

King of Kings

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[0 : 00] Now, as I mentioned, as we consider this text this morning, we're not going to be going verse by verse through Revelation 19.! We see this title, King of Kings, but what we see more broadly in the book of Revelation is this overarching theme of the kingdom of God.

And so this morning, I want us to consider the kingdom of God really in three parts. I want us to consider the king of the kingdom. I want us to consider the citizens of the kingdom.

And the realm of the kingdom. And so let's first consider this king, the king of kings, as described here. Now, if you think about politics, if someone's running for public office, there's a lot that you want to know about them.

You want to know their party. You want to know their platforms. You want to know their ideology, their experience. And oftentimes, we care to know their background, their history. So oftentimes, politicians will be very careful about how they craft this narrative about who they are and how they've reached this point in their life.

If you were to study the history of Winston Churchill and read biographies, those books do not begin in 1940 when he becomes prime minister. They look back at his childhood.

[1 : 05] How he had this deep love for his nanny. How he had this estranged relationship with his father. How he spent time in boarding school. And so on and so forth. And so the similar practice needs to be done here, I think, as we think about Christ as our king.

We need to understand the context. Because in this passage in Revelation 19, it's really the end of the story. Christ is coming in his power to claim final victory over his enemies.

To establish this perfect and everlasting kingdom. But I think it's important that we go back to see the very beginning of the story. Because while we have the Bible and we understand it's divided into Old Testament and New Testament.

We have 66 separate verses or separate books in our Bible. We recognize that this is one overarching unified story of scripture. And so in order to appreciate the end, we really need to understand the beginning.

And so we really need to go back to the beginning. To Genesis 1. Where we see God creating the heavens and the earth. And we see that he is this eternal king by his very nature.

[2 : 10] It says in scripture that he upholds the universe by the word of his power. He is the sovereign sustainer of all life. And so we see this in his very character. Whether, regardless of his relationship with man.

Regardless of his plan of redemption. Christ, the Lord, is king. But what we're going to be looking at today is specifically how he serves as our mediator king.

How he extends his grace and provides salvation to rebels like you and me. And so we really see this play out through scriptures. Christ, as king, as creator.

He creates Adam. And he puts Adam in a role very much like a prime minister of sorts. To have dominion over the earth. And he puts him in this garden. The earth is created to be like God's tabernacle.

The garden is meant to be like the holy of holies. This place of worship. This place of peace like we talked about last week. But unfortunately we know that Adam rebelled.

[3 : 06] And rather than worshipping this one true king. He chooses to worship another king. This king of self. But rather than become a king. He actually becomes a slave to sin.

And we see that this rebellion proves fatal. But we see that God in his great mercy. He promises a rescuer. Someone who will come to restore this fallen kingdom.

And so with time as we go through scriptures. We see someone else who's appointed like a prime minister. Abraham. And God makes a promise to Abraham. And says I will be your king. And your ancestors will be citizens of my kingdom.

And so as we move forward and study this. The history of the people of Israel. They are delivered from Egypt. From this land of slavery. They're brought into this promised land.

A land that's supposed to resemble. Symbolize this new Eden. But just like their father Adam. Didn't cast out the enemy from the garden. The same happened for the people of Israel.

[4 : 08] And rather than cast out the enemies. They become attracted by the enemies. And see all these enemy nations. With them having their own earthly kings. And while they had their own king.

God promising to be their king. They come. The elders of Israel. They come to the high priest Samuel. And say we want a king too. Samuel says. He warns them.

He says you don't want a human king. They will only tax you and oppress you. But they're adamant. And say we want a king over us. And so we see that God grants a request.

He gives them Saul from the very beginning. Not a good king. He replaces him with David. And we see that this is a part of God's plan. That through the lineage of this earthly king David. He's going to bring about his Messiah.

A king who is both God. Yahweh. But also a king who will be a humanly king. From the line of David. And so this is the covenant promise to Davis.

[5 : 04] That we heard read earlier. From 2 Samuel 7. And listens to portions of it again. He says speaking to David. When your days are over. And you rest with your ancestors.

I will raise up your offspring to succeed you. Your own flesh and blood. And I will establish his kingdom. I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father. And he will be my son.

Your house and your kingdom. Will endure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever. So even though we have King David. Who's described as a man after God's own heart.

We know that he did not rule perfectly. And he could not fulfill this prophecy or this promise. He only served as the shadow of this divine king who would be sent. And so we see through scripture.

This promise being carried forward. One king after the other. But instead of creating a legacy. Of loyalty and victory. We see a history of sin. And rebellion and failure.

[6 : 02] These kings repeatedly broke this treaty. That they had with the one true king. But yet we see a God who remains faithful to his people.

And so we see these prophecies. And these promises continue. Of this king that is coming. This is the passage we looked at last week. From Isaiah 9. For unto you a child is born. For unto you a son is given.

And the government will be on his shoulders. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor. Mighty God. Everlasting Father. Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace.

There will be no end. He will reign on David's throne. And over his kingdom. Establishing it and upholding it. With justice and righteousness. From that time on. And forever.

And so this is the promise. That's given to God's people. And centuries continue to pass. And the people remain longing. And waiting for this promised Messiah.

[6 : 59] Enduring flawed leader. After flawed leader. After flawed leader. Until finally. The time has come. And we read in the very beginning of the Gospel of Luke.

That an angel comes to a young poor woman named Mary. And this is what he says to her. He says you will conceive and give birth to a son. And you are to call him Jesus.

Jesus. And he will be great. And he will be called the son of the most high. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever.

His kingdom will never end. We see shortly after Jesus' birth. Magi come from the east. And come to Jerusalem. And ask where is the one who has been born? King of the Jews.

We have seen his star. And we have come to worship him. And so very early on in the Gospels. We see the fulfillment of this promise coming to pass. But in a very unexpected way.

[7 : 57] We see a king coming not in power. But in weakness. Not in honor. But in humility. Not in glory. But in his grace.

And this is even what Isaiah had prophesied. That this man. Nothing in his appearance. Shows you that you should desire him. And this is true.

Who did the Jewish leaders want in the New Testament. To raise up as their Messiah. They wanted an earthly king. They wanted someone who would come to the throne. Raise up an army. Parade into Jerusalem. On a horse.

And overthrow the Romans. Who do we see instead? We see Jesus. Who comes in Jerusalem on a donkey. And rather than going toward the throne.

He is going toward the cross. And we see that in Jerusalem. There he's arrested. And he's questioned by the Roman leader Pilate. And what does Pilate ask him? He says are you the king of the Jews?

[8 : 55] Jesus says you speak correctly. But he clarifies. He says my kingdom is not of this world. If it were my servants would fight. To prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.

So Pilate says you are a king then. And he says you are correct to say that I'm a king. In fact the reason I was born. And came into the world. Is to testify to this truth.

And so while Pilate finds no fault in this man. The people of Israel still cry out. Crucify him. Crucify him. And so while you think a king would come to conquer.

By shedding the blood of his enemies. We see this king Jesus who comes. And is willing to spill his own blood. But a king cannot conquer simply by dying. We see this king defeated death.

And the curse of sin through his resurrection. By overcoming the grave. And so what appeared to be such a great weakness. In fact became the greatest act. In human history.

[9 : 54] And so what follows then. King Jesus is his coronation. Where he ascends back to the father. Having secured the victory. This is what we looked at in the book of Acts.

Early on in Acts chapter 2. What Peter preaches. He says that Christ has been exalted to the right hand of God. He has received from the father. The promised Holy Spirit that has been poured out now.

Therefore let all Israel be assured of this. God has made Jesus whom you crucified. Both Lord and Messiah. And so this is the king that we see in Revelation 19.

This divine Davidic king. Who shed his blood for his people. And now comes in power to judge the evil one. To establish his eternal kingdom. Of peace and prosperity forever.

This is the king of kings. And so in order to understand more about this king. And what he does. We really need to think about that second element of the kingdom. The citizens of the kingdom.

[10:53] We say that Jesus came to save. Well who did he come to save? A number of years ago. I was able to tour the beaches of Normandy. And France. Where the allied forces invaded on World War II.

And one of the things that really left an impact. Was not simply seeing the scars of war. These old bunkers. Or these divots from bombs that still exist. But actually going into these little coastal communities.

And towns. And seeing flying American and British flags. And it's striking. The fact that these flags simplifies the freedom.

That was given to these French citizens. Not because they freed themselves. But because someone else came for them. And the fact that they're still flying. Shows as a symbol. How it impacts their life even today.

And so we see a similar. Similar picture here in the New Testament. Where Paul talks in Colossians 1. And he says God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness.

[11:52] And brought us into the kingdom of the son he loves. In whom we have redemption. And forgiveness of sins. And so we see here that Christ doesn't merely invite allegiance.

He actually secures it through his grace. That's received through faith. That we may willingly come under his reign. And what we see here is this.

This liberation actually involves transformation. Because sometimes we may think. Well we've been rescued from the enemy. In fact we were the enemy.

We were the ones who have been rescued. And been transformed from death to life. From the enemy now to loyal subjects. And so again. This is what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5. Therefore if anyone is in Christ.

He is a new creation. The old has gone. The new is here. Further in Ephesians 4. He tells us to put off our old self. And to put on a new self.

[12:50] Created after the likeness of God. In true righteousness and holiness. And so this is what we see in our passage. Going back to Revelation 19. It describes the bride of Christ.

Ready for the wedding. It says that we are the bride of Christ. Dressed in fine linen. Bright and clean. That has been given to us to wear. And it says this fine linen.

Stands for the righteous acts. Of God's people. This is the identity that we have in Christ. We have been given his righteousness. But as citizens.

It's not only our identity that changed. But also our mission. We have this new commission. Paul says that we are ambassadors of Christ. With a ministry of reconciliation.

And so if we are truly stewards of God's grace. It should be our desire to extend this kingdom. That more and more may be brought in as citizens. In an age when many countries are thinking about shutting down borders.

[13:49] Of having to stop immigration. We see the commission given to God's people very different. To preach the gospel to the nations. That more and more may be brought into the kingdom. And so is that.

As citizens of this kingdom. Is that our desire? Do we even recognize ourselves to be citizens of this kingdom? I think so often our identity can be taken up with other things. Whether it's our work.

Or our school. Or our family. And it's our identity that so often dictates our priorities. How we're going to spend our time. And our resources. Where do our loyalties lie?

I think as Christians so often. We want to be kings of our own little kingdom. We want to cling to our own comforts.

And our own conveniences. We want to plan out our own schedules. What's going to be our next holiday? What's my kids next activity? When do I get my next promotion? And we think well maybe I'll sprinkle a little bit of Christianity on top.

[14 : 48] I'll be the king. Maybe God can be my duke. You know when most of you here are probably born British citizens. But for those of us who may want to become British citizens.

We have to take an oath of citizenship. And this is what the oath says. It says I do swear that I will be faithful. And bear true allegiance to his majesty King Charles.

His heirs and successors according to law. So help me God. And so if that's what we pledge to a national king. How much more should we willingly and joyfully pledge allegiance to the reigning king of kings.

Who continues to serve his people. And I want to make this clear. When we become citizens of his kingdom. It's not as though the responsibility shifts on us. About what we have to do for the kingdom.

It's the focus remains on the king and what he does for us. And so all we have to do. If we return to the Westminster Shorter Catechism 26. And for those who may not be familiar with catechisms.

[15 : 50] They're a means of helping us to understand and articulate our faith. That's taken from scripture. And this question 26. It says how does Christ execute the office of king?

This is the answer. Christ executes the office of king in subduing us to himself. In ruling and defending us. And in restraining and conquering all of his and our enemies.

The act of this king of kings. Was not simply just a one time act of redemption. He conquers us as rebels. But then it says he rules and defends us.

He gives us his word. To be our law and our guide. He gives us his spirit to empower us. Toward obedience. He gives us his church. As a form of unity.

And leadership and accountability. He preserves our faith. Even in the midst of struggle. And suffering and opposition. And it says he continues to do battle for the enemy.

[16 : 50] Against the enemy. Often times in the Old Testament. You see this imagery used for shepherds. And often times kings could be referred to as shepherds. Why is that?

Because it was their responsibility. To look after their sheep. To look after their flock. This is why we say in Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He's a good shepherd.

Who cares for his flock. He is a king. Who graciously conquers our hearts. Who wisely governs our lives. Who faithfully protects our salvation.

And who powerfully defeats every enemy. Now and forever. Is this not who we want as a king? And that really brings us to our final point then.

What is the realm of the kingdom? Because I think it's easy for us to think about Christ as king. And we can be his citizens. But then we look around us at the world. And we see the chaos and the brokenness all around us.

[17 : 48] We see war and threats of war. We see poverty. We see oppression. We see slavery. We see rising inflation. We see a slowing economy.

We see growing debt. That's just on a macro level. Think about a micro level. In your personal life. You may be struggling at work. Or finances may be tight. Or you need to repair work on your car done.

Your marriage is on the rocks. Your schedule is constantly too full. And that's just looking at outside of us. What about inside of us? We're continuing to struggle with the same sins over and over.

We're sick. We experience physical ailments. The effects of aging. Mental health issues. And so you may be left asking.

If this is the kingdom. I don't know if I can trust the king. I don't know if I want to be a citizen of this kingdom. And so it's vitally important that we understand the realm of the kingdom.

[18:51] Where is the kingdom? When is the kingdom? We look back in scriptures. In the testimony of Jesus himself. He says repeatedly that the kingdom is at hand.

He also compares the kingdom to a mustard seed. So he says that even though it's something very small. It grows into something very large. But then at the last supper he takes the wine. And he says I'm not going to drink of this again.

Until the kingdom of God comes. So which is it? Is the kingdom here? Is it growing? Or is it yet to come? And the answer is yes. We've spoken about this before.

This understanding that we live in this tension of the already and the not yet. We live in this collision of two ages. This age which is an age of sin and death. And the age to come which is an age of life and peace.

And so the age of death began at the fall. But we see that Christ at his first advent. At his first coming. He enters in. He invades this current age to bring his grace and salvation.

[19:56] And so we can say that this kingdom of God was inaugurated. Or it was established at the cross. Where he bore the punishment for our sins. Where he conquered death at his resurrection.

But we look around us and we know that sin and decay. This age still persists. And so this is why we wait for Christ's return. When he will not be coming in grace.

But he will be coming in glory. And he will be coming in his judgment with power and might. To fully and finally defeat the enemy. And so this is what we see in our passage.

Revelation 19. I saw the heavens standing open. And there before me was a white horse. Whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.

His eyes are like the blazing fire. And on his head are many crowns. The armies of heaven were following him. Riding on white horses. Dressed in fine linens. White and clean.

[20:53] Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword. With which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of almighty God.

And so this is what we see. The kingdom of God was inaugurated. When Christ bore the penalty for our sins. And the kingdom of God will be consummated.

When he pours out his punishment on his enemies. And it's at this time. If we read on the book of Revelation. That Satan will be defeated.

That a new heaven and a new earth. Will be created. And God will once again. Dwell with his people. In perfect peace. This is the goal. Of the king of kings. This has been his plan.

From the very beginning of time. And so as we live. Between these two advents. Of his first coming. Of his second coming. What we call the last days. It's a question that each of us have to ask.

[21:51] Do we acknowledge Christ as our king? Is he your king? Have you bowed the knee in faith and allegiance? Because the reality is that his wrath is coming for anyone who does not acknowledge him as king.

But what we see here is a God who is merciful. Who is willing to extend his grace to his enemies. And turn them from rebels to children.

And so this is why he came and was born. Humbly as a child into a poor family. Because he desires to seek and save the lost.

And for those of us who are citizens of this kingdom already. Do we recognize the sense of urgency? The obligation. The joy that we have to extend this message of the gospel.

That his kingdom may continue to grow. And do we long for the day of his return? We started our service by singing joy to the world. Often times this is a Christmas song that we sing.

[22:57] But do you recognize it's not actually talking about just Christ first advent but his second? Listen to these verses again. Verse 3 and 4. No more let sin and sorrow grow.

Nor thorn infest the ground. He comes to make his blessings flow. Far as the curse is found. He rules the world with truth and grace. And makes the nations prove the glories of his righteousness.

And wonders of his love. It's a truth that is true and is coming true. And so we do we long for this truth. Jesus himself tells us how to pray.

He says to pray thy kingdom come. What do we mean when we pray thy kingdom come? I'll leave you with this. Another catechism. Westminster Shorter Catechism number 102.

That describes for us how we are to pray thy kingdom come. What do we mean? What do we long for? And it's this. That Satan's kingdom may be destroyed.

[23:59] That the kingdom of grace may be advanced. That ourselves and others brought into it and kept into it. Kept in it. And that the kingdom of glory may be hastened.

May this be our longing. The king of kings will accomplish it. Let's pray. O Lord we thank you that you are the king of kings.

That there is great certainty in your reign now and forever. And so may we long for the day. May we pray thy kingdom come.

When your kingdom will be fully and finally established. It may be fully consummated. And we may live in perfect peace with you once again. Lord for those who are here who may not be citizens of your kingdom.

May they recognize the welcome that you give them. May they recognize the ability that you give them. To turn from their rebellious ways. And follow after you. God this Christmas evening may we have great joy.

[25:16] Not only at celebrating your first advent. But your second advent. God this you.