

**Marc Roby:** We are resuming our study of systematic theology today by continuing to examine Christology. We have been discussing the offices of Christ and have already covered Christ as our Prophet and as our great high Priest. So, Dr. Spencer, are we ready to begin examining Christ as King?

Dr. Spencer: We are, and let's begin by looking at Christ's birth. When the angel Gabriel came to Jesus' mother, Mary, to tell her she would have a child, we read in Luke 1:30-33 that he said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."<sup>1</sup> And, of course, a king sits on a throne and reigns, he rules over his subjects. Jesus Christ is the King who sits on the throne of David and his kingdom will never end. He rules over those who are in his kingdom.

**Marc Roby:** It boggles the mind to try and imagine what Mary must have been thinking and feeling on hearing such a statement. It was shocking enough given that she was a virgin, but she could not have missed the importance of being told that her son would be given the throne of David! Any first-century Jew would certainly have grasped the significance of that statement; it was speaking of the promised Messiah.

Dr. Spencer: I agree. It's instructive to go back and look at the Old Testament history a little. When King David had fully established himself as King in Jerusalem, he had a desire to build a temple for God. In 2 Samuel Chapter 7 we read of God's great promise in response to David's desire. We read in 2 Samuel 7:16 that God sent the prophet Nathan to tell David that even though he was not the one to build a temple for God, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

This idea of David's throne enduring forever is an important recurring theme throughout the Old Testament. The prophet Isaiah tells us, in Isaiah 9:6-7, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this."

**Marc Roby:** That's certainly one of the most well-known prophecies about the Messiah, or the Christ. And, as you noted, the coming Messiah as King is a common theme in the Old Testament. For example, in Psalm 2:1-6 we read, "Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains,' they say, 'and throw off their

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fetters.’ The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, ‘I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.’”

Dr. Spencer: And when the psalmist declares that “The kings of the earth take their stand ... against the LORD and against his Anointed One”, we need to remember that both the Hebrew word Messiah and the Greek word Χριστός (Christos), from which we get Christ, mean anointed one. God has installed his king, and that king is Jesus Christ. The world, which we are told in 1 John 5:19 “is under the control of the evil one”, which refers to Satan, the world opposes God and his eternal plan. But Satan, his demons and all the powers of every king on earth combined can do nothing to thwart God’s eternal plan. In his deity, Jesus Christ is the eternal second person of the triune Creator God. The only true God. And as God he has been King over his creation from the beginning. But there was, if you will, a change in the mode of his kingship when he became incarnate. At that moment in time, Jesus became the promised Messiah, Son of David, the eternal King of his people.

Marc Roby: And Jesus’ kingship was revealed by God in different ways. One interesting episode is the visit of the Magi after the birth of Jesus. These Magi may have been Persian priests and rulers<sup>2</sup>. But, independent of exactly who they were, we are told in Matthew 2:1-2 that “After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews?’”

Dr. Spencer: And Jesus himself spoke about his kingdom many times. For example, when he went to Galilee at the beginning of his public ministry and started calling his disciples, we are told in Mark 1:15 that he said, “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

And when the apostle Paul was in Ephesus we are told in Acts 19:8 the he “entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.” And it is obvious from the context that he was sharing the gospel, telling people how they could be saved by repenting and believing in Jesus Christ. This illustrates therefore, that being saved and being in the kingdom of God are synonymous.

Marc Roby: That reminds me of what Christ told Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. In John 3:3 we are told that Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” And then in Verse 5 we read that Jesus told him “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”

Dr. Spencer: And so we again see the same connection. A person is saved when he or she is born again and enabled to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is equivalent to entering the kingdom of God. This kingdom is also called the kingdom of light and the kingdom of the Son. The apostle Paul wrote in Colossians 1:12-14 about giving thanks to the Father, “who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has

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<sup>2</sup> Zondervan, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (in five volumes), Zondervan, 1976, Vol 4, pg. 34

rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

**Marc Roby: This kingdom is also referred to as the kingdom of heaven in the gospel of Matthew. For example, in Matthew 3:2 he tells us that John the Baptist began his ministry saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”**

Dr. Spencer: It is an interesting fact that calling it the “kingdom of heaven” is a distinctive feature of Matthew, nowhere else in the New Testament is that phrase used. And so, we can refer to the kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of light, or the kingdom of the Son, or the kingdom of God. They all refer to the same kingdom, and Jesus Christ is the eternal king.

**Marc Roby: And the prime feature of a king is that he rules his kingdom.**

Dr. Spencer: Exactly. We read in Romans 10:9 that “if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” That basic Christian confession, “Jesus is Lord,” is just two words in the Greek, Κύριον Ἰησοῦν (Kurion Iēsou). And if Jesus is truly our Lord, then he is our King. He rules us and we are his bond slaves, which is what the apostle Paul liked to call himself. For example, in the Greek, Paul’s letter to the Romans begins, Παῦλος, δούλος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Paulos, doulos Christou Iēsou), which simply means, Paul, a bond-slave of Christ Jesus. Now our English translations usually render that as, “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus”, because we shy away from the word slave. But we also see that word used in Chapter 6 of the book of Romans. For example, in Verses 20 through 22 we are told, “When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death! But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.”

**Marc Roby: Oh, please don’t leave off the next verse! The passage gloriously ends in Verse 23 by saying, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” In other words, we have earned eternal death, which is hell. That is what we deserve. But God has given us the gracious and precious gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus!**

Dr. Spencer: That is the gospel in a nutshell. But to stay on topic. If we have been saved, which is a free gift, the opposite of what we have earned and deserve, we are bond slaves to Jesus Christ. As Paul tells us in Romans 6:16, “Don’t you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?” In other words, the bible tells us that everyone is a slave. We are either slaves to sin, which is the nature we are given at conception, or we are slaves to righteousness, that is slaves to God, which is the new nature we receive when we are born again.

**Marc Roby: That certainly presents us with a stark contrast. But no starker than when Paul tells us in Ephesians 2 Verses 1 and 5 that we were dead in transgressions and sins and then made alive in Christ.**

Dr. Spencer: It is a very stark contrast indeed. We were in Satan's kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, and we are now in the kingdom of God's dear Son, the kingdom of light. We were dead, and now we are alive. And now, to move on with discussing Christ's office of king, let's take a look at Question 26 of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, which asks, "How does Christ execute the office of a king?"

**Marc Roby: And the answer is, "Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies."**

Dr. Spencer: The first part of that answer is interesting. The first thing Christ does as our king is to subdue us to himself. Paul tells us about our condition prior to being born again in Colossians 1:21, where we read, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior." He also wrote in Romans 8:7 that "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." We come into this world as enemies of God because of our sinful nature. We will never choose to follow Christ unless God first changes our nature. That is why Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:7 that we, "must be born again" to enter the kingdom of heaven. In the words of the Catechism, Christ must subdue us to himself. We must be given a new heart.

**Marc Roby: And God promised this wonderful conversion back in Ezekiel 36:26-27 where we read, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws."**

Dr. Spencer: That is the only way anyone can be saved. And in the passage you just read God not only says he will give a new heart, which is referring to what Jesus called being "born again", he also speaks of putting his Spirit in us, which is speaking about the Holy Spirit coming into the believer to be our resident boss. Just before Jesus ascended back into heaven after his resurrection, we are told in Acts 1:8 that he told his followers, "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." He said essentially the same thing in John 15:26-27, where we read that Christ said, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning."

**Marc Roby: And as is often the case, there is a responsibility that comes along with a privilege. If we are given the privilege of new birth, we have a responsibility to speak of Christ. And we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to do that.**

Dr. Spencer: We need the Holy Spirit to do everything God wants us to do. In John 15:5 we read that Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Now, what does Jesus mean here by saying that apart from him we can do nothing? Clearly non-Christians can do many things.

**Marc Roby:** But, as we are told in Hebrews 1:3, Jesus sustains all things, so in one sense the statement is literally true, apart from him we *can't* do anything at all. If Jesus didn't uphold us, we would cease to exist.

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that's very true. But there is another, more important, sense in which it is true that apart from Jesus we can't do anything. He is speaking there about bearing fruit and in context it is clear that he is talking about good fruit; in other words, deeds that are pleasing to God. If we have not been subdued by Christ, we can only sin. As I read from Romans 8:7 a few minutes ago, "the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." And he goes on in the very next verse, Romans 8:8, to say that "Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God." These verses make clear that an unbeliever *never* pleases God, it is impossible. He is not able to do so because of his sinful nature. There is no *desire* to please God and, hence, no ability to do so. Therefore, the Catechism is correct in saying that the first thing Christ must do as King is subdue us to himself.

**Marc Roby:** Now, it is also true, of course, that Christ is King of all people, whether they are believers or not.

Dr. Spencer: That's certainly true. He is the Creator, Sustainer and King of all. But when the Bible speaks about a person being in the kingdom of God the clear meaning is that the person is a willing, obedient subject of the King. Not a captive enemy. In a very real sense, Christ will eventually subdue everyone. As it says in Philippians 2:10-11, "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." But it is infinitely better for us to willingly bow the knee now and have Jesus as our loving King and Savior, rather than waiting until later when we will be forced to bow as a defeated enemy.

**Marc Roby:** That makes me think of Ephesians 1:22 where God tells us that he has "placed all things under [Jesus'] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church". This is a clear reference to the practice of kings in the Old Testament time to display their victory over another king by literally placing their foot on his neck.

Dr. Spencer: That is not a pleasant thought. And the Catechism's answer to Question 26 speaks at the end about Christ's "restraining and conquering all his and our enemies." But let's go back and see what the whole answer says again. It reads, "Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies." We have discussed the significance of Christ's subduing us to himself and, in the process, we also noted that God sends his Holy Spirit to empower us to do his will, which is part of what is meant by his ruling us. In addition to needing power to do God's will though, we also need to know what God's will is. And the same Holy Spirit helps with that as well.

**Marc Roby:** Yes, we read in John 14:26 that Jesus told his disciples, "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."

Dr. Spencer: Jesus also told us in John 16:13 that “when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.” And Paul wrote in Romans 8:14 that “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” And in 1 Corinthians 2:14 he wrote that “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.” There are other scriptures we could cite, but these are enough to show that we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to understand God’s word, which is the only infallible rule of conduct we have. But, in addition, he can also directly reveal God’s will to us. If we are God’s children, then we are being led by the Holy Spirit.

**Marc Roby: But we must emphasize that the Spirit is the Spirit of truth and will never contradict his word. So the personal guidance and revelation that the Holy Spirit gives to individual Christians must always be tested against his word. He will never contradict himself.**

Dr. Spencer: Yes, that’s certainly true and an important warning.

**Marc Roby: And that is also a good place to end today, so let me remind our listeners that they can email their questions and comments to [info@whatdoesthewordsay.org](mailto:info@whatdoesthewordsay.org), and we will get back to you.**