

## Luke 23:1-4

<sup>1</sup>Then the whole council rose and led Jesus away to Pilate. <sup>2</sup>And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this man subverting our nation, forbidding payment of taxes to Caesar, and proclaiming Himself to be Christ, a King.”

<sup>3</sup>So Pilate asked Him, “Are You the King of the Jews?”

“You have said so,” Jesus replied.

<sup>4</sup>Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no basis for a charge against this man.”

Berean Standard Bible, UK

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1

### **Hail to our King. Luke 23:1-4**

Jesus has been rejected by the world. 23:1-2

This King does things the world does not like. 2 “subverting our nation”

This King says things the world does not like. 2 “to be Christ, King”

Jesus is the legitimate King of the world. 23:3

The world is seeking for its King. 3 “Are You the King?”

The world already has its King. 3 “Just as you have spoken”

Jesus is innocent before the world. 23:4

King Jesus is the focus of religious life. 4 “to the chief priests”

King Jesus is the focus of secular life. 4 “and the crowds”

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2

### **When the King is in control. Luke 23:1-4**

Jesus interferes with my flesh nature. 23:1-2

The flesh is in conflict with the Spirit. 2 “they began to accuse Him”

The flesh is controlled by the Spirit. 2 “proclaiming Himself”

Jesus can transform me from within. 23:3

I need to know who Jesus is. 3 “Are You the King?”

I need to commit to who Jesus is. 3 “Just as you have spoken”

Jesus will only do good from within. 23:4

Jesus can only improve my spiritual life. 4 “to the chief priests”  
Jesus can only improve my social life. 4 “and the crowds”

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3

### **The jury is back. Luke 23:1-4**

“The jury is still out” means no decision has been reached. But now the jury has its verdict.

The verdict against Jesus. 23:1-2

The world refuses the presence of Jesus. 1 “rose and led Jesus away”  
The world rejects the person of Jesus. 2 “they began to accuse Him”  
The world revolts against the position of Jesus. 2 “to be Christ; King”

The verdict for Jesus. 23:3-4

Jesus is who He says He is. 3 “Just as you have spoken”  
Jesus is my spiritual King. 4 “to the chief priests”  
Jesus is my secular King. 4 “and to the crowds”

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4

### **This is what I need from Jesus. Luke 23:1-4**

I need to know what Jesus does. 23:1-2

Jesus will leave if you don’t want Him. 1 “rose and led Jesus away”  
Jesus will allow false accusations against Him. 2 “they began to accuse Him”

I need to know what Jesus said. 23:2

I need to know Jesus as my Saviour. 2 “proclaiming Himself to be Christ”  
I need to know Jesus as my Master. 2 “to be Christ; King”

I need to know who Jesus is. 23:3

I need to know the truth about Jesus. 3 “Are You the King?”  
I need to know the truth from Jesus. 3 “Just as you have spoken”

I need to accept Jesus as my own. 23:4

I need to accept Jesus as my spiritual King. 4 “to the chief priests”  
I need to accept Jesus as my secular King. 4 “and to the crowds”

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5

### **Jesus who? Luke 23:1-4**

Jesus is unwanted by the world. 23:1-2

Jesus, and we, have different rules. 2 “subverting our nation”

Jesus, and we, have different values. 2 “taxes to Caesar”

We have no king but Caesar

Render unto Caesar

Jesus, and we, have different authority. 2 “proclaiming Himself”

We must obey God rather than man

Jesus is unknown to the world. 23:3-4a

Jesus, and we, have a message to questioning people. 3 “as you have said”

Jesus is Lord

Jesus, and we, have a message to religious people. 4 “to the chief priests”

John 14:6

Jesus, and we, have a message to secular people. 4 “and the crowds”

Manipulated, lack foundation, lack focus, lack future

Jesus is unstained by the world. 23:4b

Jesus alone is without sin. 4b “no basis for a charge against”

Jesus alone is our Saviour. 4b “this man”

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6

Sermons about the King and His Kingdom (using the commentary notes below)

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### **Other possible titles**

Guilty or not guilty

What will you do to your Ruler?

Jesus is King! So what?

Shall we commit Regicide?

Not guilty

Yes He is

Not guilty is not enough

Jesus cannot be ignored

Long live the King!

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### **Quotes and illustrations from ‘Evidence that demands a verdict’**

The reality is that every single author who mentions Jesus—pagan, Christian, or Jewish—was fully convinced that he at least lived. Even the enemies of the Jesus movement thought so; among their many slurs against the religion, his nonexistence is never one of them. . . . Jesus certainly existed.

If archaeologists and historians could not find correlation between archaeology and the biblical text, there would be no such thing as “biblical archaeology.” But of course they do find such correlation, and lots of it.

We have an independent witness not just to the life of Jesus as a historical figure but to some of his teachings and deeds. Like all sources that mention Jesus from outside the New Testament, the author of I Clement had no doubt about his real existence and no reason to defend it. Everyone knew he existed.

The New Testament epistles and book of Revelation make no sense if they are written about a figure who never existed. The writings attempt to root the Christian faith squarely in Jesus’ life, death, resurrection, and promised return. Without those things there is no reason to continue in the faith. The writers (and their readers) clearly and firmly believed that Jesus lived and died and rose again.

Who would make up the idea of a crucified messiah? No Jew that we know of. And who were Jesus’s followers in the year immediately following his death? Jews living in Palestine. It is no wonder that Paul found their views so offensive [before his conversion (Acts 8–9)]... If it is hard to imagine Jews inventing the idea of a crucified messiah, where did the idea come from? It came from historical realities. There really was a man Jesus.

It would be foolish to continue to foster the illusion that the Gospels are merely fictional stories like the legends of Hercules and Asclepius. The theologies in the New Testament are grounded on interpretation of real historical events, especially the crucifixion of Jesus, at a particular time and place.

The authors of the four gospels present Jesus in a manner that assumes his existence. Though they want the reader to know their accounts are reliable (e.g., John 21:24), the writers are not primarily attempting to prove he existed. Instead, they are trying to convince readers that the man Jesus whom they knew is God and should be followed.

There is no evidence that those who opposed the movement attributed to him denied his existence.

Finally, while we are not sure where Tacitus obtained the information he used in *Annals*, we know he had access to the *Acta Senatus*, the Roman Senate’s archives of its activities. (Eddy and Boyd, JL, 184) Those Roman records could have contained reports of Jesus’ crucifixion, and he could have retrieved the details from there. Or he could have learned the facts while he was proconsul in Asia.

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## Commentary

Jesus underwent six trials on that day. We need all four Gospels in order to follow Jesus through the events of those trials, because each Gospel mentions only three or four of the trials endured by Jesus. The first three were Jewish religious trails. The second three were secular judicial trials. Luke is a Gentile, from a Graeco-Roman culture, and writing for a Gentile audience, so he does not even mention the Jewish trials. The other three Gospels are by Jewish authors, and they each mention two of the three trials. However, all four Gospels note both trials before the Governor, and they devote most attention to the final trial which leads to Jesus' crucifixion.

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
First trial - Annas	27:2	15:1		
Second trial - Caiaphas				18:28
Third trial - Sanhedrin	27:2	15:1		18:28
Fourth trial - Pilate	27:2-11	15:1-2	23:1-4	18:28-38
Fifth trial - Herod			23:5-12	
Sixth trial - Pilate	27:12-31	15:3-15	23:13-25	18:39-19:16

After Jesus had been through three Jewish trials, He then faced three gentile trials. The first of these was a secular Roman trial before the governor, Pontus Pilate. It occurred in the early morning (John 18:28). As a Roman soldier, Pilate's working day began at 5 AM. He was preparing to commence his duties when the priests arrived with Jesus, making it the first order of business for this soldier's working day.

### **Pilate meets with the Jewish leaders**

Pilate was forced to go outside to meet with the members of the Sanhedrin because they refused to enter gentile premises. According to the rules, to step into a gentile building would render them ceremonially unclean. The High Priest, and chief priests, need to be ritually clean in order to preside over the Passover ceremonies that would occur later this day, beginning with the slaughter of the Passover lambs in mid-afternoon, and eating the Passover meal in the coming evening. Pilate conducts himself with sensitivity to Jewish sensibilities. He is respectful but firm, leaving the priests with no doubt that Rome is in control.

Pilate is brief and businesslike when addressing the priests. He asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" (John 18:28) The priests are suddenly confronted with a dilemma. They had found Jesus guilty of blasphemy. Under Jewish law this was a crime that brought down the death penalty (Leviticus 24:16). But Pilate was Roman. He acted under the Roman rule of law. He had no interest in upholding Jewish religious law. When asked for a legal charge, the flustered priests could only answer, "If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you" (John 18:30).

Pilate was dismissive of the priest's whining. He was a busy man. He had two other cases being brought to trial on that morning. Genuine cases. Serious cases of theft. These cases were so serious that if the defendants were found guilty, they warranted the death penalty.

Pilate refused to judge any case where the priests could bring no legitimate charge. He dismissively replied to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him by your own law." (John 18:31)

Within the first two minutes of the trial the priests were being thrown out of court by the judge. All their plots and schemes were about to collapse. They needed to think on their feet, and be quick about it. They needed to recapture the governor's attention with something that was both serious, and within his jurisdiction. Quickly they invented a string of false accusations, hoping at least one of them might regain Pilate's interest. The priests cried out, "We have found this man subverting our nation;" and "He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar;" and, "He claims to be Messiah, a king." Pilate stopped. The priests had lied their way into a second opportunity. Armed with the information supplied by the priests, Pilate then returns to the praetorium to conduct his investigation of Jesus.

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus is again bound	27:2	15:1		
Whole assembly led him away			23:1	18:28
Jesus handed over to Pilate	27:2	15:1	23:1	18:28
Judas takes his own life	27:3-10			
Jewish leaders remain outside				18:28
Pilate asks for the charges				18:29
No charge - no judgement				18:30-31
Priests' objection				18:31-32
Priests' false accusations			23:2	

### The priests' accusations against Jesus.

The priests' first accusation against Jesus was 'We have found this man subverting our nation.' (Luke 23:2) Jesus certainly never subverted his nation, but he certainly did undermine the authority which the priests had arrogated to themselves; and he disregarded the Pharisaic rules they promoted. This charge is like saying, 'He complained about the government'. But, everyone in the nation complained about the bureaucracy in Jerusalem, and about the Roman occupation. Subversion was so vague and generalised that there was no specific accusation. Pilate had no intention of admitting this charge into his court.

The priests' second accusation against Jesus was 'He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar.' (Luke 23:2) This was a blatant lie. If anything, Jesus supported paying taxes, saying, 'Render unto Caesar the things that belong to Caesar.' (Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, Luke 20:25). Anyway, everyone complained about paying taxes. That was not a punishable offence. This charge did not interest Pilate.

The priests' third accusation against Jesus was, 'He claims to be Messiah.' (Luke 23:2) A religious claim to be the Messiah was of no concern to Pilate. His focus was the secular and political peace of this region. However, the claim to be a king was the one accusation Pilate

could address. If it was true, it made Jesus a potential challenger to Caesar, and a potential threat to the empire.

Jesus did claim to be the Messiah. When He was speaking with the woman at the well of Samaria, she said, 'I know that the Messiah, called Christ, is coming' (John 4:25). Jesus immediately responded by declaring, 'I, the one speaking to you, I am He.' (John 4:26)

Events	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus faces Pilate	27:11			18:33
Are you King of the Jews?	27:11	15:2	23:3	18:33
My Kingdom is not of this world				18:34-36
Pilate confirms Jesus is a king				18:37
Jesus agrees	27:11	15:2	23:3	18:37
What is truth?				18:38
Pilate's verdict 'No basis'			23:4	18:38

Also, the description which Jesus constantly used for Himself was the title 'Son of Man'. This is a reference to an Old Testament prophecy.

'The Son of Man is coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into His presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His Kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.' (Daniel 7:13-14)

Every time He used the title 'Son of Man' Jesus was claiming to be the Messiah and God.

However, the Jewish Messiah was their King. Jesus never claimed to be a king. He was indeed the rightful heir to the royal title of King of the Jews. He was the direct descendant of King David and his heirs and successors. But instead of claiming an earthly heritage, Jesus only proclaimed the Kingdom of Heaven, or the Kingdom of God.

(The above is a copy and paste from *Timeline 44, Gentile trials*, a chapter in the free e-book available from [www.sermoninspiration.net](http://www.sermoninspiration.net))

(This same chapter in *Timeline* also has extensive notes on the Kingdom of God, as below.)

### **Kingdom of God / Kingdom of Heaven**

Before we proceed, let's first ask a clarifying question. Is there any difference between the 'Kingdom of God', and the 'Kingdom of Heaven'? No, there is no difference. The term, 'Kingdom of Heaven' is used only by Matthew. His Gospel is the one written primarily with a Jewish audience in mind. Therefore, he frequently uses the usual Jewish patterns of speech, and this means avoiding saying the name of God. Here is a typical example. Matthew records:

‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the **Kingdom of Heaven** belongs to such as these.’ (Matthew 19:14)

But other Gospel writers record:

‘Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the **Kingdom of God** belongs to such as these. (Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16)

The 'Kingdom of God' and the 'Kingdom of Heaven' are one and the same. Matthew's use of language is a reminder that, in our own witness, we must be both bold and honest, but we must also be sensitive to the limitations and understanding of those around us.

### **Jesus is the King. Jesus is my King.**

*Jesus has every right to be my King*

A Kingdom needs a King. The King of the Kingdom of God is Jesus. Jesus has the legal right to be King of the Jews. King David is the dynastic head of the line of Jewish kings whose genealogy is traced in Matthew 1:1-17. The very first verse in the New Testament opens with the words, "the record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David" (Matthew 1:1a). This is a clear statement that Jesus is unmistakably King of the Jews. This legal line of possession passes from David, through Solomon, and their royal descendants, then, eventually down to Joseph who is the legal father who adopts Jesus as his legal heir (Matthew 1:18-25).

In addition to His legal right to be King of the Jews, He also has a natural right to be that King. Upon David's death the kingship passed to his son, Solomon. But Solomon did not have a natural right to the throne. The natural line always passes to eldest child of the king. But Solomon was not the eldest. In fact, he may have been the youngest, because he is named last on the list of David's children. Solomon's next eldest brother had a stronger, natural claim to the throne, and that brother was Nathan. Nathan was the direct ancestor of Mary, whereas Solomon was the direct ancestor of Joseph. This line through Nathan gives Jesus a natural right to the throne, and that genealogy is traced in Luke 3:23-38.

The genealogy in Luke vastly extends the natural right of Jesus to be King. He is not only the legitimate King of the Jews, the son of David (Luke 3:31). The genealogy continues back in time to before there were kings in Israel; to before the people came out of Egypt and were formed into a nation; to before their ancient ancestor, Abraham; to before Noah and the antediluvians; all the way back to "Adam, the son of God"; terminology that declares Jesus to be the natural King over every nation, tribe, people and language. Jesus is the one and only natural line that can claim the Eternal One as His Father, both by ancestry and by birth.

Jesus also has a practical right to be my King. All of creation has come into existence because Jesus is the Creator who called the universe into existence (John 1:1-3). As part of the natural order, I do not exist for myself. I am here for my Creator. "All things were created by Him, and for Him. Also, He has priority over all things, and by Him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:16) Jesus is the only One who has any, and every, right to be King of the Jews; King of the universe; my King.

### *Jesus is already King*

Jesus is The King. He displayed His Kingship during His earthly ministry. Through the centuries, earthly rulers have displayed their lordship by triumphal entrances into cities and towns they have captured. Jesus also made a triumphal entry. He is King over a different type of Kingdom, so He did not ride into Jerusalem on a war horse. He arrived on an animal at the opposite end of the Dignity Scale. He arrived on a donkey's colt. He fulfilled the prophecy of the new Kingdom, "Do not be afraid, daughter Zion; see, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." (John 12:15) Jesus is King!

When He was interrogated by the Roman governor, Jesus confirmed He was already a King. Pilate questioned Him, asking, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Matthew 26:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3, John 18:33). As part of His reply, Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not of this world... My Kingdom is of another place." (John 18:36) Pilate pounced on Jesus' words and challenged Him, "You are a king, then!" (John 18:37) Jesus immediately answered Pilate with the affirmative, "It is as you say." (Matthew 26:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3, John 18:33). Jesus is the legitimate King of the Jews. But that is not all. He is also legitimate King of every nation on earth.

### *The Kingdom of the King*

Jesus told Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world... My Kingdom is of another place." (John 18:36) Even though the words of Jesus are crystal clear: His Kingdom is not of this world, those who are worldly-minded continue to push Him to set up a Kingdom in the world.

The first one to invite Jesus to set up His Kingdom on earth was Satan. "The devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 'All this I will give You,' he said, 'if You fall down and worship me.'" (Matthew 4:8-9) Jesus refused the earthly kingdoms, offered by Satan, answering the evil one by quoting from the Bible as His source of Authority. Satan is a liar and there is no truth in him (John 8:44). The fact that Satan has no legitimate ownership of anything, let alone the whole world, did not deter him from offering Jesus the world that He Himself had created. There is no verse anywhere in Scripture that suggests Satan has a crown, a throne, or a kingdom that he can offer to Jesus. The evil one usurps authority and arrogates to himself what rightfully already belongs to Jesus as the legitimate King.

An earthly kingship was also offered by human crowds, "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself." (John 6:15) Jesus refused to participate in any action to grant Him any Kingship on earth. Rather than try to reason with those people who were intent on pushing forward their own agenda, Jesus simply walked away from this plan. Jesus knew the ancient prophecies, and He understood God's plan for the Kingdom. The earthly kingdom had been cancelled by God Himself in the year 528 BC. "As surely as I live," declares the Lord... "Jehoiachin king of Judah... will have none of his offspring who prosper; none will sit on the throne of David nor rule anymore in Judah." Jesus was a direct descendant of King Jehoiachin. Therefore, even though He is the

legitimate Heir Apparent, He can never sit on any earthly throne, nor wear any earthly crown, nor rule any earthly Kingdom. God Himself forever cancelled the earthly Kingdom.

Even today there are well-meaning, but misguided, Christians who still want Jesus to set up an earthly Kingdom. God's Word has a clear instruction for these folk. "Since you have been raised with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Because you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God." (Colossians 3:1-3) When we come to the realisation of who we are in Christ; where we are in Christ; and what we do with our life in Christ, all suggestions of an earthly Kingdom fade from our minds and we live the life of Heaven while we are still on earth.

The only earthly crown worn by Jesus was enforced upon Him by mockers. It was a crown of thorns. "The soldiers stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head. They put a staff in His right hand and knelt down before Him to mock Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they spat on Him and took the staff and struck Him on the head repeatedly." (Matthew 27:27-30) The only earthly crown Jesus wants from me is the one that I give Him, making Him Lord of my life. Have you bowed your knee before your rightful King? Have you pledged to Him your undying devotion? Are you living out your commitment to Him, every day of the life He gives you? "He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords," (1 Timothy 6:15)

### *The King is on His throne*

Jesus does not seek a mere earthly Kingdom. He is already crowned, enthroned, and ruling. Having first stepped down from glory to the shame of the cross, "We see Jesus, who for a little while was given a position a little lower than the angels; and because He suffered death for us, He is now crowned with glory and honour." (Hebrews 2:9)

Where is Jesus now? We are repeatedly told that He is at the Father's right hand. The right hand of majesty is the highest accolade possible. It is the position of honour; the position of privilege; and the position of authority. This position "at the Father's right hand" is now occupied by Jesus (Matthew 22:44, Acts 2:33, Acts 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 8:1, Hebrews 10:12, Hebrews 12:2, and 1 Peter 3:22). God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name. (Philippians 2:11)

It is astonishing that we are told so often that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father. But there is something even more astounding! Jesus does not have His own separate throne. There is only one God; the Triune God; and Jesus is God the Son. There is only one throne in Heaven and it is occupied by God alone. Jesus announces, "I conquered and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Revelation 3:21b) Jesus is on the throne of God. God the Son, is God indeed, and He occupies Heaven's great white throne with God the Father.

But there is more! The grace of God is more amazing than we could ever possibly imagine! Listen to what Jesus promises to us - us His followers. "The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also conquered and sat down with My Father on His

throne." (Revelation 3:21) As children of God we are already seated in Heavenly places. Can you imagine yourself as a child nestled into the lap of your Divine Father? That is what we are right now. The day is coming when you will occupy that same throne. You will reign with Jesus. Don't wait. Live it now. Be more than conqueror. Make godly choices. Live your life in Christ. Live life and live it more abundantly. This is far more edifying, exhilarating, and real, than waiting for Jesus to come and set up a mere earthly throne on the other side of the planet.

### *The King is coming*

Jesus is on His throne. Our God reigns. Do not allow this world to overwhelm you. "Let not your hearts be troubled." (John 14:1) Jesus went on to say, "In Me you can have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) This world does not have the last word. Jesus is not coming back to reign, but to rule and to reap.

Jesus is coming again. "I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like the Son of Man, with a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand." (Revelation 14:14) The golden crown on His head tells us He is coming to rule. The sharp sickle in His hand tells us He is coming to reap. None can withstand Him. "He is called Faithful and True. With righteousness He judges and wages war. He has eyes like blazing fire, and many royal crowns on His head... He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is The Word of God." (Revelation 19:12) "On His robe and on His thigh He has this title written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords." (Revelation 19:16)

How does all this end? "Then the end will come, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father, after He has destroyed all dominion, authority and power... When He has done this, then the Son Himself will be made subject to Him who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all." (1 Corinthians 15:24,26) In the end, the Kingdom is claimed as His own by God the Father, and even the Sonship of Jesus is shown to be subject to the glory of God. Everything is ultimately subject to God; me included.

### *The Kingdom is here*

Even though the King is coming. The Kingdom is already here. The long wait for the arrival of God's Kingdom was fulfilled when King Jesus began His ministry. Note how frequently Jesus announced the Kingdom was within reach; the Kingdom was at hand. "After the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus went into Galilee and proclaimed the Gospel of God. 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel.'" (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus could not be more simple, nor clear, when He declares the Gospel of God.

When: the time is fulfilled.

What: the Kingdom of God.

Where: at hand.

Who: you/me.

How: Repent and believe.

The "Gospel of God" is the "Kingdom of God". The Kingdom is wherever Jesus is King.

Jesus sent the twelve apostles out and commanded them, "...As you go, make this announcement: 'The Kingdom of Heaven has come near.'" (Matthew 10:5-7) The mission of the twelve was followed up by the mission of the 72 other disciples. He instructs this second group, "Tell them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you.'" (Luke 10:9)

The Kingdom is not distant; it is not somewhere above the clouds. The Kingdom of God is close enough to reach; to touch; and to embrace. God's Kingdom is now all around us, all the time. Even the ungodly are surrounded by God's Kingdom. "On being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The coming of the kingdom of God is not something 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) Even those who oppose Jesus are surrounding by His Kingdom.

The ministry of Jesus is proof that God's Kingdom really has come. "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 is still King, but most people don't know that fact. The good news that we can share is there is a King. And, it is good to submit to His rule. My little world becomes a much better place when I step down as my own ruler and hand my tin-pot crown over to Jesus. Don't just think about it - do it!

### *The Kingdom of the King*

What is the Kingdom? First, the Kingdom of God is good. It is positive. It is beneficial. The Kingdom is good news. "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43); "proclaiming and bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1).

What is it that makes the Kingdom of God such good news? "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). No wonder Jesus could say His Kingdom was not of this world; it is from another place (John 18:36), because righteousness, peace, joy, and the Holy Spirit, are not products of this sinful, fallen world. These are the qualities of Heaven; the virtues of God. These are the hallmarks of the Kingdom of God.

The term "good news" is exactly the same word as "Gospel". That tells us how I get into this Kingdom. Jesus succinctly stated the conditions for me to enter into His Kingdom. Here is what I have to do. "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). "Repent and believe".

But I still have to live in this world and within an ungodly political system that governs this country. I still need the things of this world. Jesus' answer is "Prioritise the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." (Matthew 6:33) How do I put that command into practice? Jesus taught us to pray, "Your Kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). I cannot change the world, nor the way it functions. But I can change myself. I can ask God for His wisdom and His strength. I can then do His will, and in that way begin to bring Heaven to earth. That is far better than an earthly kingdom in a geo-political structure in the indeterminate future.

### *The Kingdom comes with power*

Jesus made an amazing promise to His followers. That promise is so astonishing that many believers in our own day have still not yet grasped its implications. Different Gospel writers record and highlight different portions of the promise. Jesus said:

- "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." (Matthew 16:28)
- "Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God arrive with power." (Mark 9:1)
- "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death until they see the Kingdom of God. (Luke 9:27)

Each writer begins with the words, "Truly I tell you", giving us an assurance of the significance and trustworthiness of what is about to be said. Then, in the first half of each verse, each Gospel writer confirms that this event would occur within the lifetime of the original hearers who "will not taste death" until it occurs. In the second half of each verse, each Gospel writer confirms that this event is about the Kingdom. Matthew notes this First Century event will be the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom. Mark records that it will be the Kingdom of God arriving with power. Luke states they will see the Kingdom of God.

Mark is our clearest guide at this point, because he alone retains an extra element at the end of the verse, after the statement of the Kingdom of God. He states that the Kingdom of God arrives with **power**. After His resurrection and immediately before His ascension, Jesus again spoke similar words about power. He said, "You will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

When the Holy Spirit was granted to the believers on the Day of Pentecost, that was when the Kingdom of God arrived with power. It is because the Kingdom of God is connected to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we read, "The Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy **in the Holy Spirit** (Romans 14:17).

Matthew connects Pentecost with "seeing the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom". The Kingdom and the Spirit are connected, so, even though Jesus is physically in Heaven, it is through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Jesus can say, "Lo, I am with you always." (Matthew 28:20)

### *The Kingdom continues*

Jesus assured His disciples, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." (Acts 1:8) So, guided by the Holy Spirit, what was the faithful witness given by these followers of Jesus?

Notice how the good news does not change over time. The good news forever remains the Kingdom.

- Before Jesus arrived, John the Baptist prepared the way “preaching in the wilderness of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near.’” (Matthew 3:1-2)
- The first recorded words of John and echoed by the first recorded words of Jesus. “Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near.’” (Matthew 4:17)
- Much of Jesus’ teaching was in the form of parables. He did not specifically define the Kingdom in a single statement, but He often began His parables with the words, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like...” For example:

The kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. (Matt. 13:24)

The kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, (Matthew 13:31)

The kingdom of Heaven is like yeast mixed into flour, (Matthew 13:33)

The kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. (Matthew 13:44)

The kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. (Matthew 13:45)

The kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake, (Matthew 13:47)

The kingdom of Heaven is like the owner of a house with a storeroom, (Matthew 13:52)

The kingdom of Heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts, (Matthew 18:23)

The kingdom of Heaven is like a landowner who went to hire workers, (Matthew 20:1)

The kingdom of Heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet, (Matthew 22:2)

The Kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed on the ground. (Mark 4:26)

The Kingdom of God is like the smallest of all seeds. (Mark 4:30)

The Kingdom of God is like a seed that became a tree, (Luke 13:18-19)

Jesus also taught the good news of the Kingdom, or in other words, the Gospel of the Kingdom. Everywhere He went. The Kingdom was His constant theme. For example:

- Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and illness among the people. (Matthew 4:23)
- Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom and healing every disease and illness. (Matthew 9:35)
- ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’ (Mark 1:15)
- Jesus said, ‘I must proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.’ (Luke 4:43)
- Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God. (Luke 8:1)
- The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the Kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing their way into it. (Luke 16:16)

After His crucifixion and resurrection, the teaching ministry was unchanged. He still had a single focus.

- After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the **Kingdom of God.**" (Acts 1:3)

After Jesus returned to Heaven and the role of proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom passed to His followers, who in turn, passed it to others.

- When they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the **Kingdom of God** and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (Acts 8:16)
- "Paul went into the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the **Kingdom of God.**" (Acts 19:8)
- "I consider my life of no value to me, if only I may finish my course and complete the ministry I have received from the Lord Jesus; the ministry of testifying to the good news of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom **I have preached the Kingdom** will see my face again." (Acts 20:24-25)
- "They set a day to meet with Paul, and many people came to the place he was staying. He expounded to them from morning to evening, testifying about the **Kingdom of God** and persuading them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. (Acts 28:23)
- "Paul stayed there two full years in his own rented house, welcoming all who came to visit him. Boldly and freely he proclaimed the **Kingdom of God** and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 28:30-31)

Paul's apostolic ministry was to proclaim the Kingdom. Even when other topics are mentioned, they are subordinate to the priority of the Kingdom of God.

### *The Kingdom now*

Therefore, the Kingdom of God is here and is now. Jesus is the King. He is enthroned in Heaven and earth is His footstool. He is crowned with glory and honour; and He rules over the entire universe. There are rebels who resist and reject His reign, but this does not diminish the fact that Jesus reigns. "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19)

In our day, the Kingdom of God on earth is the work of the Holy Spirit. "The Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." (Romans 14:17) The Spirit has two spheres of operation. First, to those who are in the world. Jesus explained the ministry of the Spirit, saying, "When He comes, He will convict the world in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement. (John 16:8) The first ministry of the Holy Spirit is to convict. To convict that all have sinned; to convict that the righteousness available through Jesus is the only way into salvation; and to convict that judgement awaits those who fail to repent.

The other sphere of the Spirit's work is with those who are within the Kingdom. With the gift of salvation, the Holy Spirit gives the gift of Himself (Acts 2:38). When the Spirit indwells each believer, He equips that believer with a selection from the wide range of the gifts of the

Spirit. These include, but are not limited to, “the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:2-3). However, it is the fruit of the Spirit that instils within us the character and virtues of the King Himself (Galatians 5:22-23).

So, how do I utilize these generous provisions of the King? His Spirit makes them available, then we employ them as we walk in the Spirit. It is the natural progress for the believer. “Since we live by the Spirit, let us walk in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25) Our daily life is described as a “walk”. It is sometimes uphill; the path is sometimes rough; there are often opponents of the King who attempt to discourage us. But the King Himself walks beside us; His other subjects surround us; spectacular vistas unfold before us; the journey is worth the effort; and the reward at the end of the road is out of this world. We are outstanding people! “The righteous standard of the law can be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (Romans 8:4)

### *Living for the King*

The Kingdom of God is everywhere and all the time. The legitimate King is on His throne. I am in His Kingdom because I was born into this universe. I was born as a rebel who did not acknowledge the King. But the Spirit of His Kingdom challenged me and convicted me of my rebellion. I repented; I lay down my weapons; I cast away my pretend crown; and I was born again – not just into the Kingdom, but into the royal family of the King.

The Spirit of this Kingdom is seeking other rebels who will come home to the palace. The King has incorporated me into a team, which He calls a church, and given each of us a mission. He has sent me back out to those rebel strongholds. I have a message to share with them. I am to tell them the truth about the King. He is good! His character is virtuous; His plans are honourable; His gifts are generous; and His commands improve our lives.

Every rebel is invited to come home. There is an amnesty. The King Himself takes all our guilt, and pays all our debts. There is freedom, there is peace, and there is life for everyone who lives under the rule of the King. But the amnesty will come to an end. The King has an all-powerful army which will, on His command, sweep across the entire universe of His Kingdom. No one can escape nor evade capture. Every creature that has ever existed will appear before His throne (Revelation 20:12).

The King will be honoured. “At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:10-11) The rebel leader is to be judged, and will be eternally punished. “The devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur... and will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10) Then everyone who did not embrace the King’s offer of peace will face the same punishment as the overt rebels. “Anyone whose name was not found written in the Book of Life was thrown into the Lake of Fire.” (Revelation 20:15)

But the King does not want anyone to suffer this awful fate. He is loving, and “He is patient. He does not want anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9)

That is why we, the King's faithful subjects, "go into all the world". We tell the wonderful story of our experience of the King. We reject lies about Him, and instead we praise His virtues. We challenge false accusations against Him, by telling the truth. We discipline ourselves to learn more of His good plans, and we conform ourselves to behave in ways that benefit ourselves and others. Our King is good. Our King is God. Our King is Jesus.

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## **Music and songs**

### Songs about the King

All hail King Jesus, 237 / SiS 219  
Amazing love [You are my King], Ot 8  
King of Kings and Lord of Lords, SiS 409  
King of Love my Shepherd is, 86  
Servant King, 674  
Shepherd King, 726  
The King is coming, Ot 40  
The King of Love my Shepherd is, 86  
The splendour of the King, How great is our God, 1020

### Songs about the Kingdom

Hear the call of the Kingdom, (Getty)  
Let Your Kingdom come, Ot 12  
Live for the Kingdom, Ot 15  
The Lord's Prayer (Thy Kingdom come)  
This Kingdom, Ot 47

### Songs about knowing

Be still and know, 114  
Everybody ought to know, HCJ 43  
Getting to know you (Rodgers and Hammerstein)  
I know who holds tomorrow, CWH 84  
They'll know we are Christians, Ot 25

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## **Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion**

1. Are bees afraid of you? Are you afraid of bees? 80% of the world's plants are pollinated by bees. Why is that significant?
2. In your experience, what has been the most difficult thing/s about being a Christian?
3. How have you managed those difficulties?

4. In your experience, what has been the best elements of being a Christian?
  5. Jesus inherited the title 'King of the Jews' but God decreed the permanent end of David's kingdom (Jeremiah 22:30). Where is Jesus' Kingship (Ephesians 1:20-21)?
  6. How does Jesus' Kingdom affect me (Ephesians 2:4-7)?
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