

December 17, 2017

Dave Zuleger

Jesus the Perfect: Gazing on His Glory in the Book of Hebrews
Sermon Title and Text - Delight in the Reign of the Perfect King: Hebrews 1:3-9

Sermon Points:

God's People Reject Him as King (Genesis 3, 1 Samuel 8)

God's Pattern for a King (Deuteronomy 17:14-20, Saul-Herod)

God's Perfect King (Hebrews 1:8-9, Psalm 45)

God's Perfect Kingdom (Revelation 22:1-4)

Application: Trust and Love the Reign of the Slain Sovereign (Hebrews 1:3)

Corporate Prayer:

Lord, the world is full of wicked rulers and wicked followers. Thank you for Jesus, the Perfect King who reigns now and forever in perfect righteousness and hatred of all that is wicked. Thank you that one day those trusting him will reign with him forever in a place where there is no more wickedness in us or around us. And help us, by your Spirit, to trust and love his reign now, remembering he was slain for our sins.

Introduction: Our Distrust and Disdain of Authority

This series is about gazing on the glory of Jesus this Christmas season through themes the Bible wants us to see from beginning to end. So far we've seen Jesus is the Perfect Son and Jesus as our Perfect Sabbath Rest.

This week may be the most offensive week of all. We live in an individualistic, autonomous culture that prizes throwing off authority do what we want when we want. That's one of the highest values we live by. The value that what makes us happy is what we should do and no one can tell us differently. And we have the freedom and resources to do. We have money to buy what we want now. We have the Internet to find what we want now. We have disdain for most people that would tell us what to do.

And quite frankly, we realize that most people in authority our deeply flawed, and so with our disdain for authority come a distrust for authority.

But, this week we will see Jesus as the Perfect King. And the thing about King's is that they demand allegiance and obedience. I wonder if when we read the Christmas story we think of the baby in the manger as coming to be the Perfect King who would rule over Israel, rule over the nations, and demand obedience from his people, and not just external obedience, but obedience from our hearts. But, we should. In Matthew 2:12, the wise men are looking for the king. And at the end of the story in Matthew 27:37 Jesus confirms to Pilate that he is a king, but that his kingdom is not from this world.

And so my prayer this morning is that we would see Jesus, the Perfect King, who will reign forever in perfect holiness, and we would delight in his reign right now in our lives.

God's People Reject Him as King (Genesis 3, 1 Samuel 8)

Although Genesis 1-2 doesn't ever use the word King to describe to describe the relationship of God with his people, we see the three elements that are always necessary for that relationship. There is a ruler, a people subject to that ruler, and there is a place. We have God who has created everything from nothing in Genesis 1-2, we have the people in Adam and Eve that are subject to God, and we have the perfect paradise in the Garden.

We also see God handing down commands to them and regulations. He grants them privileges to live in the land, to have each other, and to eat of the land. He tells them as long as they obey him they can live in this kingdom forever.

So, here God is, reigning over His people in His place. And, it is so important for us to notice that in Genesis 1-2 Adam and Eve are perfectly happy, in their relationship with God, in their obedience to God, and therefore in their relationship with each other.

But, it doesn't last for long. They think they can do better than God. And as they disobey God, sin enters, and sin destroys their fellowship with God, each other, and their happiness.

And that's exactly what we see in chapter 3. Adam and Eve disobey their King. They reject his Kingship. They commit treason to the one who created them. They follow and obey the enemy of the King, Satan and give in to their flesh, despite all God has done for them.

Fast forward to the people of Israel. God has led them out of Egypt with mighty plagues. God has sustained them through the wilderness despite their grumbling and idol worship and has brought them into the promised land.

Again, God as King of Israel has provided a place to dwell with his people and again has simply asked them to obey and promised to bless them if they will.

But, in 1 Samuel 8, toward the end of the prophet Samuel's life, the people ask for a king. They say, "Appoint a king to judge us like all the nations." Now, this might not seem like a big deal at first. But, it is. Israel has never had a king, because God is their ruler. Israel is not like the nations purposefully. They are called to be unique and follow God alone, not any man.

So, the prophet Samuel is upset with them and goes to God. Here is God's response: "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them." (v.7) They are not simply asking for a human king, they are presumptuously rejecting the King of Kings.

Like Adam and Eve, they reject the King of the Universe for their own desires instead of dwelling with the King of the Universe in his good place for them. O, how often we reject the King of the Universe and his commands because we think being like the world around us will make us happy.

God's Pattern for a King (Deuteronomy 17:14-20, Saul-Herod)

Now, what's amazing about this is that God predicts this treason and even gives instructions for it.

All the way back in Deuteronomy 17:14-20 God gives Israel instructions for when they enter the land he's given them and ask him for a king. Listen to verses 14-15:

When you come to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,' you may indeed set a king over you whom the LORD your God will choose.

God knows that Israel will want a king like the nations even after they are in the land of promise. And so, even though this means they are rejecting him as king, God tells them that they can have a king that he will choose. Now, God knows this is not a good idea, in fact it is coming from a place of rebellion, but he still he lovingly gives them a few instructions for these kings from verses 16-20.

God gives them some commands of things not to do. No foreign kings. No foreign wives. Foreigners might lead the people astray to other gods. They must not acquire horses which would lead them to trust their own strength in battle instead of seek the Lord's wisdom and help. And they must not be about excessive riches, lest they think more highly of themselves than they ought to and forget God.

However, kings weren't just supposed to avoid these stumbling blocks, but positively were also supposed to have a copy of the law with him at almost all times and his main job as king was to carry out God's commands. Listen to verses 19-20:

And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

So, if a king was called to fear the LORD God and keep all of his commands so that his heart would stay humble and he would remain a servant to the people instead of a self-serving king who used the people.

The king was supposed to be first a servant of God and next a servant of the people who would love and fear God with all his heart by knowing God's word better than anyone else and therefore help God's people obey God so that they could all prosper in the land with him.

However, from the time the first king, Saul is appointed, then King David, then King Solomon, and then all the kings after that, there is not one king found who avoids all of these pitfalls and perfectly carries out the commands of God. Some of them take foreign wives. Some of them worship idols. Some of them go into battle without asking God. Some of them care more about getting rich than obeying God who has promised to provide for them. And ultimately, all of them die imperfect kings.

And because of their imperfections, the people suffered greatly. They were led astray to idols. They were killed in foolish battles. They were punished by God, the true King because they didn't know his word or carry out his command. It got so bad at one point that when Josiah found the law in the temple, no one even knew what it was. And it all started with wicked people who demanded a king like the nations, and in doing so, ended up with wicked rulers that led them to be just like the nations devoted to sin instead completely devoted to the holy God who rescued them. They are not nearly as happy as Adam and Eve were when they were gladly submitting to God as their King in the Garden.

God's Perfect King (Hebrews 1:8-9, Psalm 45)

These kings who failed to uphold this pattern lead us to our main passage of the day. And in these verses, the author of Hebrews goes back to Psalm 45 and says it is talking about Jesus. Now, Psalm 45 was a Psalm written of an Israelite King most likely at his wedding day and it was a Psalm simply to delight in the qualities of the king and how the Bride should delight in her King, who ultimately the Bible is telling us is Jesus. So Psalm 45 shows up in Hebrews 1 and both authors have the same point, they want us to worship and delight in the reign of Jesus because of who Jesus is. So, let's just look at what verses 8-9 says about Jesus:

But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

First, notice that Jesus is God. God was the king Adam and Eve rejected and Israel rejected. So, who will come and fulfill the requirements as king perfectly? The God-Man, Jesus Christ. Do you see that? God the Father is talking to the Son, and says to the Son, "Your throne, O God." The Son is God. It couldn't be any clearer. And then go to the end of the passage and see how the Son, who is God, is anointed by his God, God the Father. So, the Father is God. The Son is God. They are both God. But, the first reason Jesus is the Perfect King is that he is God. And as God, we can trust that he is powerful enough that no enemy can dethrone him and no plan can undo his plans.

Second, notice the forever reign of Jesus that his throne goes on forever and ever. God has promised King David that someone would sit on his throne, from his family, forever (2 Samuel 7). But, every other king died. Jesus will reign forever and ever. Think of that. All these imperfect reigns ended. But, this perfect reign will

never end. It will never fade. The perfect reign of Jesus is good news for those of us trusting in Jesus and belonging to his kingdom.

Third, notice the perfect character of Jesus. The scepter of his kingdom is the scepter of uprightness. That means his kingdom's power is marked by perfect moral purity. There is no sin. There are only right actions. Right judgments. Right decisions. Right plans. There is not even a moment of sinful actions, judgments, decision, or plans. And not only actions, but his heart is perfectly pure. Do you see that in the next sentence? Not only are the actions perfectly right, but his heart is.

It says he LOVES righteousness and hates wickedness. This speaks to the heart of Jesus. King Jesus not only carries out the external commands of God perfectly as King, but he never turns astray in his heart. He loves what God loves. He hates what God hates. He loves whatever shows the righteous character of God in his heart. He hates whatever veers even an inch from that righteousness in his heart.

What's so amazing about this perfection of Jesus is that he fulfills the pattern back in Deuteronomy 17. He is from the people of Israel. He loves the word of God and uses it to fight against temptation against Satan. He will not be seduced by great power, because he trusts the power of God. He will not be seduced by great riches, because he trusts the provision of God. He will not test God, because he trusts God to protect him. And this all comes because he is saturated in the word of God like a perfect King should be. Yes, Jesus was God. But, he was tempted in every way we are, yet without sin. His temptation was real. The fight was real. And Jesus fought with the word of God and the Spirit of God and became the perfect King who would reign in perfect holiness forever and ever.

This is the king we've been looking for throughout the Bible. This is the king totally devoted to God. This is the king totally devoted to God's word. And this is the king who would be so devoted to following the will of God that he would sacrifice himself to save sinful people who rebel against his kingdom to bring them into his kingdom because he knew it was God's plan from God's word.

And because Jesus is God, because Jesus reigns forever, and because he perfectly loves righteousness and hates wickedness so much that he carries out the righteous plan of God to the point of death on a cross for sinners, God anoints him with the oil of gladness infinitely beyond his companions.

God says, "This is MY Son. This is MY King. Yes, your death looked weak now, but you will rescue many and you will reign forever. I will raise you up and you will be seated with me at my right hand forever to rule and to reign now and forever all those who have eyes to see and worship and delight in a slain King. I am well pleased with you."

God's Perfect Kingdom (Revelation 22:1-5)

And even though right now it sometimes seems like evil is winning the day, be assured that the day is coming when we will be with Jesus, reigning with him in the everlasting Kingdom of God, the new heavens and the new earth:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Nothing accursed will be in this place. No sin. No wickedness. Of course not, because the King hates wickedness and loves righteousness. God and the Lamb will be on the throne and we will again eat of the tree of life. And Jesus is not just King of certain peoples, but will be the King of people from every tribe and nation who put their trust in his death to pay for their sins. We will gladly worship him and gaze upon his face and reign with him forever.

And, in this place, there will be no serpent to deceive and no ability to sin. This is the forever reign of King Jesus, perfect forever in purity and joy. This is perfect joy and love because there is perfect holiness and obedience to the King who loves righteousness and hates wickedness.

Application: Trust and Love the Reign of the Slain Sovereign (Hebrews 1:3)

Psalm 45 makes our trust and love for his reign personal. We are the Bride to the Perfect King and we are meant to not just know about but trust and love the reign of the perfect king and come eagerly every day or our lives to rejoice in it.

Sometimes, we have a hard time trusting God when life is hard or suffering is long. But, we forget that Jesus became the perfect, trustworthy King through suffering on our behalf for sins.

We don't have to wonder if the reign of Jesus is for our good based on our current circumstances, we can know the reign of Jesus is for our good by looking at the cross where our King died for to purify us from our sins!

After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:3)

So, if you're struggling with trusting the reign of Jesus right now, don't look at your circumstances. Look at the cross. See your biggest problem paid for – your sin! See the King of the universe who loves righteousness and hates wickedness! See him take on all your wickedness and give you all his righteousness so that he could love you. Our Perfect King is a suffering, slain King who knows our weakness and is praying on our behalf right now.

But, perhaps you're not struggling with trusting the reign of Jesus, but loving the reign of Jesus. Remember when human beings found their deepest joy? When they gladly submitted to God as King in the Garden. And when will we find our deepest joy in the future? When will we gladly submit to King Jesus in the new heavens and new earth. Let's just make two quick observations from the reality that humans were and will be happiest when they gladly submit to the holy reign of Jesus.

First, this means that no matter how hard it seems to obey or how good sin looks in the moment, the essence of true human joy and flourishing is obedience to God in the presence of God. Our sinful flesh and the devil will try to tag-team and trick us that we should make our own decisions based on what makes us happy in the moment. Or, perhaps more subtly our flesh and Satan will try to trick us that we don't have to be radically obedient because NOW there is grace. But, sin never brings true happiness. Sin never pays off. Sin will bring sadness and destruction every time.

Second, notice that in the Garden and in the perfect King coming soon, there is obedience to God and perfect fellowship with God. And when that happens is perfect fellowship with each other. Our sinful disobedience to our King will never make relationships better. Ever. It will always destroy like poison, spreading more and more the longer the sin goes on. Even if sin is secret from everyone but God right now, it is wreaking havoc on relationships.

Our flesh and Satan want to work so hard to make obedience a curse word in our homes and in our churches as if we shouldn't emphasize obedience too much. But, the opposite is actually true. We could never emphasize obedience to King Jesus enough. In obedience there is deep submission and fellowship with God and therefore deep joy as we dwell with him. And that joy overflows into the relationships around us. And it all starts unraveling when we disobey.

And King Jesus died to purchase the Spirit to live inside of us to bring about glad submission to him as King and to spread his kingdom here on earth. So, how do we do that?

We know what it's like to live as people in his kingdom here on earth by reading the word (Matthew 5). And we pray that God would have his Kingdom come here on earth through people that live to glorify his name, that want his will to be done, who trust him to provide all they need, who seek his forgiveness for sin and seek to forgive others, and who seek to fight the temptation of the flesh and the devil. (Matthew 6)

