

Behold Your King

The last few days had been a blur. He hadn't slept much, he caught a few winks under a tree in Gethsemane the night before, but that's it. And he was emotionally strung out as well as being physically tired. The last week had seen many highs and lows. Six days ago, he beheld his king, as Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph with the adoration of the crowd as they cheered Hosanna, Hosanna in the highest! But that was the end of the laughter and mirth.

Last night was one of confusion, anxiety, and fear. Not at all how he expected to spend the end of this Passover week. Last night at supper, Jesus again spoke plainly of betrayal and death and going away. How could Jesus be the long-awaited king if he was going to die, or go away? Yet, just as it always happened, what Jesus said came true.

While he was nodding his head trying to fight off sleep, he was suddenly more awake than he wanted to be. He heard the murmur of many voices, the stomp and clanking of many feet and armor and weapons jostling and the ominous light of a bunch of torches.

And fear won the night. As he heard the ring of steel and a scream of pain. He heard Jesus yell at Peter to put his sword away. "Shall I not drink the cup my Father has given me!" Then they took him. They bound Jesus hands and lead him off. He was supposed to be the king! He was supposed to be the anointed one! And so fear won the night as all at once the disciples turned and fled.

But John, may have been one of the youngest, but certainly not the least courageous or faithful. He must have gathered his wits more quickly than his brothers. He must have realized quicker than the rest – I have followed my king for three years and he has never let me down. He is the Christ! The Messiah! The anointed one, king David's heir, the rightful king of all Israel. He's not only my king, but my dearest and closest friend. And now, he gets taken how can I abandon him now? No matter what, all fear, and anxiety or confusion aside – I have to know the truth about Jesus – the Christ, the King.

And so again, John followed his king, not leading soldiers to battle, but being led by soldiers. First to the high priest Annas, and a sham of a trial in front of the Jewish leaders. If he is the king, how can he stand for this? Then they made for the Roman Praetorium or judgment hall. They were going to see Pilate, the Roman governor!

And then Pilate came out, looking every bit a leader, surrounded by his guard. And the Jewish leaders presented Jesus. They said things like, "He claims to be a king – there is no king but Caesar. He is stirring up a rebellion against you and Rome, Pilate. He opposes the paying of taxes to the Roman Government!"

John probably couldn't believe his ears. The last thing was a flat out lie. The Pharisees saying there is no king but Caesar? The pharisees saying that Jesus was the one stirring up the rebellion??? What? It was the pharisees and zealous Jews who hated the Romans with a passion! It was they who opposed the paying of taxes, it was they who spoke of rebellion against Rome! Come to think of it, Jesus had never said such things. And these Jewish leaders who hated their Roman overlords were now feigning loyalty!

And to top it all off, Pilate has Jesus brought into the Judgment hall, and the Jews don't follow! Why? Because it would've made them ceremonially unclean. If they were so cozy with Rome all of a sudden, and this Jesus such a heinous criminal as they claimed then why didn't they follow??? When the judgment hall was a public place.

Anyway, John didn't care. This was his friend, he had to see what would become of his king. Ceremonial uncleanness was the farthest thing from his mind right now. Jew or not, his friend, his king was seemingly in trouble.

See, John and the other disciples had known that there was going to be a confrontation between Jesus and Rome at some point. They had hoped that they would behold him riding into battle against Rome, banners unfurled. Peter tried to make it happen the other night when he cut off the ear of the High Priests ear, but Jesus rebuked him!

And now this, Israel's hope, Israel's king is standing before Pilate – the Roman governor. John tired as he was, paid careful attention to what was happening.

Was all lost? There stood Jesus. He didn't look like a king. He looked exhausted. He bore all the signs of a full night of mistreatment. He was beaten and bruised. One could hardly say, "BEHOLD THE KING." So, Pilate asks him sarcastically, ***"Are you the king of the Jews?"***

And do you think that John didn't wonder, if he wasn't pleading in his heart. "Lord break forth in all your glory!" You could crush Pilate! You could heal your own wounds. You could take this palace and make it yours! Send down 10,000 legions of Angels! Why don't you show your power like you did on the mountain. Where your clothes and hair were white, where God the Father spoke from Heaven, when Moses and Elijah appeared with you! Come on Jesus! Make your self known! Once and for all, and leave no doubt in the minds of the Romans and the Jews or anyone else in the world that YOU are the king. I'm sick of all the godlessness, and hypocrisy and doubters and naysayers in this country! Show them Lord, make them BEHOLD THE KING. I would fight for you, like Peter tried to!!! Show them! Prove me right!

Then Jesus says, ***"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place."***

From another place. And the memories of what Jesus said at the last supper the night before come flooding back to John.

I am going to him who sent me.

In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.

Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices.

Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.

From another place. And that place is heaven. It's not just a different location, but the weapons of the world will not avail. An earthly victory carved out in blood, is no victory for the heavenly kingdom. Real truth, standing up for God's truth, the Gospel truth, cannot be delivered by the end of a blade. Rather, it's delivered by humility. It might mean being persecuted or killed for it.

This must have been a hard fact to swallow for John. Everything his Lord, his friend, his king said was true and came true and now he was standing for the truth of what he came to do. As Jesus said to Pilate here:

"The reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

In few short hours, John would behold his king testify to the ultimate truth. When the world would behold it's king, not in glory but nailed to a cross. And the truth is, Jesus is not the king the world wanted. The pharisees accused and the Romans killed him. John doubted and fled from him. Peter in weakness denied him. Judas betrayed him. Jesus is not the king the world wanted.

The truth is Jesus is the king the world needed. To save us from the real enemy, not the Pharisees, not the Romans, not the doubters and the naysayers, not even the Godless people of the world – but Satan, the father of lies. He's the one who'd have us all see a child in a manger in Bethlehem and say, "That's a king?" He's the one who'd have us see a brutal death on the cross and say, "That's the victory of your king?" He's the one who'd make us look at the world and see naysayers and the godless and say, "Is your great king ever coming back?"

See, St. John beheld the king in humility, he saw the king bloody and beaten. He had the same doubts and struggles that you and I have. But before John left this world, he also saw the king in glory and he records it for us. When John himself was beaten, and exiled as an old man stuck on an Island by himself. In the book of Revelation John records this:

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, ¹³ and among the lamp stands was someone like a son of man, ^[d] dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a

golden sash around his chest. ¹⁴ The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. ¹⁵ His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

¹⁷ When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. ¹⁸ I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!

This is the same Jesus who John saw in humility, now in Glory! We will behold the king. He is the sun that goes not down. Though he was humbled for our sake, he was killed but now he lives forever. This is the Jesus that you and I will behold. Amen