

“Advent 3: Jesus is Our Heavenly King”  
“Of David’s Royal Line” I Chronicles 17:10-14

December 12, 2010  
Pastor John Bronson

Order of Worship for December 12, 2010, Third Sunday in Advent

Pre-service Song

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship: Lighting of the Advent Candle: Jesus is our Heavenly King

Songs of Worship:

“Angels, from the Realms of Glory” Song # 259

“Hark! The Herald Angels Sing” Song # 277

“What Child is This?” Song # 281

“O Holy Night!” Song # 285

Offering and Offertory

Special Music:

Message: “The Advocate” (1 John 2:1)  
by Pastor Bronson

Closing Song “Joy to the World!” Song # 270

Parting Word of Grace

Sunday Evening Studies:  
Hebrews: A Letter for our Time  
Chapter 2  
5:30 – 7:00 pm in the Music Building

“The Prayer Closet”

December 5, 2010

*“Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.”*  
(Colossians 4:2a)

This week let us be united in praying for:

1. **Vance and Carol Johnson, Evangelical Theological college of the Philippines:** that staff & faculty will remain wholly committed to the Word of God & the gospel; that the Spirit will empower the message of God’s grace and truth for the conversion of many; that the Johnson family in the Philippines and the States will remain united in faith
2. **President Obama:** that God will bless him and his family with good health and personal safety; that the Spirit will give him an understanding that personal freedom is rooted in biblical faith; that the Spirit will open his mind to the truth of God’s Word.
3. **Music Ministry:** that Catherine Sweetman the director, the accompanists and the singers preparing music for the Christmas season will be protected in health and schedules for practice, and that the hearts will be as ready as the voices to sing for God’s glory
4. **Military Personnel of the Week: TSgt Pete Gibson** (husband of Marjorie):
5. **College Student of the Week: Caleb Hammonds at Butte College** (son of Tom and Cindy Hammonds):

As mentioned in the Advent Candle ceremony, what is written down in Luke 1:30-35 is critical for our appreciation of God’s purpose in sending His Son. We are told there in Luke’s gospel that God sent the angel Gabriel. Gabriel told Mary she was to have a child. [It would be] no ordinary child. We know that because the child was to be conceived in her womb through the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit that made of the child a remarkable child in and of itself. But what the angel had to say about the child, the purpose of [for] the child, was even more remarkable. In verses 30-35 this is what the angel said:

*“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” And Mary said to the angel, ‘How will this be, since I am a virgin?’ And the angel answered her, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.’”*

We are told from the beginning that the anointed one, the Messiah, is to be a king: Jesus is king. I appreciated how the songs today focused on and lifted up this aspect of the Lord. This was the heart of Israel’s expectation. When they talked about, thought about, prayed about, waited for the fulfilling of the promise of God to bring relief to Israel, they thought in terms of a king, one who would be sent to become their renewed ruler, to re-establish the kingdom of David, to chase out all the foreign powers. They were an occupied nation and that is what they dreamed about. Some day David’s greater son would come and sit upon David’s throne and Israel would again become what she had been promised to be, the first of all the kingdoms on the face of the earth. That was the longing of their hearts.

The Word became Flesh: that is the theme for all of our Advent [messages] this year. It is of course the heart of the incarnation: the Word of God, the Word by which He created all things, the Word by which He orders all things, the Word became flesh, just like you and me, and He dwelt among us. The expectation of the Jews was that the Word would become a king and take care of Israel.

The implication of the promise that the looked for messiah would be a king was clear enough to some even if the thinking of many in Israel had grown dull. That is the point of the second chapter of Matthew. Matthew 2:13, *“Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.’ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. . . .”* (Emphasis on the word “king” added in audio.) Ah, Herod got the point immediately: if indeed the child that had been born who was to be a king, and that child was not one of Herod’s sons, then there was trouble on the horizon. One of the prophecies made in which the future Messiah’s office of king was most clear was quickly brought to Herod’s attention. You can read it in Micah 5:2 and the religious authorities in Jerusalem quickly reminded Herod of what had been said by the prophet. *“You, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”* If Herod was troubled, he saw that it was best to act quickly. How would Herod handle the anticipation of the greater son of David, the Messiah? He acted very decisively; he acted to kill the child.

The leaders of the religious establishment in Jerusalem were as clear on the matter as was Herod. They were troubled. A ruler who was born to David in the king’s home town of Bethlehem was set to be a king, especially if star-gazing wise men arrived from the east to say so. That wise men from the east would want to worship [the newborn king] was understandable. They have seen heavenly signs. That the sitting king who was not of the family of David saw things differently was no surprise either.

When Jesus was about 30 or 33 years old, He was told that the Temple in Jerusalem which Jesus claimed he could rebuild in three days, had already been building for forty six years. As Herod listened to the wise men, he had

already been pouring vast amounts of wealth into the construction of that Temple for over fifteen years. In the end it would be considered one of the architectural wonders of the ancient world. Herod cannot be considered indifferent to the religious life of Israel, his kingdom. But he was quite clear, at least in his own mind, that it was his kingdom.

We should be very cautious when we see worldly powers investing great sums of money in places of worship. Worldly powers invest in temples for personal gain. We should not be too eager to see our own worldly powers invest a great deal of money in our own temples, because worldly rulers have a very deep sense of personal ownership and pursue personal advantage in the investments that they make.

Just to be sure, Herod sent his men to murder every child two years or less, not just in the village of Bethlehem, but in the entire surrounding area as well. Matthew 2:18 is a citation that comes from the Old Testament: *“A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping with loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more.”*

Why do I bring all this to our attention? Beloved, when a king is born, when a king enters into his office, when a king takes up his position, it is a position of power. And when we begin to reflect upon that, it might begin to alter somewhat the drift we tend to have toward a sentimentalizing of the baby Jesus into something small and something safe that can easily be tucked beneath our Christmas tree and offer no trouble at all to the way we live our lives. But Jesus is a king, and Herod knew it and understood the implications.

The religious professionals who pointed Herod to Micah 5:2 did not point to the clearest and certainly not to the earliest promise in Scripture regarding the future king that would be in David’s line and rule. Very likely those religious professionals preferred to keep things a bit unclear, both for Herod and the people. The promise was given by God to David through the prophet Nathan.

When did that promise come? You will find the promise in I Chronicles 17:10-14. The occasion was this: David toward the end of his reign, a very wealthy man, had established the boundaries of the kingdom and was honored and respected by all the surrounding nations decided that he was finally in a position to honor the God who had so blessed him. He decided, “I will build a temple. Too long has the Lord simply lived in a tent, moving from place to place.” But God did not want David to build him a temple. God spoke to David through Nathan and this is what he said.

*“...I declare to you that the Lord will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you [a reference to king Saul], but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.”*

These were wonderful words for David, and he expressed his amazement to God. Naturally David hoped and the people of Israel assumed that his future son was Solomon, and Solomon did build a temple, the temple that most of us are familiar with from the scriptures. But Solomon was not the son to which the Lord referred, and the temple he built was not the temple to which the Lord referred. Certainly it was not the temple that Jesus referred to as recorded in John’s gospel 2:19, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* In AD 70, seventy years after Christ, Titus, a Roman general and commander of the Imperial army, leveled the city of Jerusalem and the temple. He reduced it to rubble. By then Jesus had already raised the temple; it was him, it was his body. Jesus is the temple of God.

If we read the eighty-ninth psalm, we can see that the true temple and the true Messiah go together, the messianic king. The eighty-ninth psalm was not one of David’s but was written long after when on account of the apostasy, the falling away of both kings and people, the blessings of God had been removed from Israel and great troubles had befallen that nation. The psalmist is Ethan the Ezrahite. The Psalm reviews the record of God’s care of Israel and the promises that were made to David. This is what it says:

*“Of old you spoke in a vision to your godly one, and said: ‘I have granted help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him, so that my hand shall be established with him; my arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him; the wicked shall not humble him. I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him. My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. He shall cry to me, “You are my father, my God and the rock of my salvation.” And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens.”’ (9:19-29)*

But Ethan’s words do not stop at verse 29 as the high note. Verses 30-32 go on in this manner: *“If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my rules, if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments, then I will punish their transgressions with the rod and their iniquity with stripes...”* That falling away, that apostasy, that dropping out of the path of obedience and into the path of rebellion, that rejection of the authority and the rule of God, that is what the reality of Israel was when Ezra wrote his psalm. But there are five verses, verses 33-37, in which this wonderful promise is given:

*“I will not violate my covenant or alter the word that went forth from my lips. Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. Like the moon it shall be established forever, a faithful witness in the skies.”*

Here was the enduring hope of the faithful Jew, the true Israelite. They knew full well why their troubles had come upon them. They also knew full well why Herod or any other king who was not of the line of David was not their true king. They were looking for the king who would be David’s true son. And the kingdom for which they waited was not the one that would be established by worldly force of arms. God himself had promised that he would establish that kingdom. That is why we rightly understand the words that Jesus spoke to Pilate on the night of his betrayal and mock trials. Remember the conversation? John 18:33-37:

*“So Pilate entered his headquarters again and called Jesus and said to him, ‘Are you the king of the Jews?’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?’ Pilate answered, ‘Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me. What have you done?’ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.’ Then Pilate said to him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.’”*

Jesus here gives what is the essential and often overlooked connection between the true Son of David, the coming Messiah, and those who would be part of his kingdom: they must know and they must believe. This, you see, is what it means to act by faith. Those who do not know cannot believe. Those who do not believe are not part of the kingdom. That, of course, bears the most serious possible consequences.

We know from Revelations 17:14 and 19:15-16 that Jesus is destined to be the King of kings and Lord of lords. This is what we are told: *“They will make war on the Lamb (that refers to Jesus), and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is the Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.” “From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name*

*written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*” Now if you go and read chapters 17 and 19, you know they come after the horrific account of God’s judgment on the wicked, both individuals, peoples and kingdoms. In that day Jesus is sent by His Father as the ultimate ruler, the one who will finally restrain all evil in the world, enforcing order and justice upon all. In that day no one will resist the truth. The time of choice will be over, and whether wanted or not, the knee will bend and the tongue will confess.

This, however, this lordship of Jesus is not merely a future reality. Jesus is now already the King of kings and Lord of lords. We hear this in Paul’s remarkable charge to Timothy. You can look it up in I Timothy 6:13-15. This is what Paul says: *“I charge you in the presence of God who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords...”* You have to pay careful attention to the tense of that sentence: “he who is” not “will be”; he who is the blessed and only sovereign.

What do kings do? If we have an understanding mind, if we have grasped the point, if we have seen what it is that God wants us to see and understand, that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ the Savior, Jesus Christ the prophet, is Jesus Christ the King, then we would be interested to give an answer to what it is that kings do. There is a variety of things that kings do. They do such things as lead governments. They do such things as execute the law. Kings also implement justice. Kings maintain domestic and international peace.

Over what realm is Jesus presently king on the earth I might ask? Surely it is the kingdom of God. Where is that kingdom? We know where it is; that kingdom is in the hearts of those who believe in Him. He is a king. This is the larger context of Paul’s words to Timothy. They resonate with what Paul goes on immediately to say after that charge (I Timothy 6:11-16). This is what Paul says,

*“But as for you, O man of God, flee these things (Paul has just talked about a whole bunch of temptations associated with the desire to become rich, declaring that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil - that is the lead in for these words Paul gives to Timothy). Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords...”*

Jesus is King. We are in the habit, and it is a reasonably sound and scriptural habit, of speaking of the church as the body of Christ, which it is, or the household of God, which it is, or as the people of God, which it is. But the church is ruled over by a king. Therefore the church is part of the kingdom. Jesus is not only the shepherd of our souls, he is not just the elder brother and our High Priest or the Great Prophet. He is not just the Savior and He is not just our friend. He is also our judge, because kings judge. That is driven home to us in I Corinthians 3:10-15 and also 2 Corinthians 5:10. The latter verse is on the screen. This is what it says: *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.”* There is only one possible way in which people who call themselves Christians can tell themselves that it is not necessary to obey the laws of God. The only way they can do that is by not reading the Bible or believing what it has to say. You and I, beloved, are accountable for everything that we do and don’t do. Why? Because Jesus is a king, and kings expect to be obeyed.

Born to Mary and laid in a manger, heralded by shepherds on the night watch, Jesus is king. It is Jesus the King of kings who watches over us. It is Jesus the King of kings who draws near to help us. It is Jesus the King of kings who

with the Father has sent the Spirit to impart to those who believe the wisdom and the power of Jesus, and to illuminate the Scriptures which have been given to us for our knowledge of God’s will. It is Jesus the King of kings before whom we carry out our callings and ministries, those ministries to which He has called us. Is Jesus the King of kings who in the last day judge our works and reward our faithfulness. By His grace may He sustain us in the obedience of faith and for the glory of His great name.

Here are the last questions which we must answer:

1. Do we/ do I live under the authority of Jesus as my king?
2. Do we/ do I in obedience to Him seek to extend that kingdom of God’s righteousness to all the people and places on the earth?
3. Do we/ do I live in anticipation of the day in which I will stand before Him and give an account for all that I have said and done?

He is a king, and kings are to be obeyed.

Let us pray: Heavenly Father, how rich and varied is the gift You have given to us. It meets all of our needs, and indeed goes far beyond our comprehension. Great goodness You have in store, great expectations You presently have for all of us. May we confess in our hearts and believe and demonstrate that belief in our lives, Father, that Jesus indeed is a king. It is in His name that we pray. Amen

Questions for Understanding and Application:

1. Which of the individuals associated with the birth of Jesus – Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zachariah, Simeon, Anna the prophetess, Herod, the three magi the inn-keeper, the shepherds – most interests you and why?
2. Do you think Herod’s immense investment in the Jerusalem Temple was a good thing? What sort of motives do people have in giving to religious causes, charities and foundations?
3. Why did God prevent David from building a temple and yet Herod, a truly wicked man, do so?
4. What reason did Jesus give for His followers not fighting? What implications might this have for us as the church in the world today? (See John 18:33-37)
5. What does a king do? What is the practical application of the kingly rule of Jesus today?
6. Jesus relates to us in many ways. He is Savior, Shepherd, Friend, Elder Brother, Head, Healer, Provider and so on. How should we approach Him as our King?
7. Kings sit in judgment of their subjects – see 1Corinthians 3:10-15 and 2Corinthians 5:10. How might the fact that Jesus is our king affect present behavior in light of future judgment?
8. What service has King Jesus asked of you for His kingdom and glory?