

Shorter Catechism 26
Jeremiah 22:1-23:8
Psalm 2
Luke 17

How Is Christ Our King?

January 13, 2013

Introduction: What Should a King Be?

Did you know that the United States has a king?

We don't call him king,

but the president of the United States is an elected "monarch"

who reigns for four years, with one optional renewal of his term.

Indeed, one of the first debates in Congress was a debate over how to address the president – and one proposal that had considerable support was "Your Majesty"!

Jeremiah says to the Davidic King, here is what you are supposed to be and to do.

But you have failed.

And so God says that he will raise up a righteous Branch for the house of David

who will be what he expects of a king.

Our catechism summarizes this by saying:

Q. 26. *How does Christ execute the office of a king?*

A. Christ executes the office of a king, in subduing us to himself, in ruling and defending us, and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

Jeremiah's language states this:

"he shall reign as king and deal wisely"

(he will rule us)

"he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land"

(he will defend us)

"in his days Judah will be saved"

(he will subdue us to himself)

"and Israel will dwell securely"

(he will restrain and conquer all his and our enemies).

Sing Psalm 2

Read Luke 17

Two weeks ago, when we saw how Christ is our prophet,
we looked at Luke 4 – in which Jesus functioned as a prophet,
revealing the will of God for our salvation.

But of course, the message of salvation that Jesus brought
was that the kingdom of God is at hand, and *he* is the King!

Last week, we saw how Christ is our priest.

We looked at Hebrews 7, which emphasizes how Christ is a priest according to the order of Melchizedek –
in other words, a priest who is also a king.

So, while the scriptures distinguish between a prophet, a priest, and a king –
in that these three offices each answer directly to God,
you also see a *unity* between these three offices,
which is found especially in the office of king.

Q. 26. *How does Christ execute the office of a king?*

The shorter catechism has three parts to the answer:

A. Christ executes the office of a king, [first] in subduing us to himself, [second] in ruling and defending us, and [third] in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies.

In Luke 17, we see these three aspects of kingship.

1. How Does Jesus Rule and Defend Us? (17:1-6)

a. The King Defends His Little Ones (v1-2)

And he said to his disciples, ‘Temptations to sin’ [literally, stumbling blocks] are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come.

Now Jesus says that stumbling blocks are going to come.

The word for “stumbling block” is *skandalon*—from which we get our word scandal.

The idea is that while a person is looking around,
you quickly slip something in front of their feet in order to trip them up.

Leviticus 19:14 says not to put a “skandalon” before the feet of the blind.

Throughout the OT, the idea of the “skandalon” or stumbling block
is something that will make people fall away from worshiping the LORD.

To cause someone to stumble is to turn them away from loving the LORD their God
with all their heart, soul, mind and strength.

A stumbling block is something which directs the heart away from Christ.

That is why Jesus says *woe to the one through whom they come.*

*It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck
and he were cast into the sea*

than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin [literally, stumble].

The one who causes others to stumble and fall faces a terrible fate--

a fate worse than death.

The implication is clear:

Jesus is a king who will defend his little ones – so beware of how you treat them!

b. The Rule of the King: Repent and Forgive (v3-4)

And so king Jesus says to us,

Pay attention to yourselves!

We are talking about the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

If the one who causes others to stumble and fall faces a fate worse than death,
what should you do about that?

If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.

Notice that now we are not talking about skandala (stumbling blocks).

Now we are talking about the ordinary Greek word for sin.

In other words,

if you don't want sin to become a stumbling block,
then repent and forgive.

We all sin.

The question is what do we do about our sin?

And what do we do when others sin?

If your brother sins, rebuke him.

Do you love those who rebuke you?

You need wisdom (and humility) to receive a rebuke with love.

I don't like being wrong.

And if I am wrong, I don't like it when people tell me that I'm wrong!

But Proverbs 9:8-9 says, *rebuke a wise man and he will love you.*

Instruct a wise man, and will be still wiser;

Teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

What if the person who comes to you is being selfish?

What if their motives are all mixed up?

That's irrelevant.

What if they're right??!

You need wisdom and humility to love the one who rebukes you
and shows you the path of life (no matter how poorly!)

But King Jesus needs more people to become expert rebukers!

When I was preaching on Job, I told you to become better complainers.

Now you need to become better rebukers!

I'm sure you've all seen it done poorly!
What does a wise rebuke look like?

1) a wise rebuker is not worried about himself
(If you are trying to "get your own way" it inevitably comes off poorly!)
Rather, the reason for bringing the rebuke
is for the sake of the person who is sinning.
You don't want this person to stumble and fall—
and you certainly don't want this person's sin
to cause someone else to stumble.
But the key is that you are not doing this for your own benefit.
You are doing this because you love the person who has sinned.

2) a wise rebuker understands the one being rebuked
When you are preparing to rebuke someone, ask:
"How can I say this in a way that this person will be able to appreciate?"
After all, if you are doing this for their good,
then your chief concern should be that they get the point!

And then you must be ready for verse 3!

and if he repents, forgive him (v3)

Of course you need to be prepared for this!
Any time you rebuke or confront someone, you need to be ready to forgive.
Because if they do repent, then you are required to forgive.

Jesus even adds,

*if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times,
saying, "I repent," you must forgive him.*

Our children are quite used to this!

They are constantly repenting and forgiving.

We adults should have the same principles.

Sure, we hope that as we grow in age we will also grow in grace,
and thus we rightly expect to see greater maturity over time.

But the principle doesn't change.

Even as God has forgiven us, so must we forgive others.

If we are truly grateful for God's bountiful forgiveness,
then we will respond by forgiving others.

You might say, 'but Pastor, you don't understand how hard it is to forgive this person!'

I probably don't.

But God does.

After all, he has to keep forgiving you!

You keep coming back, over and over again!

And for the same sin, no less!

If God forgave you the way you forgive others, how would fare?

Therefore, if your brother repents, forgive him.

c. The Rule of the King: Faith and Duty (v5-10)

Notice that while Jesus said these things to his “disciples”
(the larger body of those who followed him),
it is the apostles (the twelve) who reply:

Increase our faith!

They understand that what Jesus is commanding is difficult.

It is hard to forgive.

And so they respond, *increase our faith!*

We need faith in order to forgive the way that Jesus commands.

*And the Lord said, If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed,
you could say to this mulberry tree,*

‘be uprooted and planted in the sea’ and it would obey you. (v6)

Don’t get caught up in the literal here.

Jesus is not talking about telekinesis.

He has just told his disciples to forgive those who repent.

He has told his disciples to forgive those who repent—

even if they keep doing the same thing seven times in a single day!

In other words, he has commanded a *very* difficult thing.

Jesus compares two very different things here:

- 1) forgiving everyone who sins against you
- 2) getting trees to throw themselves into the sea

Those two things are equally difficult!

Jesus is teaching his disciples about the necessity of grace —

the necessity, you might say, of Jesus *subduing us to his will*.

The 12 are saying, we are miserable failures at forgiveness.

And Jesus is saying, of course you are!

You are as likely to succeed at forgiving everyone

as you are of getting a tree to throw itself in the sea!

And even if you did everything right,

you don’t get any brownie points for it,

because you only did what you were commanded!

*Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep
say to him when he has come in from the field,*

‘Come at once and sit down at table’?

*Will he not rather say to him,
‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink,
and afterward you will eat and drink’?
Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?
So you also, when you have done all that you are commanded, say,
‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’ (v7-10)*

You can't go "above and beyond" what God commands.
If you succeed at forgiving your brother *every time*,
you merely did what you were supposed to do!

Lord, increase our faith!

- 2. How Does Jesus Subdue Us to Himself? (17:11-19)**
 - a. Whom Does Jesus Subdue? (There Were Lots of Lepers in Israel in Elijah's Day)**
 - b. But only the Samaritan Came Back**

You may recall a couple weeks ago,
when we were looking at Luke 4,
that Jesus had preached in Nazareth
that in the days of Elijah, there were lots of widows in Israel,
and in the days of Elisha, there were lots of lepers in Israel.
But they only healed gentiles.

But notice, in verse 11, where Jesus is.

Jesus is passing by a village on the border between Samaria and Galilee.
And Jesus is *on the way to Jerusalem*.
He is headed toward the cross,
and the cross must be held in the foreground
if we are to understand Luke's point here.

Because ten lepers cried out from a distance,
Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

And Jesus replied, *Go and show yourselves to the priests.*
In this instance he did not touch them.
Rather, his word went forth and accomplished the purpose for which he sent it,
and they were cleansed.

*Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed,
turned back, praising God with a loud voice;
and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks.*
Now he was a Samaritan. (v15-16)

We don't know the ethnicity of the others,
but Jesus' response makes it sound like they were Jews:
Was there no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner? (17:18)

Indeed, the fact that the only leper who responded with gratitude was a Samaritan
is especially damning to Israel.

Were there no Jewish lepers who would respond in faith,
that Jesus had to cleanse a Samaritan?!

The Samaritans were half-breeds who did not accept David or the Prophets.

And yet this Samaritan repents, falls at the feet of the Son of David
and praises God, giving thanks to Jesus for healing him.

The heart of saving faith is gratitude.

We give thanks to God for his great mercy.

That is the response of faith!

Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well. [literally, your faith has saved you]

Weren't the other nine healed?

Sure.

In one sense.

Their leprosy was gone, and they could be restored to the worshiping community.

But there is a certain ambiguity about their status.

They are restored to Israel,

but Israel is coming under judgment.

Only this Samaritan gives praise to God.

Only he shows the fruits of faith by coming back to give thanks to Jesus.

The healing of the lepers is a sign of the coming of the kingdom.

Jesus has come in order to establish the kingdom of God.

In the coming of Jesus we see the coming of the king,

and all those who believe in him become partakers of his kingdom.

3. How Does Jesus Restrain and Conquer All His and Our Enemies? (17:20-37)

a. The Days of the Son of Man (v20-25)

But in order to do this, he must also "restrain and conquer all his and our enemies."

The Pharisees think they understand the OT,

and so they ask Jesus when the kingdom of God would come.

After all, they see nothing in Jesus that remotely resembles the coming of the kingdom.

They are waiting for a Messiah who will lead Israel against its enemies—

someone like David, who will overthrow the Romans.
So, Jesus, when will the kingdom come?

Jesus replies, *The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed.* (v20)

In other words, the kingdom of God will not be accompanied
by the signs you are looking for.

*Nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' Or 'There!' for behold,
the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.* (v21)

The Kingdom of God is in your midst.

The kingdom is here, right in front of you –
but you don't see it.

The language of "day" structures verses 22-34:

v22, "the days are coming when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man"

v26, "just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man"

v27 (until the day when Noah entered the ark)

v28, "just as it was in the days of Lot"

v29 (on the day when Lot went out from Sodom)

v30 (so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed)

v31 (on that day)

And then comes the startling contrast in verse 34,

I tell you, in that night...

The days of the Son of Man are compared to the days of Noah and the days of Lot,

before the night falls.

Because judgment day is coming.

What are the "days of the Son of Man"?

Daniel had seen in his night visions in Daniel 7:13-14,

"And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.

And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,

that all peoples, nations, and language should serve him;

his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away,

and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed."

The coming of the Son of Man in Daniel's vision is not a coming to earth,
but a coming to the heavenly throne.

The coming of the kingdom in Daniel's vision occurs
when the Son of Man is given a kingdom by God.

The “days of the Son of Man” then refers to the days of the kingdom—
the days when the Son of Man is reigning on the throne.

So when Jesus says that the disciples will long for “one of the days of the Son of Man,”
he is saying that there is a time of trouble coming.

There is a time of judgment.

And he warns them that many will say in that day, “look here” or “look there”
pointing to some mighty figure.

But Jesus says, *Do not go out or follow them.*

The coming of the Son of Man will be obvious.

You won’t need someone to tell you where to find him.

*For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other,
so will the Son of Man be in his day. (v24)*

Children, when there is a terrific thunderstorm going on,
do you need someone to tell you,

“Look, there’s a thunderstorm!”

Of course not!

The coming of the Son of Man will not be some secret event that takes special knowledge.

But first,

before that day,

he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. (v25)

There is no way to glory – except through the cross!

But in order to explain what he means by *the days of the Son of Man*,
Jesus gives us two examples.

b. Like the Days of Noah [The Flood] (v26-27)

Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man.

*They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage,
until the day when Noah entered the ark,
and the flood came and destroyed them all. (v26-27)*

What were the days of Noah like?

They were pretty ordinary.

Folks were living life comfortably.

There were no unusual events going on.

Just the ordinary, everyday stuff.

Oh, except for that oddball over there building this gigantic box.

(If you look at the dimensions, the ark was not really a boat, it was a box!)

In the days of Noah the kingdom of God was also right there, in front of them,
for those who had eyes to see or ears to hear.
But then came catastrophe,
as the floodgates of heaven were opened and the fountains of the deep burst forth,
and all humanity was consumed in the flood—all but Noah and his family.

So the days of the Son of Man are like the days of Noah.

c. Like the Days of Lot [Sodom and Gomorrah] (v28-29)

*Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—
they went eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building,
but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom,
fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—
so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. (v 28-30)*

What were the days of Lot like?
Again, pretty ordinary.
All the ordinary stuff was going on.

In the days of Noah, water destroyed humanity.
In the days of Lot, fire from heaven destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

d. So Remember Lot's Wife (v30-37)

Jesus says, so shall it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed.

What day is Jesus talking about?

Listen to verses 31-32,

*On that day (on the day when the Son of Man is revealed)
Let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house,
not come down to take them away,
and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.*

Why?

*Remember Lot's wife.
Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life will keep it.*

Indeed, when the Son of Man is revealed,
Remember Lot's wife!

What happened to Lot's wife?

Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt
because she loved Sodom, and could not bear to leave it behind.

Judgment is coming;
like the judgment that fell upon Sodom.

Jesus is speaking to the Jews.
He is saying in rather plain language that Israel has become like Sodom.

God's judgment is coming against Israel.
And when his judgment comes,
it will fall swiftly.
Just as in the days of Noah and the days of Lot.
And when it comes,
don't look back.
When it comes, run!

Because when it comes, the day will be over.
Night will fall on Israel.
Jesus has been using the language of "day" but now he says,
*I tell you, in that night [in the night of judgment] there will be two in bed.
One will be taken and the other left.
There will be two women grinding together.
One will be taken and the other left.*

Would you want to be the one taken?
Or the one left?

Jesus is not talking about the "rapture"!
He is talking about the Roman army invading Judea.
He is talking about the invasion of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple.

Do you want to be the one taken by the Roman army?
Or the one left behind?

The "Left Behind" series is completely misguided.
Jesus' point here in Luke is that you do *not* want to be taken!
You *want* to be left behind!

Verse 37 confirms this:
*And they said to him, "Where, Lord?"
He said to them, "Where the corpse is, there the vultures will gather." (v37)*

Look for the dead bodies, and you will know where this will happen.

What is Jesus talking about?

Jesus is talking about a cataclysmic judgment coming against Israel.
This judgment will be like the judgment against Sodom—
it will be like the Flood of Noah.
It will completely destroy the world as his hearers know it.

What is he talking about?

He is talking about the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

A few years ago we built a scale model of the tabernacle in Sunday school.

In the tabernacle we see a model of the new creation.

As we saw Sunday evening in the book of Chronicles,

Solomon's temple is the place where God dwells "forever" among his people.

But if that's the case,

why doesn't Jesus use the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar as an example?

Why does he use the Flood and the destruction of Sodom?

What is the difference between these and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC?

The destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar was only temporary.

It does not even begin to compare with the days of Noah or the days of Lot.

What God does in the days of Noah is destroy the world and start from scratch.

What God does in the days of Lot is destroy Sodom by fire from heaven.

And what God will do in the days of the Son of Man

is nothing less than the final destruction of the temple.

It is the end of the Mosaic age.

You see, if you were living in the Old Testament, then the Mosaic covenant was a glorious thing.

But in the light of the glory of Jesus Christ, the Mosaic covenant is a ministry of death.

Jesus has come to bring cataclysmic judgment against Israel and against the temple.

It will start in his death (v25) and it will conclude with the destruction of the temple in AD 70

But why should we care that judgment is coming against Jerusalem?

Why does the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70 matter to us?

Just as God destroyed the world of Noah's day with the flood,

and just as God destroyed the world of Sodom with fire from heaven,

and just as God destroyed the world of Moses with the Roman army,

so also will be the end of the age.

Because AD 70 was not the final judgment.

It was the judgment of Israel.

It was the judgment of the temple, and of Jerusalem.

But the end of the Mosaic Age—the age of the earthly Jerusalem—

is itself a picture of the final judgment.

And while Jesus is speaking to the Jews,
 Luke is speaking to Theophilus—the lover of God—
 and saying, you, too, need to remember this warning.
Because God’s judgment against Jerusalem is only the beginning.
God will judge all the nations.
And he will judge rightly.

The coming of the kingdom is the coming of cataclysmic judgment.
 And the only way to stand in the judgment is to believe in Jesus—
 the one who endured that judgment first!

Because our Lord Jesus Christ exercises the office of a king
 in subduing us to himself,
 in ruling and defending us,
 and in restraining and conquering all his and our enemies