

The Church and Politics

Part 5 – King

Revelation 19:11-16

1. The acting King.

- *Mark 10:42-45; Philippians 2:6-11*

2. The arbiter King.

- *1 Samuel 2:10; Romans 14:9-12; John 5:24-29;*
2 Peter 3:9

3. The authoritative King.

- *Matthew 28:18; Ephesians 1:20-22; John 10:18;*
Matthew 9:6

4. The atoning King.

- *1 John 2:2, 4:10*

love.learn.live.
westvalleychurch.com



West Valley Church
11/17/24
Michael O'Neill

The Church and Politics

Part Five: King

There is the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world, and we *can* be politically engaged in this world while still being fully devoted to Jesus. But make no mistake: we vote for presidents. We submit to a king. That's been the point of this series we are concluding today.

There's been a great deal of anxiety and consternation leading up to our presidential election, and now in some cases there's even more *as a result* of our election. In the last twelve days I've seen some examples of sore losers, and I've seen some examples of sore winners. I'm not sure which is worse!

A couple weeks ago, at the end of the election day, we were in the Boise area because we were visiting our newborn granddaughter. Do you want to see pictures?! See me after church, I've got lots. Or see Shelly – she's got more pictures than I do. But that evening as we went to bed, it occurred to me we had been so caught up in our son and daughter-in-law and granddaughter that I hadn't even checked the election results. I was in blissful ignorance! So as we were getting ready for bed, I thought I ought to check and see what was happening with the election. At that point, Trump was leading, but the margin was still close. And suddenly I was hit with a wave of anxiety. I thought, what if the wrong person wins? Or the right person loses? What will the next four years and beyond be like? I was actually a bit surprised by my sudden anxiety, because up till then I really wasn't stressing over it, and of course we've been talking about this together in this series for the last month. That sudden urge to be anxious reminded me that I needed to breath deep, pray, and remember that no matter what happened, we vote for presidents but submit to a King. I voted for a president, but I submit to a King. This entire election season, and over the next four years I'm sure, will be an opportunity to remind ourselves that Jesus is King. Presidents come and go. Jesus is King.

The very last book of the Bible, Revelation, describes Jesus this way:

...the Sovereign-Strong. On his robe and thigh is written, King of kings, Lord of lords. (Revelation 19:11-16, tmt)

Jesus is *the* King. Now for a lot of people, the idea of kings and kingdoms makes us think of tyrants or dictators. Maybe to you a king is like a character from a fairy tale or a movie, one with a with a positive image or maybe a negative one, or a comical or even cartoonish image. Maybe the best you can do is think of that creepy large-headed Burger King guy from their ads a few years back. Regardless of what we think about kings, Jesus Christ is not just *a* king; He is *THE* King, and we need to be

sure we understand who he is and submit to him. That is the only way to navigate whatever awaits us in the four years ahead of our country and world.

Let's start by seeing that Jesus Christ is...

1. The *acting* king.

I don't mean that he is someone who "acts" like a king but isn't really; what I mean is that he is a king who *acts* on his kingship. He is a king of action. You can learn a lot about a king by the way he behaves, and the same is true for how Jesus, the King, acts. While Scripture makes it clear that Jesus is King, Jesus' earthly ministry was not one of military might or oppressiveness or of gathering great power or great wealth. Usually if someone is a king, he must prove it by his power and by his money. Jesus certainly could've exerted his power, but he chose not to. His reign is one of peace, liberation, love and service. Jesus turned the whole concept of kingship and rulership upside down:

Jesus got (the disciples) together to settle things down. "You've observed how godless rulers throw their weight around," he said, "and when people get a little power how quickly it goes to their heads. It's not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not to be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for many who are held hostage." (Mark 10:42-45, tmt)

Jesus knew the popular images of kings and lords and he didn't just reject them, he thoroughly redefined them. In Jesus' Kingdom, in order to be a ruler of all, a person must be a servant of all.

Jesus didn't order his subjects to serve him; Jesus showed the way by being a servant to others, from the very beginning. The story of Christmas is an example of Jesus' redefining what it means to be a king. The Bible says:

He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross. For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. And so, in honor of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees, and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:6-11, gnt)

Jesus is the King, yet his actions as king are different than the way we think a king should behave. Before the birth of Christ, and even since then, no royalty would *ever* dare to show their humility. For most, that would be too human; too common. Kings have parades and entourages to draw the focus toward themselves and their power and wealth. But God the Son, King of all creation, humbled himself to become human

– one of us. And even though he would never die of natural causes, he chose to serve and shared the ultimate fate of his imprisoned subjects: he died (more on that in a minute).

Not only is he the serving king by his actions, he is also...

2. The arbiter king.

Jesus' role of King is closely tied to his role as arbiter, which means he is the "judge" king. Now, Jesus as judge is something that you don't hear about much in churches these days – I'm not sure many of us like the idea a whole lot. But Jesus as judge is in our very creeds – our statements of faith. Here are some excerpts from the church's historical statements of faith:

We believe in the resurrection of the dead, that the bodies both of the just and of the unjust shall be raised to life and united with their spirits—"they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

We believe in future judgment in which every person shall appear before God to be judged according to his or her deeds in this life. We believe that glorious and everlasting life is assured to all who savingly believe in, and obediently follow, Jesus Christ our Lord; and that the finally impenitent shall suffer eternally in hell.¹

Those are in our age-old Articles of Faith. Right now, Jesus is the eternal and all-powerful Lord and King, and someday he will return to judge, and everyone and everything will submit to Him. These are some the things the Bible says about him:

Those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will judge with thunder against them from heaven; the LORD will judge the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed. (1 Samuel 2:10, niv)

For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living...we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written:

"As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will acknowledge God." So then, each of us will give an account of ourselves to God. (Romans 14:9-12, niv)

Jesus said: Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the

¹ Manual, Church of the Nazarene *Articles of Faith*, Article XVI, paragraphs 16-16.2, pgs 34-3, 2023

Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out—those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned. (John 5:24-29, niv)

Jesus Christ is the arbiter king, meaning that he is the judge. But unlike human judgments, Christ looks at the heart and does not judge by human standards. Our justice seeks *retribution*, but Christ's justice seeks *restoration*. (*repeat*) Human justice is repayment and incarceration; Christ's justice is about repentance and salvation. That's why the Bible warns us time and again about Jesus' return. That's why the Bible tells us that God is holding off on Jesus' promised return as long as he possibly can in the hopes that as many as possible would repent and be saved:

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9, niv)

God wants you to come to him *before* you have to face his judgment. He's warning you in order to restore you to right relationship with him, and so that you don't have to face his judgment as a sinner.

Someday we will all stand before the truly righteous judge who will accept no excuse and will tolerate no legal loopholes. On Judgment Day you won't be able to sue anyone or blame anyone else for your sins. You will be called to account for every sin you have committed – and you can be certain that your sins will condemn you to death. (Romans 6:23)

But don't despair! Although you won't be able to blame anyone else for your sins, right *now* today someone else will take the punishment for you; that's Jesus the judge himself. Author and pastor John Stott once said, "The concept of substitution lies at the heart of both sin and salvation. For the essence of sin is man substituting himself for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for man."² The judge stepped into your judgment for you. You still have time to accept God's free gift of pardon: it is called salvation. Jesus Christ the King died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. He did it, not because some clever lawyer was able to pin your sins on him – he willingly took your sins and died for them *because he loves you*. He died, so you could live. (Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 12:36; Romans 2:16; 1 Timothy 4:1, 8)

Jesus is the acting King, the Arbiter King, and he is...

3. The authoritative king.

We are used to democracy where everyone gets a vote. In fact, the accusation is that there are many people who get *more* than one vote! You know what they say: vote early, vote often! But even now as officials are still counting and recounting senatorial ballots for the elections, you don't get a vote when it comes to Christ – he

² John Stott, The Cross of Christ (Intervarsity, 1986)

is king. “Due process” and “the majority rule” can do good things in our government, but there are times when those systems make mistakes or are taken advantage of. Jesus is not subject to votes. God is what we call “wholly other” – completely other; he is completely different in his form and function and thoughts and existence than we are. Yet he has chosen to reveal himself in history and become one of us in Jesus Christ. Still Jesus said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18, niv)

Make no mistake: we have not elected Jesus to be president and God’s creation is not made up of registered voters. There are no referendums on God’s will and there is no chance of recalling him or filibustering if we don’t like the way he does things. We vote for presidents; we submit to a king.

That’s why this reality of Christ as Lord and King is sometimes difficult to us who live in a democratic society where the focus more and more seems to be a selfish priority on our own individual rights. In His Kingdom we surrender all of our rights to Him. The Bible reminds us:

(God) raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world. Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. (Ephesians 1:20-22, gnt)

He is a King, but Christ is a different kind of King: all-powerful, but also all-loving. He is all-merciful and in a loving relationship with his creatures and creation through his church. We must submit to Jesus as our Lord and King, true. But it is a submission that brings with it liberation and freedom from sin and its slavery. Life under King Jesus is full of abundant blessing and resources.

Jesus has authority, yes, but he does something different with it. He used his authority to give up his life. He said:

No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do. (John 10:18, gnt)

Jesus chose to do that for us because it was the only way to completely deal with our sins, and that is something that he also has the authority to do:

I, the Messiah, have the authority on earth to forgive sins. But talk is cheap—anybody could say that. So I’ll prove it to you by healing this man.” Then, turning to the paralyzed man, he commanded, “Pick up your stretcher and go on home, for you are healed.” (Matthew 9:6, tlb)

Jesus has ultimate authority, and ultimately forgiveness is what he does with it when you accept Him.

If you searched through the New Testament for the word “king,” you’d find some very interesting results. The vast majority of the references to Jesus as King occur during the passion narratives in the Gospels – in other words, the most times Jesus

is called King is when he is being arrested, tortured, crucified, and died. Jesus' kingship is proclaimed multiple times while he is on the cross. Even though his resurrection proves his ultimate authority, the cross is still a primary defining point of Christ's Kingship. Hear that: when we talk about kings, we talk about their power and their glory. When the Gospels talk about the King, it talks about his suffering and death.

That's because, lastly, Jesus is...

4. The atoning king.

The King has made atonement – paid the price – for us! His actions, arbitration, and authority all lead to this. Jesus Christ became human and willingly died a horrible death on the cross to release his subjects from captivity. The King of this world, the King of the Universe, the Lord of Glory made this ultimate sacrifice out of his love for the world, even though it's a world that is constantly in rebellion against him. The Bible says that:

(Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2, niv)

The King himself is our atonement! That's how much he loves you:

He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. (1 John 4:10, niv)

The King of the universe gave up his life for you so you could live; so you could have an eternal relationship with God. That's atonement.

Christ's kingship on the earth is not like a king with a jewel-encrusted crown in purple robes on a gold throne, holding a heavy scepter and demanding subservience. No, he is the crucified King with a crown of thorns, hanging half-naked on a cross of shame to set US free from our slavery, so that we can live like kings. The Bible says that his subjects – his people – will one day rule and reign with him! (2 Timothy 2:12)

And he rose from the dead so we can enjoy his love forever.

Now, he will either prove himself King at the *end* of your life when you face his judgment, or you can accept him as King in your life now and enjoy all that we've talked about and more. Is he king of your life?

We vote for presidents; we submit to a king. I hope you voted in this last election, but regardless: have you submitted to the King? A president can make temporary changes in our culture. The King will make transformational changes in your life. A president can write executive orders that can be reversed; the King gives eternal life that is irreversible. A president serves at most two terms, the King rules and reigns forever. A president is subject to influence peddlers, profits, and poor choices, the King is immutable, infallible, and unfailing in his love for you.

We vote for presidents; we submit to a king.

Prayer

Benediction:

May you have grace and peace from God who is, and was, and is to come...from Jesus Christ who faithfully reveals all truth to us. He was the first to rise from death, to die no more. He is far greater than any king in all the earth. All praise to him who always loves us and who set us free from our sins by pouring out his lifeblood for us. He has gathered us into his Kingdom and made us priests of God his Father. Give to him everlasting glory! He rules forever! Amen! (Revelations 1:4-6, tlb)