

A King in Court

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[0 : 00] Now though, let's turn to Mark's Gospel, Mark chapter 15. And we're going to read Mark chapter 15, verses 1 to 20.

1 to 20. Beginning verse 1.

And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate.

And Pilate asked, are you the king of the Jews? And he answered him, you have said so. And the chief priests accused him of many things.

And Pilate again asked him, have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you. But Jesus made no further answer. So that Pilate was amazed.

[1 : 09] Now at the feast, he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. And among the rebels in prison who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas.

And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. And he answered them saying, do you want me to release for you the king? The king of the Jews?

For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas instead. And Pilate again said to them, then what shall I do with a man you call the king of the Jews?

And they cried out, crucify him. And Pilate said to them, why? What evil has he done? But they shouted all the more, crucify him.

So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas. And having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

[2 : 10] And the soldiers led him away inside the palace. That is the governor's headquarters. And they called together the whole battalion. And they clothed him in a purple robe. And twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him.

And they began to salute him, hail, king of the Jews. And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him. And kneeling down in homage to him. And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak.

And put his clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. Amen. This is God's word. Do turn up Matthew chapter 15 in your Bibles again.

And as you do that, let me pray. Father, we thank you that we can join together and sing and praise and rejoice in the cross of the Lord Jesus.

And so as we turn to your word to think about what it means, we do ask that you would help us to understand, but much more than to understand, to respond with our whole hearts to Jesus as our king.

[3 : 23] For it's in his name we pray. Amen. Amen. We live in an age of trial by public opinion. Somebody, often some sort of celebrity or public figure, says something that disagrees with a commonly held value.

And suddenly Twitter and the internet are full of attacks. And said celebrity is falling over themselves to find some way to apologize, or to correct, or to bring understanding as to why they could possibly have said what was so wrong.

Who cares about the facts? The baying public mob have spoken. Well, if you look around at that sort of thing nowadays and cringe, well, Mark records for us a similarly justice-less trial at the end of his gospel.

Mark begins his gospel by saying that this is the good news, the gospel of Jesus the Christ. Christ. And that title, Christ, is hugely significant for what Mark is wanting his readers to see.

The term Christ finds its meaning in the Old Testament, and it means the one whom God would bring to be the greater king in the line of King David. And this king in David's line would be the one who would rescue God's people.

[4 : 43] That's what that title means. So right from the beginning of Mark's gospel, he is setting Jesus up as a kingly figure. And in chapter 1, Mark tells us that the time has come.

The kingdom of God is at hand. It's near. But it's only now in chapter 15 that Mark really brings home that that has now truly arrived as Jesus is crucified.

A phrase that's not really used throughout Mark's gospel, even though it's about the kingdom coming, is repeated again and again in this chapter. King of the Jews. King of Israel.

Six times in this chapter, and not much before it. Mark wants us to be clear on just who Jesus is. And he makes clear in Jesus' trial that Jesus is the king.

We see that firstly in verses 1 to 5. Jesus is charged for being the king. Jesus is charged. The corrupt people of the world put Jesus on trial to question his identity.

[5 : 50] And today, just like then, people want to sit in judgment on Jesus. Instead of realizing that he is the king. Look at verse 1. The religious leaders of the day have finished their trial of Jesus.

And now, in order for their plan to succeed, they need to get the political leader of the day to sign off on their judgment. So Jesus is bound. And he's taken off to his trial before Pilate.

But the trial follows the exact same pattern as what happened before when Jesus was before the religious leaders. Look at verses 3 and 4. And the chief priests accused him of many things.

And Pilate again asked him, Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you. But he made no answer. And Pilate was amazed. There are all kinds of charges brought against Jesus.

The religious leaders accuse him of many things. They're trying to throw as much mud at him as possible. And they hope that some of it would stick. But look at Jesus' response. Verse 5. He says nothing.

[7 : 00] No defense against all these allegations. Jesus just lets them stick. Pilate's amazed. He can't believe it. He can see very well that this man is not guilty of what's being claimed of him.

Verse 14 tells us that. He can see that Jesus has done no evil. Jesus doesn't answer the charges even though he's innocent. This is just like in chapter 14.

Turn back a page to chapter 14. Verse 55. This is his previous trial in front of the Jews this time. The religious leaders.

And notice the similarities here. From verse 55. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death. But they found none.

For many bore false witness against him. And their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him saying, We heard him say, I'll destroy the temple.

[8 : 00] That is made with hands. And in three days I'll build another. Not made with hands. Yet even about this. Their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst.

And asked Jesus. Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? Look at all these charges that are against you.

What do you say? Verse 61. He made no answer. He's silent. Just like in chapter 15.

But then look at the next question in verse 61. The chief priest then asks. Are you the Christ? The son of the blessed. Are you the king? Are you the savior in David's line?

Then Jesus does answer. Look at verse 62. I am. Now turn back to chapter 15. Chapter 15 verse 2.

[8 : 57] Similarities again. Are you the king of the Jews? Are you the king? Jesus answers that question. As you have said. Notice what Mark is showing us.

Jesus' only responses in his trial. Are to his identity as king. That's what he's on trial for. But he doesn't look like a king. Does he? He's brought in bound.

He's beaten up. He's bruised. You can almost hear the confusion. And Pilate's question. Are you the king of the Jews? Really? Jesus wouldn't have looked like any threat.

Whatsoever to Pilate and to Rome. The Jews had to convince Pilate that he was. They were powerless to actually punish Jesus. As they wanted. They had to convince Pilate.

That he was a threat. That he was a traitor. That he was a king. So that they would execute him. A rebel king who was a threat to their power. But he doesn't look like it in this world's eyes.

[9 : 58] Mark wants us to see clearly that the time has come. Jesus the king is here. His kingdom is now at hand in this event. This event that's unfolding.

Sham trial or not. Despite its lowly and weak looking nature. This event. Is a hugely significant one. God's kingdom was arriving.

And it wasn't a kingdom that belongs to this world. Or looks like the kingdoms of this world. And so as we've begun to see that Jesus is being identified as the king.

That's what he's being charged with. We move on and Mark shows us that he's not just charged with it. He's convicted. Jesus becomes a convict. Verses 6 to 15. Jesus is the convict.

Jesus takes the place here of one who has done the wrong. That Jesus is accused of. There are two choices laid out in this section. Two people to choose between.

[10:57] Pilate gives them the option of having one criminal released. Verse 6. So would it be Jesus? The one to whom all the Old Testament prophecies point.

Jesus the one in whom no obvious wrong was found. Jesus the scarcely believable picture of a king or a leader. Or would it be Barabbas? Barabbas the criminal.

Barabbas the murderer. Barabbas notice. Verse 7. Who was guilty of insurrection. Of rebellion. Against Rome.

The thing that the Jews were trying to get Jesus killed for. Was challenging the authority of Rome. He was a rebel king. They had to try and prove that Jesus was a threat to Roman rule.

But notice Barabbas. Barabbas is the one who was actually a threat. He was already involved in an uprising. He was prepared to use brutal force. Prepared to kill.

[11:57] Barabbas was like a king in this world's eyes. He was prepared to fight and kill to seize power. But here was Jesus beside him.

The one who was prepared to die. To usher in God's kingdom in God's way. To the point that he wouldn't even answer the charges against him.

Mark is putting these two side by side. The savior that the religious leaders were looking for was not someone like Jesus. They would much rather a worldly revolutionary.

A worldly leader like Barabbas. Who tries to achieve things in a worldly way. Jesus the obviously innocent one. Who wouldn't even open his mouth to defend himself against Barabbas.

The man who would fight and kill to overthrow Rome. A choice between two men. And the criminal is chosen as the one to walk free.

[12:54] The true king on the other hand. Jesus. The innocent one. Is made into the convict. And so Jesus at this point in Mark's gospel.

Has been rejected by the religious leaders. Verse 1. In his trial in chapter 14 as well. We see that. He's now rejected by Pilate. He's already been rejected by his own disciples as well.

But here with Pilate. Pilate's shrewd enough to know that something is at play here. That isn't quite straightforward. Verse 10. He can see that the chief priests had it in for Jesus.

They were acting here out of envy. And so Pilate tries in some ways to get Jesus off from this. He finds a way out with this offer. Well you can choose. Maybe you can let Jesus go.

But when he sees that that will only bring trouble. He loses interest in pursuing justice. He reaches the point of rejecting Jesus. Because the crowd reject Jesus. Back in chapter 12.

[13:55] The religious leaders were seeking to arrest Jesus. To capture him. But they put it off. Because of the crowd. Chapter 14.

They were plotting to kill Jesus. But again they put it off. Because of the crowd. Both times the delay. Both times because they feared the crowd. But now the crowd have turned against Jesus too.

The world was against him. The world didn't want him as king. So all people. All religious leaders. All political leaders. The masses. Even his own disciples have abandoned him at this point.

What kind of king is that? And the crowds when faced with the choice between Barabbas and Jesus. All they can shout is crucify Jesus. Crucify him. And that's what's to happen.

But Mark isn't yet finished. He introduces Jesus overtly as the king at the start of this chapter. That's what he's charged with. That's what this whole trial is about. But finally Mark shows us Jesus being crowned.

[14:58] Jesus is crowned verses 16 to 20. He's crowned as king. In these verses Mark shows us a coronation. And the kind of coronation it is. Tells us the kind of king that Jesus is.

Jesus didn't look like a king to Pilate. Pilate could see that he wasn't a threat to Rome like others who'd rebelled. Pilate could see that it was from envy that the chief priests were condemning Jesus.

So he could see in some way that Jesus was perhaps a leader that they're envious of. But he wasn't a leader in this world's eyes that was going to do anything. And so his coronation is not a coronation like this world's coronations.

Look at verses 16 to 19. Six times in just these four verses Mark uses kingly phrases to describe what's happening. This isn't an accident. Mark is continuing to make his point clear.

Jesus is king and his kingdom is now at hand. Look at verse 16. Jesus has led away to a palace. Notice the little brackets beside it.

[16:05] It's actually the governor's headquarters. That's probably how it was better known. But Mark is making clear that for now, of all the things that could be called, it's a palace. Because the king is here to be crowned.

And that happens in a palace. Verse 16 again. Look who else is present. There's a battalion of troops. The army is there too, like any royal affair.

Verse 17. Mark moves us further into the ceremony. The king is given his purple regal robe. They're dressing him for the occasion. Then verse 17 again.

He gets his crown. Verse 18. There's the grand salute. He's healed as king. Verse 19. The gathered crowd kneel down to him. They pay homage to him as king.

Mark is wanting to make this as clear as possible. This is the coronation of Jesus. And the irony that Mark uses here is no mistake.

[17:07] Jesus is the king that has been misunderstood. That has been opposed throughout his whole earthly ministry. And he's now the king who's going to be killed. Just as his own disciples have struggled to understand who he truly is.

What he's come to do. Just as the religious leaders have struggled to understand who he is. So now the government. They don't get it either. But here Mark is displaying Jesus as he truly is. He's shown to us as the king. But look at verse 20. How appropriate is it that he's stripped of the purple robe? Because he isn't like the kings of this world.

That's not the kind of king he is. And Mark's point is seen at its clearest. As Jesus ascends to his throne. This little paragraph of coronation finishes with the only thing that Jesus hasn't done in his coronation.

He hasn't taken to his throne yet. And so verse 20 we see it happen. He's led out to be crucified. Jesus' throne is a cross.

[18:17] His crown wasn't a golden one. It was one that spilled his blood. That's the kind of king that Jesus is. But Mark uses more than just kingly language here to show us Jesus and what he's like.

Layered underneath this passage is another Old Testament passage. That brings into focus just what Jesus was achieving. You see these events came as no surprise to Jesus.

He made no response to the charges because he knew that this was to be his death. He told his disciples three times already. He was going to be handed over to death. Jesus even said it would be at the hands of the chief priests.

Be the hands of the men. The people. The crowds. And it would be at the hands of the Gentiles. He's handed over by the chief priests. He called it exactly as it would happen.

He'd set his gaze to this point. Barabbas would kill to rescue his people from Rome. Jesus would die to rescue his people from all that's evil and to bring them into a better kingdom than Rome.

[19:27] And so the passage that's layered underneath this passage by Mark is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53. Isaiah tells us that this suffering servant was oppressed and he was afflicted.

Yet he opened not his mouth. Silent. Just like Jesus here. Isaiah tells us that his appearance was marred.

Disfigured. Just like Jesus would have been having been scourged. Verse 15. Or had all those thorns pierced in his head. Isaiah tells us that this suffering servant was despised and rejected by men.

He was esteemed not. Well isn't that the picture of all that's happening in this chapter? And Isaiah tells us that this servant who would come like this would be pierced for our transgressions.

Jesus' hands and feet were pierced with nails just as anyone would be who was crucified. Jesus is the king who came to serve his people.

[20:31] By dying for sin. That's the kind of king that he is. The final irony here is that the chief priests orchestrating all of these events. The who's who would be responsible for making sacrifices

for the people.

It is they who lead Jesus like a lamb to slaughter. Jesus has already said to himself that he must die as a ransom for many.

He said his blood which is the blood of the covenant was to be poured out for many. Well listen to Isaiah's words. He says this. This servant will make many righteous.

He shall bear their iniquities. The servant bore the sin of many. This week Christians all around the world celebrate these events in Jesus' life.

Not because we're sick and we enjoy brutal death. But because as Mark shows us these. They're the actions of God's king. And there is actions to deal with the sin of any who would have him as king.

[21 : 42] Jesus is the king who gladly takes upon himself the punishment of sin that is deserved by everyone but him. With Barabbas in this passage we also see how substitution works.

Jesus is the king who swaps place for the guilty. Jesus is the one who steps into the judgment that allows the guilty to go free. The innocent swapped for the guilty.

Barabbas is freed from his sentence. Freed from all that he deserved. And instead the innocent one. Jesus takes his place. And because Jesus was charged.

And because he was convicted. And because he was crowned as king. And because he took his place on his throne. The cross. Any one of us.

Can enjoy this great substitution. Any one of us can be part of the many. Who have their sin borne. For them by Jesus. Mark wants us to know that Jesus is the king.

[22 : 51] His kingdom has arrived. We can enter that kingdom with the king. Because Jesus embraced his crown. And ascended to his throne.

Because of this we can enjoy all that his kingdom means. We can be forgiven for anything. Anything that we've done. Nothing too awful.

Nothing too shameful. All of it. Put on Jesus' perfect. Pure head. All of it taken. By our king.

All we have to do. Is give up our autonomy. All we have to do. Is see that Jesus is the king. That he is our king. If we want to rule our own lives.

As we see fit. That will only lead to brokenness. Brokenness. In this world between humanity. And brokenness. And brokenness between humanity and God. But with Jesus as king.

[23 : 55] We have a king who has given up his own life. To offer a very real rescue to us. A rescue that outweighs freedom from Rome. A rescue that brings forgiveness.

For all that we have done. And if everyone's honest with themselves. We know we haven't lived as we should. We know we've done something to hurt other people.

We know we've done things that are wrong. But Jesus offers a way out. A rescue that brings hope that all evil will be destroyed.

And so Pilate asks the key question. Are you Jesus? The king of the Jews?

Is Jesus your king? Amen. Let's pray. Father we thank you.

[24 : 59] That we have a king. Who would go to the lengths that no one else would. And no one else could. Giving his life. His perfect life.

To rescue us. And so every part of us that would long to be a king. Of our own lives. Would you flatten by this truth.

So that we would gladly. Bow our knees. To king Jesus. And so welcome him as our savior. For we pray it in Jesus name.

Amen. Now may the grace. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God the Father. And the fellowship. Of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[26 : 03] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. John. Amen.