

Christ as King

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Preacher: Rev Fergus A.J.Macdonald

[0 : 00] Luke chapter 1 at verse 32. Let me read from verse 31.

And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the High. And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Of his kingdom there shall be no end, or his kingdom will never end.

I'm sure that all of us know that the theory known as the divine right of kings was relieved and practiced by the house of Stuart in previous centuries in this country.

This despotic form of government was resisted most strongly by the Christian community in Scotland and in England.

[1 : 07] Because Christians knew that the Stuart kings were arrogating to themselves powers which belong only to Jesus Christ.

And of the many confrontations which took place between the leaders of the church here in Scotland and the Stuart rulers, perhaps the most famous was that between Andrew Melville and James VI.

Andrew Melville was successively principal of the University of Glasgow and St Mary's College in St Andrews. He was one of the outstanding Scotsmen of his day, and indeed of all Scottish history.

And when he had a private interview along with other church leaders, with James, he said to him these well-known words, Sir, Sir, as divers, that is, various times before, I have told you.

So now again I must tell you there are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland. There is King James, the head of this commonwealth, and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the church, whose subject James VI is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but a member.

[2 : 28] Jesus is indeed a king. Although born in a stable, he was born to be king.

As the three wise men acknowledged him, they came and offered him their gifts. The main theme of the future, you will remember, was that the kingdom of God, the rule of God, had come in his coming.

When he was crucified on the cross of Calvary, the superscription which was erected above his cross, read in three languages, the king of the Jews.

And having died that terrible death, he rose again triumphantly on the third day, and was made king by God the Father. And so, Peter on the day of Pentecost said, let all Israel be assured of this, God has made this Jesus whom you have crucified, both lord, or king, and Christ.

You remember how in John's vision of heaven in the book of Revelation, he sees the lamb, or Jesus, as the king of kings, and lord, of lords.

[3 : 42] And so, with justice, and with reason, Gabriel said to Mary, concerning the one that she was to conceive and to bear, that his kingdom would never end.

There is a sense, of course, in which Jesus always was king, even before his birth, and before his ascension to the Father's right hand. He always was equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit as part of the eternal trinity.

He has, from all eternity, enjoyed supremacy and sovereignty over all things, equally with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. But the sense, in which, these words of Gabriel say that Jesus will be king and his kingdom shall have no end, is that at his resurrection and ascension, he was made a king by his Father as a reward for all that he had done for his people in his life and in his death.

Sometimes theologians say that Jesus Christ has two kingdoms. He is, first of all, king of creation and king of providence. He shares this rule with God the Father and with God the Holy Spirit and always has and always will.

But on the other hand, he is also king of redemption. And this is a kingship which he assumed, which he was given, which was conferred upon him in his resurrection and ascension.

[5 : 21] And so they speak of an essential kingdom on the one hand and a mediatorial kingdom on the other. He is the king of the world, he is the king of the whole universe, but he is also in a special sense the king of the church.

And it is the second kingdom of Jesus, of kingship of Jesus, that is emphasized in the New Testament. It is emphasized because it was new.

He was made a mediatorial king after his resurrection. This kingship is uniquely his. His other kingship he shares with the Father and with the Holy Spirit.

that this kingship is his alone. This redemptive or mediatorial kingship of Jesus was prefigured and typified in the Old Testament in David's kingship and that of his successors in ancient Israel.

You remember how the Jews looked forward to a Messiah who would be above all else a king. In the Royal Psalms, two of which we read and one of which we have sung, look forward to a Davidic king or a king of David's line who would become the ruler of the earth.

[6 : 47] And these psalms have found their deepest and fullest significance and fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ. And so we worship Jesus as king, king of kings and lord of lords.

What does it mean for Jesus to be our king? What does it mean to confess him and to acknowledge him as such? Again, we turn to the shorter catechism which we've looked at in actually answering these questions concerning the offices of Jesus as prophets, priests, and kings.

And in answer to the question in question 26 of the shorter catechism, how does Christ execute the office of a king? The rest of the catechism says, Christ executed the office of a king in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all he and our enemies.

There you have it in a nutshell, the five acts of Christ as king, subduing, ruling, defending, restraining, and conquering.

And when Jesus was born to be king, he was born to subdue, born to rule, born to defend, born to restrain, and born to conquer.

[8 : 10] Let us then look at each of these briefly. First of all, he subdued us. Because all of us without exception belong to the human race, and the human race has rebelled against God, we find ourselves as we are born and as we are constituted as human beings as of now, rebels against God.

As Paul said to the Romans in chapter 8, the sinful mind, he said, is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law nor can it cease. The symbol of the human race is a clenched fist shaken and defiant in God's face.

It has rebelled against God. I remember as a boy being fascinated reading Banyan's Holy War, a book which fascinated me much more than his better known book The Pilgrim's Progress.

John Banyan there tells the story of the city that he calls the city of Nansoul, a city that was founded and built by King Shaddai that had been captured by Diabolus, the mighty giant.

And Banyan tells us that when you reach King Shaddai, he sent his son Prince Emmanuel with his armies to subdue the city.

[9 : 40] And the story of the Holy War is the story of how Prince Emmanuel comes with his armies and subdues the city of Nansoul.

And of course that book The Holy War is an allegory as is the Pilgrim's Progress and the city of Mansoul is a picture an allegory of you and of me.

And what Banyan is saying there is that we have come under the power of Diabolus the devil. We have become victims of evil, willing and compliant victims.

And that Jesus Christ has come into the world to be a king to subdue us to himself. Paul wrote to the Corinthians and he said God always causes us to triumph in Christ.

And the word triumph there is used, is borrowed from the practice in ancient Rome of a conquering general returning to the capital city. And his procession as he entered the city was known as a triumph.

[10 : 52] And following his army he would bring the chiefs and the kings that he had captured.

They would be in chains. They would be part of his triumph. And Paul says that he has become part of Christ's triumph.

He has been subdued. He has been captured. And he's a willing servant, a willing citizen of Jesus Christ.

And so Jesus Christ has come into the world first of all to subdue us. I wonder have we submitted to him? Are we willing to become part of his triumph?

Are we willing to give up the illusion that we are masters of our destiny and in control of our own fate? Are we willing to submit ourselves to him?

is Christ ruling as king in the city of Mansoul? Or is he outside still seeking to subdue it?

[12:01] Secondly, Jesus as king rules us. Even after the city of Mansoul was captured, elements of rebellion and pockets of resistance remained.

Part of Banyan's story tells of how Emmanuel ruled the city. And even after having submitted to Jesus Christ as lord and as king, we require to be ruled and governed.

We live in an age which tends to react against laws and against rule and against government. and at the back of a lot of this popular or sense of popular defines is the idea that as a result of the evolutionary process, man has at long last come of age.

And he doesn't need laws anymore. He doesn't need rules. As long as we're children, we need rules. But when we grow up, we don't need parental authority.

And so the popular idea is by some evolutionary philosophers that we no longer need religion. We no longer need an absolute morality because man has come of age.

[13:21] This is a philosophy which has been expounded widely in the continent of Europe and in this country. And it is this philosophy that lies behind the permissive society.

What is the result? The chaotic and parlous state of our nation and of Western Europe at the present moment.

We need to live under authority. We have been made to live under authority. We have been made to be the servants of God. And it is indeed as Andrew Melville and Samuel Rutherford and others maintain, it is indeed because we are God servants and God slaves that we can become no man slave.

It is because we are the slaves and the servants of God that no man can make us his slaves and seek to usurp God's place.

How then does Christ rule? How does he exercise his authority? He does so in two ways. First of all by his word and secondly by his Holy Spirit. He has given us his word.

[14:37] John Calvin called the Bible the scepter of Jesus Christ. It is through his word that he leads us and he guides us. We are given in the scriptures his will.

We are given in the scriptures his guidance. But of course the scriptures deal with great principles only rather than small details.

and so in specific situations Jesus guides us not only through the scriptures but also by his Holy Spirit. And in these situations we must ask him to guide us by his spirit and that his spirit would give us a conviction as to what God's will is in a particular situation.

So Jesus Christ has promised to rule in the lives of his people. He is king and when a king commands his subjects should obey.

Do you remember how Saul of Tarsus was stopped on the road to Damascus? Do you remember how as he on that mission of persecution he was arrested as he said later by Jesus Christ?

[15:48] As he neared Damascus on his journey suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him and he fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you Lord?

Saul asked. I am Jesus whom you are persecuting he replied. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do. Get up said Jesus go into the city and you will be told what you must do.

The word of Jesus coming directly to Saul of Tarsus and what do we read? Saul got up and went into the city. The king commanded his new subject obeyed.

Now God does not speak to us directly because he has given us the full scripture which was unavailable to Paul at that time. But God speaks to us through his word.

I wonder do we obey it? When God's word comes to us whether when we're reading it privately or when we're hearing it expounded from the pulpit, do we obey it?

[16:54] Do we obey the word of the king? Are we living in obedience? Is Christ ruling in your life and in mine? Then if we move on to the next chapter of Acts we discover Peter hearing responding to the rule of Christ.

While Peter was still thinking about the vision of the sheep coming down from heaven with food, a mixture of clean and unclean food, according to the Jewish food laws.

Peter couldn't understand how he as a Jew should be asked to eat unclean food. While Peter was still thinking about the vision the spirit said to him, Simon, three men are looking for you, so get up and go downstairs.

Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them. When Luke goes on, Peter went down and said to the men, I am the one you're looking for. Why have you come?

The spirit spoke. The spirit gave him this conviction and he obeyed. He didn't stay up from the roof, from the flat roof. He obeyed.

[18 : 01] He went downstairs. He obeyed. He acknowledged the rule of Christ. He obeyed. He obeyed. I wonder when the king commands by his word and spirit in your life and in mine, do we obey?

Or do we hesitate? Do we seek to fudge the issue? Do we pander to our own prejudices, our own comforts, our own biased scale of priorities?

I wonder do we obey the king of kings and lord of lords? Or do we join the appalling spectacle of the mockery of acknowledging Christ as king, but living in rebellion against him?

The third kingly act of Christ is that he defends us. Of some people it is sometimes heard said that they have no enemy in the world.

And this is true of some people who manage to remain through tact and good grace on good terms with virtually everybody. But that cannot be said of anyone concerning spiritual enemies.

[19 : 22] And these enemies are many and powerful. people. To mention a few, there is sin, there is the devil, there is the world in the sense of the organized system of evil in society, there is death, and there is the grave.

These are enemies which face all of us. And even if we've acknowledged Christ as king, even if he has subdued us, and even if he rules us, we need him to defend us also.

Because all of us are exposed to these spiritual enemies, the devil, says James, goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

And even if we acknowledge Jesus Christ as king, temptation is fierce. And when temptation comes, we of ourselves cannot resist it.

We need Christ to defend us when the tempter comes seeking to seduce us and to bring us back, seeking to foment rebellion and sedition in the city of Manso.

[20 : 38] But with Christ's help, he can be put to flight. Resist the devil, says James, and he will flee from you. Submit yourselves to God, resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

And the forces of evil can sometimes approach us in a way which can be defined more in terms of assault than terms of temptation. Martin Luther, on one occasion, was so, felt so oppressed by the force and the presence of the devil that he took his ink pot and he threw it against the wall.

As an act of defiance against the devil, he as it were, threw it at the devil. And I remember hearing, when I was a student, Reverend James Philip of Holyrood Abbey Church in Edinburgh, say that there were times in his ministry when he was so conscious of the presence of the devil assaulting him that he spoke to the devil and rebuked him using the scriptures that our Lord used, and he was tempted in the wilderness.

You see, we need Christ to defend us. And he has promised us as our king to defend us. And if you have acknowledged Christ as your king, then you've got him as your defender and protector.

You've got him as the one who has promised never to desert you. You've got him as the one who has promised never to let you go. And he is the king of kings and lord of lords.

[22 : 08] All power, he says, is given unto me. His power is greater than the forces of evil put together. And he is able to keep.

He is able to present you faultless before the presence of his father with exceeding joy. Why? Because he is king, king of kings and lord of lords.

And so it is that even although we be tempted fiercely and even although we be assaulted assiduously by the devil, we by the grace of God can sing if he is our lord.

The lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my god, my strength in whom I will trust. And fourthly, Jesus as our king restrains his and our enemies.

He is able to thwart the plans that are devised by the enemies of his people. You remember how Balaam was hired in the Old Testament by Balak to curse the people of Israel.

[23 : 20] And Balaam, that old soothsayer, found that he was unable to do so. He said, I cannot, he said, curse the people that God wants to bless. You remember how Paul, writing to the Romans, Christians who were suffering some form of persecution, some form of oppression, assured them that God works all things together for good to those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

But even in the midst of persecution, even in the midst of suffering, God causes all things to work together for good. He's restraining. He is restraining and overruling his and our enemies. God before us, who can be against us? Because he is the sovereign Lord, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Fifthly and finally, Jesus conquers all his and our enemies. He is one who is the King of, born to be King, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the one of whose kingdom there will be no end. And he does this now in part. He does this by limiting the power of our enemies, the power of death, for example.

[24 : 42] If Christ is your King, death can touch your body, but it cannot touch your soul. If Christ is your King, you can cry out, O death, where is thy sting?

O grave, where is thy victory? Because Christ has conquered death. Christ has robbed death of its sting, by having borne that sting in himself upon the cross of Calvary.

And so Christ, as King of Kings and Lord of Lords, is one who conquers now. And the last and the most feared enemy of all is the enemy of death. And that enemy is a conquered enemy.

The people of Christ still have to pass through death, but it's the death only of the body. It is not the second death, which the book of Revelation grimly describes.

But if he conquers partially now, he will conquer completely at the last day, when all his enemies shall be put under his feet. And in Psalm 2, which we read, we have that graphic picture of the resistance of the enemies of the King of Kings being smashed, like a piece assured of pottery.

[26 : 00] We must remember at this time of year when we think of Jesus, gentle, meek, and mild. He is the one who made a whip and drove the money changers from the temple.

And that he is one who will come to judge the world at the last day. And then he will not come in mercy. He will come in wrath. And that is why the psalmist in Psalm 2 urges us to kiss the son, to kiss him with a kiss of oriental submission and acknowledgement as king.

Because unless we make our peace with him now, if we persist in defying him and flouting his offer of mercy in the armistice that he offers us, he will have no alternative but to pass us by and to judge us on that day.

He is the one who although when he came into this world became a servant and lived as a servant to men and who died the death of a cross, yet God has highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

That's the great utterance of Paul in Philippians chapter 2. Every knee shall bow. He will conquer.

[27 : 46] He must reign, says Paul to the Corinthians, until he has put all his enemies under his feet. This is the one who was born in Bethlehem's stable.

He was born to be king. He was born to rule. And he will rule forever and ever. He will conquer all his enemies.

He will banish sin from his creation. He will establish an order of perfect justice and goodness and righteousness.

But he is withholding the establishment of that order in order to give us who belong to this present order which has gone wrong the opportunity to opt out of it into his new order.

He in his mercy and in his grace is withholding his judgment in order to give us the opportunity to reject the authority of diabolus and submit ourselves to the kingly rule of Jesus Christ.

[29 : 01] And so he as king of kings and lord of lords has come. He's come to Bethlehem. He's come to Calvary. And he's come here today.

to your door and to my door. And he offers us once again to become our king. He reminds us at this time of year that he has come, he's been born, born, as Gabriel said, to be king, king of kings and lord of lords.

And as he came once at Bethlehem, so also he will come again. not to some obscure village in Judea.

And he shall come to the whole world, every eye shall see him. He will not come in obscurity. He will come, and the whole world will know that he has come.

He will not come to invite men and women to submit. But he will come to enforce submission. He will come to establish his rule, to be king of kings and lord of lords.

[30 : 19] But you see, the problem is that you and I, as we have been made in the image of God, have been given the faculty of choice.

And God, in Jesus Christ, is inviting you and me to choose him as king. See, when he comes, and when he forces people to accept him as king, that destroys their personality.

It destroys our humanness. And that is perhaps one of the things that hell will be, because it's destruction. You see, Jesus is withholding his coming and giving us the opportunity to choose him as king.

Giving us the opportunity to make him our king. Giving us the opportunity to honour him as our king. Because, you see, if we delay until he comes and forces us to acknowledge him as king, then this will mean that we'll be no longer human beings.

In the sense of the term, we will be destroyed. We'll be judged. we'll be under his wrath and under his judgment.

[31 : 37] And that is why the message of the king, the message of the stable of Bethlehem, the message of Jesus Christ, is a message of love and of grace. And he offers us now the opportunity to make him king, to crown him Lord of all.

The kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom. It is an extensive kingdom also. It includes people of all ages, ranks and nations.

Many shall be found in it from every nation, from every people and from every language. And all men everywhere are invited to enter his kingdom. This kingdom will never end.

God. And so a Christ who was born as a babe, was born to be king, born to offer us today security, both temporal and eternal, satisfaction, both physical and spiritual.

He comes to offer us all that sin has rubbed us off. He comes offering to become our king.

[32 : 51] May God grant that all of us may acknowledge him as such, and that we may submit to him now and acknowledge him as our king and as our Lord.

Amen.