

**“Jesus the King”
Matthew 12:42**

Having heard the past two weeks that Jesus is both prophet and priest par excellence, we meet the final office of Christ revealed in the twelfth chapter of Matthew: kingship. But first He gives the Pharisees a warning, saying, “The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.” Matthew likes to exemplify Gentiles by depicting their faith. He’s also the only evangelist to cite Isaiah when referring to the residence of Jesus as “Galilee of the Gentiles” (Mt 4:12ff; cf. Mt 12:15ff). But that’s part of the offense to the Pharisees: that Gentiles might receive God’s salvation while they—the adept Jewish “law-keepers”—are condemned. The queen of Sheba, a Gentile woman, travelled over 1,000 first-century miles to hear Solomon, the son of David; the Pharisees, who were next-door neighbors to Jesus, the *promised* son of David, reject what they hear. To not listen to the king is to be disobedient. And it’s a baffling circumstance we’re all guilty of when diseases and disabilities, the wind and the waves, demons and death itself obey the king, but men don’t. That doesn’t make Jesus any less of a king... it just makes Him a king that wants citizens willing to live under His rule of grace.

When the queen of Sheba visited King Solomon, it was a foreshadowing of another visit: “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’” (Mt 2:1-2)—another visit by Gentiles to meet the son of David. And even though the wise men ask for the “king of the Jews,” they betray their true thoughts when saying, “we have come to worship him.” They’re not looking for a regional king with whom their people or king might strike an alliance. They’re looking for the king who’s the promised son of David... which makes that king *their* king—king of both Jew *and* Gentile. Because only the king of the Jews could be the King of kings since it was David’s offspring who was guaranteed an eternal kingdom (2 Sa 7:12; Ps 45:6). To be the King of kings, both you and your kingdom have to endure—if your kingdom is lost, then you didn’t put down your enemy; if you’re not the last king standing, then another king took your place. So it seems every king is superseded by another... every king in history has a tomb. But not every king in history has an *empty* tomb. To be the King of kings you can’t just cheat death on occasion—you have to destroy death itself. As Peter said at Pentecost, “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:29-31). Above Him the placard read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews” (Mt 27:37), and it was Jesus who “presented himself alive... after his suffering by many proofs” (Acts 1:3). He is the last king standing, and always will be, because He destroyed death—He Himself “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor 15:20).

It was never a question of whether God’s promise to David of an eternal kingdom would be fulfilled... it was just a question of which offspring would sit on the eternal throne. Which descendent is the Christ, the promised son of David, the King of kings? When the queen of Sheba visited Solomon,

“she said to the king, ‘The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness” (1 Ki 10:6-9). Those are pretty lofty words that applied to Solomon for a time. But he and his kingdom wouldn’t endure. Solomon disqualified himself through sin, and his kingdom was torn in two. But 1,000 years later, an angel would visit a virgin and declare, “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” (Lk 1:31-33; cf. Pss 2; 45; 72). In Jesus the queen of Sheba’s words are perfectly fulfilled—His servants listen to His surpassing wisdom and partake of His surpassing prosperity—God has delighted to set Jesus on the throne of Israel to execute justice and righteousness. It’s a justice and righteousness that compels God to forgive because it originates from the just and righteous punishment rendered on the cross of Christ, and “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn 1:9). Everything the queen of Sheba longed for she glimpsed in Solomon, the son of David; and everything she longed for you have in Jesus, the promised son of David, for “behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”

And “of his kingdom there will be no end,” for “[Jesus] will build [His] church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18). You’ll be persecuted, ridiculed, assaulted by the devil through godless philosophers and god-hating rulers, but “hell shall *not* prevail against [you].” Despite appearances, the kingdom of Christ is stronger than any kingdom of the world, because He’s put down the enemy and destroyed death, keeping you safe in His kingdom of grace that ushers you into His kingdom of eternal glory. Paul writes, “[God] raised [Christ] from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:20-23). Jesus is king over all things for the benefit of you, His church. As the priest par excellence He offered the sacrifice of Himself; as the prophet par excellence He makes His sacrifice known; and as the King of kings He rules all things so that you might attain the glory won and prepared for you. “The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it,” but by the Spirit of Christ you know and believe that “something greater than Solomon is here.” Amen.

—Pastor Greg Bauch