

Saint_Thomas_Aquinas_explains_the_Gospel_for_Jesus_Christ_the_King.

Pilate therefore went into the hall again, and called Jesus, and said to him: Art thou the king of the Jews? Jesus answered: Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of me? Pilate answered: Am I a Jew? Thy own nation, and the chief priests, have delivered thee up to me: what hast thou done? Jesus answered: My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not from hence. Pilate therefore said to him: Art thou a king then? Jesus answered: Thou sayest that I am a king. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice. (John 18: 33-37).

CHRYC. Pilate, wishing to rescue Him from the hatred of the Jews, protracted the trial a long time. Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall, and called Jesus.

THEOPHYL. i.e. Apart, because he had a strong suspicion that He was innocent, and thought he could examine Him more accurately, away from the crowd: and said to Him, Are you the King of the Jews?

ALCUIN. Wherein Pilate shows that the Jews had charged Him with calling Himself King of the Jews.

CHRYC. Or Pilate had heard this by report; and as the Jews had no charge to bring forward, began to examine Him himself with respect to the things commonly reported of Him.

Jesus answered him, Say you this thing of yourself, or did others tell it you of Me?

THEOPHYL. He intimates here that Pilate was judging blindly and indiscreetly: If you say this thing of yourself, He says, bring forward proofs of My rebellion; if you have heard it from others, make regular inquiry into it.

AUG. Our Lord knew indeed both what He Himself asked, and what Pilate would answer; but He wished it to be written down for our sakes.

CHRYC. He asks not in ignorance, but in order to draw from Pilate himself an accusation against the Jews: Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me.

AUG. He rejects the imputation that He could have said it of Himself; Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me: adding, what have you done? Whereby he shows that this charge had been brought against Him, for it is as much as to say, If you deny that you are a King, what have you done to be delivered up to me? As if it were no wonder that He should be delivered up, if He called Himself a King.

CHRYC. He then tries to bring round the mind of Pilate, not a very bad man, by proving to him, that He is not a mere man, but God, and the Son of God; and overthrowing all suspicion of His having aimed at a tyranny, which Pilate was afraid of, Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.

AUG. This is what the good Master wished to teach us. But first it was necessary to show the falsity of the notions of both Jews and Gentiles as to His kingdom, which Pilate had heard of; as if it meant that He aimed at unlawful power; a crime punishable with death, and this kingdom were a subject of jealousy to the ruling power, and to be guarded against as likely to be hostile either to the Romans or Jews. Now if our Lord had answered immediately Pilate's question, He would have seemed to have been answering not the Jews, but the Gentiles only. But after Pilate's answer, what He says is an answer to both Gentiles and Jews: as if He said, Men, i.e. Jews and Gentiles, I hinder not your dominion in this world. What more would you have? Come by faith to the kingdom which is not of this world. For what is His kingdom, but they that believe in Him, of whom He says, you are not of the world: although He wished that they should be in the world. In the same way, here He does not say, My kingdom is not in this world; but, is not of this world. Of the world are all men, who created by God are born of the corrupt race of Adam. All that are born again in Christ, are made a kingdom not of this world. Thus hath God taken us out of the power of darkness, and translated us to the kingdom of His dear Son.

CHRYS. Or He means that He does not derive His kingdom from the same source that earthly kings do; but that He has his sovereignty from above; inasmuch as He is not mere man, but far greater and more glorious than man: If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. Here He shows the weakness of an earthly kingdom, has its strength from its servants, whereas that higher kingdom is sufficient to itself, and wanting in nothing. And if His kingdom was thus the greater of the two, it follows that He was taken of His own will, and delivered up Himself.

AUG, After showing that His kingdom was not of this world, He adds, But now My kingdom is not from here. He does not say, Not here, for His kingdom is here to the end of the world, having within it the tares mixed with the wheat until the harvest. But yet it is not from here, since it is a stranger in the world.

THEOPHYL, Or He says, from here, not, here; because He reigns in the world, and carries on the government of it, and disposes all things according to His will; but His kingdom is not from below, but from above, and before all ages.

CHRYS. Heretics infer from these words that our Lord is a different person from the Creator of the world. But when He says, My kingdom is not from here, He does not deprive the world of His government and superintendence, but only shows that His government is not human and corruptible.

Pilate therefore said to Him, Are you a King then? Jesus answered, you say that I am a King.

AUG. He did not fear to confess Himself a King, but so replied as neither to deny that He was, nor yet to confess Himself a King in such sense as that His kingdom should be supposed to be of this world. He says, you say, meaning, you being carnal say it carnally. He continues, To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. The pronoun here, in hoc, must not be dwelt long on as if it meant, in hâc re, but shortened, as if it stood, ad hoc, natus sum, as the next words are,

ad hoc veni in mundum. Wherein it is evident He alludes to His birth in the flesh not to that divine birth which never had beginning.

THEOPHYL. Or, to Pilate's question whether He was a King our Lord answers, To this end was I born, i.e. to be a King, That I am born from a King proves that I am a King.

CHRYS. If then He was a King by birth, He has nothing which He has not received from another. For this I came, that I should bear witness to the truth, i.e. that I should make all men believe it. We must observe how He shows His humility here: when they accused Him as a malefactor, He bore it in silence; but when He is asked of His kingdom, then He talks with Pilate, instructs him, and raises his mind to higher things. That I should bear witness to the truth shows that He had no crafty purpose in what He did.

AUG But when Christ bears witness to the truth, He bears witness to Himself; as He said above, I am the truth. But inasmuch as all men have not faith, He adds, Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice: hears, that is, with the inward ear; obeys My voice, believes Me. Every one that is of the truth, has reference to the grace by which He calls according to His purpose. For as regards the nature in which we are created, since the truth created all, all are of the truth. But it is not all to whom it is given the truth to obey the truth. For had He even said, Everyone one that hears My voice is of the truth, it still would be thought that such were of the truth, because they obeyed the truth But He does not say this, but Everyone that is of the truth hears My voice. A man then is not of the truth, because he hears His voice, but hears His voice because he is of the truth. This grace is conferred upon him by the truth.

CHRYS. These words have an effect upon Pilate, persuade him to become a hearer, and elicit from him the short inquiry, What is truth had almost said to Him, What is truth?

THEOPHYL. For it had almost vanished from the world, and become unknown in consequence of the general unbelief.

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