

## 1. Jesus Refuses to Play Politics

- a. Why does Jesus respond with "You say."
  - i. Jesus is ambiguous because any other answer to the question will be too imprecise and distant from the truth.
  - ii. Jesus is more than King of the Jews, for example, but to answer in the affirmative would limit him to the presupposition of what *they* meant by "Christ" and what Pilate meant by "King of the Jews".
    1. "King of the Jews" - what does this mean
      - a. Accusation of the Sanhedrin: Jesus is claiming to be a political leader with a political agenda to overthrow Rome.
        - i. "misleading our nation"
        - ii. How?
          1. forbidding us to pay Caesar his tribute
      - b. Look at their accusation of what "misleading Israel" was: resisting Rome!
        - i. Claiming to be a king!
        - ii. John records that they actually say, "We have no king but Caesar."
    - iii. Pilate's question, then, is not regarding Jesus' Christhood or Messiah-ship, or even the "Son of God", but rather a political question, "What is your political ambition?"
      1. The disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24) thought the same thing, "we thought he was the one to redeem Israel"
      2. "redeem" means to release from oppression or slavery
    - iv. Thus, the "King of the Jews" question is one of *political intent*, not a spiritual question.
      1. Jesus responds ambiguously.
  - b. What does "You say" mean?
    - i. First, it is not clearly an affirmative, like the NASB translates it, "It is as you say."
    - ii. Second, it is also not a negative, "That is what *you* say" as if Jesus were rejecting the claim as erroneously coming from another.
    - iii. It is ambiguously in the middle of these two, and it is a brilliant political and theological response to the question
      1. All the gospel writes record it this way, thus it is very important as to why Jesus answered such.
    - iv. There are some questions which are simply unfair and impossible to answer:
      1. "Have you stopped stealing from your employer?"
        - a. If you answer, 'yes', then it is assumed that you once were stealing from your employer.
        - b. If you answer, 'no', it implies that you are currently stealing from your employer.
      2. This is what is called a "loaded question" and it is used often in political maneuvering, whereby the person question cannot answer simply without appearing guilty.
        - a. Thus, the ambiguous responses from Jesus is more accurate than answering the presupposition of the stated question.
    - v. Jesus is unique in His rule, and His kingdom is unique, not fitting into Pilate's paradigm, thus to answer either yes or no would be misleading and inaccurate.
      1. Luke is trying to get across the unique Kingship of Jesus
      2. John shows, in his gospel, that Jesus claims that his kingdom is not of this world, and my followers are not here to fight
        - a. Thus, if Jesus answered yes, he would be claiming to raise an army to overthrow Caesar in Judea
        - b. However, he still claims to be a king with a kingdom, and if he had answered, "no" to Pilate's political question, then he would have claimed that he had no rights over political powers or rule, but simply came to create an "inner kingdom", which is also inaccurate.

- i. Jesus didn't come to just bring personal peace and happiness in your personal life.
      - ii. Jesus did come to rule over all kingdoms, and to eventually overthrow all rule and power and authority and dominion (Eph 1:21; Col 2:10)
      - iii. It is "how" he is doing this that is very different than what was expected.
    - vi. A lot of people want Jesus to be political and to overthrow political power, and a lot of people want Jesus to reject politics and just create an inner peace and inner kingdom, but Jesus won't do it. He *refuses* to do it.
  - c. Jesus Came With a Different Kind of Power
    - i. In the narrow political sense, Jesus didn't come to politically overthrow Rome.
      - 1. Luke's point is to show that Jesus has scared the Jewish leadership because they saw that he had some sense of political power over people, yet at the same time they were convinced that he had none at all
        - a. Especially now that he was arrested and beaten and before Pilate with the power of execution.
    - ii. Herod and Pilate, two of the most paranoid people of the time and were envious and distrusting of one another, refused to find Jesus guilty of political insurrection
      - 1. Neither of them cared if he claimed to be divine or to teach truth, they only cared if he posed a threat to the power structure to which they were committed
      - 2. Because they didn't feel that Jesus was a threat to their political systems (because they didn't consider him powerful in such a way), they didn't find him guilty of death
      - 3. In reality, neither of them had any problem whacking somebody whom they considered to be a threat to their power
        - a. If a family member had the means and the motive, either one of these guys would have executed them
        - b. Thus, for them to find Jesus non-threatening means that they didn't believe that he had the means or the motive to overpower them
    - iii. However, in the broader sense, Jesus is very political; he reigns over all kingdoms
      - 1. He claims that he has the authority of one who sits at the right hand of the power of God
      - 2. He claims that he is the one who receives an eternal kingdom which will never fail, etc.
      - 3. Thus, he does *claim* the power, but Herod and Pilate don't believe that he *has* the power, because he doesn't fit their view of power

## 2. Human Politics Views Power Differently Than Jesus

- a. Both Pilate and Herod viewed Jesus as worthless, small, and unthreatening to their power, because he wasn't like what they expected a king to be
  - i. When the guards went to arrest Jesus in the garden, they brought weapons of warfare
  - ii. They expected a fight, because worldly power presumes such a struggle
  - iii. Thus, when Pilate sees a beaten, weak, non-aggressive, quiet-mouthed man standing before him, he is disgusted with the claims of kingship
  - iv. When Herod sees that Jesus won't (can't?) do any "signs" for him, then he treats him with utter contempt
- b. Both rulers see Jesus as unthreatening, and therefore unworthy of death
  - i. Pilate judged that Jesus was with "no guilt" in regards to any kind of coup against Rome.
  - ii. Herod also found Jesus unworthy of death
  - iii. These were not men of integrity or justice, they felt that he was absolutely nothing of a man
    - 1. In fact, they felt contempt for him, Herod dressed him up before sending him back, mocking him as "royalty"
    - 2. Pilate put a crown of thorns on him and labeled him "King of the Jews" on the cross
- c. Human political power relies on coercion and control

- i. Politics is about, “I can get this done” and “I will stop this person” and “I can control this problem with whatever means that I have available”
  - 1. This is why the founding fathers of this country placed a checks and balances system within our governing structure
  - 2. They know that politics is power by coercion and control, and unrestrained it leads to tyranny by king or by parliament.
- ii. This is why, in the name of tolerance, our society is becoming more and more intolerant and coercive in regards to conscientious issues – it is the way worldly power works
- iii. In John’s gospel, Pilate asks if Jesus is a King, and Jesus responds with “you say” and then says, “I came to bear witness to the truth...”
  - 1. To Pilate, this “truth” speak is laughable and utterly unthreatening, because he wants to talk power and politics and coercion, not philosophy, ideas, morality, i.e. truth
- d. Human political power is self-aggrandizement
  - i. Roman politics was rooted in recognition and getting your name among the people as worthy
    - 1. We are good and they are not
  - ii. Thus, bribery and deception was commonplace in the Roman political system – lying about war exploits, political exploits, and belittling and lying about your opponents failures
    - 1. Does this sound familiar?
    - 2. Puff yourself up, minimize your weakness, maximize your opponents weaknesses, spin them, and hide his strengths
  - iii. Jesus, however, will not defend himself and he will not attack his accusers.
    - 1. He did not hold on to what he deserved, and he gave to those who did not...

### 3. Jesus Shows that Real Power is Changing People, Not Coercing Them

- a. Coercion is power to force behavioral change *against* desires for the truth
  - i. Thus, coercion and self-aggrandizement go together
  - ii. “I have the power to make you do what I want you to do”
- b. Change is power transforming the heart *to desire* the truth
  - i. Transformative power goes with humility
  - ii. How does Jesus change us from the inside out?
    - 1. “When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32)
    - 2. That is, *in His sacrifice He draws the hearts* of men.
    - 3. It is as we see His loving, merciful, atoning sacrifice *on our behalf, to rescue sinners like me*, that my heart is warmed and melted and drawn to Him as my trusted King
  - iii. Pilate and Herod don’t even understand this kind of power, nor this type of rule over the hearts of men, so they deride Jesus and think Him worthless
- c. The reality is that human politics will never touch the human heart!
  - i. Coercion and law and boundaries and letters will never warm the heart, break the pride, or renew the spirit
    - 1. The letter kills, the Spirit brings life (2 Cor 3:6)
    - 2. God writes the gospel on the tablet of the human heart, not on tablets made of stone (2 Cor 3:3)
  - ii. Law, on which politics is based, can only restrain the heart, it can never transform the heart
  - iii. Jesus came to transform the heart through His self-giving sacrifice and the pouring out of His Holy Spirit
- d. How are men changed?
  - i. Men are changed by beholding the Holy Gracious God in the face of Jesus Christ
  - ii. 2 Cor 3:18 – “we all, with unveiled face, *beholding the glory of the Lord*, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory...”
    - 1. What is this image and what is the glory of the Lord?
      - a. 2 Cor 4:4 – “...the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (2Co 4:4 ESV)

- b. 2 Cor 4:6 – “For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2Co 4:6 ESV)
    - 2. So, it is as we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that we are transformed?
  - iii. This means that the means of our transformation is the beholding, the knowledge of, Jesus – *accurate theology of God*.
    - 1. Theology is supposed to be the central work, purpose, and power of the entire Church, not just the clergy.
    - 2. The Spirit of God works to this end, to show us the glory of the character, purposes, will, and works of God *so that we might know Him and be changed into His image*.
    - 3. “You become what you behold.” – John Piper
      - a. We are all beholding something as worthy, virtuous, glorious, and what we are beholding as such is what we are becoming
      - b. The more we are theocentric, rather than anthropocentric, the more like Christ we become
- e. We Must See Jesus
  - i. The holy, powerful, authoritative Son of Man lifted up (crucified) for you, to atone *for your sins* by His holy blood; to purify you *for Himself*; because He delights in you (Psalm 18:19), and let your heart melt in humble repentance before such tender mercies.
  - ii. The risen, ruling, victorious King who delivers you from death, dishonor, and depravity and promises to fully and completely sanctify you for the presence of God and let your heart exult in the hope of the glory of God (Rom 5:2), which is Christ in you (Col 1:27)
  - iii. To be humbled by your sin; to exalt Him as your Savior; to be transformed toward the holiness without nobody will see the Lord.

Politics will never save us. Human power, law, and legislation can only restrain the human heart from doing vice, but they cannot make it virtuous. Christian, while we seek civil laws that restrain evil and promote virtuous behavior, let us not be deceived that legislation will change anyone. Let us not put our hope in political power, but if we want to see this culture transformed, it will only be by the transformation of its citizen’s hearts to desire the things of God. This is why Jesus was lifted up. This is why He was sent, and why God ordained His unjust death and suffering, that you and I might be changed. This is why His Holy Spirit was poured out, writing His law upon our hearts, resituating our desires and affections upon the truly virtuous one. So, we seek Him, to know Him, to exalt Him, to love Him, and to proclaim Christ crucified according to the providence of God as our only hope, and by proclaiming Him as lifted up, He will draw many to Himself.