

Behold Your King!

Kingship and Compromise

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One of the most important ways in which the Bible speaks of the God of the Old Testament and the Christ of the New Testament, is that He rules as King. We first encounter this in the song of Moses and Miriam, which affirms that the Lord will reign forever and ever.

This idea of God's eternal reign as King in the future is repeated numerous times in the Scripture and it is also affirmed as extending into time, immemorial, in the past. Jesus Christ is thus the anointed King, par excellence, from the line of David, and numerous Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament look ahead to Him.

In the Gospels Jesus is called, "son of David," King of the Jews, King of Israel, primarily by His opponents during His trial before Pilate. However He did acknowledge His kingship openly in response to the high priest.

Mark 14:61-62 But He kept silent and answered nothing. [That is, Jesus Christ.] Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven."

So Jesus admits who He is and He says, "you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power," which is of course God, called here "the Power." This is equivalent to the Mighty One; it designates dignity and majesty, because to sit at the right hand of God is the chief place of honor and kingship.

In John 19 there is an astounding example of irony. John is the only gospel writer who mentions this incident. Pilate did not believe that Jesus was their King, but despite the Jews, he called Jesus the King of the Jews. Of course God inspired him to do that, but in his mind he was just spiting the Jews.

John saw this as significant because Jesus died for His people as the King of His people, as the Messiah. Pilate could not resist goading the Jews, "shall I crucify your King?" he asked, as if Rome would not crucify a Jewish king. The Jewish response was, "we have no king but Caesar." which was full of irony.

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John 19:14-15 Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he [Pilate] said to the Jews, “Behold your King!” But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”

The rebellious Jews claimed loyalty to Rome, which is irony in itself, while disclaiming their true Messiah who they did not even recognize.

John 19:16-18 Then he [Pilate] delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified Him, and two others with Him, one on either side, and Jesus in the center.

This needs a quick clarification. The phrase “which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha,” is not quite accurate. It should say, “which is called Hebraically, Golgotha,” or “which is called in the Jewish Aramaic language, Golgotha.” Golgotha is not a Hebrew word, but an Aramaic word, but the Jews at that time had a cross between Hebrew and Aramaic, so they Hebraized Aramaic, so to speak, so you get that distinct difference that only John mentions

The trial of Jesus began with the arrest in Gethsemane late at night on 14th day of the month of Nisan of the sacred Hebrew calendar. The trial was a double trial—a Jewish trial, and a Roman trial. In the Jewish trial, Jesus was examined on the charge of blasphemy and if Jesus was merely a man, this charge and the condemnation that followed it were just, because Jesus had made this claim. In reality however the trial was unjust because the laws of Judaism were repeatedly violated and no defense in support of Jesus' claim was admitted.

In the Roman trial, Jesus was examined on the charge of insurrection and treason for having made Himself a king. This trial in contrast to the Jewish trial was legally exact according to the Romans, but the result was murder. For having acquitted the prisoner of all guilt, Pilate nevertheless gave Jesus over to be crucified. So much for human justice, he was found innocent yet still found by guilty by the other Roman court.

Seen in these trials and the crucifixion is the justice of God unfolded in His punishment of sin in Christ. So on the basis of the death of the innocent Christ, divine love might go

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out and embrace and fully save the one who trusts Him—all of us and those who have trusted Him and even back to those who were faithful in the Old Testament.

Let me give you some background to help paint a picture regarding the situation that Jesus faced leading up to the crucifixion. We do not want to dwell on the crucifixion itself because John does not and neither do the other gospel writers. We need to only note that there was no more terrible death than crucifixion.

The method of crucifixion is detailed in the New Testament and in other ancient documents. After sentence was passed, the victim was first subjected to scourging, a punishment so severe that some died of it. In Jesus' case the scourging took place before the final passing of the sentence so as to evoke pity from the mob.

Next was the horizontal bar of the cross was bound to the condemned man's back, who was then led through the city to the place of crucifixion accompanied by a centurion and four soldiers who made up the execution party. A placard describing the crime for which he was to die was carried before Him.

Arriving at the place of crucifixion, the victim was stripped of his clothes which then became the property of the soldiers. The victim's hands were nailed in place and the cross bar was then hoisted upwards to rest upon the upright bar which had already been placed to receive it.

In most cases the feet were also bound to the cross. As a result of this he would raise himself up, that is, the crucified individual, from time to time thereby alleviating the strain upon his arms and diaphragm. After hours, even days, of such torture, the victim would die of shock, exposure, loss of blood, or suffocation.

This is something that we are all well aware of because we talk about it every year, but it is something that we should all keep fresh in our minds.

It is interesting that as John tells the story of Christ's crucifixion, he does so with great restraint, not at all emphasizing the physical aspects of the crucifixion, and one of the reasons for this is that the physical aspect was well known to his contemporaries and so needed little elaboration. But the more important reason is that John, like the other gospel writers, has more important things to emphasize. There is the fulfillment of prophecy for example, or there are the words from the cross.

One striking point significantly mentioned in all four gospels is that Jesus was not the only one to die that day, he was accompanied in His death by two thieves. Theirs is an

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interesting story, and though John himself does not elaborate on it, apparently they had been guilty of robbery which may have been part of a wider revolutionary activity on their part. The word used to describe them was the same word used to describe Barabbas in John 18:40, and it can also mean an insurrectionist.

Now whatever their specific crime may have been, they were caught and were now sentenced to die with Jesus. As He was nailed to the cross they were also nailed, and as He was lifted up they were also lifted up. The pain was excruciating and these two robbers, being filled with anguish and despair, must have cried out intensely cursing God, the Romans, and the Jews. But the Jews were not minding these robbers, they were thinking of Jesus, and they were adding insult upon insult to His sufferings and they mocked His Kingship.

Matthew 27:40 and saying, “You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

Luke 23:35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God.”

Mark 15:32 Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.” Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him.

As they listened to these taunts, the two thieves turned their thoughts from themselves to Jesus and joined in with the jeering. Matthew 27:44 tells us that the robbers who were crucified with Him also heaped insults upon Him.

Luke 23:39 Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

Then suddenly something wonderful happened, a miracle. God began to work on the heart of one thief so that his cursing died down and he began to think and at last began to understand the truth about himself and Jesus. Earlier he had been cursing Jesus and now he turned to the other thief and rebuked him for the evil things that he now understood him to be saying.

Luke 23:40-42 But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, “Do you not

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even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.” [So he turned to Jesus and voiced his new found faith.] Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

Now what did Jesus answer? Did He say, “It’s too late for that now, you should have joined the revolutionary band.”? We know He did not say that, but instead said, in quiet confidence:

Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

But is that what He really said? Luke did not state, as did Matthew or John, how the events of Jesus' death fulfilled Old Testament scriptures. Luke's purpose instead was to show that Jesus was the forgiving Messiah even as He was dying (in verse 34). Jesus asked the Father to forgive those who were killing Him. Even in death Jesus had the power to make people right with God.

Now Jesus said that the crucified thief would be with Him in paradise, and He also said He Himself would be in the grave three days and three nights after His crucifixion. So how could a thief have been promised to be in paradise that same day? Well, most of you already know the answer to that, but let us go through it just to make sure it is clear in our minds. If we can prove where Jesus went when He died, then we can prove if the thief really went to paradise that day. So take note of what Paul tells Christians here in I Corinthians 15.

I Corinthians 15:3-4 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

So Jesus was buried, but it does not say His body was buried, and that His soul went to paradise. It reads that He Himself, entirely, was buried. He died for our sins, He was dead for three days, and then He came to life and arose. John gives us further proof of where Jesus was.

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John 19:41-42 Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So there they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation Day, for the tomb was nearby.

It was Jesus who was laid in the tomb, not merely the body of Jesus. Jesus was dead—speaking of Christ. Peter quotes the prophet David as follows in Acts 2.

Acts 2:31 He [David], foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption [or decay].

This verse proves that Jesus was not in paradise, but in the grave, often translated hell in many English versions. Today the word hell is more accurately, correctly rendered “grave.” Now the inspired Greek word used by Peter is Hades, meaning the grave, but it does not mean a fiery, burning place for which the Bible uses another Greek word—Gehenna.

In the King James Version you find the word hell quite often recorded in the Scripture. In the New Testament it is translated from three different words; Hades, Gehenna, and Tartaros. Hades just means the grave, which is where it occurs most.

Hell or the grave is not paradise obviously and since Jesus did not enter paradise that day, the day of His crucifixion, then neither did the criminal enter it. Christ has preeminence in all things as Paul tells us in Colossians 1.

Colossians 1:18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.

This means that He is first, He is the first-fruit, and so on. Therefore the criminal who repented could not have preceded Christ to paradise and whenever the repented criminal enters paradise, Christ will be there too. He said, “You will be with Me in paradise.” For the average member of God's church this is very basic teaching.

Since we know where Jesus was when He died, then where is paradise? In II Corinthians 12 Paul speaks of when he was given a wonderful glimpse of paradise by

the Lord.

II Corinthians 12:1-4 It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. [Paul is speaking here] I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven [the third heaven is the throne of God]. And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul here is talking about himself who was given a glimpse of heaven. In a vision, he was caught up to the third heaven, God's throne, and was caught up into paradise. Paradise then is located in the presence of God's throne. In various passages the Bible describes paradise.

Revelation 2:7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.” ’

Notice that the Tree of Life is in the paradise of God.

Revelation 22:1-2 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Revelation 21:2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

In this city we find a river of the water of life proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb and on either side of the river was the Tree of Life. The New Jerusalem contains the Tree of Life. In the New Jerusalem then is the paradise of God.

Jesus said the repented criminal would be with Him in this paradise, but the New

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Jerusalem is not yet finished and Jesus is still preparing for us a place in it, because it will not be fully ready until after the Millennium. Not until then will it descend to earth and not until then will the repentant thief enter paradise.

Then what did Jesus mean by saying today you will be with me in paradise? At first glance, many professing Christians have assumed that Jesus promised the thief that he would be with Him in paradise that very day, but that is not true as we have seen. Remember what the thief had asked Jesus earlier:

Luke 23:42 Then he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.”

The truth is that Jesus has not yet come into His Kingdom.

I Thessalonians 4:13-17 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.

Additionally proper punctuation helps explain Luke 23:43. Most translations are not properly punctuated to make it appear that Jesus was in paradise that day, however, as we saw above, the Bible proves that Jesus was not in paradise that day.

In Luke 23:43, the King James, New King James Version, ESV, NIV, and all the major translations word this incorrectly.

Luke 23:43 And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

That is incorrect. A comma placed before the word today is incorrect. The comma should follow it. It should read: “Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with me in

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paradise.” By using the word today, Jesus was stressing the time of His promise, not the time He would be in paradise. Punctuation was not used in the inspired Greek that Luke wrote. It was added into the Greek and English centuries later by men who translated into the various translations.

There is exactly word for word the order in the original Greek which can be verified in any interlinear Bible: “truly I say to you today, with Me shall you be in the Paradise.” That is in the original Greek transliterated. “Today” naturally follows and modifies the word “say.” It is good Greek grammar.

The repentant criminal who was crucified with Jesus is still dead and buried and Jesus alone is the first born from the dead.

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

I Corinthians 15:23 But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming.

Nevertheless the time is coming when this repentant criminal will be resurrected and eventually enter the paradise of God that Jesus promised would come to this earth. We do not know when that is and we do not how repentant he was on the cross. That is for God to judge.

Now let us get back to Pilate here presenting Jesus to the Jews as a king. Pilate delivered Jesus to the priests, and they, with the help of the Roman soldiers, took Jesus to be crucified. “That was the most cruel and shameful of all punishments,” said the Roman statesman, philosopher Cicero. “Let it never come near the body of a Roman citizen, nay not even near his thoughts, eyes, or ears.” That is how terrifying that type of death was.

Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. And many of the Jews read this sign because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city and the sign was written in three different languages.

John 19:19-22 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many

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of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew [the Jewish Aramaic], Greek, and Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews." ' ' " [speaking of Christ] Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Of the four gospel writers, John alone, as far as we know from Scripture, was an eyewitness of Christ's crucifixion. So it is not surprising that his account contains details that are missing from the first three gospels. John alone tells us how Jesus lovingly entrusted Mary to his care. He alone tells us of two of Jesus' sayings from the cross; "I thirst" and "It is finished." No one other than John tells us that being crucified along with the two thieves Jesus was in the midst, or in the middle.

He alone tells that Christ's side was pierced by a soldier's spear and that there came forth blood and water. John alone distinctly tells us that Jesus set out for Golgotha carrying His own cross after which Simon of Cyrene had to carry it, as the other gospels tell us. So John fills in quite a few details there showing that he might have been the only one there at the crucifixion, because he had so much more detail.

These details of the events of the crucifixion vary in importance as John himself seems to indicate by the prominence or lack of prominence he gives them. Among those that are very important, is a detail concerning the title that Pilate had placed over Christ's cross. There is nothing unusual in the mere fact that John mentions the title that was placed above the cross. This title was standard procedure in cases of crucifixion and each of the other gospel writers likewise mentioned the placard.

Matthew 27:37 And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mark 15:26 And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Luke 23:38 And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Each of these accounts tells us that there was a placard designating the crime for which He was crucified and each gives us the substance of it. What John and Luke tell us and the others do not is that it was written in three languages. Nothing in the Bible is put

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there in vain, it is all there for a reason.

John 19:19-20 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew [literally Aramaic], Greek, and Latin.

This is an interesting detail. For one thing it provided us with one explanation of why the precise wording of that title in each of the gospels differs from that in the others. It seems that each gospel writer simply gives a selected translation. The full text would have been: "this is" translated by Matthew and Luke, "Jesus" given by Matthew and John, "of Nazareth" added by John alone, "the King of the Jews" provided by all four writers.

However John's intention in providing this detail is not to explain to us how the wording of the other gospels might have come to differ slightly, but rather it is to show that Jesus, while dying as the King of the Jews, nevertheless had a relationship to the world beyond Israel. He was not only the King of the Jews.

Let me explain this. Aramaic, Greek, and Latin were the major languages of the then known world, just as English is the business language of the world today. There is a reason why those three languages were world renown, so to speak.

John is actually declaring that Jesus is a King for everyone, He is not merely a Savior for Israel, though He is that. He is the Savior of the Greeks and of the Romans as well. He is the church's Savior now and He is the King of the world to come.

Once we have seen this we immediately think of the strong emphasis on this truth throughout John's gospel. We think first of John's prologue in John 1.

John 1:9-12 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world [there is a universal statement there]. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many [another universal word there] as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

We know in other areas that the apostle Paul wrote that there is neither Jew, nor Greek,

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and so on. Now in these verses from the very beginning of the gospel, John is indicating that the provision for salvation from sin about what he is writing in the gospel is not for the Jew only, but instead is for all believing men and women. All have rejected Jesus but from that vast number composed of both Jew and Gentile, God had elected a great mixed race to be His spiritual children.

Later on in this same chapter the ministry of John the Baptist is unfolded in detail and John's testimony to Jesus is recorded. John declares:

John 1:29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

The theme occurs again in John 3, the chapter that recounts Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. In these verses, Jesus speaks to Nicodemus of the nature of the necessity of a new birth and then he continues:

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

There is the ultimate goal stated there. After this, he repeats the idea of Jesus being the world's light.

John 3:19-21 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth [not just knows the truth only, but *does* the truth] comes to the light [Jesus Christ is the light and we reflect that light], that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

In chapter 4 we have an example of Jesus going beyond the strict bounds of Judaism to reach a woman from Samaria and through her the entire town. In this account there is an interesting contrast between Jesus' open and unprejudiced attitude toward others and the suspicion and vain superiority of His own disciples towards the Samaritan woman.

They were practically on her own level of understanding. They might have understood a little more than her at that time, but they were certainly on the same level when they stood before God, yet the disciples looked down on her, and Jesus, who was infinitely above all, stooped to reach her and lifted her up to believe on and eventually be with Him.

It is significant that the story goes on to tell of the eyewitness of the woman to her friends and fellow citizens of Samaria, at the end of which these declare, forcefully,

John 4:42 Then they [that is the disciples] said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

In chapter 6, He is the bread of life given for the life of the world. In chapters 8 and 9, Jesus is the light of the world and in chapter 10, He is the shepherd whose task is to gather His own out of Judaism and the other folds of this world. He is to lead them into that one "new fold" which is the church. Now in John 10. Jesus is speaking here:

John 10:16 "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."

Then in chapter 11, John reports the unwitting prophesy of Caiaphas the high priest, whose with calculating self interest, declared this:

John 11:49-50 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."

Now Caiaphas was not thinking of the Gentiles when he made this statement, in fact he was not even thinking of Israel, though he claimed to be making his suggestion for the good of the Jewish people. Caiaphas was thinking of himself and of his own position and prestige that felt threatened at that point. Yet John indicates:

John 11:51-52 Now this he did not say on his own authority [that is that Caiaphas did not speak of his own authority or of his own mind]; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the

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children of God who were scattered abroad.

Then in chapter 12, John alone of the gospel writers tells of the Greeks who came to Jesus and to whom Christ declared: "The hour has come for the Son of Man should be glorified."

John 12:20-23 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

At the end of the chapter in John 12:46 he reports Jesus as saying:

John 12:46 "I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness."

Now it is difficult to imagine how the universal scope of Christ's death could have been more fully or more consistently presented than the way John did in recording the three languages. We should be glad that it is presented in such a way because it is John's way of saying that there is no respect of persons with God. Paul has written this truth, theologically, but John demonstrates it practically, showing that God offers salvation to the Greek and Roman as well as to the Israelite. If we stop to analyze it we can see that this is the only path open to a God of perfect justice.

We understand that there are different times for different peoples to be called into the church or to be given the opportunity to live God's way of life. What God has done may be remembered this way, we are looking for the significance of the placard that Pilate caused to be nailed over Christ's cross—the placard that designated His supposed crime. We may remember according to the scriptures, God saw another title over that cross, though the message of that invisible placard was different. Paul tells the Colossians about it.

Colossians 2:13-14 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has

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taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

He nailed an invisible placard to the cross giving us that forgiveness. What Paul is getting at here is, he is using the image of the placard placed over the cross of a dying criminal to say that, although you and I have violated the holy law of God given at Sinai and therefore deserve to die for it, we do not need to die, because Jesus, the innocent, took our place and died for our trespasses. His cross bore the placard of our crime in Him, our violation of God's just law was punished, and God can therefore reach out to justify the one who trusts Him. Regardless of that person's nationality, intelligence, race, or any other factor.

There is another point. I have been talking about Jesus being the Savior and King of the world because this is what John suggests by recording the title plaques over the cross in three main languages. I am sure you noticed that the title did not exactly refer to Jesus as the Savior, it actually referred to Him as King—King of the Jews and of the remainder of the world as well. This suggests that His accomplishments as Savior and His identification as Lord, Master, and King go together, they cannot be separated.

Or another way to put it is you cannot have Christ the Savior without having Him as Lord also. He cannot be Lord—Master—unless He is the Savior. The use of three languages in which the caption of the cross was written is significant. The first language mentioned by John is Hebraic Aramaic, which was the language of religion and morality.

There were religions in Greece and Rome too, of course, but Hebraic Aramaic was preeminently the language of religious faith because it was in Hebrew that God had given the Old Testament in which the only faithful representation of Himself and the way of salvation was provided for the ancient world.

Proclaiming Jesus as King in Hebraic Aramaic suggests that He is King of religion, He is Himself the only true representation of God and the only sure and certain proclaimer of the way to be just before Him.

Jesus is Lord in this area. Consequently if He is your Lord, He must be the one that determines what you believe concerning God and salvation. There is no room for compromise at all when it comes to living God's way of life.

Greek is the second language and this was the language of science, culture, and philosophy. It was the language of "beauty" according to the world. If Jesus is Lord in this area His outlook must prevail over the culture as well.

Is what you see what He desires in culture today? Are our cultures world and life view His view? Of course not, but it will be when He comes back as King of kings. Because the views are different, you must side with your Lord, your Master, and your King, regardless of the world's opinion, either of Him or of you. Who cares what the world thinks about what we believe and our faith in Jesus Christ and God the Father? When we start worrying about what the world thinks of us, if we have not already begun to compromising, we begin to compromise.

Finally there is Latin, the language of law and government. This reminds us that Jesus is the Supreme lawgiver and law administrator. His laws must govern your conduct. You must be obedient to Him even though His commands may be countermanded by the state and other human authority.

Pilate may have thought that he put his inscription primarily to irritate the leaders of the Jewish people, and it did irritate them, but we know that God inspired the message that He wanted inscribed. It irritated them so much, that is the scribes, Pharisees, and Jewish people, that they came back to Pilate and requested that the wording to be changed. They wanted the sign to read "He said I am King of the Jews."

John 19:21 Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'He said, "I am the King of the Jews." "

These leaders hated Jesus so much that in His death they did not want to give even the appearance of recognizing His Kingship, truly revealing the enmity of their human nature against God.

Notice that it did that for Pilate too, because in response, the cowardly obstinacy of Pilate emerged clearly so that the one who did not have the courage acquit one whom he knew to be innocent, nevertheless stupidly dug in his heels and responded in verse 22. Pilate answered here:

John 19:22 Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

Now the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ always reveals men as they are. It reveals the soldier's nature, the nature of the crowds, that of the faithful women, and that of John, who was also in the city of Jerusalem at this period. It reveals our hearts as well.

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Why did God inspire Pilate to announce to the Jews, “Behold your King,” and for him to announce to the world by way of this multi-language placard, Jesus is “the King of the Jews”? What does this do for us, the saints? Why must we learn from this? Why is it so important?

There is scarcely a grander, more widespread image used in the Bible than king. Impressive in physical appearance; honored and respected by his people, the king was the dispenser of protection, justice, mercy, and a symbol of power and authority. But hardly a king on earth has ever been a righteous king, there have been very few.

In the Bible we find two royal images, God as king and humans as kings. It is important biblically that the king reflects Christ's Kingship. The Hebrew Aramaic word for king is Melek. It is one of the more commonly used words in the Old Testament, occurring almost 2700 times. The same is true in the New Testament. The Greek word for king is vasilus, and it occurs more than 125 times. So obviously the image of king is a very important image to understand.

Now God had planned that Israel would have a king, so He laid down regulations to show how the expected king was to conduct himself within the office. The people had rejected having trust and loyalty to God, the God of the Old Testament, Jesus Christ, as their King, so God gave them a human one so that they could be like the other nations as they wanted and learn the severe lessons of that.

These regulations are designed to ensure that the king does not overly elevate himself above the people and rule as an autocratic tyrant, instead he is to be thoroughly familiar with and guided by the attitudes and laws of God. He must comprehensively know that his own nature is just like those he serves and to be humble in carrying out the office.

The king then, was not a law unto himself, but rather was subject to God's law and his major function was to be an example of a humble servant of God leading the people and keeping the law. King Solomon is an example of what happens when a king compromises God's law, particularly in areas we view as small and unimportant. His apostasy shows how seemingly inconsequential compromises can lead to greater sins and the results in difficulty with repentance.

The more we compromise the harder it is to return to the faith once delivered. We are in training to be kings and priests in God's Kingdom, so it is very important that we know what to avoid. Solomon made some core mistakes by ignoring the spiritual principals involved.

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As the children of Israel stood poised across the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land, Moses accurately predicted that Israel would eventually reject God's divine leadership preferring a human king like other nations. Israel did this about 350 years later in the time of Samuel the prophet.

Tolerantly, God instructs Moses to tell Israel how to make the best of this mistake by giving guidelines a Godly king should follow. These governing principals are listed in Deuteronomy 17.

I want to examine these principles and we will compare them to the life of Solomon to see how well he followed them, because they do have lessons for us. One guideline requirement is:

Deuteronomy 17:16 But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'

Now we know that Egypt represents sin, so it is a way of saying do not return to sin again. There are so many of us that came out from the world that we do revisit the sin of the world on occasion.

Given the size and scope of the empire that he inherited from his father David, Solomon no doubt needed means for transportation and trade and beyond this, horses were prime war material in those days, particularly for pulling chariots. So multiplying horses can indicate territorial aggression and a warlike spirit. Most importantly it can show a lack of faith in God and also a greater faith in armies.

I Kings 10:26-28 says that Solomon had thousands of horses imported from Egypt. The next verse reveals further proof of his departure from these royal guidelines. He also imported chariots and sold horses and chariots to other nations. Solomon was an arms dealer, in our modern vernacular.

What surfaces is here is nothing more than a 10th century B.C. arms race. Solomon armed the Hittites, Syrians, providing them with the means to attack Israel and Judah in later years. In so doing he violated one of the smaller precepts of God's law first given to Israel 450 years earlier.

In what do we place our faith? Kings in God's Kingdom will have been placing their faith in God. Placing our faith in something or someone else is like returning to Egypt or

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returning to sin, something we must avoid. Compromising will move us into that more rapidly than we expect.

Another guideline in God's instruction through Moses is that Israel's leader was not to multiply wives to himself.

Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

Now what does this have to do with us? How many of us have more than one wife or husband? Solomon may have subconsciously reasoned, "If importing horses from Egypt has brought no immediate penalty, what is the harm in taking a second wife?" yet he eventually took a third, fourth, and so on. Each new wife confirmed his decision to violate God's law. In a sense they became his idols.

By the end of his reign he had 700 wives, not to mention his additional 300 mistresses or concubines. God's prohibition of royal bigamy was a means of protecting the king from having his heart turned away from God. How many idols do we have, or do we have any? Anything can be an idol, as you well know, and hopefully we do not have any because they will turn our eyes from God.

Solomon failed and compounded the problem even further by marrying many foreign women as well as the daughters of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, Hittites, from the nations from whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you."

In Deuteronomy 7:3-4, Moses predicts the deadly results of marrying non-Israelite women. Such wives would lead their husbands to serve other gods and Solomon disregarded these warnings when he was old and allowed his foreign wives to turn his heart after other gods and "his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God." Solomon broke the first commandment, "you shall have no other gods before Me" and he also broke the second, third, and fourth, which means that he broke all of the Ten Commandments by his actions of rebelling against the guidelines for kings representing God.

From the minor infraction of importing horses from Egypt, he eventually condoned or at least was an accessory to the sins of idolatry and murder—sins he would not have contemplated seriously at the beginning of his reign. Did he commit murder? Well, he caused murder, which is having a hand in it.

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Solomon not only went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites, but he also built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Molech, the abomination of the people of Ammon, whose rituals involved the horrible rite of child sacrifice by fire. That is what his compromises caused. No different than the abortions today that we have to agonizingly hear of.

Archeologists have found skeletal remains of infants in three sites where this brutal human sacrifice occurred. These Solomon high places for Chemosh and Molech stood for three centuries before Josiah finally destroyed them. As a result to Solomon's perverted disobedience, several of his corrupt successors to the throne even caused their own children to pass through the fire. Kings of Israel offering their children to Molech and other gods demanding child sacrifices. That is how far compromises can carry a person.

What have we made an idol of? Is there anything that we have set as a higher priority than God? Our home or perhaps our wife, and our children? Solomon put seven hundred wives before his God, it only takes one. He continually broke the third commandment about idolatry.

After his prodigious wisdom, Solomon is best for his colossal, seeming-astronomical, personal wealth. While riches are not evil in themselves, another guideline is that God admonishes the Israelite king not to greatly multiply gold and silver for himself. That is found in Deuteronomy 17:17.

Beyond the greed factor, God gave this warning, not because He wants His rulers to be poor, but because of the effect amassing wealth has on the general populace as well as the king himself. When a king gathers all of the nation's wealth to himself, the citizenry experience acute financial oppression. Guess where the United States is headed now?

I Kings 10 describes Solomon's unbelievable wealth in detail. He was so wealthy that he surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches, in generating an income of 666 talents of gold per year, and silver was as common in Jerusalem as stones and cedars as abundant as the sycamores in the low land.

He even charged a heavy yearly set fee for everyone who desired to hear his wisdom. God gave it to him for free and he charged for it. Money just seemed to pour into his coffers.

Obviously much of his wealth came to him from his trade and of gifts like that of the queen of Sheba., however he took advantage of his people to garner a great deal of

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wealth in the form of high taxes and using resident aliens as forced labor on public works projects. After he died the people sent emissaries to his son Rehoboam to request a lightening of their work and tax burdens, but he rebuffed them causing Israel's rebellion under Jeroboam.

From the biblical perspective, amassing wealth like this is a terrible abuse of power. Solomon had no excuses, he was fully aware of these instructions. Deuteronomy 17:18-19 shows Israel's kings were to read all of the book of the law; write it out by hand; keep it with them and read it continually.

Deuteronomy 17:18-19 "Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes,

Solomon knew it was wrong to import horses from Egypt; to take many wives, and enrich himself. Apparently he considered these infractions too minor, too small, too limited. Solomon fell victim to the same temptations that the rest of us so often face, to compromise in what we think are small concerns, or gray areas. The danger in such reasoning is that small compromises weaken character and over time lead to major sins. Just as we can grow in character little by little, so can we backslide in the same manner.

Solomon's series of compromises gradually, but inexorably distorted his understanding of God and His ways. The psalmist of Psalm 111 writes:

Psalm 111:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

Its converse is equally true. If we slack off in our resolve to keep all of God's commands, even those we deem as less important, we will gradually lose our God-given understanding of His way of life. We have seen this in the many people who have left God's church. They have no idea about God's truth anymore or of how to live it.

King Solomon may not have understood how far reaching his little sins would be by giving his royal sanction to the worship of pagan deities. Solomon set a precedent that

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was followed by most of Judah's kings after him. His example was retained by the ten tribes of Israel in Samaria and their subsequent wanderings. His religious influence still pervades the thinking of the monarchy of the line of David to this present day.

Solomon, having learned the hard way, writes: "there is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death." He found that out in the largest and greatest way that anyone could. Satan begins making his inroads in our lives when he influences us to compromise on God's law and follow our own way.

Once we compromise, the process of sin has begun and its ultimate end is death. The time to stop the process is in the beginning, when the situation and the pulls are still small and simple. It is the little compromises, the ones that we think are meaningless, that grow into full blown sin and apostasy. Nip it in the bud and the enduring consequences of compromise will never have a chance to bloom.

One of the most dangerous weaknesses a king can have is to compromise the keeping of God's commandments, His word, His truth, His way of life with seemingly little things, or gray areas. Compromising kings, church leaders, and parents are detrimental influences on those they lead or care for. Compromising in front of your children is going to send them the wrong message and they will take the easy route.

Pride is the primary motivator for compromising God's standards in my opinion. Paul says in I Corinthians 5:

I Corinthians 5:6-8 Your glorying [or pride] is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

These are characteristics every king has to have. The Days of Unleavened Bread are designed to teach us that little things matter and that we must live our lives with sincerity and truth—the opposite of compromise.

Christ's kingship is over His chosen people first, however His kingship extends to the nations as well. He is sovereign over them and they will worship Him in the end. Jesus Christ is our Savior and King. The establishment of Jesus Christ's kingship is found in the book of Revelation. "Behold, your King."

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Revelation 17:14 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.”

Faithfulness is the opposite of compromise. Christ, our King, does not compromise God's truth. Now here He is called the King of kings and Lord of lords, he is the King of the nations or of the ages, and most of the book of Revelation is devoted to declaring God's victory over the power of evil.

When Jesus Christ returns to earth as King of kings, over what kings will he rule?

Revelation 1:5-6 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

We are those kings if we do not compromise and if we stand faithful and steadfast in God's way of life. We do not know which positions God will put us in but regardless we still have to have qualities of both kings and priests. That is what we are being trained in now. We are to be kings and priests in God's Kingdom and reign on this earth. Compromise will not be among those kings.

For a final scripture turn to Revelation 5.

Revelation 5:8-10 Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.”

God the Father is our God and His son Jesus Christ is our Savior, High Priest, Lord, and King. He never compromises God's will because He always does the will of His Father and that is what we must do as well. If we are to qualify to be kings in God's Kingdom under the King of kings, we must learn to be uncompromising with God's truth. Proverbs

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20:28 states:

Proverbs 20:28 Mercy and truth preserve the king, and by lovingkindness he upholds his throne.

May we glorify God as we persevere in guarding the truth as we are being trained to be loving kings and priests of the Kingdom of God.