

THE STORY OF JESUS' MINISTRY

The rule of God's kingdom, *Matthew 28:18-20*

A tendency exists to interpret Jesus' life in terms of his birth, death, and resurrection. However, the gospels dedicate considerably more time to Jesus' ministry than his birth and death. In fact, two of the four gospels do not even record Jesus' birth. While volume alone does not determine significance, it does contribute to how we assess importance. Given the weight the gospels give to the long middle section of Jesus' ministry, we began a short series last week exploring the message of the kingdom driving Jesus' ministry. This lesson continues that series by noting that Jesus' ministry announced his identity as the ruler of God's kingdom in the world. Jesus' identification as God's anointed king raises a question for us, "What does Jesus rule over God's kingdom mean for me?"

"Hail, king of the Jews"¹

- Matthew and Luke begin their accounts about Jesus with memorable stories of his birth that emphasize his royal identity (*cf. Matthew 1:1; 2:1-2; Luke 1:26-33; 2:8-11*).
- Mark takes a different approach; he cuts out Jesus' birth and opens his account with the beginning of Jesus' ministry. However, Mark introduces Jesus' ministry with a brief statement that makes the same claim Matthew and Luke make in their records of Jesus' birth – Mark introduces Jesus as the "Christ," God's promised royal ruler (*Mark 1:1-3; cf. Isaiah 40:1-11; 52:7-13; 9:9:2-7; 11:1-9*).
- Because of the boldness of his claim, Mark follows his opening statement with several scenes narrating Jesus' authority (*cf. Mark 1:21-27; 2:1-12; 23-27*).
- Despite Mark's portrayal of Jesus as God's promised, Davidic monarch, Jesus did not refer to himself as a king. Instead, Mark notes that Jesus adopted a title loaded with prophetic significance – he called himself "the Son of Man" (*Mark 2:10*), a title based on Daniel's vision of a figure "like a son of man" to whom God entrusts rule of the kingdom He established in the world (*Daniel 7:1-14; 2:31-45*).
- Jesus does not merely appropriate the title for himself; his actions reveal the authority behind his adopted title. For example:
 - He taught with authority (*Matthew 7:29*).
 - He exercised authority over spiritual powers (*Mark 1:21-27*).
 - He ruled over the creation (*Matthew 8:23-27*).
 - He had God's authority to forgive sin (*Mark 2:1-12*).
 - He possessed authority over the Sabbath (*Mark 2:23-27*).
- The demonstrations of Jesus' royal identity sit opposite his declarations about the trajectory of his story – he repeatedly told his disciples that he "must go to Jerusalem and suffer many

¹ John 19:3. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed” (*Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19*).

- However, rather than being a defeat like Peter assumed (*cf. Matthew 16:21-23*), the gospels reveal how Jesus’ death became the means of his coronation.
 - Jesus began the final week of his life by entering Jerusalem at the beginning of the Passover week – an intentionally symbolic entrance that drew on the meaning of the Passover to announce his identity as God’s chosen king (*Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38*).
 - Even though the crowds welcomed Jesus as their king (*Matthew 21:9*), the Passover week ended with the crowds demanding his death (*Matthew 27:15-23; cf. Isaiah 52:13-53:12*).
 - However, their rejection (ironically) resulted in Jesus’ coronation and the ushering in of his kingdom.
 - Jesus announced his royal identity while on trial before Pilate (*John 18:33-37*).
 - Jesus received his crown and royal robes from the Roman soldiers who hailed him as “king of the Jews” (*John 19:1-3*).
 - Jesus’ rule was announced by the Roman soldiers who affixed a plaque to his cross declaring him “the king of the Jews” (*John 19:16-19; cf. John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32*).
 - Jesus’ coronation reveals the New Testament’s vision of Jesus – ***Jesus rules God’s kingdom because he is God’s sacrificial lamb*** (*cf. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 2:5-11; Revelation 1:12-16; 5:1-12*).

Applications

The gospel writers composed records of Jesus that emphasize his royal identity, raising the question, “What does Jesus to rule over God’s kingdom mean for me?” Consider the following general applications:

- Because God entrusts “all authority in heaven and on earth” to Jesus, we pledge our allegiance to him rather than individuals or institutions in our world (*Matthew 28:18-20*).
- Submitting to Jesus’ authority involves obeying his instructions and following his example (*Matthew 7:24-27; John 13:12-16, 34-35*).
- Jesus’ kingdom is not simply a ‘spiritual reality’; it exists in the world, and he expects its citizens to faithfully represent it through their actions (*cf. Ephesians 1:15-23; 4:1-6:9*).
- Citizenship in Jesus’ kingdom draws us into the kingdom’s conflict – we join Jesus in his effort to defeat the spiritual forces of evil in the world (*1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Ephesians 6:10-20*) – our world is a battleground, and we cannot be neutral.

May God help us submit to Jesus’ rule and faithfully represent his kingdom.

