

# WISDOM: Christ the King

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## John 18:33-38

33 Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" 34 Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" 35 Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" 36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." 37 Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." 38 Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him."

## REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Jesus answers Pilate in some intriguing ways. He doesn't always answer directly and replies with a question. Why do you think Jesus answers Pilate's questions in the ways that he does?
3. What does it mean to you when Jesus says, "My kingdom is not of this world"? Is he referring to physical reality, the world of power and empire, or something else?
4. Is Jesus a king?
5. What are the implications and consequences for Jesus to have the title "king" while standing before the Emperor's chosen governor, Pilate?
6. How might the idea of "Christ the King" fit into the power games and politics of the 21st century? What does Christ's "reign" mean for our personal and family lives?
7. What is the "wisdom of God" if seen through the lens of Christ? What wisdom do we learn from the life, teaching, arrest, and crucifixion of Jesus?
8. Pilate asks, "What is truth?" It's a profound and provocative question,

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even now. How would you define or describe truth?

that continues to demean and malign the Jewish faith.

9. In a social-media-saturated world of misinformation and disinformation, how do you seek out the truth?

### **Important Note on “The Jews”**

In John’s Gospel, the term “the Jews” appears often, especially in the passion narrative. This phrase has a sordid history of Christian interpretation and has led not only to anti-Jewish theology and ideas but also to violence (and violent mobs) against people of Jewish faith. Such currents exist today. The Christian faith does not require, nor should it promote, anti-Judaism. As Christians, we need to take extra caution with how we understand and use this phrase.

The phrase “the Jews” misses out on a wildly complex religious landscape: Jesus was Jewish. His followers were Jewish. There were Jewish leaders complicit with the Roman authorities, and there were Jewish people and leaders resisting the Roman oppression. There was no “the Jews” who uniformly supported the execution of Jesus, or who were ultimately responsible for his murder: that authority rested squarely and *finally* with Rome.

In addition, we should be mindful that there may have been interest among early Christian communities to distance themselves from other Jews, especially when those Jews were targets of violence by Roman authorities.

Most importantly, we need to take responsibility for our own tradition and seek to resist any version of Christianity

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