

Good Friday

KING, JESUS STYLE

John 18:1-19:42

Good Friday

Analysis by Joseph Justus van der Sabb

Chapter 18

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. 2Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. 3So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. 4Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" 5They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. 6When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. 7Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth." 8Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go." 9This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me." 10Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus. 11Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?"

12So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. 13First they took him to Annas, who was the

father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.
14Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

15Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, 16but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. 17The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."
18Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

19Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. 20Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. 21Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said." 22When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" 23Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" 24Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

25Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not." 26One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" 27Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

28Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. 29So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" 30They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you." 31Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death." 32(This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

33Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" 34Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" 35Pilate 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?" 36Jesus 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." 37Pilate 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." 38Pilate 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. 39But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" 40They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

Chapter 19

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed

him in a purple robe. 3They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face. 4Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him." 5So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!" 6When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." 7The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

8Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. 9He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. 10Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" 11Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." 12From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

13When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. 14Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" 15They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." 16Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; 17and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is

called Golgotha. 18There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." 20Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. 21Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" 22Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." 23When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. 24So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

*"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."*

25And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." 27Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

28After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." 29A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. 30When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. 32 Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. 33 But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. 35 (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) 36 These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." 37 And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

38 After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. 39 Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. 40 They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. 42 And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

DIAGNOSIS: No King but Caesar (x3)

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *We have no king but Caesar.*

The days where “King of the Jews” meant something (circumcised, at the very least) lasted from the days of Saul to the time of Zedekiah, 434 years later. After that, for six hundred long years, the Kings of the Jews were not Jews at all but Assyrians, Babylonians, Macedonians, Romans, Syrians, Egyptians and Idumeans. Herod the Great, “king of the Jews” was appointed as such by the Roman Senate, but died in AD 6, after which there’s no more King in Judea, only a Roman civil servant. Pilate’s not king; he’s governor. Tiberias Caesar is Caesar and will be Caesar still until March 16, AD 37. By the time quill scratches the Gospel according to John onto parchment around AD 100, there will have been a dozen more. And no other kings of the Jews. In fact, Jerusalem has been sacked, the Temple destroyed and the last hotheads at Masada have been extravagantly zealous and gone and killed themselves. Tough times for the Jews. It would’ve been great if there was a King of the Jews and he’d actually been the one that counted—that is, the Messiah!

Six hundred years of reading the newspapers to find out whose flag we should be flying this week. Six hundred years of waiting and hoping and suffering the bitter indignation of being God’s ruled people. Ruled by someone else. No king but Caesar? Already forgotten about Herod and Ptolemy and Antony and Octavian? Forgot to mention Antiochus Epiphanes? Caesar? which Caesar? Julius or Caligula or Tiberias or Claudius or Nero? or maybe darling boy Titus? “Nevermind silly questions! What’re you trying to prove anyway!? Whoever and whatever, here and now, (that’s not Jesus-crucified-and-risen-God) that’s our King!”

Ruled by someone else. Anyone else. But not by God. Sounds familiar.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *We Want No King but Caesar*

For Jewish priests and princelings 2000 years ago and equally

for nearly contented middle classes this very day, Jesus is vaguely unsettling. How so? Caesar has plans to grow the economy, bring us roads, aqueducts, sanitation and schools... all very nice, all very tempting. Caesar might also burn us down and kill us all. It's something of a gamble, really, but with weighted dice.

Jesus' Kingdom is different altogether... a matter of the heart, of minute-by-minute choice, of allegiance and genuine self-emptying, foot-washing love. For Jesus, Kingdom is not about wealth, power, prestige religion or righteousness. It does not involve harping millions and is not contingent on adherence to long lists of rules and regulations. Kingship, Jesus Style, can't be enforced—not by the strength of armies, not even by the omnipotence of God – because it exists in human hearts by way of choice. Jesus is King when Peter chooses not to draw his sword. Jesus is King when Nicodemus braves the powers-that-be to ask for Jesus' body. Jesus is King when he himself chooses to be for us the Crucified instead of taking the easy road. This coronation begins with a beating. A purple prop from the costume box. A mess of tangled thorns leftover from Adam's tussle with the first field. And then Ecce Homo et Ave Rex. And then, to begin his glorious tenure, instead of a turn around the ballroom floor with a stunning beauty (she's off sinning no more), a marrow-jarring slog to Golgotha. And instead of a throne from which to receive the tribute of nations... a couple of hours in the waning light, bleeding out.

Caiaphas, Pilate, Peter, Judas, John, Mary? That's my best and only offer. Interested?

Whoa. Seriously? I don't think so! That's way too chancy. Doesn't that hurt? Doesn't sound very good to me! Can't you at least throw in an equal-opportunity shot at security, prosperity and wealth? Stuff I can fight for, work for? Something I can

stockpile bullets for? You know what? You can keep your Kum-Bah-Yah and mumbo jumbo about Truth, thanks very much. Hail Caesar!

Hailing Caesar is our ploy. Our attempt to butter our own bread. One more stab at hoarding manna for tomorrow. A backup plan for when Moses' little Passover stunt doesn't work. The stuff of mutiny.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *We Get No King but Caesar*

That light has come, and that you loved darkness instead? That's judgment. (3:19)

What you choose is what you get.

PROGNOSIS: Here Is Your King, Jesus Style

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus, Jesus Style*

We stand here on Day Two of the Great Three Days. There's no sense in rescuing Jesus from the tomb just yet. No, I mean it. There's no sense, whatsoever, in rescuing Jesus from the grave. We have to let him be dead. His suffering and death is the whole point.

Or is Good Friday misnamed, after all? Can the Good News be Good if Jesus doesn't rise, or hasn't risen yet? (Granted, Paul might have an opinion here.) Can we leave Jesus in the grave on Good Friday? Can we bear to wait? Can we tolerate delayed gratification? You know, we really don't like waiting for an outcome, do we? What if Jesus dies and gives up his spirit and it really is finished? That'd be a lousy ending, right? Nothing else? No happy ending? That's supposed to be OKAY?? That's not OKAY! That's like dying in a car crash right after you yelled OH SH!T! It's BAD! If Jesus ends up in the hands of Death, if the bad guys win... that's BAD!! We can't leave him there! We can't

bury him! We gotta bail him out! C'mon Mary Magdalene! Kiss him and see if true love's kiss can perk him up! Somebody do something!

Hang on, if Jesus is King, Jesus Style, and he dies... why is that BAD? Is it even bad? Doesn't Jesus' Kingship/Kingdom transcend death already ... without him even dying yet? Jesus' choice to walk the path of truth is already his coronation, is already his Glorious Day: "Truth Doesn't Back Down in the Face of Pain, Struggle and Ignoble Death," the headlines read. They kill him, of course they have to... but his victory is accomplished, finished, already. In his death. Before he rises. "The Resurrection is the eschatalogical echo of the victory on Calvary" [source not cited].

More dimensions of Jesus Style? Jesus knows the Father. He was sent by the Father. He and the Father are one. Whoever knows the Son knows the Father. That alone should be enough. Jesus is King, Jesus Style when human choice bends right, when the incurvatus is bent back to God and, for instance, we know and love God and our neighbors. God does that bending. We believe he does and celebrate it when we notice it happening—in ourselves and in others. The Jesus Style Kingdom depends upon our fickle choices? No wonder not much has changed in 2000 years! His Kingdom will never be much to look at from Caesar's point of view... no palaces, no armies, no flags. Not much. Maybe just a meal. Where, perhaps, I can finally stoop to welcome as brother someone else who's not as good as me. Call THAT a Feast of Victory and wish for not one thing more!

"Good Friday has to end with the Resurrection, you know? It just HAS to be okay." Eh? Where's the hell? It IS okay! Easter is not the okay for the Utter Disaster and Royal Crap of Good Friday. Good Friday is already, itself, Good. It is already FINISHED on Friday afternoon. Dead or alive, that's now irrelevant to what

has been accomplished. ** Jesus has shown his followers the Father. The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world has fallen under the knife of the world, once and for all. The Paraclete is on the way. People have been given their choice, and they have chosen. Yeah... but no one chose the right thing! They're all judged! Yeah... but Jesus made a choice too... he chooses that they are not judged. He chooses that "his own" will have life through him. He chooses that truth will not be silenced by violence and fear. And by choosing to follow his path even unto death... his choices are ratified. Stamped and sealed. Locked in. Is that your final answer? "You can bet your life on it." But disciples, being merely smelly versions of you and me, would live on in fear and unbelief. So to let people know: white smoke from the chimney... a pre-arranged signal "Its done!" You have one who is for you before God! One of yours stands with you against the night! THE LIGHT SHINES ON INTO THE DARKNESS... THE DARKNESS WILL NEVER OVERCOME IT. Boom. Light the fireworks. Blow the fuses. Sing yourself hoarse. A Friday Victory. We found out only now. And I know it's wrong, but I really just want to say it now: Alleluia!

**(So is the resurrection just a perk? Would Jesus have been willing to die if he knew there was no resurrection waiting? Of course. That's the measure of Jesus. If he'd not been raised, would he still be our Savior, still be the Son of God? Would the "take away the sin of the world" thing still have worked?)

Step 5: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Solution) : King, Jesus Style

The white smoke has been seen. We have heard his name. We see them standing on the balcony, ready to draw back the curtains... But we wait. We wait on Holy Saturday, though victory is ours.

We wait for nearly two thousand years, though victory is won.

Jesus is King, Jesus Style, and calls us his friends. Calls us his own. Makes us his own. "If I am wrong, testify to it. If I am right, why do you hiss at me and strike? Or would you rather have no King but Caesar?"

Caiaphas, Pilate, Peter, Judas, John, Mary: This is my best and only offer. Interested?

Some might call this a "leap of faith." More like Baby Steps. Each and every hour of each and every day, it is believing that Jesus has accomplished all he promised. Faith is living in light of that belief, from one choice to the next. Moment-ous stuff. Or would you rather have no King but Caesar?

Step 6: Final Diagnosis (External Solution) : *Friends, Jesus Style*

We live in a world where Caesar is called King. Yet we know that Jesus is King too, though ... with a bit more Style. A dangerous, slippery enterprise? No more so than leaving Galilee... but Yes as much as No. Caesar is King: schools and universities, roads and airports, paychecks and taxes, armies, drones, hospitals and health care plans, manufacturing and mining, NGOs and charities, immigration policies and trade agreements. Caesar is King: oppression, injustice, corruption, concentration camps, detention camps for enemy combatants held without trial, wars, endless pollution and crimes against humanity. Caesar is King. Sucks the wind out of a person, yes?

But Jesus, Jesus Style, is our Lord and King. That is enough for today, yes? We are his disciples; his subjects in his Kingdom. Our deeds and the deeds of our communities and nations are brought to the light to be exposed (3:20). We cannot expand this Kingdom, Jesus Style, with violence. The concept makes no sense. Jesus takes oaths with a towel and basin. This Jesus Style Kingdom will not be about winning but about knowing the Father

and abiding in his love. Abiding in his love, we dare to testify to the Truth. What is Truth? Watch these little ones abide in their Lord's love. There, you'll see the Truth speaking, healing, loving, forgiving and drawing all men and women unto himself. Sucks the wind out of a person, yes? and when a new breath returns... makes you want to breathe "Alleluia."