

# THE UPSIDE DOWN KINGDOM

## 2- The Once and Future King

11/3/24

**Introduction:** *Does anyone admit to having a problem being in the passenger seat of a car? Ever have to ride with someone who loves the center line, or maybe the sound of the rumble strips on the right, or maybe loves to go a little faster than others but hates to pass? How about that person who has to look at you when talking, instead of the road?*

- We want to be behind the wheel.
- It's a control issue. But let's be honest, it's a *perceived* control issue.
- Am I *really* any better?

**Say this:** *I will follow Jesus.*

That's a bold declaration! It sounds good, until you have to ride shotgun with the Lord! When you have to give up control.

We are in a series called *The Upside Down Kingdom* which is the Kingdom of God. It's an important message from Jesus:

### **1. It is the most repeated message.**

- The Kingdom of God or The Kingdom of Heaven is mentioned 86 times in the four Gospels, almost always by Jesus

### **2. Jesus states very clearly that this is His ordained message.**

- "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent." (Luke 4:43 NLT)

Last week we talked about *The Lost Kingdom*. This Kingdom that was in the original creation, epitomized by the Garden of Eden where Adam and Eve enjoyed the best of all provisions and an unhindered relationship with God. ***There's no place like home! And the question last week was, where is your heart...where is your home?*** In the Kingdom of God or here on earth?

Today, we are talking about the King. And in this moment where we are in the week of the presidential election, I bring the hope and glory that Jesus is on the throne. Amen?

In 1958, T.H. Wright put together his shorter tales of King Arthur into a more complete novel titled *The Once and Future King*. It stands as one of my favorite classic fantasies. What I find fascinating are the unintended parallels the book makes with the Bible. I say unintended because T.H. was a well known agnostic. But remember, last week we learned that even the unbelieving world yearns for this ideal Kingdom where all are equal, all are provided for, and there is peace and harmony. T.H. White calls that place Camelot. We know it as the Kingdom of God.

The book is titled *The Once and Future King* because the belief was that King Arthur would come back to rule sometime in the future.

**Jesus is our once and future King. He is the Ancient of Days** that was there before creation and through whom all things were created; and **He is the Returning King** who will come back in all of His majesty and might to reclaim His throne and to rule in Truth and Righteousness.

***He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*** (Revelation 19:13, 16 NASB)

So, Jesus was the Word of God in the beginning and Jesus is the King of Kings in the Triumphant Return, but **who was He in the Gospels?** Here are a few titles:

- **Lamb of God** – *"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)*
- **Good Shepherd** - *"I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11)*
- **Deliverer** – *"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." (1 Thess.1:10)*
- **Light of the World** – *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)*

Who doesn't want to follow this Jesus? Crowds of thousands came to see the miracles and healings of this Jesus. Now, we know that **Jesus as the Son of God, the Word of God, part of the Triune God had all authority under heaven and earth, but His time here on earth won Him the devotion of those who would follow.**

In T.H.White's book, the wizard Merlin teaches the boy Arthur how to be a good king. He does this by transforming Arthur into various animals (a perch, bird, squirrel) and letting him experience the harsh realities of tyranny and bullying, but also the simple and beautiful ways of community, family, and love.

I love that Jesus came to earth and walked among us. Beyond His miracles, healings, and teachings, and beyond the great work Jesus came to do on the Cross and through the tomb... Jesus walked in our shoes. He knows our hurts and sorrows. He knows the temptations and persecutions.

*Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:14-15 NASB)*

**Jesus has won my adoration and devotion.  
But have I given Him my allegiance?  
Say this again: *I will follow Jesus.***

I think it's easier for us to follow the **Lamb of God, the Good Shepherd, our Deliverer, the Great High Priest, and the Light of the Word.** In each of those roles, we receive something valuable from Jesus. **But a King? That would require something *from* us.**

Author Jonathan Cruse writes this: *"Tell me he's a good teacher, fine. Tell me he's a miracle worker, a philanthropist, a philosopher. Tell me he's my savior, even. But don't you dare tell me he's my king." We balk at that notion of Jesus as king because it undermines our self-rule, our autonomy. If I say he's king it means my life needs to change. It means he calls the shots. It means the posture that God wants me to take in life isn't that of one seated on my throne, but of bowing before his—and that's hard.*

**When we say *I will follow Jesus*, we are also declaring our allegiance... our loyalty, obedience, and faithfulness.** But THIS king is worthy of our allegiance. When we only know Jesus through His ministerial roles in the Gospels we are missing something significant. Jesus is also the Lion of Judah prophesied in Genesis 49 and confirmed in Revelation 5:5, mighty and victorious.

*"Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals."*

(Revelation 5:5 NLT)

That's a shift in my thinking about Jesus! Jesus as a Lamb is one thing, but Jesus as a Lion?

\*In the Chronicles of Narnia, when confronted by the idea of Aslan, the lion, who is a picture of Jesus, Lucy asks, *"Is He safe?"*

*"Safe?"* said Mr. Beaver. *"Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."*

Mr. Tumnus also says, *"He's wild, you know. Not a tame lion."*

***Not a tame lion. I wonder if I've been trying to domesticate Jesus. To make Him easier for me to control. But we need a MIGHTY LION to defeat this present darkness and win our victory.***

***I will follow Jesus. I will bow before His throne. I will live in obedience and faith. I give my allegiance to Jesus.***

This morning we are going to share in **communion**. **This is where we, as believers, remember the great work on the Cross that bought our freedom. But we also, with reverence and honor, bow before the Once and Future King of kings.**