
King of Kings

Christmas/Advent 2019

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Long before the moment of His birth, it was foretold that one day, a King would come... and that this King wouldn't simply be added to mankind's long list of failed and fallen kings... but that this King would be a TRUE King, a GOOD King. And that when this King took His throne, not just all people... but all of creation would blossom and flourish, and bloom underneath His rule and reign.

In **Luke 1**, the angel appears to Mary and tells her, you're going to have a son, His name will be Jesus, He will be great, He will be enthroned as King, He will reign forever, and there will be no end to His Kingdom.

In **Matthew 2**, the wise men, following the star... come to King Herod, asking for the One who has been born King of the Jews.

The storyline of Scripture tells us that this baby — born in a manger, 2,000 years ago in an obscure little town, to a no-name family, with an incredibly checkered bloodline, from a belittled, struggling, and oppressed nation — is **the One True King, the Good King, the King of Kings**.

But before this King would take His throne for good, before His Kingdom would be established, He'd have to lay everything down... and this is exactly what He did.

- **Philippians 2:5-11**

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**THE BIRTH OF THE KING
THE DEATH OF THE KING
THE RETURN OF THE KING**

The Birth of the King

We are officially in the Advent season, that time of the year where throughout the history of the church, we collectively look into the incarnation — the idea that God became a man. And we look into the birth of this newborn King and the purpose of His coming. This is what we celebrate at Christmas.

- **Philippians 2:6-7**

...though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

What's so radical about this passage is it tells us that...

- The Creator entrusted himself to creation.
- The eternal became dependent.
- The infinite became finite.
- The supernatural became natural.
- The King of the Universe, was hidden in a manger....

To help us grasp how radical this is... No other religion in history has even come close to making such an outlandish claim — the full divinity of God, and the full nature of man were combined in One person: Jesus Christ.

The other major world religions say one of two things — that either the incarnation is unnecessary, or that it's impossible.

1. **Unnecessary:** Religions like Hinduism and Buddhism believe that the incarnation is unnecessary because God is already in everything. There's no need for God to come down, because He's already here. God is like the force... God is this essence that just needs to be tapped into and utilized. So, there's no need for the incarnation...
 - a. **Question:** But if that were the case... if God was really a part of everything, in everything, through everything... why is there this sense in all of us that things are not as they should be? If God is in everything, why is everything in its current state, slowly and steadily falling into chaos and decay? Why is there so much injustice? Suffering? Hardship? *If God's world is here — why is life so hard?*
 - i. Eastern religions try to help us escape from our sorrow and suffering, but there really is no good explanation of why so much of it exists.
2. On the other hand, **Western religions** like Islam say that the incarnation is impossible because God is too great. He's too holy to come down, He would never be born as a baby, God is too great to become vulnerable, weak, dependent, and needy.
 - a. Now, let me pose a question to you... if you come across someone who is too important to get down on the floor and play with a child... if someone is too "important" to clean the floors, or scrub toilets... if they're too "great" for that... are they really that great? What would we say about someone like that?
 - i. That they are arrogant, narcissistic, self-absorbed.
 - b. See, it's the fact, that yes, God is pure, holy — and yet He still comes down, wraps a towel around his waist, and washes us clean. It's the fact that He is holy, yet He still enters into our mess with us that makes Him so great!!
 - i. He didn't look at us and say, "Ah, I'm too great to go down to all those dysfunctional little sinful people. I'm just going to let them fend for themselves..." But He looks on us with love, compassion, and moves toward us, comes down to us, enters into the mess of humanity with us!

Question: Why in the world did Jesus leave behind all His rights and privileges to become human? Why did the King come as a servant? Why did He descend from His throne?

Because God loves us. And yes, he loves *us*, but more specifically, because He loves *you*. He came because He wants you to know that God has not abandoned you, that He is for you and not against you. Because He longs to bless you, and to free you from all the things that would destroy you — and to give you abundant life, to bring you into His Kingdom, and to cause you to flourish, and blossom.

The Death of the King

Question: Why did Jesus die? More specifically, why was He killed?

- **Psalm 2:1-3**
"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? ² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us burst their **bonds** apart and cast away their **CORDS** from us."

On the surface, the psalm seems to be saying that the kings of the earth are in shackles... like they're imprisoned... but a better translation for bonds and cords is actually the word for **yoke**. A yoke is something that you put on oxen, or a harness on a horse... it's something you put on a living creature that you own.

In other words, the kings of the earth aren't revolting because they're imprisoned, *they're revolting because they have an owner*. Psalm 2 is saying, *someone owns the kings of the earth and they hate it!* the Creator has rights over them and they don't want anything to do with it! "Let's burst the bonds and cast away the cords," Let's get this yoke off us... I don't want to answer to anyone!

Question: Do you ever realize that you don't have to teach your children to rebel... you have to teach them to obey. You don't have to teach them to say, "No!" or "Mine!" There's something innate in them that can't help but rebel and fight against you. Why? Because they don't like your yoke. They don't like being "owned," they demand the right to self-determination and autonomy from the moment of their first independent thought.

ILLUSTRATION: When my son, Jack was two... he wasn't happy with me because I wouldn't let him have something he wanted... might have been chocolate... I don't remember. But what I do remember is not being able to find my kindle a little bit later on. I looked all over for it... couldn't find it anywhere... under the beds, in the kids' closets, in the cars... nowhere to be found. The last place I decided to look was in the couch cushions... and what I found was my kindle, hidden inside one of Jack's children's books.

He was so mad at me, the he took my kindle out of my bedroom, stuffed it in one of his books, and hid it behind a couch cushion.

You know what He was telling me? "Dad, I don't like that yoke you've got on me! I don't want to have to answer to you!" at two-years-old!

This attitude is still alive and well in us as adults.

***"I am my own. I belong to myself. I'm in charge of my life. Take off the yoke!"
We hate the idea of being ruled by anyone or anything.***

When Jesus came, and was announced as the newborn King of the Jews King Herod goes ballistic, conspiring, killing innocent children. When Pilate stood before the crowd and said, "Who do you want released back into your neighborhoods where your children play, Barabbas, a sadistic murderer, or Jesus, your King?" — they chose Barabbas because they didn't want the yoke! Because, if by some chance, Jesus actually is who He claimed to be, if He really is God in human flesh... ***if He really is King... then He has the right to put His yoke on anyone He chooses.*** And the idea filled them with such outrage and does the same to us that we killed Him for it. ***We are so committed to our own autonomy that we literally murdered God to keep it.***

Scottish writer George MacDonald said:
"The one principle of hell is – 'I am my own.'"¹

Scripture tells us that human beings don't just, *"not like the idea of God, we HATE God."* **Romans 5 & 8, Philippians 3, James 4...** We are at war with God! The carnal mind is enmity with God... This is why we put Jesus on that cross 2,000 years ago and hung that scornful sign over His head, "King of the Jews."

**But ultimately, we didn't take His life — He gave it willingly, and obediently.
He carried the yoke we couldn't.
The yoke of punishment for our sin, for our rebellion.
That's the yoke we deserved —
and that's the yoke the King of Kings carried.**

¹ MacDonald, George, *Unspoken Sermons* (Cosimo, Inc., Dec 1, 2007) 332

- **Philippians 2:7-8**

but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- It's audacious to say that God stooped so low to be born in manger
- He stooped even lower than the manger by being crucified on a cross
- Jesus came as a King
- He was killed as a King
- He's coming back not just as the King —
- But the Conquering King of Heaven and Earth

The Return of the King

When we think of Jesus around Christmas, we often have warm, cozy, sentimental pictures of the quaint, quiet scene around the manger; the star and the wise men; the angel appearing to Mary and Joseph — Jesus, tender, meek and mild, look upon the little child. That's what we're given around Jesus **1st coming**.

But Jesus is coming back. When He comes back the 2nd time — it's not so quaint and quiet.

- **Revelation 19:11-16**

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

- In His **1st coming**, He came as a *helpless child*;
 - in His **2nd**, He comes as a *conquering King*.
- **1st coming**, a baby in a *manger*,
 - **2nd coming**, a *king on His throne*.
- **1st coming** He came to *serve*,
 - **2nd coming**, He comes to *rule*.
- **1st coming**, rode into Jerusalem on a *borrowed donkey*;
 - **2nd coming**, He's riding on the *white war horse* of heaven with eyes aflame with fire, wearing a robe dipped in blood, a sword proceeding from his mouth, and with tattoo on His thigh letting all the world know — *"I am the King of kings, Lord of lords."*
- **1st coming**, he *suffered in silence*,
 - **2nd coming** *He'll silence every mocking, conniving, insubordinate voice...*
- **1st coming**, *He made a way*,
 - **2nd coming**, *the King comes to make war* and He will establish His eternal throne and Kingdom, forever and ever, to God be the Glory!

Don't ever mistake Jesus' meekness for weakness. Is He more like Mother Theresa or William Wallace? **Yes. He's both. He is the Lamb, but he's also the Lion.**

Since that's how He's coming back... when you see Him, you'll have one of two reactions: Joy or Dread.

1. Because if Jesus truly is the King of Kings — the rightful ruler of heaven and earth; and if He really is coming back to establish His dominion and Kingdom once and for all; and you have chosen, of your own free will before His returning, to bow the knee to the once and future King — you'll gladly bow the knee on the day of His returning! You'll rejoice when the trumpet sounds, and the sky splits, and the King comes back with that robe dipped in blood!

2. But if you refuse to bow the knee to Him now... you will bow then. ***If you reject the Son when He came a servant, you'll have no place with Him when comes as King.*** And when he appears as the Conquering King, you won't be filled with joy... why? Because the King has come to take his rightful place and it means you must answer, not for your life, *but for what you did with the life He graciously gifted to you.*

- **Philippians 2:9-11**

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

*Every knee in heaven, on the earth,
believers and unbelievers alike...
even the demons will bow and they'll hate it,
but they will bow and confess...*

That's awful! Why would Jesus do that? I thought God was a God of love! That sounds so authoritarian and demeaning, and that's just not the God that I believe in.

- **ILLUSTRATION:** Think about like this... If you have children, and those children whom you love, who are precious to you, have been taken from you and abused, lied to, beaten, tortured, ripped away from every good thing you wanted to give them... ***What would you do to rescue them?*** What would you do to the ones who took them from you? What kind of wrath would you bring down on the ones who hated you so much that they took your own children from you?
 - **You would do anything.** Everything. You wouldn't ever stop. You would use every resource imaginable to find them, to go after them... You would use all of your power, all of your might, everything in your being... You would stop at nothing...
 - You would even sacrifice your own life to save them... wouldn't you?
 - You would lay everything down to rescue them, to restore them to their rightful place in your family, to heal them, to make them safe, to redeem them, wouldn't you?

This is exactly what Jesus has done — and He's actually left it up to you — if you want to be counted as one of His children, *or as one of His enemies.* It's up to you. *But until you admit you've been His enemy, you can't become his child.*

“Now, Rob, most people don't hate God... especially in the South... we're very religious down here.”

- And you're right if you're only talking about the **concept of God.** Most people don't hate the concept of God, but the moment you start describing the **demands of the biblical God,** their attitude starts to change... because the Biblical God gives us the Messiah. The Messiah says, *“Unless you hate your father, mother, brother, sister, compared to your love for me, you have no place with me. Unless your love for others so pales in comparison to your love for me, you've got no place with me.”*
- *The biblical God says, “No other things, no other priorities, or loves, or allegiances can rule in your life, I must be first, no other Gods before me,”*
- *... the God who comes to you and says, “I own you. I Created you. I purchased you. You belong to me.”*

Some of you hear that and think, *“How primitive and archaic! Who could believe in a God like that! Who could follow a God like that or love a God like that!? That is so offensive, and repulsive to me, I can't stand that God... I even hate that God!”*

Well then, it's only the skeptical, rebellious folks that hate God... not necessarily!

- Do you feel like you're a pretty good person? Better than most?

- Do you believe that if God were to show up right now and pick 100 of us that he was going to take to heaven with him, that you'd have a pretty good shot at getting in?
- You sort of feel like, "you know God, I'm a good person and you'd be lucky to have me."?
- Very religious people can use their religion to put limits on what the King can require of them.
- They might look like a Christian... but there is no submission in it... there's no surrender in it.
- It's all a guise to get God to leave them alone and to keep His yoke off of them.
- We use religion as a way to barter with God by saying, "Look how good I am... look how moral I am...
 - you're kind of lucky to have me, God, because I'm a good person."
- If that's your approach, then God is not your King, he's your consultant –
 - you're treating Him as an assistant.
- And if He's just your assistant, then He's not your Savior.

Question: *Is that you? Do you loathe the rule of the King?*

There is no question that Jesus is the King of Kings... He was born as a King, He died as a King and He's coming back as the Conquering King. **But the question is, is He YOUR King?**

Why would I make Him my king? Why should I give my whole life to Jesus?

- **Hebrews 1:8**
...the Father declares over the Son, "You are on your throne forever, and underneath your rule, everything flourishes. All of creation, every life, every wrong, broken thing is brought into its right alignment under the rule and reign of Christ."
 - You want your broken life mended?
 - You want your twisted motives straightened?
 - You want that black hole of self-absorption to finally go away?
 - Make Jesus your King, because everything flourishes under His reign.
 - Everything.

Christmas tells you something so incredible... so big and profound it's actually hard to accept... because it seems too good to be true.

Christmas tells you that the King...

- left His Heavenly Kingdom *for you*.
- He gave up all of His power and authority, rights and privileges *for you*.
- He became a helpless human baby, *for you*.
- He lived every moment of His life, *for you*.
- He even laid that life down... He died *for you*.
- He conquered death, and rose *for you*.
- He ascended to His Father and took back His throne, *for you*.
- And of all people, He's coming back *for you!*

Why should you give your life to Him? Why should you surrender everything over to Him?

- Because He gave everything for you. Everything.
- He surrendered everything for you. He laid it all down for you.
- When you were raising your fists in the air cursing God –
- He pursued you with perfect love.

Response

If you know today is your day to bow the knee to King Jesus, to make that decision once and for all, to bring all the pieces of your life before the King of Kings... and lay it all before Him, say *“God, I’m yours. Place your yoke upon my shoulders. I belong to you and you alone. Your rule and reign in my life, I surrender my demand for autonomy and control, I give myself, over to You, today.”*

Religion: If you realize that you’ve been using religion to keep God at arm’s length — to limit what the King can require of you — and you’re ready to surrender your fear and guardedness, to lay it leave it at the altar, come to Him now.

Casual Allegiance: If Jesus has been a casual acquaintance, a mere consultant and not your King, come to Him now.

Enemy: If you’re ready to admit that you’ve been an enemy of the King — in order that you might become His child, a son, a daughter — come to Him now.

Discussion Questions

1. What is radical about the birth of Jesus?
2. Why do some other religions think the incarnation is unnecessary?
3. Why do some other religions think the incarnation is impossible?
4. Discuss George McDonald’s statement, “The one principle of hell is — I am my own.”
5. Have you struggled with the giving up of your whole self to Jesus as King of your life?
6. Explain to each other (as you would to someone who does not know) what the difference will be between the way Jesus first came into the world, and what His second coming will be like.
7. Then ask that person (who did not know), whether that Second Coming would fill them with Joy or with Dread?

NOTES