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## KINGDOMS IN CONFLICT

Jesus Christ stands before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. But it's not about one man. It's an epic clash of kingdoms. Worldly vs spiritual. Darkness vs light. Truth vs lies. The scene unfolds from John 18:28 as scrupulous religious hypocrites refuse to enter Roman headquarters so they can remain ritually un-defiled to observe Passover. Yet in their travesty of justice, they deliver the Passover Lamb who pays the sins of the world - Jesus, who had prophesied crucifixion, a penalty administered only by Rome.

Pilate follows protocol. Tipped off about a troublemaker, he provided troops to arrest Him. But now they offer no specific charges, simply saying this evildoer deserves death. Pilate and the Jewish leaders despise and distrust one another. He refuses to simply acquiesce to their demands. He asks "*Are You the king of the Jews?*" Jesus then declares three defining characteristics about His kingdom.

**1- Jesus' kingdom TRANSCENDS the world.** "*My kingdom is not of this world.*" It is not defined nor defended by worldly means, or else His followers would be at war. Jesus rejects jihad. He explains in John 3 "*Truly truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*" You are naturally born into the natural world, but His kingdom is spiritual. YOU must be re-born from above by the Holy Spirit. God's regeneration brings spiritual life to a soul dead in sins.

**2- Jesus' kingdom testifies about TRUTH.** "*For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world - to bear witness to the truth.*" Jesus IS pre-incarnate Truth, the Word, who created this world now in rebellion to Him. Striving and writhing in the darkness of sin, worldly kingdoms thrive on lies. But He came to set people free. He bears witness to Himself as Truth in three ways. Incarnation - God becoming man; Manifestation - His words and works reveal God; and Glorification - His crucifixion-resurrection-ascension, which accomplishes redemption for His people. Jesus IS the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth. HE is the Way, the Truth, the Life. HE is the King of Kings.

**3- Jesus' kingdom TRANSFORMS the world.** "*Everyone who is of the truth listens to My voice.*" At Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, God said "*This is My beloved Son, listen to HIM.*" His sheep hear His voice and follow Him. They believe His testimony of truth, come to His light, depart the darkness, and receive His eternal life. Jesus invites Pilate to align himself with eternal Truth - true for all people in all places and all times. But he scoffs, preferring earthly obfuscation. Pilate chooses to follow lies of the world, flesh, and devil - and so proves not to be among those the Father has given to the Son.

Pilate declares "*I find no guilt in Him.*" Jesus is just a victim of a vicious Sanhedrin plot, without basis for capital punishment. But they demand the rebel Barabbas, a murdering terrorist, a real threat to Rome. Pilate notes the wicked irony. He has Jesus flogged, hoping to satisfy the crowd and free an innocent.

The soldiers crown Him with thorns and a purple robe, striking, mocking "*King of the Jews.*" Again Pilate proclaims "*I find no guilt in Him. Ecce homo, behold the man.*" Indeed, Jesus IS the perfect man, without sin. Displaying the glory of God in His disgraceful suffering. Pouring out God's grace to you. The people cry "*Crucify Him!*" Pilate is disgusted. They ask for his judgment but refuse to accept it.

"*He made Himself the Son of God*" they charge. Now Pilate is even more afraid, since 'god-man' is in the Greco-Roman worldview. But Jesus says he would have no authority unless granted from heaven. God even works through human sinful actions to accomplish His eternal purposes. Then the accusers play a political card that trumps Pilate's options. "*Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar.*" The crowd demands "*Crucify Him!*" The chief priests cry "*We have no king but Caesar.*"

**Their condemnation is complete.** They deny God as King of Israel, and reject His Messiah. This results in complete destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 - the loss of all they're trying to save, including their souls. Choosing the world, the infuriated crowd rejects God's heavenly kingdom. John 19:16 "*so Pilate delivered Jesus over to them to be crucified.*" So God's Truth can make atonement for the sins of the world.

Jesus "*overcomes the world*" by His death and resurrection. If you receive Jesus' sacrifice for you, 1John 5:4 is true of you, "*Everyone born of God overcomes the world.*" The transcending Truth of the King of Kings transforms the world - one life at a time, through all who believe. YOU too? Only if you choose Christ, declaring "*I have no king but Jesus!*" now and forever, *Amen!*