



“Preaching Jesus As King”

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Jesus is declared to be a king and is said to possess a kingdom hundreds of times in the Old and New Testaments. The word *kingdom* means *a domain or a rulership; a reign*. In fact, when you see the word in our English translations, you can usually substitute the word *reign*. The kingdom of God is the reign of God, the kingdom of Christ is His reign or His dominion. However, this claim caused great reaction in the first century when Jesus was preached as being the king. It fostered hope in the hearts of many of the Jews who believed the prophecies of the Old Testament and understood them. Other Jews were confused and skeptical if not outright opposed to the claim because of their prejudiced view of Jesus and the fact that He didn't fit their mistaken mold of what their king should be. It caused no less of a stir in the Roman Empire since allegiance to Caesar was demanded, and if any threat to him arose, it was swiftly put down.

We read of an incident in **Acts 17** where, as the message of Jesus continued to spread throughout the Gentile world, Paul and Silas came to the city of Thessalonica. They taught at the synagogue for several weeks, gaining several converts, but there was an element of the Jews who did not believe their preaching. These were determined to stir up trouble for Paul and Silas.

Acts 17:5-8 “But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too. Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king--Jesus.” And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.”

The claim that there was another king besides Caesar was responsible for turning the world on its head, as did the other claims of Christ. If the world truly understood the claims of Christ today, it would have the same effect. We're in the midst of a series of lessons called *Preaching Jesus*. How did the apostles

and the early church present Jesus to the world? Who did Jesus Himself claim to be? And is the Jesus we claim to believe in today the Jesus we claim to follow today? Is He the same Jesus set forth in scripture? Do we really understand who He is and why He came? We've learned what the Bible means when it declares Him the Son of God, why He is called the Christ or the Messiah, the Anointed One, how He is proclaimed by God above, by nature below, by those who truly know Him to be Lord. Today, we'll study why He is declared to be King. What it means to call Him and honor Him as King.

That the Bible sets Jesus forth to be a king is beyond dispute. It was one of the many claims of Jesus and it is one of the most notable titles that He now wears. The word *kingdom* appears in the New Testament 158 times, the majority of which are in reference to the kingdom or rule of Christ. It comes from the Greek word *basileia* which means *reign or rule*. In one respect, the universe is Christ's domain. He is sovereign. All things were created by Him, they are governed or upheld by Him and by the word of His power. They belong to Him.

But the kingdom of Christ, as foretold in the Old Testament and realized in the New Testament refers more specifically to the rule of Christ over His chosen people and His relationship to His people. It is a powerful and ever-expanding kingdom which exists in heaven and earth today. Sometimes it's called *the kingdom of God* because the authority that Christ has as King was given to Him by God. All authority is God's and God's alone to give. It's called *the kingdom of Christ*, or as Paul once referred to it, *the kingdom of God's dear Son, the Son of His love* because God has given the kingdom to His Son to rule over. It's also called *the kingdom of heaven* because it originated from heaven. It is headquartered there and, ultimately, its citizens will be there.

Those different descriptions don't refer to three different kingdoms, but they all refer to the one kingdom that Christ presently rules over. The Bible is clear that Jesus came to this world in view of being King and He understood that a crown awaited Him after He came and accomplished the will of His Father. When Jesus was born, the wise men inquired thus:

Matthew 2:2 "...Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him."

When Jesus was thirty years old, John the baptizer was preparing the people for Christ's appearance and ministry by preaching, "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**" (**Matthew 3:2**). You see, John saw the kingdom as something that was at the doorstep, so to speak. It was *at hand*. We learn in the next chapter that as Jesus stepped into the divine spotlight, He began to preach repentance also.

Matthew 4:17 "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

That would be a strange statement if, two thousand years later we were still waiting on the kingdom to commence. Throughout his 3 ½ year ministry, Jesus taught about His coming kingdom, laying down many of the principles and truths that would characterize and govern it. He affirmed Himself to be the King who would rule within it. For example, He painted a picture of judgment this way:

Matthew 25:31,34 ""When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory...Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:'"

Revelation 19:16 “And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.”

This expresses His sovereignty, His superiority, His supremacy over all who would be called king or lord in this world. Christ possesses all power and authority, as He told His disciples.

Matthew 28:18 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

He possesses dominion over every force, power, or authority in the universe. His kingdom, reign, and rule are the most powerful in all of the universe. There is a great deal of confusion about His reign and kingdom. Many believe it is still yet to come. They are anticipating it. They don’t believe He is yet reigning as King. Some suggest when He said that He would be made King that this was in view of the Jews receiving Him as their Messiah and King, but that since the Jewish nation rejected Him when He first came, God then put His program on hold until a future time when the nation will finally be converted and Jesus can then sit upon His throne as King and rule the world. They believe that after a series of events take place in the world, Jesus will return to the city of Jerusalem, reestablish the throne of David, and rule over the earth for a millennium or thousand years. This is, in part, based upon a statement made by John in the book of **Revelation**.

Revelation 20:4 “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”

But remember that the book of **Revelation** is a book filled with symbolic and apocalyptic language. It is divine truth—no one disputes that this statement is true, but is it to be taken literally or is it symbolic language? **Revelation’s** signs and symbols are not literal objects and numeric values; rather, they symbolize concepts and realities. We must interpret symbolic passages in light of what the Bible teaches in literal or directly stated passages—not the other way around. You don’t begin with the figurative and then move to the literal; you begin with the literal and move to the figurative. So, the question is this: is Jesus reigning now or are we waiting on His reign to come? If He is reigning now, we must interpret **Revelation 20** in a figurative way. If the Bible teaches that Jesus is reigning now, then the notion that there will be a yet future kingdom simply cannot be true.

So, what does the Bible say about Christ’s kingdom? What kind of king is He? Can we be in His kingdom now? If so, how? Well, there are two kinds of kingdoms referred to in the Bible and in the history of the world: physical or earthly kingdoms (just like the kingdoms that have existed soon after the tower of Babel and that continue to exist all around the world today) and spiritual kingdoms. While there are certainly many comparisons we might draw between the two, they are totally different in nature. You recall when Jesus was being questioned by Pilate that Pilate wanted to know if He was the King of the Jews. The Romans were not concerned about Jesus’ religious teachings. They couldn’t care less what the Jews believed about their own religion at that time, except as it affected their submission to Caesar. It was important to know if Jesus claimed to be a king. Of course, Pilate didn’t really take Jesus seriously as a king or a threat. He didn’t look, talk, or act like a king as far as they thought. Nonetheless, Pilate wanted to know about this accusation being made against Jesus--that he claimed to be some kind of monarch over the Jews. Jesus’s reply was very plain and succinct.

John 18:36 "Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here."

So, get that. *My kingdom is not of this world*. What did He mean by that? That it was not an earthly or physical kingdom. It was not the same kind of kingdom as was headquartered in Rome or any other earthly power.

John 17:20 "Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation;"

That means that you cannot identify, demark, and survey it as you would an earthly kingdom. It has no physical boundaries. It has no earthly headquarters, no confined territory on this earth.

Luke 17:21 "nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

That means that the kingdom's rule is not concerned with any earthly city or geography or land. But it is concerned with the hearts of people. Remember when Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and Jesus so famously told him that one must be *born again* to enter into the kingdom?

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

He went on to say that this was not a physical birth, but a spiritual birth.

John 3:5 "Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Paul would later write this to the Christians in Colossae.

Colossians 1:13-14 "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Now, notice: they had already been delivered from darkness and placed into the kingdom. He doesn't speak of this as a future transaction, but as one that had already taken place. He connects that with the forgiveness of their sins and the redemption that Christ had provided for them.

With all of that said, let's see if we can identify this kingdom. Let's put all of that together. What is it? Where is it? And when is it? First, Jesus said His kingdom would come during the lifetime of some of His apostles.

Mark 9:1 "And He said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."

He later said this to those same men:

Acts 1:8 "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

If you go one chapter later in **Acts 2**, it shows us that the apostles received power when the Holy Spirit came upon them in the upper room in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. So, Jesus said in their lifetimes, they would see the kingdom come with power. Now, if people are born of the water and the spirit to enter that kingdom when it came, and if entering it meant to be delivered from the power of darkness and thus placed into the kingdom, the events of Pentecost in **Acts 2** should tell us some things. When the apostles received power, Peter stood up and preached the Christ and 3,000 sinners—men and women—held under the power of darkness and living under the rule of Satan in their sins, heard Peter preach and they were convicted of their sins. They wanted to be saved.

Acts 2:37-38 "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.""

There, we see the idea of authority—of Jesus as the King. And there's the new birth. And what then happened?

Acts 2:47 "...And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

They were born of water and the spirit. What did Jesus say in **John 3:3-5**? That's how you get into the kingdom. So, they obeyed the gospel in **Acts 2** and were forgiven of their sins and the Bible tells us they were added to the church. And as Paul would later say, when they were delivered from the power of darkness, they were conveyed into the kingdom.

If being freed from sin or forgiven of sin results in being added to the church, and if being delivered from the power of darkness results in being conveyed into the kingdom, doesn't it stand to reason that these people became citizens of the kingdom when they became members of the Lord's church? You see, Christ's kingdom on this earth IS Christ's church, His people over whom He rules.

The Bible established that the Christ would be a king long before He was actually born. Remember that the very title *Christ* refers in part to Him being anointed as prophet, priest, and king. We learned about that last week. Let's quickly look at an Old Testament prophecy that pictures Jesus as our great High Priest and at the same time as our king.

Zechariah 6:13 "Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, And shall sit and rule on His throne; So He shall be a priest on His throne, And the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

Here, the prophet is speaking of the branch, the Messiah to come. This speaks of His spiritual temple, which the old physical temple prefigured. The temple of God today is not made out of brick and stone. It is not situated in some city or geographical location. The temple of the Lord is a spiritual thing. It is the church. And kings occupy thrones. Notice that Christ is declared to be priest at the same time that He was king. That has to be talking about Jesus in the New Testament age because the offices of priest and king could not be occupied by the same person under the law of Moses. They came from different

tribes. The priests came from the tribe of Levi and the kings came from the tribe of Judah. But here, he says the Messiah would be king and priest, and would be a priest while He sat upon the throne. Well, what do we read in the **Hebrew** letter concerning our great high priest, Jesus Christ?

Hebrews 8:1,4 “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens...For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law;”

Sitting at God's right hand means that God has given Him His power and His authority. In other words, He is ruling from heaven as King at the right hand of God. At the same time, He is our great High Priest in heaven. The **Hebrew** writer says that He would not be a priest if He were on earth. He had to go to heaven to be our priest. The holiest of holies is no longer on this earth as it was in the tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament. It is in heaven and He functions there as our anointed High Priest and He rules from there as our anointed king as well.

Friend, the kingdom of Christ is here now. Think about it: every kingdom has four things that constitute it:

1. A king. (We have Jesus, given all authority at God's right hand.)
2. A law. (Christ's law went forth from Jerusalem from His ambassadors, His apostles. Even Isaiah prophesied that on the Day of Pentecost, the law would go forth from Jerusalem **(Isaiah 2:3)**. That's the law of Christ's kingdom, the gospel.)
3. A territory. (Christ's kingdom girdles the globe as the gospel has been taken around this world since the Day of Pentecost nearly 2,000 years ago.)
4. Subjects. (Christians today submit themselves to His rule in the church, His kingdom.)

All of these things are found in the presence of the church in His saving gospel in the world today. I might add that His kingdom is open to all who will surrender to Him. You enter that kingdom when you, in faith, submit to Him beginning with obedience to the gospel plan of salvation.

Some will say, *how can Christ be ruling now as King when there is so much sin and evil in the world? When there seems to be so much chaos, upheaval, and disorder? Surely, we must still be looking for Christ to reign and rule as King.* Friend, we don't understand the nature of His rule. Satan's doom has already been sealed. So has the fate of all who follow him and reject the Christ. Satan's power and his back were broken at Calvary when Jesus rose from the dead.

Colossians 2:15 “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”

He arose back to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God as sovereign, as the supreme ruler. Satan has no power over Him. What you see going on in the world today where Satan is causing destruction, ruin, and death is the result of men and women rebelling against Christ and allowing Satan to rule within their hearts.

But Jesus has already won the victory. The Bible teaches that He is in the process of expanding His rule and His kingdom every day as more and more hearts are freed from the bondage of sin and Satan and come into His kingdom through redemption. The kingdom was pictured by Jesus as leaven, that would

begin as a small lump and would spread to the whole lump. It was pictured as a tiny seed that would grow into a great tree. Since the Day of Pentecost, the message of King Jesus has spread from heart to heart, and as people submitted to it in obedience and acknowledged Him as Lord and Christ, that kingdom has continued to grow and expand. Jesus has taken more and more spiritual territory. Paul taught that King Jesus is in the process of putting all enemies under His feet.

I Corinthians 15:24-28 “Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

It will come full circle. That’s God’s program for the ages. Jesus is King. His kingdom first received the Jews who believed in Him and then came the Gentiles, and soul by soul it continues to expand. It could include you today if it doesn’t already, until all who will enter have entered. Jesus will then destroy that wicked one and those who follow him in rebellion. He will then deliver the kingdom—all of its people—to the Father and we will dwell with Him in peace, safety, joy, and love forever. Jesus is King. Have you bowed the knee and surrendered to Him in gospel obedience? Won’t you do so today?

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