?” The concluding σύ is incredulous in its emphasis: “you poor prisoner.” Οὐκοῦν is found again in the Greek Bible only in the A text of 2 Kings 5:23.

ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς. The art. is omitted, according to Jn.'s usual habit when using this phrase (see on 1:29, 50), by ¹²³L¹²⁴W¹²⁵Γ¹²⁶Δ but it must be retained here, being read by ¹²⁷κ¹²⁸A¹²⁹B¹³⁰D^{supp}¹³¹N.

Σὺ λέγεις ὅτι βασιλεύς εἰμι. Westcott-Hort note in the margin that this might be taken as a question: “Do you say that I am a king?” But the Synoptists agree in giving as the reply of Jesus to the question “Art thou the King of the Jews?” the words σὺ λέγεις (Mk. 15:2, Mt. 27:11, Lk. 23:3), which is neither a clear affirmation nor a denial, but an assent given as a concession. But cf. the answer ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι to the question of the priests, “Art thou the Son of God?” in Lk. 22:70. Here, in like manner, we must translate, “Thou sayest that I am a king.” This is the point on which Pilate has been insisting, that Jesus’ claim seemed to be one of kingship, and Jesus admits it again (cf. v. 36), but adds some explanatory words.

The R.V. margin offers the alternative rendering, “Thou sayest it, because I am a king,” but the Synoptic parallels do not support this.

It has been alleged that σὺ λέγεις or σὺ εἶπας was a Rabbinic formula of solemn affirmation (Schöttgen on Mt. 26:25), but Dalman has shown that this cannot be sustained. Where “thou hast said” appears in the Talmud, it is merely equivalent to “you are right.”¹³²¹ In any case, we have here not an ellipse such as σὺ λέγεις, with nothing added, but a complete sentence, “Thou sayest that I am a king.”

¹²³L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹²⁴W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

¹²⁵Γ (ε 70) Oxford and Leningrad. ix–x. Contains cc. 1:1–6:13 8:3–15:24 19:6 to end.

¹²⁶Δ *Sangallensis* (ε 76). St. Gall. ix–x. Græco-Latin.

¹²⁷κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

¹²⁸A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

¹²⁹B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹³⁰D *Bezae* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

¹³¹N *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in Cambridge *Texts and Studies* (1899).

¹³²¹ Cf. Dalman, *Words of Jesus*, Eng. Tr., pp. 309–312.

After εἶμι the rec. adds ἐγώ (repeating it again in the next sentence, ἐγὼ εἰς τοῦτο κτλ.) with ¹³³A ¹³⁴Γ ¹³⁵Δ ¹³⁶N ¹³⁷Θ, but ¹³⁸κ ¹³⁹Β ¹⁴⁰Ḑ ^{supp}141L omit the first ἐγώ. If it were genuine, it might carry a reference to the contemptuous σύ in Pilate's question; but the answer is more dignified, without any emphasis on the "I": "Thou sayest that I am a king."

ἐγὼ εἰς τοῦτο γεγέννημαι. Here the ἐγώ is impressive: "To this end I have been born."¹⁴²¹ See note on 1:13; and cf. Lk. 1:35 τὸ γεννώμενον ἅγιον, Jn. 16:21 ἐγεννήθη. The reference is to the Nativity, not to the Incarnation; cf. also Rom. 14:9.

καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ἐλήλυθα εἰς τὸν κόσμον, a favourite Johannine phrase, e.g. 9:39, 16:28; see on 11:27.

ἵνα μαρτυρήσω τῇ ἀληθείᾳ. Truth is one of the keywords of the Fourth Gospel (see on 1:14). It was John the Baptist's privilege to bear witness to the truth (5:33), but in a deeper and fuller measure was this the purpose of Jesus' mission. His witness to the truth was not confined to this "good confession" before Pilate (1 Tim. 6:13), but was continuous throughout His ministry (3:11, 32, 7:7, 8:14). Cf. Rev. 1:5.

πᾶς ὁ ὢν ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας (for this description of a candid mind, cf. 1 Jn. 3:19) ἀκούει μου τῆς φωνῆς, "heareth my voice," i.e. hears with appreciation and obedience, for such is the force of ἀκούειν followed by the gen. (see on 3:8). The sheep hear the voice of the Shepherd (10:16, 27); and the spiritual deafness which does not hear it is blameworthy (see on 8:47, and cf. 1 Jn. 4:6). No such claim on man's allegiance was ever made by any other master: "Every one who is of the truth heareth my voice."

Pilate Suggests to the Jews, Unavailingly, that Jesus Should Be Released (vv. 38–40)

38. Pilate is now convinced that Jesus' "kingdom" is not a temporal one, and that He is innocent of revolutionary designs. His rejoinder is perhaps wistful rather than cynical or careless: "What is truth?" But to this, the greatest of questions, he does not wait for an answer.

¹³³A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

¹³⁴Γ (ε 70) Oxford and Leningrad. ix–x. Contains cc. 1:1–6:13 8:3–15:24 19:6 to end.

¹³⁵Δ *Sangallensis* (ε 76). St. Gall. ix–x. Græco-Latin.

¹³⁶N *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (1899).

¹³⁷Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

¹³⁸κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

¹³⁹Β *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹⁴⁰Ḑ *Bezæ* (δ 5). Cambridge. v–vi. Græco-Latin. Cc. 18:14–20:13 are missing in the Greek text, and the gap has been filled by a ninth-century scribe (D^{supp}).

¹⁴¹L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹⁴²¹ The phrase is reproduced by Justin of Christ: εἰς τοῦτο γεννηθεντα (*Apol.* i. 13).

He goes outside again (πάλιν, see v. 29) to the Jews assembled in the courtyard, and roundly tells them that he can find no reason why Jesus should be put to death.

ἐγὼ οὐδεμίαν εὐρίσκω ἐν αὐτῷ αἰτίαν. This is the order of words in ¹⁴³B¹⁴⁴L, but the rec., with ¹⁴⁵κ¹⁴⁶A¹⁴⁷N¹⁴⁸W¹⁴⁹Γ¹⁵⁰Δ¹⁵¹Θ, puts αἰτίαν after οὐδεμίαν. According to Jn., Pilate says this three times to the Jewish accusers (19:4, 6); as also does Lk. 23:4, 14, 22, who has αἴτιον for αἰτίαν. The αἰτία is the *crimen*, the thing charged against the prisoner; cf. Mk. 15:26, Mt. 27:37, and see on 19:19. For this use of αἰτία, cf. Gen. 4:13, Prov. 28:17.

At this point in the narrative, Luke gives an incident unrecorded by the other evangelists (Lk. 23:7–12). He says that Pilate caught at the word “Galilæan” which had been used by the accusers of Jesus, and, anxious to evade responsibility, sent Jesus to Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, who was then at Jerusalem. According to this story, which has every mark of genuineness and which no one was likely to invent, Jesus kept silence before Herod, and having been mocked by the soldiers was sent back to Pilate. Herod was not anxious to involve himself in any question of treason against the imperial authority.

Pilate’s next effort to save Jesus, or to save himself from the shame of condemning one whom he believed to be innocent, was to appeal to a Passover custom of releasing a prisoner from custody. Of this custom we know nothing beyond what is told in the Gospels, but there is nothing improbable in the statement that it prevailed at Jerusalem. Livy tells of something similar at the Roman *Lectisternia* (Livy, v. xiii. 8), and there is an allusion to it in Dion. Halicar. (xii. 9).¹⁵²¹

39. This συνήθεια (cf. 1 Cor. 8:7, 11:16) is alluded to by the other evangelists (see Mk. 15:6, Mt. 27:15); Lk. (23:17) even makes it an ἀνάγκη.

βούλεσθε οὖν ἀπολύσω ὑμῖν τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Ἰουδαίων; Mk. 15:9 has the question in the same words, Jesus being described as “the King of the Jews” by Pilate, with a contemptuous allusion to the charge made against Him by the chief priests.

¹⁴³B *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹⁴⁴L *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹⁴⁵κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

¹⁴⁶A *Alexandrinus* (δ 4). British Museum. v. Cc. 6:50–8:52 are missing.

¹⁴⁷N *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in Cambridge *Texts and Studies* (1899).

¹⁴⁸W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

¹⁴⁹Γ (ε 70) Oxford and Leningrad. ix–x. Contains cc. 1:1–6:13 8:3–15:24 19:6 to end.

¹⁵⁰Δ *Sangallensis* (ε 76). St. Gall. ix–x. Græco-Latin.

¹⁵¹Θ *Koridethi* (ε 050). Tiflis. vii–ix. Discovered at Koridethi, in Russian territory, and edited by Beermann & Gregory (Leipzig, 1913). The text is akin to that of *fam.* 13, *fam.* 1, and the cursives 28, 565, 700 See Lake and Blake in *Harvard Theol. Review* (July 1923) and Streeter, *The Four Gospels*. Cf. also *J.T.S.* Oct. 1915, April and July 1925.

¹⁵²¹ See *E.B.* 476 for these passages.

At this stage in the narrative, Mt. 27:19 tells that a dream of Pilate's wife was reported to him, warning him not to condemn Jesus. There is nothing of this in the other Gospels, but the incident, if genuine, would fully account for Pilate's hesitancy in signing the death warrant.

40. ἐκραύγασαν (see on 11:43 for this verb) οὖν πάλιν κτλ., "Then they yelled again, etc." Jn. condenses the story; he has not told before of the wild shouts of the crowd. After πάλιν, the rec. inserts πάντες, but om. ¹⁵³κ¹⁵⁴Β¹⁵⁵Λ¹⁵⁶W. For πάλιν, ¹⁵⁷Ν substitutes πάντες.

Μὴ τοῦτον, ἀλλὰ τὸν Βαραββᾶν. Mk. 15:11 (followed by Mt. 27:20) tells that the priests had suggested this to the mob. Mt. alone says that Pilate had *offered* the alternative "Jesus, or Barabbas" (Mt. 27:17, where a famous variant gives Jesus as the name also of the robber, whose patronymic was Barabbas). Lk. 23:19, 25 says that Barabbas was an insurgent and a murderer (cf. Acts 3:14); Mk. 15:7 saying that he was an associate of such. Mt. 27:16 only says that he was a "notable" prisoner (δέσμιον ἐπίσημον), and the article here, τὸν Βαρ., would agree with this, "the well-known Barabbas."

ἦν δὲ ὁ Βαραββᾶς ληστής. Jn.'s description of him is powerful in its brevity, and provides a good illustration of his "irony" (see on 1:45). For ληστής, cf. 10:1, 8.

The release of Barabbas, which must have followed here, is not explicitly related. Probably Pilate ascended his βῆμα (cf. 19:13) to pronounce the formal sentence which would free the prisoner.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵³κ *Sinaiticus* (δ 2). Leningrad. iv.

¹⁵⁴Β *Vaticanus* (δ 1). Rome. Cent. iv.

¹⁵⁵Λ *Regius* (ε 56). Paris. viii. Cc. 15:2–20 21:15–25 are missing.

¹⁵⁶W *Freer* (ε 014). Washington. iv–vi. Discovered in Egypt in 1906. The Gospels are in the order Mt., Jn., Lk., Mk. Collation in *The Washington MS. of the Four Gospels*, by H. A. Sanders (1912).

¹⁵⁷Ν *Purpureus Petropolitanus* (ε 19). Dispersed through the libraries of Leningrad, Patmos, Rome, Vienna, and British Museum. vi. Some pages are missing. Edited by H. S. Cronin in *Cambridge Texts and Studies* (1899).

¹⁵⁸ J. H. Bernard, [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*](#), ed. Alan Hugh McNeile, *International Critical Commentary* (New York: C. Scribner' Sons, 1929), 604–614.