

JESUS CHRIST: THE KING IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

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INTRODUCTION

The gospel of Matthew places special emphasis on the King and the gospel of the kingdom. The kingdom of which it speaks is the future, literal millennial kingdom of Israel's King, the Lord Jesus Christ. His millennial kingdom will be the golden age of the earth. It will be the crowning dispensation in which the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ, will rule as King of kings and Lord of lords. All of redemption history will culminate through the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, in His millennial kingdom. The Messiah's rule will emanate from Jerusalem, and the nation of Israel will be the head of the nations on earth. Christ and His co-heirs, those taken from the dispensation of grace, will rule from the heavenly realm of the kingdom over the earth (cf. Rom 8:17; 2 Tim 2:12; Rev 2:26-27; 3:21). Thus, two orbs of the kingdom, earthly and heavenly, exist and will be controlled by Israel and the Church with the Lord Jesus Christ ruling over both realms.

Referencing numerous Old Testament passages, Matthew's gospel presents the first advent of the King in light of the proffered millennial kingdom. The importance of the King and His kingdom is paramount for both Israel and the Gentile nations. A summary statement for Matthew can be seen in the Old Testament book of Zechariah: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee" (Zech 9:9).¹ Matthew quotes Zechariah 9:9 in the Twenty-First Chapter as he describes Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem to present Himself as King. Thus, the theme of Matthew is the King and His millennial kingdom as predicted in the Old Testament. Any attempt to separate the King and the kingdom is fruitless.

Matthew records the ministry and message of the King as He offers to Israel the prophesied kingdom. Matthew also shows how Israel, in spite of overwhelming evidence, rejected its King. The rejection results in a withdrawal of the kingdom from Israel until a future time and another generation. Blinded by sin, Israel not only rejected its King but murdered Him unjustly. Because of His great love for Israel, the King is willing to forgive and not totally cut them off. However, due to Israel's sin, God allows Gentiles the privilege to share in the glory of the heavenly realm of the kingdom with the King (cf. Matt 21:43; Rom 11:11; Eph 2:6; 3:6). Hence, Matthew is particular in his message to Israel; he is also universal in his message to Gentiles.

THE PREDICTION OF THE KING

The New Testament should be read and understood in light of the previous revelation of the Old Testament. From a literary perspective, there is not a gap between the testaments. John Sailhamer has stated, "The last word in the Hebrew Bible can also be understood as the first word in the New Testament. It is a verb without a subject, (2 Chr 36:23, 'let him go up'). Its subject could very well be taken from the first chapter of Matthew in the New Testament. It is a call for the coming of that one 'whose God is with him,' and who is to build the Temple in Jerusalem."² The one of whom he speaks is the Messiah, the King. Matthew begins his gospel

by referencing the lineage of the King, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1:1). It is vital to note “a key to the argument of the book is found in this opening statement. It is contained in the order of the words. The Messiah is *first* ‘Son of David,’ and *then* He is ‘Son of Abraham.’ First He is Sovereign, then Savior. And this is the order in which Matthew develops the thought of the Gospel. [Emphasis the author’s]”³ The importance of the King and His kingdom is immense. The major thrust of the Old Testament prophesied the coming King and His rule. Concerning the kingdom, Alva J. McClain has remarked, “The Kingdom of God is, in a certain and important sense, the grand central theme of all Holy Scripture. In approving this affirmation we are not forgetting the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . but as we contemplate Him and His manifold glories as revealed in the Word of God, we shall inescapably come sooner or later to the Kingdom of which He is the divine center. For it is in this Kingdom that the Father’s eternal purpose in the incarnate Son shall be certainly and completely fulfilled.”⁴ All of human history and the future are dependent upon the prophesied King and His righteous kingdom.

Matthew uses various Old Testament quotes throughout his gospel to place emphasis on the predicted King. In Chapter One, he quotes Isaiah, who prophesied of one who would be born of a virgin, “God with us.” In Chapter Two, he quotes Micah, who predicted the birthplace of the Messiah. In Chapter Three, John the Baptist is the “voice of one crying in the wilderness” of whom Isaiah spoke. He is preparing the way for Israel’s long-awaited King. When Jesus is ministering to the Jews in Chapter Eight by healing diseases and casting out demons, Matthew cites more of Isaiah’s prophecies as being fulfilled. In Chapter Eleven when John the Baptist’s disciples ask if Jesus is the Promised One, Jesus points out the fulfillment of Isaiah’s predictions concerning Himself, the Messiah. In Chapter Twenty-One, Matthew relays the praise given Jesus at His triumphal entry as he references the prophet Zechariah. In all, “there are one hundred twenty-nine Old Testament references: fifty-three of them are citations, and seventy-six are allusions.”⁵ Additionally, Matthew highlights thirteen times where Jesus performed certain acts so “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet.” The purpose of this emphasis is to convey the fact of Christ’s central position among the Old Testament prophets.

Matthew also includes vocabulary to describe Jesus which is definitely Hebraic.⁶ Jesus is referred to as the “Son of David,” the “Son of God,” and the “Son of Man.” All of these titles are Jewish in nature and point directly to specific aspects of the concluding Jewish King, the Messiah. Matthew’s favorite term to describe King Jesus is, “Son of Man.” This term references back to Daniel 7:13-14 which describes the King and His kingdom. Daniel portrays the “Son of Man” as all powerful and His kingdom, unlike the other kingdoms of men, as an everlasting kingdom that shall not be thwarted.

THE MESSAGE OF THE KING

The gospel of the kingdom was loudly proclaimed by Jesus and recorded most proficiently by Matthew. In concert with John the Baptist (cf. Matt 3:2), Jesus began his public ministry by preaching the gospel of the kingdom, “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt 4:17b). The term “kingdom of heaven” is a reference to the rule of the heavens over the earth. It is directly related to the spiritual realm of the kingdom which Satan presently rules (cf. Matt 4:8-9; Eph 2:2; Rev 12:7-10). Jesus came to defeat and de-throne Satan. Thus, Jesus’ offer of the kingdom was not limited to the earthly realm of the kingdom, but the heavenly also.

Jesus' message was intended directly for His people and His people alone, the nation of Israel (cf. Matt 10:5-6; 15:24). Israel was sin-sick and needed to be healed. Isaiah describes a similar condition for the nation in his day as follows: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1:4-6). In mercy, Jesus appeared to save Israel from its sin. Jesus, the Messiah, was offering the predicted kingdom to Israel on the basis of a *national* repentance. The long awaited kingdom was near, but a sole condition was cited prior to its official appointment—repentance. The repentance was to be from a love for their traditions back to a love for the God of their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Israel was walking away from the Lord and out of fellowship with Him. They were implored to "change their minds about their prior attitude towards God's commandments (Isa 1:19; cf. Lev 26:3ff; Deut 28:1ff)."⁷ Judgment had befallen them by the hand of God, and they were currently under His curse (cf. Deut 28:15ff) without a King or kingdom. The God-ordained position they once enjoyed in the Old Testament, a Theocracy, had ceased to exist because of sin. Israel, God's redeemed first born son (cf. Ex 3:22; 15:13; Hosea 11:1), was presently scattered among the nations and out of favor with God (cf. Ez. 16:35-43). Only a remnant was present to hear the good news of the Messiah and the promised kingdom. Thus, Jesus' message conveyed through Matthew to wayward Israel was not soteriological but eschatological in nature. It could be summarized as follows: Israel, return to fellowship with your God, and the promised reward of the kingdom will follow.

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE KING

Ancient kings were always viewed as regal law givers. Moses was viewed by Israel as the pre-eminent law giver and thus, a king. Unfortunately, sinful Israel was currently worshiping the minutia of the Law of Moses and their traditions, instead of honoring the God from which it proceeded. Moses' writings also testified of one who should come after him and be greater than him. Jesus was the one of whom Moses testified. As King Jesus, it was necessary for Him to proclaim the law of His kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is, therefore the constitution of King Jesus. It is the royal law by which King Jesus expects his subjects to conform. However, it does not negate the Law of Moses; rather it clarifies the intent of the Mosaic Law. Further, Christ's Law, the law of love (cf. Gal 5:14; 6:2; John 13:34-35), fulfills the Mosaic Law and sets Christ's disciples on a higher spiritual plane of faith and dependency upon God. Those who obey its directives will be rewarded in the kingdom. Those who ignore its commands will suffer loss and not be afforded blessing in the kingdom.

The proper interpretation of the sermon is paramount. It is not soteriological in nature for it is directed primarily to the disciples. Stanley Toussaint has stated, "It is concerned with the life the disciples were to live in light of the coming kingdom. . . . To say that the primary purpose of the sermon is to bring conviction of sin is to misrepresent the sermon. The epistles addressed to believers have the same high standards, and no one would say they are to be used primarily to convict an unbeliever."⁸ One will not find the simple message of salvation by grace through faith (the gospel of grace) in the sermon. The sermon is concerned with instruction in righteous

living which pleases God. It corrects the errors propagated by the Scribes and Pharisees. Righteous living results in the blessing of reward in the kingdom.

Jesus begins the sermon by listing characteristics which should describe His disciples. Humility, meekness, practical righteousness, mercy, purity, and peace are qualities that depict the King's disciples. The disciple whose life is characterized by these distinctives shall be rewarded greatly for faithful perseverance and good works (cf. Matt 5:12). Those who endeavor to be rewarded in the kingdom must heed the words of the King and obey His commands. Followers of the King should have a life characterized by practical righteousness exceeding that of Israel's leadership (cf. Matt 5:20). Without this greater righteousness, there is no hope of entering the kingdom and enjoying reward from the King.

Jesus reveals in the sermon that God is our Father, and we are to pray to Him as such. We are to ask Him to send the kingdom and to seek a life controlled by His will. Absolute faith in the Father's provision is taught as a rule of life for the disciple. The discourse is also concerned with doing and serving. A life of mercy towards others and faith in God is a common theme in the discourse. A major premise in the sermon (and in much of Jesus' teaching in Matthew) is reward for faithfulness (cf. Matt 5:12, 19, 46; 6:1-6, 16, 18-21). Those who seek "first the kingdom" are those who will seek to please the King. An intimate relationship with the King will result in blessing in His kingdom (cf. Matt 7:24-25). Conversely, those with a distant relationship with the King will experience loss (cf. Matt 7:26-27).

The teaching of the Sermon on the Mount was astonishing to those who heard the sermon. The clarity and authority proceeding from Christ was without equal. The King addressed His subjects and revealed to them His Law. It was a law which hinged on love (cf. Matt 7:12) and not on the peripheral. It dealt with the heart and not externals. Jesus' Law was in agreement with Moses' Law (cf. Matt 5:17-18), but Jesus brought unparalleled clarity and conviction.

THE CREDENTIALS OF THE KING

Matthew highlights Jesus' healing ministry as authentication of His Kingship. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan" (Matt 4:23-25).

In Chapters Eight and Nine, Matthew records ten miracles that Jesus performed during the early part of His ministry. The miracles were for the benefit of the Jews so they might understand the Messiah was in their midst and His kingdom was near. Three miracles are recorded consecutively in Matthew 8:23-9:8. This triplet of miracles was recorded to give a foreview of the conditions of the King's kingdom. Jesus calmed the raging sea showing He had control over the elements. This foreshadowed the prophesied kingdom which would be one of harmony in nature (cf. Joel 3:18; Isa 55:13). He cast out the demons from two men into swine conveying He had power over Satan and his spiritual kingdom. Daniel 8:23-25 and Zechariah 3:1-2 prophesied of the coming King who would thwart the powers of darkness. Jesus healed the paralytic man and forgave his sins amplifying His ability to fulfill verses such as Isaiah 33:24;

60:20-21. These miracles prove Jesus was able to bring the promised blessing of the kingdom to Israel.

Matthew records several instances of wonder and amazement among the disciples and people. “But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him! . . . But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men . . . And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel” (Matt 8:27; 9:8, 33). Israel had never before seen such a massive display of miraculous signs. The explosion of signs indicated one thing for the Old Testament student of Scripture- The Messiah was on the scene, and the kingdom was about to materialize.

Matthew also records the sending out of Jesus’ twelve disciples to Israel. Jesus’ instructions were: “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt 10:5-8). Wondrous works were wrought among the people of Israel by the disciples of Jesus. The purpose was to amplify the arrival and blessing of their King. Gentiles were not to be considered during this portion of the King’s ministry. Israel was the elect of God, and the blessings of the kingdom were promised to them first.

In doubt, due to circumstance, John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to inquire if Jesus was indeed the Messiah of whom he had earlier spoken. In answer to the question, Jesus told them to report back to John, “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Matt 11:5-6). The sick were healed, lepers cleansed, the dead came back to life, and demons were cast out by Jesus and His disciples. Israel’s promised King was on the scene and His wondrous works of signs and miracles should leave no doubt in their mind as to His identity.

THE REJECTION OF THE KING

While Jesus ministered throughout the land of Israel preaching the gospel of the kingdom and authenticating His Kingship through miraculous works, the leaders of Israel were jealous. The Scribes and Pharisees were in a state of unbelief and disobedience. They desired the praise of men rather than the praise of God. They were attributing Jesus’ works to the works of Satan (cf. Matt 8:34). The gospel of the kingdom was good news, but it had one requirement: national repentance. The leaders of the people, who sat in Moses’ seat (cf. Matt 23:2), were required to lead the people back to fellowship with their God. Instead of returning to God, they began to reject the Lord by rejecting His Anointed.

Chapters Eleven through Thirteen are pivotal chapters in Matthew’s Gospel. Matthew conveyed Jesus’ Kingship in earlier chapters by recording His supernatural birth, baptism, temptation, signs, law, and power. As Matthew develops the story, he shows how Israel’s leaders begin to oppose and reject their King. In Chapter Eleven, Jesus began to chastise the cities which did not repent and accept Him as their Messiah (cf. Matt 11:20). Because of their rejection of Jesus, judgment was predicted (cf. Matt 11:22-24).

The climax of Jesus’ rejection is recorded in Chapter Twelve. The Scribes and Pharisees ascribed the supernatural works of healing to Satan rather than to the Spirit of God. Jesus pronounced judgment upon the nation of Israel for their rejection and the sin of blindness which

credited the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan. Jesus said this specific sin would not be forgiven, and the nation of Israel would face the consequences of the unpardonable sin. Israelites in the current dispensation (Law) and the coming dispensation (Grace) would not have the blessing of the prophesied kingdom (cf. Matt 12:32). Because of their rejection, Jesus formally announced the cessation of the offer of the kingdom in Chapter Twenty-one. His words were, “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt 21:42-43). The nation of which He speaks is the Church (cf. 1 Pet 2:9-10).

Chapter Thirteen of Matthew is a transitional chapter where the message of the coming kingdom changes. The kingdom is no longer near but in the distant future. In Chapter Twelve, the subject of the Gentiles is mentioned for the first time (cf. Matt 12:18-21). Up until this point, Christ used parables sparingly. Beginning in Chapter Thirteen, He begins to speak in parables concerning the coming kingdom. Because of the sin of blasphemy, Christ no longer speaks directly to the nation of Israel (cf. Matt 13:10-17; 35-35). He speaks to the disciples and those who have ears to hear.

Matthew continues to develop the life of Christ and show His ministry in light of the rejection of His offer of the kingdom. In Chapter Twenty-Three, Jesus pronounces severe judgment upon the nation and its leaders for their unpardonable sin and rejection of Him. Israel's leadership had “shut up the kingdom”(Matt 23:13) and were responsible for keeping the nation in bondage. They worshiped their traditions taken from the Law of Moses instead of the God of Moses. They served the letter of the law instead of the spirit of the law. Jesus pronounced eight woes upon the leaders for their hypocrisies. He refers to them as “hypocrites,” “blind guides,” “fools,” “whited sepulchers,” “serpents,” and a “generation of vipers”. The ramification of their rebellion and rejection would be felt by many generations. Jesus sums up His judgment by saying:

“Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and Scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt 23:34-39).

THE NEW SUBJECTS OF THE KING

The transition of Chapter Thirteen sets the stage for Matthew to introduce Jesus' revelation of the kingdom in light of Israel's rejection. “The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the seaside” (Matt 13:1). The language in verse one is fraught with meaning; the house is symbolic of Israel and the seaside is symbolic of the Gentiles. Thus, Christ left Israel to speak to the Gentiles who began to come into view in Chapter Twelve (cf. Matt 12:18-21). The remainder of Matthew moves in the direction of the Gentiles and the kingdom. The

parables spoken in Matthew Chapter Thirteen were spoken in relation to fruit bearing with a view of the coming kingdom. The message of the parables is not that of salvation by grace through faith; rather it is the “word of the kingdom” (Matt 13:19). It is spoken to those who would seek to produce fruit in relation to the coming kingdom (i.e. the disciples and other believers who desire to love and obey the King’s Law and be rewarded in the coming kingdom). Since Israel rejected the King, Jesus now reveals issues concerning the kingdom to those who have ears to hear concerning His coming kingdom- the Gentiles. Chitwood has remarked, “These parables—centering around a message pertaining to *the kingdom of the heavens* — have to do with an offer of the kingdom to a people other than Israel, following the removal of the kingdom from Israel (cf. Matt. 21:33-43; I Peter 2:9, 10). These parables have to do with the message pertaining to *the kingdom of the heavens* during and following the present dispensation, and these parables conclude with events surrounding Christ’s return (after He, the Noblemen in Luke 19:12, has received the kingdom from the Father [cf. Dan. 7:13, 14; Rev. 11:15; 19:11ff]). [Emphasis the author’s]”⁹

Because of the rejection of Israel, Matthew begins to emphasize the change in Jesus’ message. In Chapter Sixteen, Jesus reveals to the disciples the reality of His immanent death and resurrection. The need for His sacrificial death is brought into view. The Church is formally mentioned in Chapter Sixteen, and the cost of discipleship is emphasized. Those believers who desire reward in the coming kingdom would need to submit to Christ’s Lordship in their daily lives. The overarching theme of the kingdom and reward is vividly understood in Chapter Sixteen, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works” (Matt 16:24-27). Many passages in Matthew, especially the parables, have direct application for the Church (cf. Matt 28:19-20). The reward of the kingdom of Christ is paramount throughout the book- Jews and the Church sharing in the glory of the kingdom (cf. Matt 19:27-30).

THE SECOND COMING OF THE KING

In light of the rejection, it was Jesus’ plan to speak of His *second* coming and the subsequent inauguration of His kingdom. The plan of God for the restoration of the earth by means of the kingdom of the Messiah will not be thwarted. Statements of His second coming are made in the parable of the tares in Chapter Thirteen. In Chapter Sixteen, Jesus mentions His coming in glory which speaks of His second coming to establish His kingdom (cf. Matt 16:27-28). Jesus continued to speak of the kingdom of heaven (Satan’s current kingdom, but soon to be Christ’s) in numerous parables. Many of these parables were kingdom of heaven parables dealing with the coming kingdom and the King’s new program. Even though the kingdom was not near, it was still going to come to fruition. The Church would have a part in the heavenly portion of the kingdom (cf. Matt 21:43; Phil 3:10-15; 2 Thes 1:5; 2 Tim 4:18). Thus, the parables are applicable to the Church (cf. Matt 28:19-20). These parables primarily speak of service, judgment, and reward. Jesus uses the parables to teach his disciples how they should live. He also uses them to give believers an idea of how He will judge them for their works. Therefore, they are not soteriological but eschatological in nature.

Matthew, in Chapters Twenty-Four and Twenty-Five, presents Jesus' famous Olivet Discourse. The discourse is offered to the disciples and is the longest prophetic message of Christ. The language is strongly apocalyptic. The discourse is a result of the disciple's inquiry, "Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world" (Matt 24:3)? The disciples were interested in the consummation of the age and the establishment of the kingdom. The discourse moves in the direction of this great event and explains the events that will take place prior to the establishment of the kingdom.

The second coming of the King in power and glory to establish His kingdom is the focus of the apocalyptic discourse. Three groups are dealt with in the discourse: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church. The prophetic portion in Matthew 24:4-35 deals with a period of time known as the tribulation- a seven-year period of time identified by Daniel and confirmed by Matthew and Revelation. The focus of this section is upon the Jewish nation and the judgment it will experience as a result of God's wrath. The rejection of their Messiah will result in judgment so severe that no one will be spared except by God's attribute of mercy. Matthew 24:36-25:30 focuses upon the disciples and hence the Church. A fervent expectation and watching for the coming of the King and the kingdom is reinforced. Believers are admonished to wait patiently and serve the Lord. Judgment for faithfulness and unfaithfulness while waiting is emphasized. Matthew 25:31-46 focuses on the Gentile nations at the King's second coming and their treatment of the Jews during the tribulation. The status of the Gentile nations in the millennial kingdom will be determined by the King's righteous judgment.

THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF THE KING

As the calendar of events unfolds, Matthew documents the increased animosity towards Jesus from the leaders of Israel. Because of His uncompromising message, the leaders seek to destroy Him by means of the Roman government. Matthew records the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the passion week of Christ. The last supper, the time of trial and prayer in the garden are documented with special emphasis. The betrayal by Judas is recorded, and the subsequent inquisition before Caiaphas, the high priest, is highlighted. In response to Caiaphas' question, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God"(Matt 26:63b), Jesus proclaims himself to be the Son of God. This declaration infuriates the leaders. They violently react and desire that He be put to death. However, they did not have the power to put any one to death and sent Jesus to Pilate for him to carry out their wishes. Pilate did not want to crucify Jesus, but the rebellious nation of Israel, in denial of their King, desired for Jesus to be crucified. Ironically, Pilate placed a plaque over the head of Jesus while He hung on the cross that read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Matthew records the triumphant resurrection of the King. Jesus assures His followers that all power is His. He instructs them to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matt 28:18-20). Matthew ends His gospel on a positive note by encouraging believers to carry on the mission and message of the coming King and kingdom.

CONCLUSION

The King and His kingdom is the central theme of the book of Matthew. Matthew wrote his gospel in order to convince his readers the King indeed came and is coming again. Jews who read this gospel should be convicted of their nation's sin and repent for their great error. Gentiles who read the story should be convicted that the God of the Jews is the only God, and they should trust in Him for salvation. Both individual Jews and Gentiles in the present dispensation should first trust Jesus for salvation from sin. Then, every believer should seek a position of honor and exaltation with Jesus in His coming kingdom. Positions of heavenly honor alongside the King will be afforded those who love God, obey His commandments, and seek His kingdom and its righteousness above all else.

ENDNOTES

¹ The King James Version is used exclusively throughout this paper.

² John H. Sailhamer, "The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:1, March 2001, 14.

³ S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., "The Argument of Matthew." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 112:146, April 1955, 144.

⁴ Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1968), 5.

⁵ W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels* (Old Tappan, NJ, Flemming H. Revell Co., 1975), 270.

⁶ Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King* (Grand Rapids, MI, Kregel Publications, 1980), 15.

⁷ Arlen Chitwood, *Mysteries of the Kingdom* (Norman OK, The Lamp Broadcast, 1998), 8.

⁸ Toussaint, 93-94.

⁹ Chitwood, 12.

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