

King Jesus vs Jerusalem Leaders

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[0:00] As you have seen, our passage today is quite long and there is a lot in it. And so we are going to cut it short. Not because I am lazy. But yeah, we are going to look at up to verse 44.

And then if you have any questions regarding verse 45 until chapter 21, verse 4, please see me afterwards and ask your questions.

Okay, so Bali. Bali is a popular destination for Australians, isn't it? But if you go to Bali and you look foreign and you can't speak Bahasa, you'll find that things in Bali are not actually that cheap because they give you tourist prices.

The trick is to go to Bali with someone who comes from Indonesia, who has been to Bali many times, who speaks the language, who knows how to deal with the locals and who knows where to get good things with good local prices.

That's not me, by the way. And that's often the case for a lot of things, right? But you trust and follow someone who has been there and done that.

[1:20] And particularly if you want to go to a particular place, you want to trust the guidance of someone who comes from that place and who knows their way through that place.

Now, we've been looking at the identity of Jesus as king. And here in our passage, we will see Jesus' superiority over the leaders of Israel, particularly because he comes from the place where we want to go to.

We want to enter the kingdom of God. Well, he's the king of that kingdom. We want to get eternal life. Well, he comes from the eternal world. We will see that he is both human king and God himself.

And so his wisdom is out of this world as he presents things from both the material and the spiritual perspectives. And we will see how this informs our understanding of physical life here on earth.

So let's take a look at the story. In our passage last week, the rulers of Israel refused to acknowledge Jesus as king.

[2:37] And so now they set up some traps for him. In verse 20, they sent some spies to see whether what Jesus said could incriminate him and they could report him to the Roman governor.

Because they have tried capturing him. They could not. And so maybe the Roman governor can. In verse 22, the spies asked, Jesus, is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?

Now, this question is very smart. During that time, Israel was colonized by the Roman Empire. And so if Jesus had said, no, don't pay taxes to Caesar, he would have been captured for treason and then killed.

And then the leaders would have been mission accomplished. But if he had said, yes, pay taxes to Caesar, he would have been seen as a traitor by the Jews and the Jews would have abandoned him.

And remember that up to this point, the leaders had not been able to capture Jesus because of the people. The people were following him. And so this question was designed to either incriminate Jesus or make him hated by the people.

[4 : 05] One way or the other, they would have said, mission accomplished. And so in response though, in verse 23, Jesus asked to see a denarius, a coin.

And then he asked, whose image and inscription are on it? Now, the denarius would have had Caesar's image on it.

And the inscription that said, Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus. Caesar was claiming to be a god or the son of a god.

And he put his image on these coins. And so in verse 25, Jesus said, and give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. And to God, what is God's?

This is profound. Remember that the Jews believed that humans, all humans were created in the image of God. And so, and also, and also based on the Old Testament, the Jews were supposed to write God's laws in their hearts.

[5 : 18] So basically what Jesus is saying here, this false god, Caesar, has put his image and inscriptions on these coins, give them back to him.

The real god, however, has put his image and the inscription of his laws on you. And so give yourselves, your whole being, to God.

Now, the implication of that is that giving their whole being to God also includes giving their money to God. Because money is included in their whole being.

And the implication of that is that paying taxes to Caesar is an expression of their total devotion to God. This agrees with other parts of the Bible where it says that the sovereign God ordains earthly rulers.

And therefore, our obedience towards earthly rulers is an expression of our devotion to God. As long as the earthly rulers don't tell us to do what is contrary to God's word.

[6 : 34] So, give God your whole self and give Caesar his taxes as an expression of your total devotion to God.

It's a genius answer. In these few words, basically Jesus brought the physical act of paying taxes to an earthly government and the spiritual devotion to God together to form the kind of public theology that is both materially relevant and spiritually faithful.

Genius. Now, the Jews would have agreed with what Jesus was saying. That Caesar falsely claimed to be a God. That they were created in the image of God.

And had the inscription of God's law. And that they ought to give total devotion to God. And that's why in verse 26, they were astonished by his answer.

What they didn't realize was the rebuke hidden behind Jesus' answer was a rebuke. Because remember the parable that Jesus told right before this incident.

[7 : 56] God is the owner of the vineyard, the kingdom of Israel, and he sent his son to demand the fruit from the vineyard. And so by saying, give God what belongs to God, Jesus was rebuking the leaders.

Give to God what belongs to God, your whole being. And here is God's son. Why are you still rejecting him? So if you today haven't made your decision to follow Jesus yet, this is another call to acknowledge Jesus as your king.

He's the only one worth following. And you will see more of his beauty and his wisdom as we continue the story.

But if you want to know why I decide to follow Jesus, again, like I said last week, feel free to ask me after the service. And I'd be happy to share the beauty of Jesus with you.

Now for those of you who have devoted your life to Jesus, this is a reminder that your spiritual devotion to God is expressed in your physical and public lives.

[9:17] If Jesus is your king, then your whole lives belong to him. Your work, your family, your money, your relationships, your political life, all belong to him.

Theologian and former Dutch Prime Minister Abraham Kuyper says, there is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry, mine.

That means how we pay our taxes, how we vote, how we pay our employees if we have our business, how we conduct our business, how we work for our manager, everything that we do in our public lives must be informed by the fact that Jesus is our Lord and King.

And that he expects the fruit of righteousness from us with the help of the Holy Spirit. And that we have been accepted by God through Jesus by grace only, regardless of our performance in the public sphere and regardless of people's opinions about us.

My sister is very much into politics. She's the brain in the family. She has a PhD from Melbourne Uni in international politics.

[11:01] She now works in Indonesia as a social researcher and has been an Indonesian delegate in the UN conferences. And she's a Christian. And when asked why she's doing politics, she says, roughly, because my Christian faith shows me Jesus, the Grand Judge, who has displayed both mercy and justice in the most profound way on the cross.

And after reading a bookshelf of policy literature, the cross is still the finest and the most unthinkable problem-solving strategy I have ever known in my life.

No other leader worthy of the throne would abandon their pride to give the ultimate freedom that we need. And so I do politics to reflect that great truth to the people who need it.

Jesus is the most worthy of all kings. And following Jesus transforms how we view public and political lives.

And our devotion to Jesus is expressed in our public and political lives. Now, public life is not the only thing that is transformed.

[12:24] Even domestic relationships are transformed as well when we follow Jesus. That's what we see in the next encounter. In verse 27, there were the Sadducees, a wealthy group of people who only believed in the five books of Moses.

So Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And because they thought that there's no mention of the resurrection in those books, they did not believe in the resurrection.

And so here they asked Jesus. In the Old Testament, there's a law, the law of Moses, that if a husband was dead without leaving children, then his brother would have to marry the husband's wife out of duty.

And this was for the sake of social welfare. Because women could not work. And so if a husband died, his brother had to marry the wife to provide for her.

Or at least to provide children who would later take care of her. Now, here the Sadducees asked Jesus, if there were seven brothers who died one by one and all had to marry the same wife, whose wife would she be in the resurrection?

[13:51] They were saying, Jesus, the doctrine of resurrection is ridiculous. It doesn't work. Notice the assumption behind the question.

Again, these people were stuck in the physical. This is all they could see. They assumed that the resurrection life would be the same as how it physically works here.

But it doesn't. And so King Jesus showed them that their assumption was wrong. In verse 34 to 36, Jesus uncovered a few things about resurrection which has some implications for marriage.

First, in verse 35, only those who are considered worthy will be resurrected. You see, the Sadducees assumed that all seven husbands and the wife will be there in the resurrection age.

No, this is life beyond the physical life now. Not everyone who's been physically born in this age will be there in the resurrection age. Second, the resurrected life will indeed be physical life.

[15:11] In verse 36, the resurrected people will not die, so there will be physical life. but it will be a different kind of physical life because we will not die.

We will be like angels. So something is the same, other things are different. And third, there will indeed be relationships between people, just like how it's like here, but relationships will be different because we will not be husbands or wives, we will all be children of God.

The kind of relationship that is already true spiritually now, if we follow Jesus. And so here, the Sadducees could only see from the physical perspective of the here and now, and Jesus proved that he had a much superior perspective.

and for an extra point, in verse 37 to 38, Jesus showed that even in the five books of Moses, resurrection is already implied because there, God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, even though the three have physically died, implying that they are spiritually alive and will be resurrected.

So, here, Jesus showed again that he had a greater perspective, greater knowledge, he's superior to the leaders of Israel.

[16:49] And following Jesus means having a more holistic understanding, physical and spiritual, of this world in light of eternity. and this more holistic understanding of life in light of the resurrection has some implications for human relationships in general and for marriage in particular.

So, Christians believe that marriage is a great thing, is a great gift from God, and the physical aspect of marriage is great. We get to enjoy each other's company, we get to enjoy physical affection, sex, having date nights, having a partner in raising kids, and doing domestic tasks.

Great physical things that we ought to enjoy. But there's also the spiritual aspect of the relationship that we ought to pay attention to.

Because following Jesus again means not being stuck in the physical. We see things from the spiritual perspective. Now, if human relationships will be different in the resurrection age, as Jesus told us, if the primary relationship that will be there is the spiritual relationship between children of God, then even the unmarried singles can enjoy that too.

And married couples should invest in that kind of relationship in our marriages. Hannah and I are married now and we deeply enjoy our marital relationship.

[18:35] But our vow to each other is only until death do us part. If our marital relationship won't continue in the age of resurrection, but our spiritual relationship as fellow children of God will continue, then I think we need to invest in that.

Husband and wife need to make sure that they love Jesus more than they love each other or even their children. They need to make sure that they both grow in the knowledge of Jesus.

They need to make sure that they forgive each other because both of them have been forgiven and adopted as children of God. Theologian and pastor Jonathan Edwards once said about his relationship with his wife, the uncommon union which has so long subsisted between us has been of such a nature as I trust is spiritual and therefore will continue forever.

Friends, your relationship with your spouse will only continue forever into the resurrection age if it's not only physical but also more importantly spiritual.

Because we will all be children of God and not husbands or wives. And here again in this encounter Jesus showed himself as the superior king who saw things not single dimensionally but in light of eternity multi-dimensionally both spiritual and physical.

[20:30] Now upon hearing Jesus' answer, I think his audience should have asked, how do you know this Jesus? How do you know the reality in the eternity?

How do you know what's going to happen? And the question is of course because he comes from there. He comes from eternity. Jesus is not only a human king but also God.

And going back to our illustration, if we trust someone who comes from a particular place, if we want to go to that place, then we need to trust this king if we want to go there.

God will be to that in the next encounter. In verse 41, it's Jesus' turn to ask his opponents a question.

In verse 42 to 43, he quoted the psalm, Psalm 110, our Old Testament reading, which is a psalm about the Messiah.

[21:37] Now here, in that psalm, David calls God the Lord and the Messiah my Lord. And so Jesus asks, if the Messiah is also the son of David, then why would David call him Lord?

Now, because in that culture, the younger pays respect to the elder and not the other way around. And so which one is it? Is the Messiah David's son?

or David's Lord? The passage doesn't provide any answer, but we know, don't we? He is both.

Again, from the previous parable, Jesus is the son of God as well as son of David. And from other indicators like his ability to forgive sins, to raise the dead, to calm the storm, we know he is God himself.

God so, he is David's son in his physical lineage, but he's David's Lord, because he is the Lord of the universe in his spiritual origin.

[22:53] He comes from outside of human culture, and human politics, and human world, and that's precisely why he could see both the physical and the spiritual perspectives.

Such is the wisdom and the beauty of Jesus our King. And so he is the only one who could save us from evil and brokenness in this world, because he came from outside of evil and brokenness.

is the eternal son of God who entered the world of evil and brokenness and faced evil and brokenness to the point of death.

He's not the king that we deserve, but he's the king that we need. And he's the only king worth following, worth adoration, and even worth worshipping.

And following this king should make us realize that both our physical and spiritual lives matter. And the way we see our public life and human relationships, the way we see the whole world is transformed when we follow Jesus.

[24:21] He truly is the king who is superior to all the leaders of Israel and even all leaders throughout history. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for this great display of Jesus' superiority and his glory and his wisdom and his beauty.

Help us, Lord, to see more and more of his beauty and wisdom every single day and help us with the power of your spirit to get our minds transformed into the likeness of the mind of Christ so that we can see the relationships around us and the world around us with his eyes and not only see physically but also spiritually in light of eternity.

In the name of Jesus, our King, we pray. Amen.