

More Than a Baby

The King

John 18:33-38a

December 22, 2019 am

HDBC

Some numeric designations are tossed around so casually that we may not realize just how different they are. For example . . . **It may seem that there is little difference between a million, a billion and a trillion. But there is.**

1 million seconds – 11 days ago **1 billion seconds** – 31.5 years ago
1 trillion seconds – 317 centuries ago.

Our limited perception sometimes causes us to miss reality. **At Christmas** we celebrate His birth and His infancy. This is proper. But it brings with it the danger of seeing Jesus only as a baby. He was so much more than a baby.

The Light who came into a dark world to overcome ignorance and evil.

The Savior who came the world to save sinners.

The King who came to introduce the Kingdom of God.

This morning we look at a text that is not normally associated with Christmas. A conversation between Pilate and Jesus that occurred only hours before His death, but which revealed so much about His birth. Pilate was trying to get Jesus to say something that would warrant the death penalty.

I almost pity Pilate. He's trying to outwit Jesus! He tried in vain to find a reason to sentence Jesus to death but could not. And he tried in vain to avoid personal responsibility for sending Him to the cross. But he did not.

Read John 18:33-38a

The Two People in the Conversation:

1. **Fearful Seeker**

Pilate was a seeker, as evidenced by his questions. But he was a fearful seeker, as evidenced by his actions. Afraid of the truth. **To quote Colonel Jessup in *A Few Good Men*, he couldn't handle the truth!**

A. Pilate's Questions

1) ***Are You King of the Jews? (33)***

Those who wanted Jesus dead had formulated their charges against Him; sedition and rebellion. Pilate knew this as he asked Jesus. *Are you king of the Jews?*

In essence he wanted to know how Jesus would plead? Guilty? Or Not guilty? Pilate wanted to know if Jesus truly made this claim. Were the accusations true? I love the answer of Jesus. I will discuss it in a few moments.

2) ***What Have You Done? (35)***

After the response, Pilate got a little snippy! *I'm not a Jew! Your own people brought you to me. Now, what have you done?*

Pilate was simply rephrasing his original question. He was giving the Lord an opportunity to give His side of the story. **I can only imagine** how Jesus must have grinned on the inside and bitten his lip to keep from answering that question in a more comprehensive way. ***What have you done?***

I created the heavens and the earth and made man.
I've kept the laws of nature working in the universe.
I caused a flood to destroy the earth, saving Noah.
I met Joshua on the plains of Jericho.
I saved Daniel from the jaws of hungry lions.
I turned Nebuchadnezzar into a madman because of his pride.

WHAT I HAVE DONE???

I left Heaven to become like you.
I healed the sick and raised the dead.
I've upset the status quo.
I've walked on water.
I turned water into wine.
I've changed the world.

Jesus resisted the temptation to say all of that, choosing instead to return to the original question. We'll see his answer in a moment.

3) *Are You a King? (37)*

Subtle difference in this question. This time he did not ask if Jesus claimed to be king of the Jews, but was He a king, period. This was in response to Jesus' response in which He identified His kingdom as being beyond this earth.

4) *What is Truth? (38)*

Last question of Pilate? This is a great question. But it betrays his inability or unwillingness to see the truth. THE TRUTH was standing right in front of him, but his eyes were blinded. Great question but is futile unless you are willing to accept the truth.

Those great questions for any seeker. But the questions will be futile unless the right actions follow. Pilate's actions demonstrate that he was unwilling to respond properly to the truth he had just discovered. His fearfully led him away from Christ, rather than toward Christ.

B. Pilate's Actions

1) *Abused the Lord*

He had the Lord Jesus scourged. Degrading, humiliating, and unmercifully painful.

2) *Crucified the Lord*

He ultimately caved in to the pressure around him and sentenced Jesus to be crucified. He knew what he should do but chose to do just the opposite.

2. Powerful King

A. A Statement About Pilate (34)

In answer to Pilate's first question, notice what Jesus did. He answered Pilate's question with a question of his own. *Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about me?*

This was not an attempt to get information, for Jesus knows all things. This was a challenge to Pilate. **Jesus was exposing** Pilate's heart. Jesus wanted Pilate to look inside to see whether the question was a genuine attempt to know the truth, or was he simply mouthing the words of others? ***Is there a real thirst in your heart and soul? Do you really want to know the truth?***

I would ask you the same thing this Christmas season. As you consider the meaning of the season will you simply be following the lead of others or is there truly a hunger to know the Savior.

B. A Statement about His Kingdom (36)

Notice second, that Jesus makes a statement about His kingdom. Jesus declared to Pilate and the world that His kingdom was unlike any kingdom they had seen or could imagine. It was not an earthly kingdom. Could not be measured in miles, money, armies or prestige.

His is a spiritual kingdom. It supersedes time and space. His death would not be the end of His kingdom because it was not a physical kingdom. Transcends physical life and death. It is "other-worldly."

C. A Statement about His Birth (37b)

Note two things:

1) The Uniqueness of His Birth

It was unlike the birth of any other.

For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world. This statement is carefully worded. Two statements. One speaks of his entrance into humanity and the other his eternal personhood. **Birth** speaks of the beginning of something new. He became what He had never been. He had never been fully human until the incarnation. **Come** reminds us that prior to His birth this one who has existed for all eternity chose not only to relocate for a season, but to become something He had never been. His **coming** reveals the fact that he already existed.

Last night I met my newest grandson, Noah Johnny Oliver. He was born October 1. Because he has been made in the image of God he has an eternal soul, which means he will live beyond this life. But there was a time when he did not exist, except in the mind of God.

It is right to speak of Jesus leaving Heaven to come to us, for He already existed in Heaven. We don't say that about anyone else. It reminds me of the prophet Isaiah . . .

*A child will be born to us . . . a son will be given.
A child is born. Jesus had never been a child.
A son if given. You give what you already have.*

Listen to the words of Jesus in John 8:56-59.

Your father Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day; he saw it and was glad.' They Jews then said to Him, 'You are not fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?' Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.' So they took up stones to throw at him . . .

The theological word for the mystery of Jesus' humanity is **incarnation**, not **creation**. **His birth** did not signal the beginning of a new person. It signaled the addition of a new nature, the nature of humanity without corrupting his eternal nature as God.

2) **The Purpose of His Birth**

Why did Jesus come into the world? Why was He born? He gives us the reason in this text. That He might bear witness to the truth. What truth? That He is the King of an eternal kingdom that transcends this physical world.

When Pilate looked at Jesus they saw the king of a kingdom that was unwilling to acknowledge. He had every opportunity to know the truth, not simply intellectually, but relationally. Why could he not see it? Maybe he did . . . but was unwilling to lay down his own power, prestige and position and yield to Jesus. Maybe

that's why we see the frustration in him as he tried desperately to release Jesus . . . and when that was unsuccessful to reject personal responsibility for his actions.

Jesus was saying to Pilate, "look at me. I am the truth about life and death. I'm the real deal. If you want peace and fullness in life you need to look no further." That is still true today.

As a baby, there was an attempt on his life because he was a king.
At his death a sign was displayed declaring him to be a king.
When he comes again he will come as a king.

Play Video ***King of Kings***