

Jesus the King

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Preacher: Rev. James Maciver

[0 : 00] Now let's turn together to John chapter 18 and we're looking today at verse 37. Then Pilate said to Jesus, So you are a king. Jesus answered, You say that I am a king, for this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth.

Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice. As we've said, we're going to look at this theme of Jesus the king and both of our services today.

Looking at it here in terms of Christ's own understanding of him being the king. And then we'll look tonight at Philippians chapter 3, at the expectancy of God's people as they live this life.

Of their expectancy that the king will return and that the king will come actually to, as we see there, transform them to be like himself in terms of their physical body particularly as it's mentioned there. Now Jesus was aware of who he was and Jesus was aware of what he was about, why he was in this world the way he was, why he exercised the ministry that he had in this world, why he needed to be taken and crucified.

[1 : 19] He gave himself to all of that. He had a clear understanding of his own identity, where he had come from, who he was as a person, and what his ministry was about.

And both of these are combined in terms of who he was and what his ministry was about. Both of these are combined together in this passage and in this verse itself as well.

For this purpose he says, I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth. And all we're going to do this morning is to extract from that the way that he comes to accept the way in which Pilate put to him that he was a king or questioned him about whether he was a king and whether he was the king of the Jews.

And all the way through this passage from chapter 18 here, right through it to chapter 19, at the point which we stop, verse 16, and even beyond that, the whole of that passage really has this theme of Christ being the king woven through it.

And it is something that comes very clearly to the surface in this passage all the way through. Three things about that that we want to look at.

[2 : 32] It's important, first of all, that we understand there was a preparation for Jesus coming to be revealed as the king of his people or the king redemptively or the king of creation, you might say as well.

It's all packed into his kingship. Although his kingship is especially with regard to his redeemed people as he is their king and they are his citizens or his subject.

In other words, we're talking about the Old Testament's anticipation or prophetic announcements about this king that was to come. And it's important that we actually take that with us, that we don't start looking at the kingship of Jesus in the New Testament.

Because for one thing, scripture is one. And it's important that we see the Old Testament and the New Testament, as we call them, as one witness to God, one witness to Christ, one witness to what redemption, what salvation is, one witness to all of that.

It's a unified, united, composite word. It's one that is the word of God right through it. And that's such an important thing for us to continue to remember and to hold to when you come across so many views that just take a different approach to the Bible and chop things off it and take things out and add things to it and tell you things about it, certain things in it are no longer relevant.

[4 : 05] It is a complete unit of truth, inspired by God, giving us this revelation of himself. And in that you have the revelation of this messianic king in the Old Testament, in the prophecies of the Old Testament.

But in many of the Psalms that we sing, you find that same emphasis, for example, Psalm 45 that we sang, Psalm 145. And even more specifically than that, there's Psalm 2, which is almost entirely

about the king that God has placed upon his hill of Zion.

Against all the noise and the tumult and the rejection of God by the masses, the heathen as he puts it there at the beginning, they rage against God.

And God answers that by saying, Here is my king. I have installed my king. I have installed him so that you will come and acknowledge him as my king and your king.

Therefore, he is saying in that Psalm, my counsel to you is kiss the son. It's interesting. That's how he puts it, almost like a verse from John's Gospel. Kiss the son.

[5 : 20] This king is also the son. He is God's son. He is God's chosen one to be the king of his people. And in addition to those prophecies, you of course have kingship in the Old Testament.

You have kings like David and Solomon and others that were noted for their faithfulness to God throughout the period of the kings in Israel.

And so you have that as an anticipation too of the great king, the perfect king, that was still to come. For example, we did some studies quite some time ago now and in 2 Chronicles, what we call the gallery of the kings.

And we went through many of those kings of Judah that are mentioned there and saw something about how the Bible deals with their reign, the good ones and the bad ones too. But you may remember that we saw at that occasion that 2 Chronicles is the last book in the Hebrew Bible. In the arrangement of the Old Testament books in Hebrew, 2 Chronicles is the last book. Not Malachi, 2 Chronicles. And that means that the Hebrew Bible actually finishes with the last sentence of 2 Chronicles, which are words of Cyrus of Persia, the king of Persia, who gave permission or liberty to the Jews to return from Babylon to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple.

[6 : 52] And the words are, whoever is of the Lord his God, let him go up. Let him go up to Jerusalem. Let him have the liberty to go and build their temple.

Now of course, in a literal sense, that just means let him go up to Jerusalem. But as the last word of the Old Testament and anticipating the New Testament age, that's really what it's saying to us spiritually, let's go up to that.

Let's raise, let's step up to what the New Testament is now about. Let's step up to the coming of the king. Because none of those kings in the Old Testament were perfect.

Solomon wasn't perfect. Not even David was perfect, as we well know. And the imperfection of those kings, who were themselves representatives of the kingship of God, the imperfection of the Old Testament kings, was one of the things that added to the longing of the people of God in the Old Testament for this messianic king to come.

Because one after another, all of these kings, literally, were failures. And so when the king actually came, he came in the person of the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

[8 : 11] And Jesus was aware of that. Jesus knew that. Jesus knew that his identity was bound up with the kingship that was promised in the Old Testament. So when he came to be questioned here by Pontius Pilate, are you the king of the Jews?

Which Pilate answered in his own way. And then Jesus said, my kingdom is not of this world. If it were, then my supporters would actually rise up and fight.

By the time Jesus had come and was engaged in his ministry, this prophetic expectation of a messianic king had become pretty much a political thing on the part of these leaders of the Jews. What they were really looking to was a political king, somebody who would take over the nation and actually lead them out from under the dominance of the Roman authorities, of those, of the Roman Empire and its rule in Israel.

That's what they were looking for. They were looking for this political figurehead, this champion that would lead them out from under the rule of Rome and bring them liberty. And when Jesus came, and when it became obvious, he was not going to be a political leader, that his emphasis was on a spiritual kingdom, well that was no use to them.

[9 : 36] And it was part of the reason they rejected him. It's not what they were looking for. He didn't fit the bill. And that, you know, again fits with the Old Testament prophecy, doesn't it?

Psalm 118, for example, the stone which the builders rejected, it's become the head of the corner. They examined him, they looked at him, they asked, could this be the one?

And for most of them, and for the leadership, no, it doesn't fit. So we have to put him aside and wait for the king to come. And that's why he describes it here as, his kingdom is not of this world.

Twice he says that, my kingdom is not of this world, by which he means, the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom over which he is king spiritually, is of a different order to a political kingdom. It's got a different origin, it's not of this world, it's of God, it's from him. And it's a different nature to a political kingdom, it's a spiritual nature, it's a spiritual nature, it's a spiritual kingdom, it's a kingdom characterized by things like redemption, and forgiveness of sins, and righteousness, and acceptance with God.

[10:54] That's why he says there, whosoever is of the truth, listens to my voice. In other words, the citizens of this kingdom come to be citizens through their obedience to Christ.

Placing their trust in Christ, receiving Christ for themselves as a savior, that is what actually gives them, if you like, or God gives them through that.

the passport that's stamped a citizen of Christ's kingdom. And that, of course, brings about a question for ourselves.

Are we citizens of this kingdom already? Do we belong to this kingdom? Are we willingly under the rule of this king? Is our heart willingly given to him?

Is our life willingly given to him? Have we said of ourselves, if there's going to be any hope at all for my future spiritually, then I must have this citizenship.

[12:03] I must have this king as my king. I must know that he's my king. I must willingly bow before him as my king. I must willingly kiss his hand as my king, pay homage to him, receive him, and accept him, and acknowledge that he's my God and my king.

Is that so with yourself? Is that where you are today? Is that where you're at in your life? A citizen of this great kingdom.

It's quite possible to be a worshipper, but not a citizen of this kingdom. To be amongst God's people in the worship of this great king and still not belong to this kingdom, still not have come into this kingdom, still not have this king willingly installed in your life and over your life.

Make sure today that you are a citizen of this kingdom. Make sure that you don't think it automatically comes to you. Make sure that you distinguish between being part of the church in the widest sense and actually being a citizen of this kingdom because belonging to the church in the widest sense, good though that is.

Coming to worship God in church with other people, good though self does not bring a citizenship of this kingdom. You need to bow before the king and accept this king.

[13:26] You see, that's what he's saying. Whoever is of the truth listens to my voice. And it reminds you of John chapter 10, that imagery of the shepherd and the sheep, doesn't it?

That my sheep hear my voice and I give to them eternal life. It comes to the same thing. There's just a different way of describing it here. The king and his kingdom, the shepherd and his sheep. How do you come to be part of the flock of Christ? Well, of course, there's a predestinarian side to it. There is God's side to it. That's where it all begins. But there is, from our point of view also, a reception of Christ, a coming of giving ourselves to Christ, a coming to Christ, and entering into citizenship where he is the king.

First thing then, preparation for the king's coming. Secondly, we're dealing with the king's arrival because Jesus says here, for this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world.

You notice how he combines together there being born and coming into the world. Now we ourselves speak like that, don't we? We actually say when a baby is born, we describe that as someone that has come into the world.

[14:40] We would say about our own birth. that's when I came into the world. That's when I actually came to live independently as myself as a human being. We would say I was born, which means at the same time I came into the world.

But while that is true of Jesus in terms of his birth as a human being literally, there's actually much more to it than that when you think about him being born and coming into the world.

Because before you and I were conceived in our mother's womb and then came to be born into the world, we didn't exist. We didn't exist actually in our persons.

But Jesus did. Jesus was always the son of God from all eternity. Jesus existed as the second person of this glorious trinity that God is.

So when he speaks about being born and when he speaks about him coming into the world, it means he came into the world from where he was. From where he existed.

[15 : 41] from all eternity as a person of the Godhead. He came from eternity if you like. You see words are so difficult for us to find words that can describe this thing adequately.

Because we're not talking about someone whose person had a beginning. His human nature, yes, it had a beginning. But not his person. His person had no beginning.

He existed before time. He existed in the way in which he was always God. And it was by him and through him and for him, as scripture says, that creation was made.

That everything that was made came to be made. So you see, his person, that's why you find so often in the Bible, we saw it in the gospel of Luke, you find it in John as well, you find it even on the lips of Pilate, where have you come from?

Pilate didn't really understand the importance of that question in a spiritual sense, but when he went back in again to his headquarters to re-examine Jesus and ask him, after he'd been told by the Jews that this man had made himself the son of God, he was even more afraid then.

[16 : 59] And when he went in, this is the question he put to him, where have you come from? Now Jesus could have said to him, well actually I've come from eternity, I've always been in existence as God, of course Pilate wouldn't have a clue what that meant, it's difficult enough for ourselves.

But you see, this is what it is, in coming into the world, in coming to be born, in coming into the world, Jesus actively was involved in that himself.

He actively took human nature and joined it to himself. This person who is the son of God is identified as the son of God.

But this son of God chose to take human nature by being conceived in the womb of Mary, by developing in her womb, by coming to be born the same way as you and I are born.

But the great question is, who is this? It's not just simply a human being. You don't deal with his identity by just saying he is a human being.

[18 : 12] You say, this is the son of God. And that is one of the amazing things. that before the world existed, before anything existed, Christ existed, Jesus existed as the son of God.

And when the time came, if you put it in terms of worldly terms, of things that we understand and our circumstances of time, when the time came, Jesus having had this planned for all eternity, he himself actually came and took human nature willingly to himself.

In other words, God, you see, you must give this I, all the force that the text itself gives to it. Jesus answered, you say that I am a king.

For this purpose I was born. And for this purpose I have come into the world. I, the son of God, I, God, this person of the son, I have come into the world.

I have been born. It's an amazing thing that God in the person of his son knows what it is to be conceived in a human womb.

[19 : 27] Knows what it is to develop as a fetus in a human womb for the months of development before birth. Knows what it is to be born of a woman brought into this world in a birth that you can say is a human birth.

birth. But it's the human birth of the son of God. How amazing is that? That's the reality of it. And in all of that, Jesus, the son of God, is actively involved in this himself without ceasing in any way to be God.

God. He is in himself God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever, as our catechism beautifully puts it.

And all of that is so important when we think of who this Jesus is. He's the king. How is he the king? Well, he's the king in the way that he came to be revealed to us in this world.

He was born to bear witness to the truth. He came into the world to bear witness to the truth. That means the truth of God, the truth of all that God has revealed of himself to us.

[20 : 48] He came to bear testimony, to bear witness to that truth. And he was born to that end, including of course his ministry and his death and his resurrection. And all is bound up with that as the truth of God.

And the king's arrival was through birth, through coming into the world. And we worship him as the king.

In Luke's gospel you find, of course, the announcement of the birth and the coming of the wise men from the east and so on and the gifts that they brought to him. And all of that, of course, is part part of the way the scripture presents the birth of the king.

He was the king in the sense in which he was God. He was the king from all eternity. But he's now the king in a different way. And the fact that he's actually in a manger, wrapped up there with baby clothes, dependent on his human mother.

father. But he's still the king. He's the king in that cradle as he was before the world was created. The same person but now having taken our human nature to himself.

[22 : 07] And that, of course, helps us to understand what it is we're doing when we worship Jesus. And why we worship Jesus. And why he's worthy of our worship just as much as the Father is and the Holy Spirit is.

Because he is the king. Because he is, in fact, the king in a sense in which no other of the persons of the Trinity is the king. Because it wasn't the Father who took human nature.

It wasn't the spirit who took human nature. The spirit was involved and the Father was involved. It is Jesus, especially, who has taken our human nature. And as we know him as the king, so we worship the God-man.

We worship the person. We worship him as our king. Preparation and then arrival. And then we come to the rejection of the king.

Another important facet of this passage. Because the passage is not just telling us that Jesus is the king and will be the king and remains the king. The passage is telling us that it was as the king or presented to them as the king, as their king, that the Jews rejected him.

[23 : 16] That these religious leaders rejected him and instead of accepting him, said away with him, crucify him. And Pilate, to give him his due, Pilate was afraid of what he was about to pronounce because he had heard things about this and he understood things about this man.

And he could see for himself about this man that this was no ordinary man. And in fact he said to the Jews, shall I crucify your king? I don't find any fault in him. You take him and crucify him.

No, said the Jews, we have a law. He made himself the son of God and we have a law. Anybody saying that has to be put to death. And that's when Pilate asked, where are you from?

Now, we've said that there's an anticipation in the Old Testament, prophecies about the coming of the king. But in the Old Testament, you have to remember that ultimately, God is their king.

And that's why we sing these great psalms that express in the Old Testament days that God was the king of his people. Before Jesus was born, before the incarnation, before the New Testament age began, God was the king of his people as he still continues to be the king of his people.

[24 : 36] Psalm 95, Psalm 145, Isaiah chapter 6, which brings side by side the death of the earthly king Uzziah in the year in which the king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord high and lifted up.

And what was Isaiah's reaction? Woe is me, I am undone, for my eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts.

God is the king. And that's why Samuel was so upset when the people in 1 Samuel chapter 8, as we have it recorded there, the people came to him and said, make us a king so that we will be like the nations around us, a king who will go into battle at our head.

They wanted to be like these nations that each of which had a king to lead them and to lead them into battle and things like that. Israel said to Samuel, make us a king.

And Samuel was upset by that. He knew that their king was God. What were the people doing? So he brought the matter to the Lord. And he spoke to the Lord about it and prayed about it.

[25 : 56] And the Lord answered him. And what the Lord said to him was, do what they're telling you. Do what they're asking. Because they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being their king.

That was God's response. They have rejected me from being their king. And that rejection is not confined, of course, to the Old Testament.

As we said this passage, the ultimate rejection of God as king is in the rejection of Christ by the people then. That's the ultimate rejection of God as king.

And all the way through, as we say in this passage, when you take note of it, if you just read it again when you get home, or when you have an opportunity, read through this passage we've read today, and just check the number of times that Christ as a king is mentioned.

Whether it's in a question, whether it's in the Jewish rejection of him, or in Pilate's interview of him, or in Christ's own words, it's there almost verse after verse, this fact of Christ being the king, and the way that it's dealt with in these verses.

[27 : 14] And when you come to see how they dealt with it, you can see there from chapter 18, as I say, verse 39 and 40, especially we have a custom, do you want me to release to you, sorry, chapter 19 it is, and verse 9, Pilate entered his headquarters again and said, where are you from?

As if he's saying, well, I know there's something about this that I can't understand, but I just need to be sure about what I'm doing. Where are you from?

Who indeed are you? What's your identity? And when you come to see who they actually took instead of Jesus, the end of chapter 18 there, it's very interesting that significant that Jesus, that Pilate wanted to keep to the custom that they had, that someone should be released at the Passover.

Somebody who had been taken into custody. And do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? What a great question. What a dynamic question.

There he is, bringing to these people this man, Jesus Christ. And these people that ought to have recognized him as their king as the answer to the Old Testament's prophecies, as the fulfillment of him in himself.

[28 : 43] Shall I, do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? They should have said, yes.

No, they said, not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was, as it says there, a robber, which is not really just the strongest term.

The literal term is an insurrectionist. You would call him nowadays, and we're very used to this nowadays, Barabbas was actually a terrorist. He was known to the people as a terrorist.

That's why he was in prison. He was a dangerous man. He had led a rebellion or been involved in an insurrection or a rebellion. He wasn't just a thief. He wasn't somebody who was a robber in the normal way in which you find that spoken about.

He was an insurrectionist. He was what you would call nowadays a terrorist. And that's who they said. They wanted released instead of their own king as he should have been to them.

[29 : 48] The other interesting thing is that Barabbas, an Aramaic, has a particular meaning that's relevant to the situation. Bar is the Aramaic for son.

Abbas for father. Put them together. What do you have? Son of a father. Release to us Barabbas, the insurrectionist, the terrorist, whose name means son of a father.

Crucify the son of the father. Because they didn't accept that's who he was. He made himself the son of God. Therefore he has to die.

How ironic is that? That they accepted an insurrectionist whose name meant the son of a father. And they rejected the Messiah. The son of the father in heaven. They gave him over to be crucified. The rejection of the king.

[30 : 55] But you see, God always has the last word. And God will always have the last word in your life and in my life as well. And in the history of the world.

And in all the developments of the world. And in everything that's been done against him. All the way down through history. When the king comes again, he will have the last word. And you can see God having the last word even in this passage.

Because when he comes to be crucified, they bring out a plaque to be placed above his head. Which, in verses 19 to 22 there of chapter 19, Pilate had this inscription written and put it on the cross. It read, Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews.

Many of the Jews read this inscription for the place where he was crucified was near the city. And was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, Do not write the king of the Jews.

[32 : 01] But rather that this man said, I am king of the Jews. And Pilate, as God's instrument, if you like, said, What I have written, I have written.

You can crucify him. You can say he's not your king. I am going to leave what I have written the way it is. The hand of God, you see, is in that.

Pilate didn't know that he was acting for God, that God was using him. But that's how it is. And God is really saying through that, Yes, you can reject my king, but he's still the king.

You can crucify him, but he's still the king. It's not just that these people said he was the king, or this man said that he was the king of the Jews. He is the king.

And to this day, he's rejected. And he's rejected by many people and by many philosophies. And he's rejected in our own land to the extent that even what you find, as we mentioned to the children

this morning, this one-minute film or advert for the Lord's Prayer, is rejected from being shown in cinemas.

[33 : 17] It was a means for those who devised it just to bring this great message in advance, I think it was, of this new film, the new Star Wars film, that would bring the king, that would bring prayer to God in terms of the Lord's Prayer, which for generations has been rehearsed and learned by our children, by ourselves, by people in our nation, but is rejected.

Why? Because the king is rejected. But God is still saying, fine, you can reject me, you can reject my king, but he's still the king.

And it'll be shown when he comes. And you can choose to reject that, but it's still a fact. And it will be the case, because God has said it.

And that's what we hold on to. And that's where God brings us, as at the end of Psalm 2, to think of our own relationship to this king today.

And when it says there, kiss the king, kiss the son, is what it says. Pay homage to him.

[34 : 38] It's not just a sign of affection, it's also a sign of homage. There was a great debate recently, wasn't there, about the leader of the Labour Party, the new leader, whether he would come and be made a privy councillor.

The custom is you kiss the queen's hand as a sign of acknowledgement of her being the monarch and your subjection to harass the monarch. A great question, was he going to do that or not? I don't know if he did it or not. I'm not interested, frankly, it's not for a political point I'm making it at all. The point is, when you come to acknowledge a monarch, you show your acknowledge by certain things that you do.

And one of them is by kissing the hand of the monarch. And that goes back to ancient times. And when Psalm 2 says, kiss the son, what it's really saying is, pay homage to him, bow before him, accept him as your king.

The ironic thing is, is that when Jesus was delivered to be examined and then crucified, he was delivered by Judas Iscariot with a kiss.

[35 : 52] The kiss of treachery. The very thing that outwardly was a sign of allegiance. A sign of homage, a sign of affection, became the sign of treachery on the part of Judas.

What ought to have shown his allegiance to Jesus, instead, he turned it. Whosoever it is, I kiss, that's the one that you have to arrest.

that you're not going to be a Judas. You're not going to turn that the way he did. You're going to kiss him, are you not?

In love and allegiance and acceptance. O Lord, you are my God and King.

Let's pray. Gracious Lord and our Father in heaven, we thank you that you are indeed our King.

[37 : 03] We thank you for all that your kingship means to your people. And we thank you for the way that you continue to emphasize your kingship against all the assaults that are made upon it in our land and our day and throughout the world.

O Lord, our God, we pray that you would manifest that kingship in a way that would answer your people's prayer for blessing. For as we have been singing in your praise, we call upon you as one who girds your sword spiritually upon your thigh.

We plead with you to ride forth in blessing and prosperity and bring people into subjection willingly to yourself. We ask these things, Lord, confessing your sin, seeking acceptance of us now.

For Jesus' sake. Amen.