



## **GROW. PRAY. STUDY.**

The Church of the Resurrection – Weekly Guide

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**November 29, 2020**      *Incarnation – The Royal Titles*

### **Scripture:**

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,  
who are one of the little clans of Judah,  
from you shall come forth for me  
one who is to rule in Israel,  
whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.      *Micah 5:2*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” *Matthew 2:1-2*

### **Glory to the newborn king**

**MONDAY 11/30**      **Matthew 1:16-18; 2:1-6; Micah 5:2-4**

“Christ” was a title, not a personal name. The Greek word “*christos*” meant “anointed one,” the same meaning as the Hebrew word “*mashiach*,” or “Messiah.” Matthew said Jesus is called “the Christ”—that is, the anointed king. Israel loved the hope of God sending a ruler born in Bethlehem. The “chief priests and legal experts” knew Micah 5 when King Herod asked them. But it was the foreign *magi* who spoke of the infant as Israel’s ultimate king.

- Matthew used the Greek word “*magos*” (English “magi”) to describe the visitors from the East. Picture the scene in your mind’s eye: these wise men, often honored and respected themselves, honored the young child Jesus and named him “king.” What did this say about their hopes for who Jesus was and would become? What do you hope Jesus, the king, will do in your life?
- The Magi didn’t say, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We have come to make a treaty with him,” or “We have come to attend one of his meetings.” Scholar William Barclay noted that the magi had “the reaction of adoring worship, the desire to lay at the feet of Jesus Christ the noblest gifts they could bring.” As you plan for Christmas, how will you honor Jesus’ birth through “adoring worship” this year?

**Prayer:** King Jesus, amid all of the holiday hoopla, help me to find a place of inner stillness and peace. And in that space, help me, like the wise men of old, to name you king, and to commit myself anew to serve you. Amen.

## **God's anointed one (Messiah, Christ), God's son**

**TUESDAY 12/2 Psalm 72:1-6; Matthew 16:13-20**

Scholars call Psalm 72 a “royal psalm,” one that almost certainly originally prayed for Israel’s earthly anointed king. But as the decades and then the centuries rolled by, it became painfully clear that no merely human king could possibly fulfill the hopes that the psalm expressed. The hope rose anew as Peter and the disciples followed Jesus. They saw him as “the Christ,” the true king who could bring justice, peace and righteousness forever.

- Note carefully all the qualities Psalm 72 asked God to give to the king. How thankful would you be if any of the leaders we recently elected, or the president we will elect in 2016, fully lived out all those qualities? What kept Israel’s kings (and our leaders) from being able to fully live them out? What made Jesus uniquely qualified to be that ultimate, eternal king?
- In answer to Jesus’ question, the disciples said people identified him as “John the Baptist, others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” That was no insult—those were great, respected names. Yet they fell short of what the disciples saw in Jesus. To what extent can you join Peter in declaring that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God”? What factors shape what you believe about Jesus?

**Prayer:** Lord, the carol says “The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” Thank you for rekindling hope in me, and for giving me strength to live beyond my fears. Amen.

## **Paul’s message: Jesus is “the Christ”**

**WEDNESDAY 12/3 Acts 17:1-4, 26:19-23**

Earlier this year, we studied the apostle Paul’s life, preaching and writing in detail. Paul always had one great central message. He used all his learning, his extensive knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures and his speaking skill to convince his hearers that Jesus was “the Christ,” God’s anointed king. His message has long outlived those seemingly more powerful, important people (like Agrippa) who scoffed at his faith in Jesus.

- Scholar N. T. Wright noted that Paul’s preaching from the Scriptures wasn’t just a few proof texts. “It was a matter of the entire plan of God, the whole sweep of the narrative, the story of Israel going into the dark tunnel of slavery in Egypt only to be rescued at the Passover, of David fleeing from Absalom only to be reinstated after a great victory, of Jerusalem being destroyed and the nation carried away captive to Babylon, only to be brought back and rebuilt after a tribulation everyone thought would be final ... of a story whose main themes were all about suffering and vindication, disaster and reversal, death and resurrection.” In other words, Jesus as “the Christ,” crucified and risen, embodied the essence of all of God’s saving action. In what ways has Christ brought the power of “reversal,” of hope, into your life?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, the world around me sees suffering as something to avoid at all costs. Thank you for living out a different story, one that gives me hope that service and suffering are the ultimate paths to life and true greatness. Amen.

## **“The Son of David” claimed David’s kingdom**

**THURSDAY 12/4**     **Isaiah 9:2-7, Matthew 21:8-16**

Isaiah wrote of Israel’s hope that God would send a faithful heir of David’s royal line to rule forever (cf. 1 Kings 9:3-5). In Israel, donkeys were for kings (e.g. 1 Kings 1:33-44) as well as common people. But Zechariah 9:9-10, which Matthew cited, distinguished a king on a donkey, who came in peace, from the war horses and chariots of a conqueror. People hailed Jesus as the “Son of David,” God’s promise come true at last.

- Some who watched Jesus no doubt hoped he would lead a drive to kill the Romans and restore Israel’s power. His ride on a donkey pointed in a different direction. “When the chief priests and legal experts saw the amazing things he was doing and the children shouting in the temple, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David!’ they were angry.” They didn’t want a gentle king, a “Son of David,” who said to love your enemies. Do you?
- “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” Yet even after he met Jesus, Paul would write, “Now we see a dim reflection” (1 Corinthians 13:12). In what ways has Jesus already brought light into your dark world? In what ways are you waiting for the full brilliance of God’s light?

**Prayer:** Lord God, during Advent we renew our trust in your gift of hope. So much in our world, globally and locally, tugs me toward hopelessness. Renew and reinforce my ability to live in hope this Advent. Amen.

## **Jesus (not Caesar) is Lord, ruler of all**

**FRIDAY 12.5.14**     **Acts 10:34-43, Romans 14:2-12**

By New Testament times, Rome’s Caesar claimed worship as “Lord” (Greek *kurios*). There could only be one “Lord,” so to say Jesus was king and lord was risky. But even to Romans, Peter and Paul said Jesus was the true *kurios*, the Lord of all. With Rome’s military might pitted against Jesus’ seemingly naïve witnesses, the contest looked ridiculously uneven. It was—but 2,000 years of history shows that it was Caesar, not Jesus, who was overmatched.

- One important way Rome demanded that citizens in its empire show their allegiance was to say, formally, “Caesar is Lord.” Picture the scene as Peter declared to this group of Roman soldiers, “This is the message of peace he sent to the Israelites by proclaiming the good news through Jesus Christ: He is Lord of all!” (verse 36) What “lords” has Jesus challenged and dethroned in your life?
- Jesus’ lordship needs to shape the family of faith. Some Romans disagreed in critical, caustic ways. Paul told them we do not answer to one another, but to our Lord, Jesus. Scholar William Barclay wrote, “‘I beseech you by the bowels of Christ,’ said Cromwell to the rigid Scots of his day, ‘think it possible that you may be mistaken.’ We must banish both censoriousness and contempt from the Church’s fellowship. We must leave the judgment of others to God, and seek only to sympathize and to understand.” When do you need to remember that Jesus, not you, is Lord over some person you disagree with or dislike?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you are Lord of all. That takes in all of the world’s big problems that sometimes trouble me—and it also takes in all of my internal struggles. Be Lord of all, inside me as well as outside. Amen.

## “King of kings and Lord of lords”

### **SATURDAY 12/5      Revelation 19:11-16**

In a vision packed with symbols, Revelation proclaimed Jesus’ final triumph over evil. Some symbols change little over time—good guys, for example, ride on white horses. Others take a bit more thought—the sword from the victor’s mouth is a symbol for the power of God’s word (cf. Hebrews 4:12). The vision used a double title—“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”—doubly inscribed (“on his robe and on his thigh”) to powerfully underline Jesus’ royalty in the universe.

- Rome happened to be in power at the time of Revelation’s writing. But Rome was hardly unique. Human rulers have often claimed divine approval for their actions (e.g. Nazi soldiers wore belt buckles that said, in German, “God is with us”). Some, like the Roman emperors, have even claimed to be divine. Scholars G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough said Jesus’ title “is expressing the idea of ‘ultimate ruler over all kings’ ... The name is taken from Dan. 4:37 Septuagint [Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament], where it is a title for God.” The headlines continually report concerns about Vladimir Putin, various terrorist leaders and many others. Do you trust that Jesus is “king of kings” over all of them? In what ways does that trust form the basis for the hope in which we live, during Advent and all year long?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you are the King of kings, you are the Lord of lords. I cannot fully grasp all the reach of that, but I can and do ask you to be Lord of my life, to make me the person you want me to be. Amen.

**Family Activity:** Being called by the right name and title is important to everyone. It helps us feel cared for and valued. The angel told Mary to give her baby boy the special name Jesus. And Jesus was given important titles, like Lord and Son of David. Notice the people around you. Do you know the name of your mail carrier? School-crossing guard? Janitor at work or school? As a family, take time to learn the names of those who serve you every day. You can share God’s peace and love by introducing yourself and telling them how much you appreciate their hard work. For something extra special, bundle up some homemade treats and give them a Christmas treat! Also tell them you are praying for them.