

## What Sort of Man is This? Pt 4: The King and His Ambassadors

**Psalm 45:6 ESV** Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness **7** you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions

- I. So here we are! The fourth and final message in our series “What Sort of Man is This?”, where we have been examining the person, the life, and the death of Jesus Christ. Today we’ll conclude by discussing the implications of his resurrection and ascension.
  - A. The resurrection and ascension of Christ are the most important facts of human history.
    1. They are to be considered vastly superior facts to the discovery of fire or invention of the wheel. They are more important than the writing of the Code of Hammurabi, the Magna Carta, or the Declaration of Independence. They are more important facts than the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the renaissance, or the discovery and colonization of the Americas.
    2. Everything in history that preceded the resurrection was pointing to it and anticipating it; everything that has happened afterwards finds its context in that one event.
  - B. Although the substitutionary, atoning death of Christ seems to be the usual focus of the church, which takes a rightful joy in proclaiming to the world that Christ died for their sins, Paul tells us that Christ’s death on the cross, minus the resurrection, cannot be considered “good news” at all!
    1. **1 Corinthians 15:14 ESV** And *if Christ has not been raised*, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. **15** We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. **16** For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. **17** And *if Christ has not been raised*, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. **18** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. **19** If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.
    2. Paul’s argument here is that one can be saved by the cross alone! Without a resurrection, “your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.”
  - C. The gospel is made good news, not because of his death alone, but because death could not keep him.
    1. While the cross was necessary for Christ to satisfy the righteous wrath of God, and secure the ultimate victory for us over the power of sin, the resurrection declares his ultimate victory over death, which according to Romans 3 was the just payment (or wage) for our sin.
      - a) If Christ was to be the savior of fallen mankind, he must both fully pay the debt of our sin at the cost of his sinless life, while simultaneously demonstrating that he had all authority over the power of death.

- b) **John 10:17 ESV** “For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18** No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. ***I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again.*** This charge I have received from my Father.”
    - 2. And because he had authority to take his life back up again, the curse of Eden, the pronouncement that God made over Adam and Eve concerning the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (“...in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” -Genesis 3:17) was eternally reversed!
      - a) **Hebrews 2:14 ESV** Since therefore the children (us) share in flesh and blood, he (Christ) himself likewise partook of the same things, that ***through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death,*** that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those ***who through fear of death*** were subject to lifelong slavery.
      - b) Adam and Eve were dead, even while they lived. The effects of their sin took immediate effect as their spirits breathed their last from the first bite of the fruit. But more than that, their souls were perverted and their bodies began to decay.
    - 3. By comparison, when we were made alive with Christ, our spirits were immediately made alive with him, never to experience death again. Our souls are daily being recreated according to their original design until we once again conform to the image of Christ, our prototype. Even our bodies will one day be gloriously resurrected and the Bible promises that “we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2).
  - D. **John 11:25 ESV** Jesus said to her, “***I am the resurrection and the life.*** Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, **26** and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?”
    - 1. He wasn’t just resurrected, he is the resurrection! He doesn’t just give life, he is the life! His resurrection is our promise...”though he die, yet shall he live... everyone who lives and believes shall never die”.
    - 2. The question he asks Martha in this passage is critical for you to answer confidently as well, “Do you believe this?”
- II. So we have briefly discussed the implications of Christ’s resurrection on the human race, but what, if anything, does the resurrection say about ***him***? Let’s look at a passage from Ephesians 1 and try to discover the answer to that question...
  - A. **Ephesians 1:15 ESV** For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, **16** I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, **17** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, **18** having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, **19** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places ...

1. Paul begins by telling these Ephesian believers that he is praying for them. He wants them to increase in the wisdom, revelation and knowledge of Christ, with greater enlightenment by the Holy Spirit, so they will understand the deeper meaning of all that is their's in Christ; the hope, riches and inheritance that is in him.
2. Paul is also praying for them that they will understand what he calls "the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe".
3. But notice that when he wants to find something to illustrate this, he points them to the resurrection! He is saying that this is what God's power in you looks like! Lets continue...

B. **Ephesians 1:19 ESV** and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might **20** that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, **21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.**

1. Paul does something here that is interesting to me. He connects Christ's resurrection with his Kingly authority. He says that God raised Jesus from the dead, and seated him in a place of authority in heaven.
  - a) And what a description of Christ's limitless authority he gives! "...far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet..."
  - b) In doing this, he also connects the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the kingdom dimensions of his ascension to the right hand of God.
2. It is critical that the church understand the ascension as never before! Because, as Paul points out here, the ascension assures us that Jesus is reigning presently as King.
  - a) Sometimes it seems however, that much of Christian teaching is an attempt to remind us that Jesus will reign as king **someday**, but the overwhelming proclamation of the New Testament is that Jesus is reigning **currently!**
  - b) "...in our own day the "ascension" is just a way of saying that Jesus "went to heaven when he died." To speak of Him "sitting at the Father's right hand" has become simply a fancy, perhaps even fanciful, way of saying "he entered into a very splendid and glorious position"...We have, as a result, understood the ascension in vague terms of supernatural glory, rather than in precise terms of Jesus authority over the world." -N.T. Wright
3. 21 times the New Testament writers refer to Christ's position at the "right hand" of God. In every instance it is a term of the highest exaltation.
  - a) Christ himself as well as the writer of Hebrews refer to David's prophecy the the Lord would say to Jesus, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool."

- b) (Stephen) **Acts 7:55 ESV** But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.
  - c) Christ himself did not shy away from the implications of his resurrection and ascension, saying to his assembled disciples right before going to his throne: **Matthew 28:18 ESV** And Jesus came and said to them, “**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”
- III. So if it’s true that Christ’s resurrection and ascension are God’s loud declaration of Jesus’ here-and-now rule, what impact should that have on our daily lives? There are several things to consider.
  - A. First, Jesus must occupy the place of absolute sovereign in our lives. That means we must no longer view the gospel simply as an arrangement that gets us into heaven, or a “get out of jail free card” for our faults; but rather we must view the gospel in terms of his authority, his call and his mission.
    - 1. His authority means we must not try to use Christ to endorse our plans, lifestyles, or agendas; rather, we must submit every facet of our lives to his will (our relationships, careers, habits and behaviors, etc.). The primary function of our lives must be to lavish upon him worship, thankfulness, and obedience.
    - 2. His call means that I go where he tells me to go and do what he wants me to do. When it’s hard, I remind myself that his grace is sufficient for me. When it requires sacrifice, I rejoice that I am counted worthy to suffer loss for his name.
    - 3. His mission means that I care about the things that he cares about regardless of the opinions of others, or my desire for popularity in my culture. That I prioritize truth, holiness, justice and service above every other value that pleads for my allegiance.
  - B. Secondly, It means that instead of clinging to this world, that I assume a transient mindset regarding it.
    - 1. Peter tells us that we are sojourners and exiles in this world. He means we are just “passing through” this world in its present condition.
    - 2. **Philippians 3:20 ESV** But **our citizenship is in heaven**, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...
  - C. Grasping this truth becomes absolutely vital in an election year, especially like the one we are experiencing in 2016!
    - 1. We have two candidates, both of which have landed in our laps with extremely high unfavorables among the electorate. If you don’t like the one on the right you probably aren’t a fan of the one on the left, and vice-versa.
      - a) A recent Public Policy Polling survey found that 13% of the electorate would prefer that a giant meteor would strike the earth, rather than vote for Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton.
      - b) For believers, there is the even greater concern that both candidates, in different ways, seen to have serious moral flaws, calling into question the validity of the Christian faith they both claim to have.
    - 2. But ironically, in an effort to make them more palatable to a wider religious voter base, they have both tried to identify (in different ways) with the church.

- D. But an attempt to “church up” the candidates is unfortunately is an old tactic that has never yielded lasting positive results. Generally it draws the church’s attention away from our kingdom citizenship and calling.
1. In the seventies, the Jimmy Carter campaign capitalized on the term “born again” to describe their man in order to contrast him with the criminality of the recent Watergate scandal.
  2. In the eighties, the Reagan campaign did a masterful job of courting the endorsements of leaders of the so-called “Christian right”. This enabled him to ride the wave of evangelical support twice into the white house.
  3. And every presidential candidate after him - from George HW Bush to Barack Obama has (in one way or another) shamelessly offered themselves as God’s answer for what is ailing our country.
- E. The net effect of this - whether you supported or opposed a particular candidate, is that by and large the attention of the church was drawn away from a kingdom reality (that remains true whether or not “our guy” wins) to a merely political solution.
- F. This was seen clearly in the work of Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority, Ralph Reed’s Christian Coalition, and Don Wildmon’s American Family Association (among others) in the 80’s.
1. I am not trying to be judgmental, or even harshly critical. In fact I was very involved in several of these types of organizations as a young man!
  2. I would picket, boycott, and write angry letters to politicians and advertisers until my hands cramped up!
- G. But it wasn’t until I understood the gospel better that I realized that the mission of these movements was to clean up the streets, while Jesus’ mission was to rescue and redeem the hearts of sinners like me.
1. The weapons of these groups were threats of economic boycotts and picket lines with slogans and bullhorns, all wrapped in the flimsy cloak of self-righteousness. The entire focus was to combat rampant immorality.
  2. But the weapons of Christ and the Apostles seemed to be love and truth, plain and simple.
    - a) Did you know that no where in the New Testament are we told to clean up society morally? In fact we are told in places that society will grow darker and more resistant to God’s order as the end approaches.
    - b) What we are given is command after command to proclaim the gospel, and re-present Christ and his love to every person on the earth, even the most immoral and unloveable, the cast out and cast down.
- H. **1 Corinthians 5:9 ESV** I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— **10 *not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.*** **11** But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. **12 *For what have I to do with judging outsiders?*** Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? **13** God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.”

1. The groups I frequented in the 80's and 90's misread what God wanted. They were ready to fight with pornographers and homosexuals while ignoring the sometimes epic immorality that existed within the church of that time!
  2. God has called us to love and engage the world while simultaneously taking an attitude of ruthlessness toward our own sin!
  3. Jesus said, WE are the salt of the earth! WE are the light of the world! Without us this place is a tasteless, darkened cesspool!
- I. The world needs us, not to curse it for it's sickness, but to offer it the cure! We must not simply try to put a better suit of clothes on the corpse of our culture, but rather we are to call it back to life in Jesus!
    1. This happens by engaging your culture with love and truth.
      - a) Without truth, you will never convince someone of the true danger of their desperately sinful separation from God.
      - b) Without love, all you'll be is an arrogant, judgmental pharisee.
    2. Love and truth are never contradictory, but two sides of the same gospel coin.
- IV. In conclusion, I'm not going to tell you who to vote for this year, but rather to live in this world, not as permanent residents, but as assigned diplomatic representatives of our true king.
- A. Paul used this language in 2nd Corinthians, saying that he was God's ambassador, making his appeal on behalf of God.
  - B. An ambassador represents the interests of his home country, on behalf of his sovereign, in a foreign land.
  - C. When God sent the people of Judah into exile in Babylon, he gave them a very specific instruction:
    1. **Jeremiah 29:7 ESV** But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, ***for in its welfare you will find your welfare.***
    2. This is the attitude we should carry into every engagement with the political and cultural realms of this world. We are not at war with the people of this world, but with the spiritual forces pulling the strings behind it. We must seek it's welfare and pray for neighborhood, our city and our nation.
- V. Don't ever forget that no matter what happens politically at any given time that Christ has already been crowned King, and has been given all authority in both heaven and earth.
- A. You are his ambassador. Your circle of influence is your diplomatic assignment.
  - B. You cannot please the Lord by using the world's methods and weapons to fight God's battles.