

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.

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?

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?

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.

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).

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.

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.



Friendship Plants a New Company

J. H. Zachary

When Melvin Steinke needed to live closer to his work in the logging industry he and his wife, Eileen, purchased a home in Rock Creek, British Columbia, Canada. There was no church or fellow believers in the area, so Melvin and Eileen set out to make friends.

Eileen did not look for employment outside the home, so she had time to get acquainted with neighborhood women. "As we reached out to people they soon began inviting us to their clubs." In a short time Eileen was attending two women's Bible study groups with different Protestant sponsors. She also met with a Women's Institute. She joined in quilting and sewing activities.

The Steinkes planned a Vacation Bible School program, but the first two days no one came. Eileen became discouraged. But on the third day one person attended. "Who is sponsoring this program?" she asked Eileen. Eileen told her that she was Seventh-day Adventist.

"Oh," the visitor said, "had I known who you are I could have filled this room!" With this woman's help, the attendance at the Vacation Bible School grew.

Melvin and Eileen kept the VBS program going all winter. They invited their group to come to their home each Sabbath evening for Bible stories. Parents began to come with their children. As the group grew, the Steinkes opened their home for Sabbath morning services.

One interested family accepted an invitation to attend a seminar being held in a town one hour away. During the long drive to and from the seminars, which continued for several days, the two families became close friends. That family shared with their friends what they had learned at the seminar.

By the time the Steinkes had lived in Rock Creek a year, 20 persons were attending worship services in their home. Many worship with Steinkes on Sabbath and attend their own church on Sunday. The Steinkes plan to hold a Revelation Seminar soon. One family is already preparing for baptism.

Melvin and Eileen Steinke are hoping to purchase a church in the near future. During their visits with their new neighbors, they were delighted to find a couple of former Adventists who are now renewing their commitment to the Lord Jesus.

The Steinkes are demonstrating the method of evangelism that Jesus taught and modeled. Strong evangelism is built upon developing bonding friendships with others.

J. H. Zachary is coordinator of international evangelism for The Quiet Hour.

Produced by the Office of Mission
Sabbath School-Personal Ministries department of the General Conference
Email: gomission@gc.adventist.org