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THE KING IS COMING  
CHRIST THE KING SUNDAY

Revelation 19:11-16

**1. The Acting King**

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

**2. The Arbitrating King**

- 1 Samuel 2:10; Psalm 50:6; Romans 14:9-12; John 5:24-29;  
2 Peter 3:9; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27; Matthew 12:36;  
Romans 2:16; 1 Timothy 4:1, 8

**3. The Authoritative King**

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

**4. The Atoning King**

- 1 John 2:2, 4:10; 2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6

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West Valley Church  
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## **The King is Coming** *Christ the King Sunday*

What does it mean to be truly great? A lot of people have claimed to be great, some even claim to be the greatest. One of those was Louis the Great of France—this fancy looking guy on the screen.



Without a doubt, Louis XIV of France, or Louis the Great, is one of the most famous kings to have ever lived. It wasn't because there was anything particularly great about his appearance; he was relatively short and plain looking. He had only a modest education and a poor imagination, but Louis was able to overcome all these things. He had great confidence in himself and a natural ability to run the government so by most standards he was a pretty competent ruler. But, from the start, Louis was not content to be just a good ruler; Louis wanted to be known as a great ruler – and the greatest of kings.

He had a huge collection of art and literature. He built the elegant palace of Versailles that took 35,000 workers over thirty years to complete. He had incredible wealth. King Louis didn't just want to be great; he wanted to be glorious. He knew that the only way to have that kind of glory was for him to take all the power for himself. He made proclamations that stated, "The King alone has sole power," and he quickly took away the power of all the great nobles in France. Then he boldly proclaimed, "I *am* the state!" He ruled France with an iron hand and influenced the cultural and political structures of all of Europe.

Before he died in 1715 at the age of 72, he left specific instructions with the Bishop of the Catholic Church in France that he be buried in a golden coffin and that at his funeral service the entire cathedral should be dark, except for one candle positioned above his coffin to give the impression of his great power even in death. At the memorial, thousands waited in hushed silence. Then the Bishop began to speak; as he did, he slowly reached down, and against the King's last wishes, the bishop snuffed out the candle, and then he said, "Only God is great." And there wasn't one thing Louis could do about it!

"Only God is great!" Jesus Christ is the only Great King. As hard as Louis tried to corner the market on greatness, he could never be greater than God. God's greatness excels our reach and is greater than anything else we might think of as great.

Today is called "Christ the King Sunday" on the calendar of the traditional church year. In the liturgical Christian calendar, today is the last Sunday of the year – the Christian year actually starts next Sunday with the first Sunday of Advent; Advent is the beginning of the Christian calendar. The last day of the Christian calendar is "Christ the King Sunday." The day was created during a time in the Church when kings and dictators in Europe were on the rise, and many of these dictators were setting themselves up as the supreme authority. So the Church established this as Christ the King Sunday specifically to communicate three things:

1. That nations would see that the Church has the right to freedom, and immunity from the state.
2. That leaders and nations would see that they are bound to give respect to Christ.
3. That Christians would gain strength and courage from the celebration of the day, as we are reminded that Christ must reign in our hearts, minds, wills, and bodies.<sup>1</sup>

So in that tradition, we are going to recognize the kingship of Christ on this Sunday before Advent. Next week we will begin our annual celebration of the arrival of Christ as the Baby, but we want to prepare for Christmas by remembering that Christ came as our King.

Are you prepared for Christmas yet? I remember times past that we would be brave enough to attempt “Black Friday” shopping. A few years back Shelly and I and our boys went to the Walmart here at like two AM. There were a lot of people there! Let me just say that it would be worth doing this just for the entertainment value alone (I say that very non-judgmentally). Something occurred to me there: you have a crowded store filled with people at two in the morning. Some probably didn’t go to sleep, others like us got up early. We were tightly packed in the aisles and most of us had just downed a lot of coffee. All of us had morning breath – or more like, “middle of the night half digested turkey dinner and loads of coffee breath.” I imagine it took a week for Walmart to get the air fresh in there. They probably had to use their entire stock of Febreze just after that one night. It is an interesting way to prepare for Christmas, and we did get some shopping done. But that’s *not* the preparation I want us to make today. I’m talking about preparing our hearts and spirits and minds for the Celebration of Christ’s Advent. During the month of December we will hear a lot about the baby that was born in a manger. We’ll all probably read the Christmas story in the Bible. We will see it on TV and we’ll talk about that event each Sunday of the Advent season. But I want to give us the context in which to place it all, and it is this: Jesus Christ is the King of all Kings. The very last book of the Bible, Revelation, describes Jesus this way:

“Then I saw Heaven open wide--and oh! a white horse and its Rider. The Rider, named Faithful and True, judges and makes war in pure righteousness. His eyes are a blaze of fire, on his head many crowns. He has a Name inscribed that's known only to himself. He is dressed in a robe soaked with blood, and he is addressed as "Word of God." The armies of Heaven, mounted on white horses and dressed in dazzling white linen, follow him. A sharp sword comes out of his mouth so he can subdue the nations, then rule them with a rod of iron. He treads the winepress of the raging wrath of God, the Sovereign-Strong. On his robe and thigh is written, KING OF KINGS, LORD OF LORDS.” (Revelation 19:11-16, tmt)

Jesus Christ is King! For a lot of people, though, the idea of kings and kingdoms makes us think of tyrants or dictators or strange men like King Louis. Of course, few if any of us Americans have ever lived under a king. Maybe to you a king is like a character from a fairy tale or a movie, with a positive image, or a negative one, or comical, or even cartoonish. Maybe the image you think of is that creepy large-headed Burger King guy. Regardless of what we think of, Jesus Christ is not just *a* king; He’s *the* King. And we need to get a better

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.churchyear.net/ctksunday.html>

understanding of that. So let's start by seeing that Jesus Christ is...

## 1. The *Acting* King

You can learn a lot about a king by the way he behaves, and the same is true for how Jesus, as King, acts. While Scripture makes it clear that Jesus is King, Jesus' earthly ministry was not the kind of king we think of; it wasn't one of military might or oppressiveness or gathering great wealth. Usually if someone is a king he must prove it by his might and by money. Jesus certainly could have exerted his power, or leveraged unlimited money, but He didn't. His reign was one of peace, liberation, and above all, service. Jesus turned the whole concept of Kingship and Rulership upside down:

"Jesus got them (*his 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 specifically *redefined* them. In Jesus' Kingdom, in order to be a ruler *at all*, a person must be a servant *of all*.

Jesus showed us this servanthood in his actions, by coming to be among us. 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, gnb)

Jesus' actions as king are different than the way we think a king should behave. In the history of the world, no royalty would *ever* show their humility. That would be too human, too common. Kings have parades and entourages to draw the focus toward themselves. Author Philip Yancey points out that when Queen Elizabeth visited America about twenty years ago, she brought with her the following items:

- 4000 pounds of luggage – 4 outfits for everyday she was in America
- 40 pints of plasma
- Her own hairdresser
- Two valets
- An official photographer
- Two personal secretaries

The cost of her trip to America was 20 million dollars.

Compare that to God's visit in Christ to earth: it took place in an animal stable; there were no trunks full of robes and no attendants to wait on Him – only a cloth to cover him and animals lounging nearby. There wasn't even a place for the baby to lie down except in a feeding trough known as a manger. In fact, that event – which divided history and our calendars – that event went by unnoticed except for a few low-life shepherds who came by for a visit.

Jesus is a different kind of king. 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 share the same ultimate fate of his captive subjects: death. He wasn't martyred or murdered; he allowed us to kill him.

Because of His authority and what He has done for us, He is also...

## 2. The *Arbitrating* King

Jesus' role of King is closely tied to his role as arbitrator or Judge, which is something we don't talk about much in churches today—I'm not sure we like the idea a whole lot. But we say in our creed or statement of faith (*read it with me*):

“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.” (Nazarene Manual 2005-2009)

Right now, Jesus is the all powerful Lord, King, and Judge and someday he will return and everyone and everything will submit to His judgement. These are some of the things the Bible says about Him:

“Those who oppose the LORD will be shattered. He will 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)

“The Heavens proclaim His righteousness, for God alone is Judge.” (Psalm 50:6, 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 confess to God.’ So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:9-12, niv)

Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, 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 to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to judge because he is the 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 good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned." (John 5:24-29, niv)

Jesus Christ is the Arbitrator King, meaning that He is the Judge. But unlike human judgments, Christ looks at the heart and does not judge by human standards. Also unlike *our* justice, which focuses on retribution against those who have committed a crime or hurt us, Christ's justice focuses on restoration – it is designed to lead us to repentance and salvation. That's why the Bible tells us that God is holding off Jesus' return as long as possible so that as many as possible could come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) The only reason Christ's justice becomes punitive is by our choice – because we have rejected his salvation, we have resigned ourselves to our eternal destiny in hell. His justice is way different than ours. For example, in the name of "justice," some Americans have initiated ridiculous lawsuits. Consider the following:

- In September 1988, two Akron, Ohio-based carpet layers named Gordon Falker and Gregory Roach were severely burned when a three and a half gallon container of carpet adhesive ignited when the hot water heater it was sitting next to kicked on. Both men felt the warning label on the back of the can was insufficient. Words like "flammable" and "keep away from heat" didn't prepare them for the explosion. They filed suit against the adhesive manufacturers, Para-Chem. A jury obviously agreed since the men were awarded \$8 million for their troubles.<sup>2</sup>
- Or how about this one: we all know that the weather reports are frequently wrong and we take that into account when planning our days, but this was not the case for an Israeli woman who sued a TV station for making an inaccurate prediction. The station predicted good weather but it rained. The woman claimed that the forecast caused her to dress lightly – resulting in her catching the flu, missing a week of work, and spending money on medication. She further claimed that the whole incident caused her stress. She sued for \$1,000 – and won.<sup>3</sup>
- In another case a young woman was injured when her fiancé deliberately smashed into her go-cart, as they were finishing up their ride around the track. The court ruled that the young man who actually ran into the woman was 85 percent responsible, the young woman herself was 14 percent negligent and the theme park was 1 percent involved. However, in the interests of "justice," the theme park was required to pay the entire cash judgment.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.legalzoom.com/articles/top-ten-frivolous-lawsuits>

<sup>3</sup> <http://listverse.com/2009/01/28/top-10-bizarre-or-frivolous-lawsuits/>

Shifting responsibility, blaming others, and expecting someone else to pay for our stupidity is common in today's legal system, but none of that will hold water when we stand before Jesus and he judges us. Someday we will all stand before a 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 own sins. You will be called on 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 there's good news! Although you can't blame anyone else for your sins, someone else will take the punishment of your sins *right now*; you still have time to accept God's free gift of pardon: it's called salvation. Jesus Christ the King died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sins. He did it, not because a 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)

He's the acting King, the Arbitrator King, and He is...

#### 4. The ***Authoritative*** King

What's normal to us is democracy where everyone gets a vote; but that is not Christianity, and it is certainly not God. "Due process" and "the majority rule" can do some good in society, but we all know that they also make mistakes (you might especially think that, depending on how you voted in the last election).

But God is completely different in his form and function and thoughts than we are; still He has chosen to reveal himself in history and become one of us in the person of Jesus Christ. He is "wholly other." Remember, Jesus said that all authority on heaven and on earth has been given to him. (Matthew 28:18)

But make no mistake, we have not elected God to be President and God's creatures are not made up of registered voters. There are no referendums on God's will and there is no chance of recalling Jesus if we happen not to like the way He does things. That's why this reality of Christ as Lord and King seems difficult and foreign to us in a democratic, individualistic society. 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, gnb)

Jesus is a king, but we must remember that Jesus is a different type of King: all-powerful yes, but also at the same time merciful, all-loving, and in a loving relationship with his creatures and through His Church. We must submit to Jesus as our Lord and King, true. But it is not a submission that oppresses us, it sets us free from oppression and brings with it *liberation*, and *freedom from sin*.

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 authority 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, gnb)

He chose to do that for us because it was the only way to take care of our sins, which he also has the authority to do:

“(I) have the authority to forgive sins.” (Matthew 9:6, niv)

If you searched through the New Testament for the word "king" you'd find some interesting results. The vast majority of the references to Jesus as king occur during the Passion narratives in the Gospels—in other words, the majority of references to Jesus as King take place when he was being arrested, tortured and crucified. 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.

That's because He is...

#### 4. The ***Atoning*** King

The King has made atonement—he has paid the price—for us! Jesus Christ became human and died a horrible death on the cross to release his subjects from captivity. The King of the world, the Lord of Glory made this ultimate sacrifice out of his love for the world, even though it's a world that is constantly rejecting him. The Bible says:

“He 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 that you could live; so that you could have a relationship with God. That's atonement.

Christ's kingship is not like a king with a jewel-encrusted crown in purple robes on a golden throne, holding a heavy scepter. No, He is the crucified God with a crown of thorns hanging half naked on a cross of shame to set *us* free from our bondage, so that we can live *like* kings. The Bible says that we will one day rule and reign with Him! (2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 20:6)

Now listen: you will either discover Jesus as King *at the end* of your life when you face His judgement, or you can accept Him as King *in your life now* and enjoy all that we've talked about and more. Is He the King of your life?

In the Berlin art gallery in Germany there is a painting by the famous artist Mengel that is only partially finished. It is supposed to be a painting of King Frederick of Germany talking to his generals. Mengel painstakingly painted the generals first around the outside of the painting. The king was left until last,





leaving a bare patch in the middle of the painting with the background of generals. But Mengel died before he could finish the painting. So there is a painting full of generals with no king. Here's the point my friends - listen: we can spend so much time putting all the generals of our lives in their place—things that are really insignificant: material possessions, personal desires, ambitions, all kinds of things that may seem important. But we leave the King of Kings out of the picture until last; and sometimes that's too late! How many people die without putting Christ into the very center of the picture of their lives? The painting of our lives will never be complete without Christ being the King in the center. Don't be so busy with the 'generals of insignificance' that you leave out the most important person – King Jesus Christ.

*Lead in prayer for commitment to Christ as King.*