

Jesus, Our King



Sabbath Afternoon

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S STUDY: Hebrews 1.

MEMORY TEXT: “He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3, NRSV).

KEY THOUGHT: Though Hebrews repeatedly presents Jesus as our High Priest, Jesus also is pictured as King.

KINGS HAVE A LONG AND CHECKERED ROLE IN WORLD HISTORY. Because they often wielded power, their characters could determine the fate of nations. Israel, dissatisfied with the judges as their leaders, wanted a king, instead. They got one; in fact, they got many kings.

The Bible presents Jesus as a King. Jesus is even the King of kings (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). In Hebrews, Jesus the Priest-King is even more than a benevolent Ruler. He is able to do so much for us because of the nature of His rule, the nature of His reign, and the nature of the ministry involved in that rule and reign. This week we will take a look at His role as King.

THE WEEK AT A GLANCE: How is Christ’s kingship depicted in Hebrews? In what ways was His role as King prefigured in the Old Testament? Why is the character of a king so important? What does Jesus do for us in His role as King?

*Please study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, July 12.

Sunday

July 6

JESUS, THE KING (Hebrews 1).

Hebrews 1 contains a “hymn” describing our Lord Jesus Christ. God has spoken to us in Him (vs. 1). He is the perfect representation of God the Father (vs. 4). In verses 2, 3, Christ’s existence is summarized: It starts with His preexistence, covers His earthly sojourn, and reaches up to His exaltation. He partakes in God’s government and kingship and far surpasses the angels in superiority (vs. 4).

The rest of Hebrews 1, verses 4-14, praises Jesus in higher and higher terms: (1) Jesus is the Son (vs. 5); (2) Jesus is to be worshiped (vs. 6); (3) Jesus is King and God from eternity to eternity (vss. 8, 9); (4) Jesus is Creator (vss. 10-12); (5) Jesus participates in God’s rule, and all will be subject to Him (vs. 13).

Although the kingship idea occurs throughout Hebrews, the clearest portrayal is obtained in Hebrews 1. “In this language is represented the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 921.

In various places in the book of Hebrews (Heb. 1:3, 4, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), the author mentions Jesus’ being at the “right hand” of God (expressed in various ways). After looking up the texts, ask this question: Is this emphasis in these texts on the exact *geographical* or *spatial* position of Jesus, or is the emphasis, instead, on Christ’s heavenly authority? Give reasons for whichever position you take.

Interestingly enough, Jesus is never specifically called “King” in Hebrews. Nevertheless, His kingship is made apparent by the various terms and references in the book in regard to Him. What specific references are found in the first chapter that point to His kingship? Look up these other texts, as well (Heb. 2:7, 8; 7:1-3, 17; 10:13). What do they say that prove that, according to Hebrews, Jesus is our King?

The allusions to Jesus’ kingship are quite strong in Hebrews. Jesus has an everlasting throne. In His hand He holds the scepter of uprightness and justice. He is crowned, and everyone is and everything is subject to Him. King Melchizedek is a type of Jesus. Clearly, Jesus is, according to Hebrews, the King of the universe.

The character of a king, someone who in ancient times often wielded unchallenged authority, is crucial. A cruel, depraved king can wreak moral and physical devastation over his kingdom. Knowing what we know about Christ’s character, why is the thought of His being King of the universe so comforting?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

Key Text: Acts 2:33, 34.

Teachers Aims:

1. To explore the depiction of Jesus' kingship in the book of Hebrews.
2. To define the character of a king and provide an outline of Jesus' role as King, as described in the Old Testament.
3. To provide examples of what Jesus' role as King means for us.

Lesson Outline:

I. Establishing Jesus' Sovereignty.

- A. Jesus sits on the right hand of God.
- B. Jesus possesses an everlasting throne.
- C. He holds the scepter of uprightness and justice.

II. The Making of a Divine King.

- A. What did Jesus lose in order to save humanity?
- B. His death and resurrection guarantee His right to ascend the throne of God as Heir-apparent.
- C. The results of Christ's salvation are as eternal as His throne.

III. The Character of King Jesus.

- A. He is a King who upholds righteousness and justice.
- B. He is a loving and self-sacrificing Monarch.
- C. He is a humble and true Servant toward His subjects.

Summary: Christ is not just a King but a Priestly King whose reign is closely tied to humanity. Through Him, as a Leader of the people and for the people, we receive strength, understanding, and salvation.

Commentary.

Prophet, Priest, and King are descriptions that appear in the book of Hebrews to describe Jesus' role in heaven. Jesus the Son, according to the Epistle to the Hebrews, "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1:3, NKJV). It was a sign of exaltation and honor.

The position "at the right hand" was the preferred position in any gathering where people were classed according to status. The one who sat at the host's right hand at a banquet, for instance, was the guest of honor. In the ancient Near East, it was customary for people to recline when they ate. The person at the host's right hand reclined so that his head was near the host, where he and the host could converse most easily.

In early protocol, there was no person of higher status than the

Monday

July 7

JESUS, THE PROMISED PRIEST-KING (Psalm 110).

The kingship motif in Hebrews is based on a number of Old Testament passages, which include Psalms 2, 45, and 110. In fact, not only is Psalm 110 used throughout the book of Hebrews, but it also provides the backbone of Hebrews 1. An allusion to Psalm 110:1 is found in Hebrews 1:3, and the next-to-the-last verse of the chapter (vs. 13) comes from Psalm 110:1. Between these two references to Psalm 110:1, six other Old Testament quotations dwell on the kingship of Jesus.

Read Psalm 110. What are the major lines of thought developed here? What is the psalmist saying? Paraphrase it in your own words.

Psalm 110 (written by David) is quoted extensively in the New Testament. Verse 1 mentions the enthronement of the King and verse 4 the bestowal of the priesthood on Him; other verses talk about the world dominion of this King. God will subdue His enemies. The King will partake in Yahweh's reign. This King will also be a Priest forever, a Priest-King—a remarkable concept, because a Davidic king legitimately serving as a priest cannot be found in Israelite history. There was none.

Thus, we find here a direct Messianic prophecy. The promise refers to the Messiah only.

Read Matthew 22:41-45. Why does Jesus quote Psalm 110? What was Jesus telling the leaders about Himself?

In ancient Jewish thinking, there were to be two messiahs: one royal messiah (from the tribe of Judah) and a priestly messiah (from the tribe of Levi). In Hebrews they are united into one Messiah, the Priest-King, Jesus, a theme that is developed all through Hebrews.

Read Psalm 110 in the context of Hebrews 1. In both sections, the superiority, the assured victory, of “my Lord” (Ps. 110:1) and of “the Son” is assured. How can we, amid the seemingly intractable trials of life, draw comfort and hope from these promises? What do these promises of His victory mean for us?

TEACHERS COMMENTS

king. He would always be at the head of the gathering, with the princes and closest allies at his right and left, but he was also thought to be the one closest to God. Therefore, he was called God's "son" or "chosen one." Jesus is the only One worthy to share this position of honor next to the Father in heaven.

Jesus was exalted in heaven as a King. The point of this statement is that the Son sat down in exaltation at the right hand of the Majesty. That Jesus is enthroned at the right hand of God is one of the earliest affirmations of Christian faith. It goes back to Jesus' own application to Himself in the opening words of the divine oracle in Psalm 110: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand'" (vs. 1, NKJV).

It is clear that this language denotes the exaltation and supremacy of Jesus. Jesus was totally qualified. Paul can speak of the same idea in different language by saying that Jesus Christ has "ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10, NKJV), that "God . . . highly exalted Him and [gave] Him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9, NKJV). Psalm 110 comprises the main passage of the epistle, and the importance of Jesus Christ's being seated as High Priest is clearly set forth in Hebrews 10:11, 12, where He is contrasted with the Aaronic priests, who remained standing, because their sacrificial service never came to an end. He is the Priest who has accomplished a perfect work of cleansing His people's sins; He is the King who sits enthroned in the place of chief honor alongside the Majesty on high.

The author of the book of Hebrews was interested in the royal enthronement character of Psalm 110, because he wanted to present Jesus as a King. Like other kings, Jesus held the position of favor with God, "at the right hand" (Heb. 1:3). Jesus, the Son, was a true replica of the Father, acted as His agent, and spoke with the authority of the Father. As King, He has a special place of honor with the Father that was even greater than that of the angels. The concept of the enthronement of Jesus at the right hand of God gives the modern mind the idea of unparalleled power and glory.

The book of Hebrews tells us Jesus is the King of heaven, but what does His kingship *mean* for us? We can begin to answer this question by defining key aspects of any earthly king to show how Jesus not only fulfills but exceeds all these requirements. In doing so, we will be able to grasp better the superior services His kingship offers us, starting first with a look at the aspect of enthronement.

Monarchs in ancient times often received gifts in honor of being enthroned. In keeping with this tradition, God asks Solomon what he desires for a coronation present. Solomon desires wisdom and knowledge, and, in turn, God gives these to him, along with all else he does *not* ask for: riches, wealth, and honor above all kings (2 Chron. 1:7-12). Likewise, it was also customary in those days for foreign monarchs to visit other rulers and offer gifts. This is exactly what the Queen of Sheba does (2 Chron. 9:1). So impressed is she with the

Tuesday

July 8

JESUS' KINGSHIP.

As Christians, we believe in the eternal preexistence of Christ. He is not a created being. From eternity, He lived with the Father in some capacity as Ruler. However, the author of Hebrews is not interested in discussing the nature and extent of the Son's rule *before* His incarnation.

For him, instead, what is important is that the final realization of Christ's reign has begun after His death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, when Jesus sat down at the right hand of God after "he had made purification for sins" (Heb. 1:3, NRSV). Christ's humiliation through Incarnation and death was followed by Resurrection and exaltation (2:6-9); first the Cross, then the crown (Heb. 12:2).

Study these three verses carefully (in context): "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool" (Acts 2:33-35). What is Peter saying here about the enthronement of Christ? What have we received because of that heavenly enthronement? Why, then, is this event so important to us?

Notice, too, that Peter quotes Psalm 110:1, which is interpreted as Jesus' exaltation as King after His resurrection and ascension. The visible sign of that event on earth was the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. In Acts 5:30-32, Peter returns to the same topic.

Thus, Jesus became King after He brought about salvation for humankind. Salvation and kingship are, therefore, linked. As the results of salvation are never ending, so is His kingship. His throne is forever and ever.

Yet, although Jesus reigns over His angels, His saints, and the heavenly world right now, enemies exist, which will eventually be made subject to Him. The cosmic realization of His reign is still future. This will come at the end, when sin and sinners are no more, when all the questions of the great controversy have been resolved, and when God and His government will stand vindicated forever.

What does the linkage between kingship and salvation mean for us? In what ways does Christ's being King help give us assurance of salvation? Or does it? For example, What should give us more hope: to believe that the angels want us saved or that the King of the universe does? Explain your answer.

TEACHERS COMMENTS

reputation of the fabled wisdom of Solomon she journeys to see the king, who makes “silver in Jerusalem” as common “as stones” (vs. 27). She brings him spices, the gold of Ophir, jewels, and algum wood (vss. 9, 10). Solomon, in turn, offers her “all her desire” (vs. 12).

Like Solomon, Jesus receives and bestows gifts upon becoming King. It is the occasion of His heavenly enthronement that entitles Him to do this. According to Acts 2:33-35, He receives the gift of the Holy Ghost after He is enthroned. What does He do with this gift once He receives it? He gives it away to us—as though pouring out His life for us were not enough.

But the gift giving does not end there. Jesus is not content to offer only His body and His blood to save us; He wants us to share in the rest of the coronation riches of His enthronement. Not only is He given the gift of the Holy Spirit, which He then bestows upon us, He gives us the unprecedented privilege of calling Him Brother. Imagine hailing a modern-day monarch—Queen Elizabeth of England, for example—as “Sister Elizabeth.” The queen probably would be taken aback at the breach of etiquette. What monarch other than Jesus would be willing to die for you and let you call him Brother? Surely no earthly monarch.

INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Texts for Discovery: Judges 8:23, Matthew 11:11, Luke 17:21, John 1:1, Philippians 2:7.

1. Hebrews presents Jesus as a King. What does the image of kingship suggest to us? Is it possible for our experience of earthly kings and rulers to cause us to have a distorted view of what kingship and rulership mean as applied to Jesus?
2. In what ways is the kingship of Jesus different from kingship as seen in earthly history? Why do you think the author of Hebrews went to such lengths to portray Jesus as a royal figure? In what ways is Jesus the ideal King?
3. The description of Jesus' elevation by God to the level of kingship has been taken by some to mean that God somehow adopted the Man Jesus to be His Son. How do we know Jesus, in fact, was the Son of God, not only before His life on earth but from all eternity?
4. Hebrews suggests Jesus' kingship is tied in with His eventual victory over the forces of evil. Does this mean the kingdom of God is something that will exist in the future, or is it possible to say, in some sense, it exists now?
5. Do you find it paradoxical that Jesus proved His claim to kingship by performing the seemingly unkingly acts of self-sacrifice and servanthood? Do you think the original readers of Hebrews might have found this fact hard to grasp?

Wednesday

July 9

THE CHARACTER OF JESUS, THE KING (Heb. 7:1-3).

What are some of the attributes of King Jesus as presented in Hebrews? Heb. 1:8, 9, 12; 2:9, 10, 11; 7:1-3; 12:2, 3.

Because the title of king can arouse different feelings (sometimes good, sometimes bad), we must understand what kind of king Jesus is.

Five basic characteristics are mentioned below:

The King of peace (Heb. 7:1, 2). Like Melchizedek, Jesus is the King of peace. The name *Salem* is connected to the Hebrew concept of *shalom*, “peace.” It describes peace, completeness, and welfare. It includes good health, prosperous relations to others, friendship, and even the idea of salvation. Jesus is the Peacemaker par excellence. Peace is His character.

The King of righteousness and justice (Heb. 1:8; 7:2). Jesus is just and absolutely fair. He shows no partiality. He is righteous, and His righteousness puts us in the right relationship with the Deity. Furthermore, Jesus loves righteousness and hates sin (Heb. 1:9). “To love righteousness is a higher virtue than merely to do righteousness. . . . Work, with duty as a motive, is commendable. Work, with love as a motive, is a still higher experience. . . . Love is what prompted God to action.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 400.

Self-sacrificial love and kindness (Heb. 1:3; 2:9, 10; 12:2-6). In Jesus there is no selfishness and egocentrism. He lives for others. He does not avoid suffering and death, not when that suffering and death will lead to the salvation of untold numbers.

Humility and servant leadership (Heb. 2:11). Jesus is Sovereign Lord of the universe. Nevertheless, He calls us brothers and sisters. Although being the King of kings, He is called a Servant on our behalf. He is the Supreme Example of servant-leadership.

Immutability (Heb. 1:12; 13:8). This concept does not mean that Jesus is unaffected by our joys, sorrows, and decisions. It means that His love, kindness, and justice never fail or change. We can rely upon Him—always.

Take the qualities listed above and write a paragraph (or however much you can) about what hope exists for us in these qualities. How do they help us fulfill the first and most important of all commandments? (Matt. 22:37, 38).

TEACHERS COMMENTS

The titles of earthly kings are reminders of the distance between the subjects they rule over and themselves. But the King of heaven bids us call Him Brother and banishes the breach between the Divine and fallen humanity.

Further, Jesus outstrips, outranks, and outperforms in power and in principality any other sovereign who ever has ruled. The sovereignty of the reigning Queen of England or of Charlemagne is, or was, limited to land. Jesus' sovereignty is not landlocked or limited to physical realms. His authority occupies a dimension beyond space and time. His territory encompasses the realm of peace, and He governs the geography of grace. People, places, ideas, thoughts, emotions, time—the Lord reigns over all.

The realm of His power, the coronation gifts He receives and bestows on us, and His royal title all express His character and what kind of ruler He is. These very qualities of His kingship give us assurance of salvation. He is the King of peace, of righteousness, of

WITNESSING

When Hezekiah became king of Judah, he “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord” (2 Chron. 29:2). And during his reign, the nation prospered. The Bible speaks of the rise and fall of many kings, some with upright characters, others with hearts full of wickedness. We read of kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah who honored the Lord. Others, such as Ahaz, defiled the temple of God and led the people to worship heathen gods. And kings such as Manasseh “did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord” and “shed innocent blood” (2 Kings 21:2, 16). From one king to another, God's messengers went about speaking the truth and proclaiming judgment on those who did wickedness in the sight of the Lord.

As God's messengers today, we must go forth and proclaim the good news that someday the kingdoms of this world will pass away,

and a new kingdom will arise where Christ, the King of kings, will be Ruler. In that day, we will no longer be oppressed with the evils of this world. Sin and suffering will be banished forever. And all will worship the true God.

Throughout earth's history there have been kings who have been great warriors, seizing kings and conquering territories. We can let others know that Christ, the Eternal King, has defeated Satan, the ruler of darkness, and conquered sin and death. He has freed us from bondage, the bondage of substance abuse, sexual immoralities, violence, selfishness, hatred, and fear.

Many earthly kings ruled with iron fists and oppressed those who dwelled in their realm. But Jesus, Lord of all, will rule with a scepter of love. His kingdom will be filled with joy and peace, and He will reign forever.

Thursday

July 10

JESUS, KING FOR US.

Yesterday, we studied the qualities of Jesus the King. Today, we are interested in His work in our behalf. Actions grow out of the character; they are, then, naturally related to each other. We saw the wonderful characteristics that are ascribed to Jesus. The question then arises: What does that mean for us?

Write down what the verses are saying concerning each listed topic:

Salvation. See Heb. 2:3; 5:9; and 7:25.

Faith. Heb. 12:2.

Peace. Heb. 7:2.

Sanctification. Heb. 2:11; 10:14.

An example. Heb. 12:2, 3.

Closeness. Heb. 2:14, 17; 4:15; 7:25.

Help. Heb. 2:16; 4:16.

Providing a better future. Heb. 11:16; 13:14.

Look at all this. Though Hebrews is about Jesus, it is not about Jesus in a vacuum. It is about Jesus in His roles and work of saving us from the horrible consequences of sin. It is not only about Jesus redeeming us from eternal death but about what He is doing for us now; to help us cope in this world; to give us peace, power, and assurance as we fight the fight of faith and seek to hold fast to the end, where a crown of glory is awaiting us.

This is, in so many ways, the message of the book of Hebrews. It was what Paul wrote to the believers back then, and it is what he has written for us today.

Think about your own spiritual needs at this very moment. Is there any particular area where you are struggling? Look at the list for today. More than likely, you will find something there from which you can draw comfort. If so, write down what it is and how it has helped you. Perhaps you could share it with your class.

TEACHERS COMMENTS

love. His monarchy is unshakeable, unchangeable, and absolute. But unlike worldly monarchies who often abuse sovereign rights and need to be curbed, no Magna Carta ever needs to be drafted in order to limit His powers. This is because Jesus did not seek the glory of a king while on earth but became a subject. He exchanged His crown of heaven for one barbed with briars and thorns, a diadem of mockery fit for a criminal, a cruel crown that reminds us that obstacles, thorns, and briars shadow the path of life. Yet, if we choose to walk such paths in this life, crowned with sorrows and suffering, He promises to crown us with immortality in the next. Until then, this same Monarch stands enthroned as King, at the right hand of God, living ever to make intercession for us.

LIFE-APPLICATION APPROACH

Icebreaker: There is a palace in Peterhof, Russia, just outside St. Petersburg. This palace is known for more than five hundred water fountains in the gardens that surround it. Some of the fountains are large and vigorous, others small and gentle. But the most intriguing are the “surprise” fountains, which are triggered when a visitor steps on certain rocks and steppingstones. Fountains we all know and appreciate. But surprise fountains that squirt water on you unexpectedly? The surprise would either be pleasant or startling, depending on your preparedness. Throughout the book of Hebrews, portions of Jesus’ job description keep popping up. And every now and then, it presents a facet of Jesus that is “surprisingly” different.

Thought Question:

There are many clues in Hebrews that tell us the book was probably

written for a group of Jewish Christians. Considering their heritage of rulers and kings, what kind of images do you think they associated with a king? How is the image of Jesus as King similar to the images they were familiar with? How is it different? Why do you think they might have been surprised by the author’s presentation of Jesus as King?

Application Question:

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last” (John 15:16). These are the words of the King to you! How does that make you feel? What would be your response to an earthly king who gives you a high-profile assignment? What is your response to Jesus the King? What are the differences between the two responses? The similarities?

FURTHER STUDY:

And I saw another field full of all kinds of flowers, and as I plucked them, I cried out: ‘They will never fade.’ Next I saw a field of tall grass, most glorious to behold; it was living green, and had a reflection of silver and gold, as it waved proudly to the glory of King Jesus. Then we entered a field full of all kinds of beasts—the lion, the lamb, the leopard, and the wolf, all together in perfect union. We passed through the midst of them, and they followed on peaceably after. Then we entered a wood, not like the dark woods we have here; no, no; but light, and all over glorious; the branches of the trees waved to and fro, and we all cried out: ‘We will dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.’ We passed through the woods, for we were on our way to Mount Zion.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 68.

“The way to heaven is rugged. Briers and thorns are in the way; but we can with cheerfulness tread the rough pathway, knowing that Jesus, the King of glory, once trod it before us.”—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, June 10, 1852.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1. Why is Jesus described as a King in Hebrews? Some Christians do not like this title and want to replace it by other terms. What do you think about this issue? What basic ideas does the concept of Jesus’ kingship communicate?**
- 2. Kingship includes authority on the part of the king and subordination on the part of his subjects. Authority is challenged in many societies today. Some prefer to relate to God as a friend, even a buddy, rather than as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. How would you want to relate to God? What does it mean in practical terms to accept God as Lord? How is our everyday life influenced if we do that?**
- 3. This week we were given a taste of all that Christ has done in order to save us. And yet people, even with the knowledge of these things, will be lost. With so much done for us, why will people still be lost?**

SUMMARY: Jesus is not simply a King or even the most powerful King. Christ is Priest-King, and His kingship, as well as His priesthood, are related to all human beings. With His ministry as Priest-King for our sake, Christ enters another stage of the plan of redemption. The readers of Hebrews can rely on Him in every respect.