

Wings

*"Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
Isaiah 40:31*



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The Clash of Kingdoms

The confrontation between Pilate and Jesus lasted only a few minutes, but the outcome of their exchange shook the world to its foundation, with repercussions that last down to this day.

"... Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?'" (Jn. 18:33).

"Then Pilate said to Him, 'Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?'" (Jn. 19:10).

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Pilate's interrogation of Jesus spans several verses in John's gospel from chapter 18 into chapter 19. The two questions listed here—the first and last questions Pilate asked in this exchange—highlight the cosmic significance of the battle that was fought that day.

Consider the antagonists: Pilate was Caesar's emissary in Judea, representing Rome, the most powerful and advanced empire the world had known to that time. He reminded Jesus that he had absolute power over His fate, to release Him or to crucify Him.

Pilate's opponent was Jesus, the Son of God, "the king of the Jews," an emissary of God sent from heaven.

This was Rome vs. God, the final climax of a long struggle that been

building throughout the ages. Both David (Psalm 2) and Daniel (Daniel 2) had predicted this day. Now it had arrived. Who would win?

Superficially, this contest was a terrible mismatch. Pilate had the legal authority and the political advantage to condemn Jesus to death. And, of course, he had plenty of soldiers to carry out his orders. No one could resist him.

Jesus, on the other hand, was a carpenter, an itinerant preacher whose few friends scattered like roaches when their master was taken into custody. He had no army, no allies, no secret weapon, nothing with which He could prevent the inevitable Roman victory. When pressed to reveal where He was from, Jesus "gave him no answer" (19:9), a silence that baffled Pilate (Mk. 15:5). He was accustomed to watching doomed men plead for their lives; eliminating this loser was too easy.

It was so easy, in fact, that Pilate saw no threat in Jesus. But yielding to pressure from the Jews, he gave the order to have Jesus crucified anyway, then washed his hands of the affair. The

"king of the Jews" was eliminated, and life went on as usual. Rome won a quick and decisive victory that day.

But Rome's victory was short-lived. Three days later, Jesus arose from the grave. Within months, Jerusalem was electrified by the testimony of those who had seen Him after His resurrection, and thousands took up His cause. Within a few years, this Jesus movement spread to surrounding cities and provinces, attracting both Jews and Gentiles. Within a few decades, one of those who had witnessed the resurrected Jesus stood before Caesar himself in Rome, testifying of Jesus' resurrection and His teachings.

Today, Rome is long gone. Other empires have followed, each imposing its will on its neighbors for a short while, then crumbling into the dust bin of history. But despite every effort by tyrants and traitors to destroy it, the kingdom of God remains. Ultimately, Jesus won the war, not through political or military power, but through the power of *truth* (Jn. 18:37).

Question: Which side are *you* on?

– David King