

Give Us a King

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In first Samuel chapter eight, the nation of Israel demanded a king. They wanted to be ruled like the surrounding countries. Of course, Israel already had a king: Jehovah.

At the time, Jehovah ruled Israel through the Law of Moses and judges. At the time, Samuel was Israel's judge. Greatly troubled by Israel's protest, Samuel consulted Jehovah. Jehovah rightly judged the situation:

"And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7-9).

Samuel warned Israel of the burden a new king would bring to their lives. They would have to pay taxes. Their children would be impressed into the new king's service. Regrettably, none of Samuel's warnings seemed to matter. Israel had their hearts set on a new king regardless of the cost.

Jehovah permitted Israel to have a new king. In time, Samuel anointed Saul as their king. Israel would never be the same. Their kings would lead them into idolatry. Their idolatry would cause them to be exiled from the land. If they only would have submitted to the reign of Jehovah, they would have been blessed.

How the Creator Made Jesus King

The Bible is not just a historic account of an ancient nation. The Bible is an account of how the Creator made His Son, Jesus, king of Heaven and earth. The Creator made Jesus king through a two-stage process: suffering and resurrection.

First, Jesus was made king through suffering. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are rich with kingdom symbolism. This is especially noticed at the crucifixion of Jesus. Consider how Jesus is announced as king through His suffering on the cross:

Matt. 26:28-29: *"And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!"*

John 19:19-22: *"Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but*

rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

The kingship of Jesus was mocked at His crucifixion; however, the signs all point to His reign. His clothing and crown of thorns represent the self-giving love through which He would rule the world. Jesus alluded to such a self-giving rule when He described how His kingdom would be different from the Roman Empire (Mark 10:42-45). He would not rule through oppression. Instead, Jesus would rule by sacrificing His life as a ransom for many.

If those present could not recognize the symbols of Jesus' rule, all they had to do was to read the sign. Pilate inscribed "*Jesus, King of the Jews*" in the three dominate languages of the time: Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. Jew and Gentile alike could read the notice. Pilate did not present this as Jesus' claim as the Jews demanded, but as an identification. Jesus was king of the world.

Of course, no one at the time was aware of the significance of who Jesus was or how the Creator was making Him king through suffering. However, the final sign of Jesus' coronation would make His rule eminently clear.

Secondly, Jesus was made king by the resurrection. Kingdoms come to power by being victorious in war. Strangely enough, Jesus refused to allow His disciples to take up arms for His cause (John 18:9-10, 36). Jesus' enemy was not the Sanhedrin Council, Herod, Pilate, or the Roman Empire. His enemy was Satan. The most effective weapon Satan used to make war with the human family was death. Therefore, to defeat Satan, the Creator had to use Jesus to defeat death.

When Jesus died on the cross, it appeared Satan was victorious over the Creator. Yet, three days later, the Creator by the Spirit gave new life to Jesus (John 20). Forty days later after His resurrection, Jesus ascended to Heaven. He was made King of kings and Lord of lords (Acts 1:1-11). The coronation of Jesus solidified Him as King of Heaven and earth and the Church (Eph. 1:18-23). Therefore, all are to submit to King Jesus.

What's the Point?

Israel demanding a new king was a tragic turning point in their history. More than a sad footnote in history, this event is a microcosm of the human experience. In life, we are given a choice as to who or what we will worship. We can worship the Creator or we can worship that which is not the Creator.

If we choose to worship an idol like Israel, the Creator will permit our decision. He will give us up to our poor decision and we will bear the consequences (Rom. 1:24). Our lives will be burdened. We will not have to pay excessive taxes or give our children to work for the king. Instead, we will become enslaved to sin: the means by which idolatry is expressed (Rom. 6).

The good news of the Creator is that we do not have to remain under the oppressive rule of sin. By submitting to King Jesus, we can be unburdened, rescued, and liberated (Matt. 11:28-30; Gal. 1:3-4). Through our obedience to the Gospel, the means by which the Creator made Jesus king, our lives can be renewed.

We can live in hope of Jesus' kingdom being returned to the Creator for eternity (1 Cor. 15:24). In the meantime, we are to proclaim the rule of Jesus to the world. The Gospel holds the world and its powers accountable. This was represented throughout the preaching of Paul.

In the closing chapters in the book of Acts, Paul preached the Gospel to powerful rulers. He preached to the Jewish Sanhedrin Council and High Priest. He preached to Roman officials: Felix, Festus, and Agrippa. The book of Acts closes describing Paul being sent to Rome after appealing to Caesar. Everyone who ever heard Paul preach the Gospel understood its implication: Jesus is King, not Caesar (Acts 17:6-7). By documenting this, Luke shows us how our Creator holds the world accountable to King Jesus.

Conclusion

Who do we want for a king? King Jesus or a caricature? Who and what are we trying to promote in the world? We would be wise to learn the lessons of Israel. We must obey the rule of King Jesus, or we will be exiled eternally from the presence of the Creator (2 Thess. 1:5-9).