

Live with Christ as your King!

- I. Because of who He is
- II. Because of what He has Done
- III. Because of what He will Do

*(Revelation 1:4b-8) J Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, {5} and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, {6} and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. {7} Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen. {8} "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."*

Today I'd like to begin with a quiz. Can anybody identify this man? Raise your hand if you can tell me who this is. Let me give you a hint. His name is Bhomibol Adulyadej (pronounced Pooh me pon Ah doon yah day). Still don't know who it is? Don't feel bad. I did not know who he was either, until I took a trip to the country of Thailand. You see, this man, for a period of 70 years, ruled as the king of Thailand. And for the most part, the Thai people adored him. You would see his picture everywhere: on billboards, hanging in people's homes, on their currency, it's even prominently displayed in our churches over there. Everyone loved the People's King, or as he was sometimes, called the King of Kings. They wore his favorite color, yellow, on Mondays, because that was the day of his birth. And when he died two years ago, the entire nation wore black—for a full year. Obviously, this King made a tremendous impact on the people of Thailand. It's as if he gave them an identity, sense of pride. It's what united them as a nation for almost seven decades. For generation after generation the Thai people lived and thrived with one man as their King.

Tell me, can you relate? Now, I realize the United States is not a monarchy. We don't have a royal throne in Washington. And unfortunately, our political leaders often seem to do more to divide us than unite us. But that doesn't change the fact that we all have a king. In fact, that's what we are here to celebrate today. Today we celebrate the fact that Christ is our King. But what we really want to focus on today it's how that fact, that Christ is our king—how that fact affects our everyday lives. You see, in his word, God wants us to do more than just know that Jesus is our King. He wants us to live with Jesus is our King. In fact, let's let that be our theme today. Christian,

Live with Jesus as your King!

- I. Because of who he is.
- II. Because of what he's done.
- III. Because of what he will do.

First, live with Jesus as your king because of who he is. Our text for today is a portion of the letter that the Apostle John wrote to a handful of Christian Churches in the First Century A.D. The letter, which recorded the revelation that Jesus Christ gave to John, was designed to

prepare them and us for what life would be like between Jesus' first coming and his second coming, that period that we are in right now.

John begins by greeting his readers in the name of the Triune God. John writes, *Grace and peace to you from him who is and who was and who is to come*. That's a reference to the eternal nature of our God and Father in heaven. *And from the seven spirits before his throne*, (or as it could also be translated, *from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne*. That's a reference to the Holy Spirit. And as John goes on to say, *from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth*.

Notice that John says three things about who Jesus is. First, Jesus is the "*faithful witness*." In other words, you can count on Jesus to always tell you exactly what God wants you to know and believe. And Jesus is "*the firstborn from the dead*". That's a reference to the fact that on Easter Sunday morning, Jesus was raised from the grave. St. Paul used a similar term when called Jesus *the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep* (1 Corinthians 15:20.) Both phrases underscore the fact that Jesus was just the first of many who will be raised from the grave. In fact Scripture says there's a cause and effect relationship between Jesus' resurrection and all who follow him. Because Jesus lives, so will all who put their trust in him. Isn't that what makes Jesus different than all the other kings in the world? When those kings died, they stayed in the grave. Their tombs are still occupied. But Jesus' tomb is empty. That means that when you live with Jesus as your king, you know what the future holds. Your body will not be forever in the grave. But rather, it will be raised glorious, just like Jesus was.

But there's one more thing that St John says that Jesus is. He says that Jesus is *the ruler of the kings of the earth*. Do you realize what that means? It means that no matter who is in the White House, or who is in the Kremlin, or who's in the governor's mansion, Jesus Christ is still in control. And even though earthly rulers will sometimes misuse the authority they've been given by God, and even though they will at times go to war against the church and make life miserable for believers, the fact is, they do not have the upper hand. Jesus is still the King of kings and the Lord of lords. And what's even more comforting is the fact that the control that Jesus is exercising over the nations of our world is being exercised for the benefit of believers. How does St Paul put it in Ephesians 1:22? *God placed all things under Jesus' feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church*. Jesus is ruling everything for the good of his people. Remember that the next time you lament the results of the most recent election or the last presidential election. Remember that when it seems like anti-Christian forces are growing stronger and stronger around the world, or the moral fabric of our society seems to growing weaker and weaker. Remember that when you hear of hostile countries attaining the ability to wage nuclear war. Remember who the ruler of the kings of this earth is. It's Jesus. Living with Jesus as your King means letting God control what he says he's going to control. It means entrusting into God's hands our lives and our futures. Or to put it another way, you and I can live with Jesus as our King, first of all, because of who he is, namely, the faithful, resurrected, ruler of the nations.

But there's another reason for you and I to live with Jesus as our King. Here in Revelation chapter 1, St John says that we can live with Jesus as our King, II. Because of what Jesus has done (specifically, what he's done for us.)

I mean, it's one thing to know that Jesus has conquered death and rules the nations. But all the power in the world gives us little comfort if we don't know how Jesus feels about us or unless we know what Jesus has done for each one of us personally—which is exactly why John goes on to say what he does here in our text. John breaks into a song of praise to Jesus. He says,

to him who loves us... Notice the present tense there. It's not like, "once upon a time Jesus used to love you. No it's right now, it's ongoing. Jesus is...*the one who loves us...and has freed us from our sins by his blood.* Really, that's all we need to know, isn't it? That by his death on the cross, Jesus has set us free from the guilt and the punishment of our sins. He's unlocked the prison doors. No longer will we face the eternal consequences that our sins deserve.

But not only has he set us free. John says, *he's made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father.* What does that mean, we are Christ's "Kingdom"? It means that Jesus has established his ruling activity in our hearts. It means that the realm where Jesus rules is within us. But he rules not by his power, but by his grace. It is his unconditional love for us that in turn motivates us to want to love and serve him in return.

But not only has Jesus made us part of his kingdom. He also made us to be priests. In the Old Testament, the priests served as mediators between God and his people. The priests offered up sacrifices to atone for the sins of the people. But now that Jesus has offered himself as the ultimate sacrifice for sin, we now have the privilege of coming directly to God in prayer. And the sacrifices we make are not to atone for sin, but rather to serve as thank offerings for the atonement that Jesus has already made for us. As priests of God, Scripture says that we now *offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1).* In other words, everything a believer does in keeping with God's will, in gratitude for God's grace, is an offering that is pleasing to our God and King.

Or to put it another way, living with Christ as our King means recognizing who God has made us to be. In Christ, we are not some good-for-nothing lackey's, despised by God and forced to muddle through life with no purpose and no power to accomplish anything good in our world. No, quite the opposite! In Christ, we are the dearly loved children of God. We are precious to God because Jesus paid such a high price to make us his own. And we have a purpose. Because God has made us his priests, God has given us the privilege of coming to him in prayer, interceding for our families, for our fellow Christians, for our nation and for our world. And, as God's representatives, as his ambassadors in Christ, God gives us a message to share with them. The message of God's love in Christ. A message which has the power to change hearts and lives, as other people come to know and believe that Jesus is their Savior and King as well.

Yes, God has given you and me reasons to live with Jesus as our King. First, because of who Jesus is, and secondly, because of what he's done for us. Here in our text, St John offers a third reason to live with Jesus as our King. He says Live with Jesus as your King... III. Because of what he will do.

With the closing words of our text, St. John turns our eyes toward a future event, namely, the glorious return of our Savior King on the Last Day. John puts it this way. *Look, he is coming with the clouds.* Just as God revealed his presence by means of a fiery cloud in the Old Testament, and just as Jesus was enveloped by a cloud at his Transfiguration and at his Ascension, so also Jesus will return to this Earth with a cloud. And, as John goes on to say, *every eye will see him, even those who pierced him.* In other words, Jesus' second coming will not be like his first coming, when his arrival was witnessed by only Mary and Joseph and maybe a few farm animals. No, at his second coming, every eye will see him because that will be the moment where all the dead are raised from the grave. All mankind—those who are still alive on the day of his return, and those who were once dead and now have been raised—all of them will stand before the crucified and now resurrected and glorified Lord of the universe.

And as John says, *all the people of the earth will mourn because of him.* Literally, *all the tribes of the earth will beat their breasts in sorrow because of him.* Recognize that this will not

be the sorrow of repentance. It will be the sorrow of regret. John is talking about all those who during their lives rejected Jesus as their Savior, and who now at Jesus' return realize the foolishness of their ways, for now they will face the consequences of their behavior. For you see, in the end, everyone is going to come face-to-face with the reality that Jesus is in fact, the final Authority, the judge of the living and the dead. Some are going to be terrified by that fact. Others are going to be thrilled by it.

The question is, which group will you be in? If, by the call of the Holy Spirit, you recognize Jesus for who he really is. If you can say with the repentant thief on the cross, "*Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom*," then you can be sure that Paradise awaits you too. And that knowledge of what Jesus has in store for you in the future can't help but have an impact on your life today. For example, it allows you and me to not get too stressed out by the trouble we face in life. We can say with the Apostle Paul, *I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18)*

And, knowing that Jesus is returning to this world to take you home to heaven with him will certainly have an impact on what you and I do with our bodies and minds as we await his return. How does St. John put it in his first epistle? *We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:3)*

The bottom line is this: When you know that Jesus is the King of Kings, ruling all things for your good, when you know that he loves you and has set you free from your sin, when you know that he will return to make all things right—that's what allows you to not only believe that Jesus is your king. It allows you to live with Jesus as your king. It puts your heart at peace and a song of praise on your lips until that day when you will join all the saints and angels in heaven and sing, "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever and ever.*" (*Revelation 11:15*). With you, in heaven. Amen.