



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.7.3.2 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

Three Aspects of Jesus' Kingdom: Power, Grace, Glory

Jesus' Kingdom of Power

Christ as King exercises supreme control over all creation, including His enemies. He exercises this control for the benefit of His Church. This is sometimes called His kingdom of power, since it involves Christ's power over the entire universe. King David wrote of the Messiah in Psalm 110: **"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!"** (Psalm 110:1-2). The letter to the Hebrews uses the same language when it says of Jesus: **"This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool"** (Hebrews 10:12-13). The prophet Daniel said of the Messiah: **"To Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed"** (Daniel 7:14).

Christ's dominion includes power even over the devil and all his army. Jesus said: **"I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"** (Matthew 16:18). And He said: **"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth"** (Matthew 28:18).

Jesus' apostles were well aware of His kingdom of power. Peter said: Jesus **"is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him"** (1 Peter 3:22). Paul talked about Jesus being at God's right hand **"in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet"** (Ephesians 1:20-22). The most wonderful thing about Jesus' kingdom of power is that He uses this power for the good of His Church; He used it for the benefit of those who believe in Him and love Him. Very clearly Paul teaches: **"We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose"** (Romans 8:28). Yes, all events that happen anywhere in the world fit into God's pattern for good for those whom He has called out of the world to be His own people.

Jesus' Kingdom of Grace

Christ as High Priest was most concerned with making the sacrifice to atone for all sin. Similarly, Christ as King is most concerned about using the Gospel to bring sinners to faith in Himself and to keep them in that faith. He then uses the Gospel in their hearts to produce the fruits of faith in their lives. This beneficial rule of Christ through the Gospel is known as His kingdom of grace. Whatever good we do is the work of our King on us, in us, and through us, without any merit on our part.

Jesus told many parables that show how Jesus' kingdom works through the Word (Matthew 13). His parable of the sower and the seed shows that Christ works through the planting of the seed, which is the Word of God – more specifically the Gospel (the Good News) of our salvation in Christ. Christ's work as king reaches its goal when the planted seed yields a crop, that is, when believers are added to the Lord through the power of the Word – believers who then bring forth the fruit of proclaiming the Gospel to others and the fruit of living a Christian life in keeping with the Gospel, showing love for God and their fellowman in their daily lives. Another parable of Jesus' kingdom is His parable of the weeds

in the wheat. In this parable we see how Christ sows good seed, but the devil sows weeds, and during the present age we cannot always distinguish between the weeds and the wheat as they are growing. But eventually the harvest time will come, and the final separation will take place. The other parables in Matthew 13 also illustrate Christ's kingdom of grace and how it works.

While Jesus was on earth, He was busy **“preaching the gospel of the kingdom”** (Matthew 4:23). **“He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God”** (Luke 8:1). Today His kingdom continues to function through His ambassadors – His believing followers – who bring His Word to the world. It is through His Word that the Shepherd-King gathers His flock and keeps His flock safely in His fold to all eternity. Jesus told Pontius Pilate that He was a King who works by means of His voice speaking the truth (John 18:37). Jesus told His disciples: **“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand”** (John 10:27-28). **“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd”** (John 10:16).

When Jesus' followers speak His Word faithfully, Jesus' voice is heard in the world, and His kingdom is at work and progresses. The apostle Paul explained: **“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ”** (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Christ as King does not force persons to believe the Gospel and follow Him. He persuades them through the Gospel of His love and forgiveness.

Christ uses all kinds of persons in His kingdom work, and He gives them varying gifts that they can use for this work. But it is never their own power or wisdom that brings people to Christ. It is God Himself who draws people to Christ. The apostle Paul wrote: **“I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase”** (1 Corinthians 3:6-7). The same apostle recognized where the power of Christ's kingdom was to be found, for he wrote: **“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek”** (Romans 1:16). The Gospel that brings people to faith in Christ also builds them up in that faith. Paul said to the Ephesian elders: **“Brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified”** (Acts 20:32).

Jesus' Kingdom of Glory

Christ will also function as King when He returns at the end of time and welcomes His believers into His eternal glory. This is known as Christ's kingdom of glory. In the week of His death and resurrection Jesus spoke to His disciples about His coming again. He compared the kingdom of heaven to ten girls, five wise, five foolish, waiting for the bridegroom to arrive. The point of this story was to emphasize the importance of being ready when He returns. He also told a parable of a man distributing to his servants various amounts of money that they were to work with until his return. So we followers of Christ are to be busy with the gifts He has given us while we are waiting for His return. Jesus concluded His discussion by describing the day of His return as King of glory: **“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory”** (Matthew 25:31). What will happen then? Christ as King will judge all people. Some **“will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life”** (Matthew 25:46). **“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’”** (Matthew 25:34).

At His return Christ will bless His Church of believers with unending and unrestricted fellowship with Himself. **“The Father...has given Him (the Son) authority to execute judgment also... All who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth”** (John 5:26-29). **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16). At that time Jesus' prayer

to His heavenly Father will be answered in full. On the night of His arrest Jesus prayed: **“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which You have given Me”** (John 17:24).

The apostle Paul explained what will happen on that day: **“The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And then we shall always be with the Lord”** (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Each believer in Christ can therefore say with Paul: **“The Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom”** (2 Timothy 4:18). On that day **“the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up... Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells”** (2 Peter 3:10-13).

Ever since the days of the apostles, false teachers have arisen in the church with false ideas of the kingdom of Christ. Some have wanted to make Jesus an earthly king, even though Jesus said plainly: **“My kingdom is not of this world”** (John 18:36). Some believe that the Gospel of Jesus will gain more and more influence on earth until almost the whole world becomes Christian. Others believe that Jesus will return more than once, the first time invisibly to take His believers from this earth and then return with them to set up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem that will last a thousand years. They say that only after that period will Jesus return for the final judgment. The Roman Catholic teaching is that the kingdom of Christ is present now in their earthly organization headed by the pope of Rome. We will go into more detail on these matters in Chapter 15 - the Doctrine of Eschatology, or the Last Things.

We have now completed the specific study of Christology. This subject is so central for the Christian faith, however, that we will always be referring to Christ, His person, His office, and His work as we study other doctrines.

Questions

1. What is meant by Christ’s kingdom of power?
2. For what chief purpose does Christ use His royal power?
3. How does the knowledge of Christ’s kingly power affect our view of world events?
4. What is meant by Christ’s kingdom of grace?
5. List the parables of Matthew 13 that describe Christ’s kingdom of grace.
6. How does Christ’s kingdom work, according to the parable of the sower and his seed?
7. How is Christ showing Himself as King of grace in our times?
8. What does Paul mean when he says our weapons are not carnal?
9. What method does Christ use to extend His kingdom?
10. What must we confess about the good that we do as Christians?
11. How do Christians participate in the coming of Christ’s kingdom?
12. What is meant by Christ’s kingdom of glory?
13. How will Christ usher in His kingdom of glory?
14. What will eternal life be like for those who trust in Christ?
15. What will happen to those who reject Christ?
16. Describe three false views of Christ’s kingdom.