

## **King of the Jews**

### **By David Feddes**

Reading: Mark 15:1-32

When Jesus was born into the world, he was called the King of the Jews. The wise men, who came from afar, said, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2). And when they came asking about the King of the Jews, the man whose title was King of the Jews, Herod the Great, immediately set in motion attempts to kill Jesus. So from the time he was a baby, he was known—by some at least—to be King of the Jews, and efforts were made on his life.

Then, of course, the charge for which he died was that he was the King of the Jews. In this story that we've just read of Jesus' sentence and crucifixion, notice how often in that brief story he's called King of the Jews. Pilate says, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Mark 15:2). He says to the crowd, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" (Mark 15:9). "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" (Mark 15:12). The soldiers mocking him say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" (Mark 15:18). The sign they nail above him says in three different languages, "The King of the Jews" (John 19:20). And when they're mocking him, they call him the King of Israel: "Come on down!"

So throughout this passage, and throughout Jesus' life, "King of the Jews" is a very significant title for who he was. And the languages of Hebrew and of Latin and Greek all proclaimed him King of the Jews so that anybody walking by would see the sign of the charge against him—but also the title that was rightfully his.

Until this morning, I just want to think with you on the fact that Jesus is King of the Jews. And I have a really complicated outline: we're going to think about Jesus' Jewishness and about Jesus' kingship. So it'll be a little more detailed than that, but those are the two main things we want to think about when we think about "King of the Jews"—that Jesus was very Jewish, and that Jesus was and is a king.

Sometimes we could ask today with the wise men, "Where is he who was born King of the Jews?" Because the Jewishness of Jesus is something that's really quite easy to overlook and not pay much attention to. I know sometimes when we're reading our Bible and I mention Jews, the kids sometimes ask, "What is a Jew? And are we Jews?" Well, the answer to "What is a Jew?" is, at one level, Jews are people whose great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

And there are many people in the world still today—millions of them—whose ancestry goes back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so by their bodily heritage, they are Jewish people. A lot of Jewish people live in Israel. A lot of Jewish people live in the United States. A lot of Jewish people used to live in Europe too, until Adolf Hitler and the Nazis killed six million of them. But there are many Jewish people still in the world today. And Jesus was a Jew.

Jesus was born Jewish. His mother Mary was Jewish. His adoptive father Joseph was Jewish. He was raised in a Jewish nation and Jewish homeland, according to Jewish customs. When the wise men came seeking Jesus, they did not say, “Where is he who was born King of the Romans?” or “Where is he who was born King of the Russians?” or “King of the Americans” or the British or the French. They said, “Where is the one who was born King of the Jews?” They didn’t go to Berlin seeking him, or to New York, or to Moscow, or anywhere else. They went to Jerusalem, and then from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, which was a Jewish city and a Jewish town.

Jesus was born in Bethlehem—that Jewish town—and grew up in the Jewish town of Nazareth. When Jesus was eight days old, he received the Jewish sign of circumcision. His parents attended synagogue every week for the teaching and worship. He and his parents went to the various festivals of the Jewish people in the great temple of Jerusalem. Jesus studied the Jewish Scriptures. Jesus fulfilled the Jewish Scriptures and the prophecies and the hopes and the expectations of the Jewish people.

Jesus was called “Rabbi,” the Jewish term for a teacher. Jesus was called by many “the prophet who is coming into the world” (John 6:14), because they knew the prophecy that there would be a Jewish person even greater than the Jew Moses—a prophet who would be kind of like Moses, only greater—the prophet who was promised. And they knew prophecies of the Anointed One, “Messiah.” The Greek word for it is “Christ,” but their word would be “Mashiach,” or “Messiah.” They looked to someone who would be a Rabbi, and a Prophet, and the Messiah. All these titles—Jewish titles—were applied to Jesus, and you really don’t understand Jesus as fully as you could if you don’t understand what those Jewish titles for him mean.

So, the first people who came to honor Jesus were Jewish shepherds. Jesus’ first followers were all Jewish. The twelve apostles were all Jewish. The women who assisted the apostles and Jesus on their travels were all Jewish women. The early church in Jerusalem was a Jewish church. Even the mission to the Gentiles often spread through a network of Jewish people. Paul would always go to the synagogue, or the local gathering of Jewish people and of those who were called “God-fearers”—non-Jewish or Gentile people who would worship the God of Israel, knowing him as the one true God. And that’s how the gospel spread when you read the book of Acts. It was always going to the synagogue. Some of the people in the synagogue would get really riled and angry at the gospel, but others would come to know the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in him.

That was Paul’s method. He says in Romans chapter 1 that “the gospel is the power of God for salvation, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile” (Romans 1:16). And that was his missionary method: he’d first go to the Jewish outposts, where there were already some worshipers of the one true God. Then he would use that as his launching base to carry the gospel to others in the area.

So Jesus was a Jew, and the early Christian movement was Jewish.

Something terrible happened along the way, however. Some Jewish people resisted the gospel, and some Gentile people still had a lot of anti-Jewishness in their attitudes. After a while, the church and the Jewish people drifted apart, and some—even in the church—became very anti-

Jewish and cruel to Jews throughout the centuries. A terrible, terrible development. And they would accuse the Jews of being Christ-killers. And that supposedly gave you the right to take away Jewish property and mistreat Jewish people—and kill them if you wished—because the Jews were the Christ-killers.

Well now, there were some Jews involved in killing Christ—but that's because the whole story happens among Jewish people. That's like saying that the Scottish people were William Wallace-betrayers. Well, yeah—but William Wallace was Scottish himself, and the whole movement that he led involved the Scottish people. Some of the villains are Scottish—but so was he. Some of the villains in the death of Jesus were Jewish—but so was he. So were all those important followers of his.

And really, if you want to be a follower of Jesus at all, you'll have to accept the title that the apostle Paul gives you: "children of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26–29). Even if you didn't descend from him bodily, you are related to him by faith. You come under that umbrella of Israel and become Jewish in that spiritual sense, in union with our Lord Jesus Christ.

So when my kids ask, "Are we Jewish?" Well, I say, your mom's great-grandmother was Jewish, so you've got a little bit of Jewish blood in you. But you're Jewish because you're children of Abraham by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

At any rate, Jesus was a Jew. And we need to keep in mind that he is a Jew for Jewish people. That's very important to remember in our time too, because over the centuries, some Jewish people have taught their children that Jesus is not for Jews. If Jesus is any good at all, he's for Gentiles only. And if you were to follow Jesus and believe in him, that would mean you stopped being a Jew.

I spent my whole summer in Israel one year with a group called Jews for Jesus. So there are Jews for Jesus. But the irony is that you could be considered a Jew if you're an atheist or an agnostic who believes nothing—but if you are a Jew who follows Jesus, many of them will say you have renounced your Jewishness. Not so.

Jesus' own mother Mary said that God "has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers" (Luke 1:54–55). The coming of Jesus into the world was God's mercy to Israel. Nathanael, one of the early disciples, said, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel" (John 1:49).

When there were some Gentile converts who were tempted to think that God was just ditching the Jews and welcoming the other nations, the apostle Paul set them straight. He says, "Did God reject his people? By no means!" (Romans 11:1). He said, if you belong to God at all, it's because the Jewish people were the native olive tree and you were an outsider—but you were grafted in. And yeah, maybe a few branches from the Jewish tree were cut off to make room for you, but God can graft any Jewish people he wants right back into that tree again. God has not written off the Jewish people.

Jesus hasn't. God hasn't written them off. But another serious error is to think that there are other ways of salvation—that Christians have one way of salvation through faith in Jesus, but God has kind of a different path for Jewish people. That's not true either. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Whether you're Jewish or Gentile, whoever you are, there's one way to be saved and to know God, and that's Jesus Christ.

So he is a Jew for Jewish people. They need him and they can have him. And it's wonderful that many Jewish people—even today—are coming to know Jesus. And in my understanding of Romans 11, many more, near the end of the age, are going to flock to know the Lord Jesus as well.

Well, Jesus is a Jew for Jews. He's also a Jew for Gentiles. God's original promise to the father of the Jewish nation, Abraham, was: "All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring" (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). And that offspring, as the apostle Paul explains in the New Testament, is not plural, but one seed. The Lord Jesus Christ is the primary source of that blessing to all the other nations. And so he's a blessing to us.

But let's never forget that, as Jesus himself put it, "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). God chose the Jewish people and then chose one particular Jew to be our Savior.

Why does that matter for us today? Well, a number of reasons.

One is just the way we relate to Jews. Some Christians have a horrible history of the way they have treated Jewish people. We need to remember that Jesus and those early followers were Jews, that God chose the Jews in love, that he has not forsaken his purposes for the Jews, and that he says, "Whoever touches the Jewish people touches the apple of his eye" (Zechariah 2:8).

Satan hates the Jewish people, because they are the people from whom the Christ came. And he has, throughout history, tried to turn even the very Church of God against them—to disastrous error. So whenever you know or meet Jewish people, you are to treat them with love, not with contempt or with hatred.

It also affects how we relate to God. Remember this: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Not, "there are several gods." The God of Israel is the only God on offer. He's the only one available. So if we're going to relate to God, we need to relate to the God of Israel and praise him as the God who has grafted us into Israel as well.

We also need to understand the continuity of history. God doesn't have Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, Plan D—and if one of them doesn't work out, then he goes to a different plan. He had one plan all along, and it was to bring Jew and Gentile together into one body in our Lord Jesus Christ. That plan unfolded according to God's appointed times throughout history.

And a final point—though others could be made—is to emphasize the unity and value of the Old Testament as well as the New. The Old Testament and the New were both written by Jewish people. But we sometimes disregard the Old because we think it's just been replaced by the New.

There is a tremendous amount to be gained by continuing to study all of God's Word in both Testaments. And so we Gentiles by physical birth—but Jews by spiritual rebirth—can benefit very much from focusing and being very aware of the Jewishness of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, having looked at that, there's plenty more that could be said, but I won't say it this morning because we need to move on to look not just at Jesus' Jewishness, but now at Jesus' kingship.

Jesus declared the coming of the Kingdom of God. If you were to do a computer search of “Kingdom of God” or “Kingdom of Heaven,” you would see all through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke—especially—those phrases: Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven. Really, they mean the same thing. “Heaven” is a polite Jewish way of saying “God” in that kind of context. It’s not just saying, “There’s a kingdom called heaven,” which is a really cool place that you can get to someday. Now, in other contexts, heaven can mean that—but when, for example, the prophet Daniel says to Nebuchadnezzar, “Then you’ll know that heaven rules” (Daniel 4:26), that’s just a polite, roundabout way of saying, “God rules.”

So Matthew often in his Gospel uses “Kingdom of Heaven.” The other Gospels use “Kingdom of God” more. It means the same thing: God reigns.

Jesus came into Galilee, and what was his gospel? "Proclaiming the gospel of God and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14–15). So he's saying, this reign of God, this kingship of God, has come very close to you.

When he drives out the evil spirits, he says, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). And so he’s proclaiming this kingdom.

People start getting excited, because a lot of them have been waiting for the kingdom to come. They've been waiting for the kingdom of God to come close and for things to change. So after Jesus does this amazing miracle where he feeds 5,000 people, the people are really excited about a king—and free food. Well, Jesus hightailed it out of there, because he knows they intend to come and make him a king by force (John 6:15). And that's not the kind of kingship or the kind of timetable that Jesus was going to be working with.

So when they intended to come and make him a king by force—and they didn’t even say that to him—Jesus was just smart enough to know their expectations. And then, of course, as God, he could also read hearts. So he went off to a mountain by himself to get away from that expectation.

Now what were they expecting? Well, they had their ideal king, and the golden age of kingship in Israel was the reigns of David and Solomon. David gave them victory over foreign powers. Then David had a dream and a desire to build a temple for God. God said, “Well, I don't want you to be the one to build the temple,” but David still gathered a huge amount of wealth to go into the temple and laid the plans for building it. Then it was his son Solomon who actually built

the temple. So kingship was something where you conquered those nasty foreign enemies, and you had a great place to worship God, and temple worship was built and restored.

If you move a little later in history, another example would be Judas Maccabeus—or Judah the Hammer. Israel was occupied by foreign enemies—by Greek rulers, both from Egypt and from Syria. After Alexander's empire got divided up, by the time of Judah, they were under somebody who was kind of a foretaste of the Antichrist—Antiochus Epiphanes—a really nasty person who butchered babies and killed Jewish people and sacrificed pigs in God's temple.

Up arose Judah the Hammer—and he put the hammer down. For three years, Judah and the other Maccabees, his brothers, led a rebellion. Then the enemy leader—the king Antiochus, who had proclaimed himself to be god—suddenly died of unknown causes. We seem to know what the causes were: God struck him down. But in terms of the battles that were fought, Judah the Hammer was a major leader in that. And then, when they had driven out the enemy, they cleansed the temple and rededicated it. That's still celebrated by Jewish people in the Feast of Hanukkah. So you have a three-year campaign, and then the cleansing of the temple.

Now here's another figure who was a king: Herod the Great. He was declared King of Judea by the Romans. He was declared that in 40 BC. There was one group of people that the Romans could never quite handle and never drive out—and that was the Parthians. They were a pretty tough bunch. They invaded the land of Israel, and Herod led a three-year campaign against them and succeeded in driving out the Parthian invaders. And after getting rid of the foreign enemies, Herod launched a major project to rebuild and refurbish the temple in Jerusalem. After a long time, it was dedicated under Herod the Great's rule.

Now, there were some people who weren't quite eager to see Herod as the King of the Jews—though that was his title. They didn't really see him as the fulfillment of the new David coming to rule. He had a few minor problems: he wasn't really very Jewish. He was from the Edomites—more the descendants of Esau. He also wasn't exactly the ideal godly king, seeing as how he murdered three of his sons and his wife and various other people—and attempted to murder Jesus, among his various crimes. So there was something about Herod where you'd say, "Well, yeah, I guess he did drive out some foreign enemies and he did rebuild the temple, but I'm not sure he's the King of the Jews we were all hoping for."

Well, along comes one of his kids who survived him—which was kind of hard to do, but he did—and Herod Antipas became king. This Herod is the one ruling during the time of John the Baptist and Jesus. His symbol was a reed that grows beside the Sea of Galilee. If you were to say, "Who's the King of the Jews?" most people would say, "Well, I guess Antipas. If you had to say somebody was King of the Jews, I guess he's the guy right now."

But John the Baptist says that he does not do what's right. He rebukes him for taking his brother's wife, and Antipas throws John in prison. Jesus offers a bit of commentary about Herod Antipas. Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John. He says, "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind?" (Matthew 11:7). We sometimes read that as, "Yeah, well, yeah, he's just talking about a reed flopping back and forth," but what he's really

saying is: “You didn’t really go out there to see somebody like Herod Antipas, did you?” Because the reed was Herod’s symbol.

You didn’t go out there to see that kind of a guy. You go to see somebody wearing silk and fancy finery and all of that? No—you go to palaces for that. We know somebody right down the road who’s got a reed and all that fancy clothing in his palace—and he’s not the guy we’re looking for. So Jesus says, “What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, and I tell you, more than a prophet” (Matthew 11:9).

So John was the one prophesying the way for the real king they’d been looking for. And it sure wasn’t Herod.

At any rate, you’ve got these different possibilities for king. And then, of course, you have the greatest power in the world—the emperor of Rome. After the death of Julius Caesar, his adopted son Octavian took over the Roman Empire after fighting with various competitors. Then Octavian declared his adopted father, Julius, to be god. And what does that make you when you declare your dad to be god? Well, you’re the son of god. You’re the supreme king. And the son of god has taken over the world and is bringing peace throughout the world.

Then, after Octavian—who renamed himself Augustus—died, his heir, Augustus Tiberius Caesar, took over. When Jesus was given a coin, it would have been a coin from the reign of Tiberius, because that’s who was emperor at the time. On one side it said, “Augustus Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus.” Hey—if you’re son of the divine Augustus, what are you? You’re son of god. On the other side, the coin had “Pontifex Maximus”—Chief Priest.

So the Roman emperor is the Chief Priest and the Son of God.

Now, what happens when somebody comes around saying, “God is taking over. I am the King of the Jews. I am the Son of God”? The Roman powers are not going to be real thrilled about that. Herod isn’t going to be too thrilled about that either. The chief priests, who have been making pretty good money under the status quo and don’t want that to get overturned, aren’t going to be too excited either about somebody saying, “God’s taking over. He’s come near.”

So that’s the accusation against Jesus. “They began to accuse him, saying, ‘We have found this man subverting our nation’” (Luke 23:2). These are some of the details we have from other Gospels about what the accusers of Jesus were saying. We get the summary of it in Mark, where they call him “King of the Jews.” But here’s what they’re explaining: “We found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar.”

Actually, he didn’t. He just took that coin and said, “Well, give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and give to God what is God’s” (Mark 12:17). Don’t go around calling Caesar “Son of God.” Don’t worship him. You can pay his taxes—but don’t go around worshiping him.

But anyway, they accused him of opposing the payment of taxes to Caesar and of claiming to be Messiah, a king.

Pilate—well, Pilate is looking at this carpenter, and by the time Pilate got ahold of him, he'd already been beaten pretty badly the night before. So he's got this beat-up peasant standing before him, and he's having a hard time taking him seriously as a contender for king or as a rival to Caesar, the so-called "Son of God." Pilate wants to set him free, because he knows that whatever this Jesus is—whether he's just a little loony and thinks he's something vague or whatever—he sure isn't a threat to Caesar.

But the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar" (John 19:12).

What was going on with Jesus? He wasn't exactly competing with Herod for Herod's position, or even with Tiberius Caesar for Caesar's position. He had a higher position in mind—and a different way of being king. Jesus explained, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst" (Luke 17:20–21). In other words, wherever Jesus goes is where the kingdom of God is. That's what he's saying: "Wherever I go, that's where the kingdom is."

And Jesus says to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). But that doesn't mean his kingdom isn't in this world or has no impact on this world. Jesus came so that God's will would be done "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). It's not an otherworldly kingdom in the sense of being only about some other place called heaven. But it is "not of this world" in that its authority doesn't come from this world; it comes from God.

Jesus continues: "If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36). His authority and his kingship and his rule come from God himself—not from how many swords he can gather or how many armies he can assemble. So Jesus makes it clear that his kingdom is going to proceed in quite a different way than even David or Solomon—and certainly different from Herod or the Caesars.

Jesus revealed a different kind of kingship. His main battle was against bigger enemies. His battle was against sin, against death, against Satan—not against any particular ruler at a particular time, but against the one the Bible calls "the ruler of this world," that is, the devil (John 12:31), and against the powers that are always with sin and death, no matter who happens to be in charge of governments at a given time.

God is becoming King on earth as in heaven through the reign of Jesus, and that kingship is already active. Now, Jesus didn't say, "The kingdom will come someday." It will come in its fullness, in all its power and glory someday—but the kingdom has already been among us.

Satan has been limited ever since Jesus came. He said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). He said, "The kingdom of God has come near" (Mark 1:15), and "If I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). So his kingdom is already at work—wherever he's freeing people from evil powers, wherever he is forgiving sins, wherever he is healing people, wherever he's transforming lives, wherever he's working from the inside out and not just enforcing his reign on people.

His kingdom is often working secretly, like yeast in bread or like seed in the ground that's just growing up quietly when nobody's looking. Jesus says his kingdom is not coming with all these big armies and trumpets—but it is going to change the world.

And then, of course, when he does come again, he'll come openly and in power and glory, finally to crush those who still remain as enemies. But in the meantime, his kingdom starts and operates in a very different way than the military leaders of his time.

Now, all of this was pretty hard for people to grasp while it was happening. Many of them did have expectations from the prophets, and many of them may even have heard the prophecies, but they didn't put various parts together. They read the prophecies about a king—or the Messiah or the Son of David—and they read those prophecies about how he would defeat his enemies and rule wisely and well. So they looked forward to someone who would be a king like that.

They also heard prophecies about Yahweh—the Lord himself—coming as the ruler and shepherd of Israel. So they looked forward to a day when God would come himself to reign and to rule. But they didn't necessarily think that God and the Davidic king were the same person.

And then there's a third figure in some of the prophets. The prophet Zechariah talked about someone who would be suffering and would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10). The prophet Isaiah spoke of a humble, unimpressive servant who would suffer rejection and torture and die for things he didn't do—for sins that others committed (Isaiah 53).

So you had these three figures out there in the prophets—and nobody really imagined that the King, the Lord, and the Servant could be the same person.

But Jesus did understand that. And he, of course, being that person, understood it. And it could have been grasped if you really read the prophecies. Here's one from Jeremiah:

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior" (Jeremiah 23:5–6).

So the prophecy of the Davidic king is also a prophecy of "the Lord our Righteous Savior." Those two figures actually do come together—right here in the same prophecy.

Or take the prophecy of the Lord baring his holy arm—and the ruling King and the suffering Servant. The prophet Isaiah says,

"See, my servant will act wisely; he will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted. Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness—so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him" (Isaiah 52:13–15).

So this promised Servant, who's going to be kind of ugly and rejected and not attracting people, is going to be the arm of the Lord—somehow the Lord baring his holy arm. And then Isaiah says,

"Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand.

After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:1–12).

So that's the prophecy that Isaiah had—of the arm of the Lord coming in power. And just before that, he says, "I've got good news: your God reigns," and he's going to bare his holy arm. And here you've got this Servant that nobody wants to look at and that everybody beats up on and despises. And it turns out that the ruling King and the mighty arm of God is the very same person as the suffering Servant.

Who'd have thunk it? You would never have guessed that—except it was right there, staring you in the face the whole time. That's the way the Old Testament Scriptures are sometimes: it's staring you in the face the whole time, and you don't see it—until you see it in Jesus. And then all of a sudden, you say, "Yeah, that clicks. And that clicks. And that's true. And that all goes together."

Well, when it was all happening—we've read the story—what a ridiculous king! Pilate looks at him and says, "Well, I know why they handed him over: they're envious. He's sure no king. He's no threat to me. He's no threat to Herod. He's no threat to Caesar. I think I ought to just cut the poor guy loose and get him out of here." But he couldn't take him seriously as a contender for a throne.

Herod and his soldiers, when they got ahold of him for a few minutes, mocked him and laughed at him. Pilate's soldiers mocked him and put the crown of thorns and the purple robe on him and laughed at the notion that he was King of the Jews. The crowds mocked him. The priests mocked him. They called, "You King of Israel, come on down!" And then he died in disgrace.

Everybody thought it was pretty hilarious that this person—of all people—would be considered King of the Jews. Is there anybody who doesn't think it's ridiculous to call Jesus the King?

Only one. And he's the one that matters. Because, "after the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied" (Isaiah 53:11). That's what God had said all along. He had said he's going to suffer, he's going to suffer for all those sins, but he's going to see the light of life again.

And when everybody was done laughing at the King, God raised Jesus from the dead and put him on the throne of the universe. And long after Herod and the various Herods are buried and despised, long after all the various Caesars have done all that they had to do, Jesus Christ lives and reigns—and billions of people call him King.

Because when everybody laughed at him and wrote him off, the only one in the universe who matters said, "This is my beloved Son; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). "This is the sacrifice I had appointed all along, and I accept that sacrifice for the sins of the world. This is the one through whom I'm going to give everyone eternal life." And so his eternal life is going to go into him right now by the power of the Holy Spirit. And so he raised him from the dead.

He is a ridiculous king—in the eyes of the world. But as the apostle Paul would later say, "The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Corinthians 1:25).

And what does God say after all that? After Romans, Gentiles, and Jews alike have killed his Son—after they've done their worst—does God just write off these Christ-killers, whether Jew or Gentile?

Well, the apostle Peter delivers a sermon to the very crowd and the very leaders who had called for Jesus' death. And he emphasizes that their God is the only God: "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed" (Acts 3:13).

But now, fellow Israelites, "I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God" (Acts 3:17–19).

What a blessing those words are: “Repent and turn to God, that your sins may be wiped out, and that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus” (Acts 3:19–20).

This is the grace of God. Less than two months after they’ve killed his Son, God has a spokesman say, “Right now, you’ve got another chance. You’ve got a chance to turn around and change your mind about this Jesus person whom you killed.”

God had his plan and his reasons for letting him be killed. But now—if you want your sins to be wiped out, they can be. If you want your Messiah, he has already come—and he’s coming again. If you want times of refreshing—well, here’s how to get the refreshing. The King of the Jews is the source of all forgiveness of sins. He’s the source of refreshing. He is our life.

### **Prayer**

Dear Father, we pray that you will give us again a new appreciation for your great Son, who came in the womb of the Virgin Mary and lived among the Jewish people as a Jewish man. We praise you that you have invited us and called us and then grafted us into that great olive tree of Israel, that we too may be part of the one great people of God.

We thank you for the kingship of our Lord Jesus—for his merciful kingship in coming and helping people to change from the inside out, rather than just coming and crushing all who oppose him. We know that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And if that is how you had handled kingship, we would all have been smashed. And so we thank you that you have done this great work of mercy in Jesus—the suffering Servant, the victorious Messiah, the Son of God himself.

We pray, Lord, that you will save us and keep us away from the errors and all the pretenders who would rival his kingship in our lives. Help us, Lord, always to live in the joy and the strength and the confidence of the reigning Lord Jesus Christ. In his name we pray, Amen.

**King of the Jews**  
**By David Feddes**  
**Slide Contents**

Reading: Mark 15:1-32

**WHERE IS THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN BORN KING OF THE JEWS? WE SAW HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM. (MATTHEW 2:2)**

**King of the Jews (Matthew 27; Mark 15)**

- “Are you the King of the Jews?”
- “Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?”
- “Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?”
- “Hail, King of the Jews!”
- The inscription of the charge against him read, “The King of the Jews.”
- “Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.”

**King of the Jews**

- Jesus’ Jewishness
- Jesus’ kingship

**Jesus the Jew**

- Born Jewish, raised Jewish, homeland
- Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth
- Circumcision, synagogue, temple
- Jewish Scriptures, prophecies, hopes
- Jewish rabbi, prophet, Messiah
- Jewish shepherds, apostles, women, early church, mission network
- Gospel is “first for the Jews”

**A Jew for Jews**

- Mary: “He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as he said to our fathers.” (Luke 1:54-55)
- Nathaniel: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” (John 1:49)
- Did God reject his people? By no means! (Romans 11:1)
- “I am the way... No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

## **A Jew for Gentiles**

- “All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.” (Genesis 28:14).
- “Salvation is from the Jews.” (John 4:22)
- Jesus’ Jewishness matters for Gentiles:
  - Relating to Jews: “Whoever touches you touches the apple of my eye.” (Zech 2:8)
  - Relating to God
  - Continuity of history
  - Unity and value of both Testaments

## **King of the Jews**

- Jesus’ Jewishness
- Jesus’ kingship

## **Kingdom comes near**

Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (Mark 1:14-15)

“If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Luke 11:20)

Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (John 6:15)

## **David and Solomon**

- Victory over foreign powers
- Building God’s temple

## **Judah the Hammer**

- Led three-year campaign against foreign occupation
- Cleansed temple in 164 B.C.
- Still celebrated at Hanukkah

## **Herod the Great**

- Declared King of Judea in 40 B.C.
- Led three year campaign against Parthian invaders
- Rebuilt the temple and dedicated it

## Is Herod the desired ruler?

Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled during Jesus' ministry. Antipas's symbol was a reed that grows beside the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. (Matthew 11:7-9)

## Supreme King and Son of God

Augustus Tiberius Caesar, son of the Divine Augustus. Chief Priest (Pontifex Maximus)

## Accused of treason

They began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Messiah, a king." (Luke 23:2)

Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar." (John 19:12)

## Different kind of kingship

"The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you." (Luke 17:20-21)

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18:36)

## Different kind of kingship

- Jesus' main battle is not against Rome but against sin, death, and Satan.
- God is becoming king on earth as in heaven through Jesus.
- His kingship is active now in forgiving, healing, and transforming, not in forcing his reign upon people.
- When King Jesus comes again, he will come in glory and power.

## Three figures predicted by the prophets

- A **king**, the Messiah, Son of David, will defeat enemies and rule wisely and well.
- Yahweh, the **Lord** himself, will come as ruler and shepherd of Israel.
- A humble, unimpressive **servant** will suffer rejection, torture, and death for sins that others have committed.
- Nobody imagined that the king, the Lord, and the servant could be the same person.

## **King and Lord**

“The days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Savior.” (Jeremiah 23:5-7)

## **Arm of the Lord: Ruling King, suffering servant**

The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God... Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed... He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering... He was pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 52-53).

## **A ridiculous king?**

- Pilate thinks Jesus has no power.
- Herod and his soldiers mock the king.
- Pilate’s soldier’s mock the king.
- The crowds and priests mock the king.
- The king dies in disgrace
- Is there anyone who doesn’t think it’s ridiculous to call Jesus king?

## **Sins may be wiped out**

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed... Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. (Acts 3:13-20)