

# THE LAST SUNDAY OF END TIME CHRIST THE KING

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## A King to Meet Demands

Luke 23:35-43 (NIV84)

<sup>35</sup> The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” <sup>36</sup> The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar <sup>37</sup> and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” <sup>38</sup> There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. <sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” <sup>40</sup> But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence?” <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” <sup>42</sup> Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

I’m breaking the rules again and talking about politics today. 2016’s Presidential Election is over. Regardless of who you voted for, we know that over half of everyone who voted did not get the president they voted for. What I think we can all be thankful for is the fact that we have a voice in the election of our leaders. Sometimes our voice is not heeded, but we do have a voice. We can tell our current President and our President-Elect what we want them to do. We can write letters to Congressmen, Representative, Senators – even to the Supreme Court. We have a voice before our leaders.

But what if we lived in a monarchy? You don’t get to pick your leader in a monarchy; your king, your leader, is born into the position. You don’t get to watch to people running for “king” debate over the issues. You don’t get to cast a vote for which “king” you want based on their political leanings or plans for our country. No, you are stuck with the person who is born into the position, whether we think they are qualified or not, regardless of whether or not they meet your demands.

The notice of crimes committed that merited the capital punishment of crucifixion that hung over Jesus’ head read, “This is the King of the Jews.” (verse 38) Jesus was nailed to the cross officially because he was a king. He was born into the position some 33 years prior of a virgin named Mary after being conceived in her by the Holy Spirit. The Magi came searching for “the one who had been born king of the Jews.” (Matthew 2:2) Now he was dying because of this title.

The people standing there by the cross made their demands of the King of the Jews. The rulers sneered, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.” (verse 35) The soldiers mocked him, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” (verses 36, 37) One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” (verse 39) The basic message? If you want us to accept you as our king, if you are really worthy of such a title, here’s what you’ll do so that we will accept you as our king: save yourself! Come on down off of that cross if you really are king material. Then we’ll accept you. Then we’ll believe in you. Then we’ll bow our knee to you. Just save yourself.

What a temptation to Jesus! You know that Jesus only wanted one thing. He said it as he neared Jerusalem that week: “Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.” (Matthew 23:37) If he came down from the cross, would they actually accept him as their king? Would they actually believe in him? No, they wouldn’t have. There would have been another demand to meet. Since you came down from the cross, now heal your wounds before us. And after Jesus did that, there would be another demand. Now cure all my illnesses, Jesus. Give me enough money that I never have to work again, Jesus. Do all my work for me, Jesus. Go get rid of the people I don’t like, Jesus. Then you’ll be my king. But there would always be one more demand before they would bow their knee to Jesus and accept him as their king.

What demands do you make of God before you accept him as your king? Do you say, “God, if you would just give me a sign that you are really there, then I would believe in you, then I would trust you”? Did you pray to God during this election, “God, elect the president I have chosen so that he or she actually makes America great, so that he or she can save my country, that he or she would make my life easier, better”?

We can make these demands of someone of whom we have a voice in putting them in their position of power, but we do not have that voice when it comes to having a king. The king is born into the position, and if we are citizens of that country, he is our king. You don’t get to contest it. You don’t to protest it. You don’t get to make demands of him before he becomes your king. He simply is by virtue of who he is. A king rules over you; he is not ruled by you or your demands of him.

The rulers, the soldiers, and the one criminal all absurdly demanded of the King of the Jews that he should meet their demands and then he would finally be their king. And what did they demand? "Save yourself." Who would ever want a king who governs and rules over people by acting in self-interest. "Prove that you are good enough to be my king by doing something for yourself." This is the absurdity of unbelief, absurdity that would not have stopped had Jesus actually done it. They had already seen Jesus raise three people back from the dead, most recently Lazarus who had been in the tomb for 4 days! They had seen him heal the sick, the blind, the crippled that week. When they arrested him the night before they saw him reattach a man's ear! They knew that he can and did save others. But they didn't care. That wasn't good enough for them to accept him as their king. They would rather kill Jesus in spite of all the things he had done. They didn't actually care if Jesus met their demands; they were just using them to taunt Jesus, to soothe themselves in saying that this man is a fraud and he is most certainly not my king because he doesn't meet my demands.

There was at least one man near Jesus' cross who came to see things differently. He hung next to Jesus on his own cross. For a while, he had been content to mock Jesus, demanding that he save himself and them just as the other criminal suggested. But something changed. Maybe it was when he saw that Jesus did not ridicule the people back or beg for his life to be spared. Maybe it was when he did not protest while being nailed to the cross. Maybe it was after he read the written notice above Jesus' head that his crime was being the King of the Jews. Maybe it was after Jesus prayed for him, for the other criminal, for the rulers, for the soldiers, for his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

This criminal had a change in heart and rebuked the other criminal. "Don't you fear God, since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." (verses 40-41) The criminal realized that he was getting what he deserved. There was no excuse for what he had done. No earthly king would rightly pardon him. This King of the Jews being crucified next to him doesn't need to save himself. That's absurd. He, the criminal, is the one who needs saving.

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He didn't call him "Christ." He didn't call him "King." He called him by the name that means, "He saves - Jesus." The criminal was making a very different demand than anyone else had done. He didn't demand Jesus prove himself in order to be his king by saving himself. No, he acknowledged him as more than his King. He acknowledged him as his Savior. This Jesus wasn't here to save himself and then rule over him. No, he already is a King. He was born a king. He is here now to serve me, to save me. The criminal simply asked of his king, "Do for me what you are accomplishing by staying on this cross. I don't deserve you as my king. I am being justly punished. Be my Savior. Be the one who remembers me because you are my King, because you are the King of the Jews, because you are the King above all kings. Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Now longer is the demand, "Save yourself," "Perform some great miracle so that we might actually believe in you." No, "Save me, Jesus. Save me because that is who are you, that is what you do. You are the one who saves. You are already my king whether I ask you to be or not. Save me."

Earthly kings, rulers, presidents cannot save us no matter how many of our demands they meet. The only ruler who can save us is this "King of the Jews." Jesus answered the criminal, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." (verse 43) "As your king, I am here to save you. I'm not here to serve myself. I will bring you into my kingdom. It's paradise. It is the Garden of Eden restored. It is the place where I reign. This is why I am on this cross. This is why I will not come down at the demands of the rulers, the soldiers, or that other criminal. I will stay here as your King so that I save you. I don't need saving, but you do. This is why I give my life for you. You need me to do this so that you can be saved. I am staying here so that today you will be with me in paradise."

My King, your King, our King, stayed on that cross to fulfill his name's sake. He did not come to save himself. That's not the king I need. That's not the demand that needs to be met. He came to be hung on that cross and stay there until it was finished, until he accomplished his mission of saving the world so that every single one of us would live in his kingdom, live in the paradise where he rules. He is our King, a King unlike any other. He is Jesus, the one who saves me.

Jesus is my King whether or not he meets my demands. He is my completely selfless King who took my place. I deserved that sentence. I deserved that punishment. I didn't demand he save me, but that's what he did because he is the Christ, because he is my King.

Forgive me, Lord, for demanding you prove yourself to me before I believe in you. You chose not to save yourself, but to save me, to save that criminal who hung there with you, to save every single person on this earth. Remove from our hearts all our selfish demands of you, our demands which tell you what you will do in order to be our ruler. Instead, fill us with the fact that you are already our King. You saved us. Truly, because you are our King, because you are Jesus, the one who saves, you will take us to be with you in paradise. Long live the King who saves us, Jesus Christ, our Lord, our God. Amen.