

# Clash of Kings

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we've got another important event coming up this month. The end of the month, other than our middle of the month is our AVM. The end of the month is our elections in South Africa.

Let me just see, is there anyone who's voting for the first time in the elections here? One, Zach, excellent, good man. Everyone else will be voting, I take it.

As many as you can. Well, living in a democracy, we get a chance to vote for our next leader. In the ancient world, they didn't often get that choice, if rarely, if ever.

And they had to put up with all kinds of strange and wonderful leaders. Really bad ones at times. And it's funny how we get to choose ours, and yet we still manage to end up with, I don't know, let's call them sub-optimal leadership.

You know, but God wants us to have a leader of certain quality. I wonder if you've ever thought of how having Jesus as a king should influence how you vote.

[ 1 : 12 ] How Jesus' kingship should influence how you vote. Or how that should impact what you look for in a leader.

And so today's story is going to help us, because it's all about what kind of a leader Jesus is going to be. The first thing we're going to see is that Jesus is our promised king.

Jesus is our promised king. And so, in Matthew, the birth stories tell us that Jesus is greater and more important than every other leader, political leader, king, ruler in world history.

The stories, well, the story that we're going to go through, but the birth stories that we're going to cover over the next few weeks, tell us that he is the only king that you will ever need.

That he's totally trustworthy. And that to disregard him and to disregard his kingship would mean that you'd make the biggest mistake of your life. So, first importance is that Jesus is the promised king of the Jews.

[ 2 : 24 ] And that's who the magi, or the wise men, or the people in our story are coming to look for Jesus. And they want to know where is this king of the Jews. So, have a look in verse 2.

Well, we'll just go through the story. It talks about Jesus being born in Bethlehem, in Judea. That's just slightly south of Jerusalem, the capital. It's a little, forlure, a little dorny, just south of Jerusalem. But it's an important town, because that's where David was born. And it has some very important prophecies made about it. But it was fairly insignificant in terms of politics and numbers and economy.

But at the time of King Herod, it's Herod the Great, the first king of, first King Herod. These magi, magicians, wise men, depending on your translation, come from the east.

They go to Jerusalem. They say, where is the one who's been born king of the Jews? They're looking for a king. The reason they're looking for this king, it's not their king.

[ 3 : 31 ] But they can read the stars, and they say, we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him. Herod gets this news.

He's the king, and like every other king in history, when he hears that there's another king that's been born that's not of his line, he's very interested to know, now, who is this king? And not in a good way. Although Herod, who's half Jewish, he's of Edomian descent, he's an Edomite, but he knows the prophecies.

He's not that interested in it. Except to say that in verse 3, when Herod hears this, he was disturbed. Depending on your translation, that word can actually be translated terrified.

The other times it's translated in the New Testament, it's often translated terrified. He's terrified about this news, that this king has been born, and these people from the east can see his sign in the stars.

And not just him, all of Jerusalem with him. So all the Jews are scared. And Herod, and he calls all the people together, everyone who knows these things.

[ 4 : 43 ] And notice what he asks them in verse 4. He calls them together and he asks them, where is the Christ to be born? Where is the Christ to be born?

Well, they know. They know about their prophecies. And they answer promptly, in Bethlehem, in Judea. For this is what the prophet has written.

And there's the prophecy from the book of Micah. Micah's writing five, six, seven hundred years before Christ. God has made certain promises about what he's going to do to help his people. And what he's going to do is he's going to send them a ruler. You, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah are by no means least among the rulers of Judah. There's a promise, by the way, that goes all the way back to Genesis.

When Abraham, well, Isaac really is blessing his children. He makes these prophecies. And he prophesies that Judah is going to be the one that will rule the tribes of Israel.

[ 5 : 48 ] But here's another prophecy from Micah. And he says, out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel. There's this promised king that has been promised in the scriptures that have been fulfilled in front of their eyes.

And it terrifies Herod. But now just to look at this idea of Jesus as a king, it's a foundational understanding that we must have of Jesus.

Now you think we kind of take it for granted. We talk about Jesus Christ. But in my experience, it's so familiar that we've missed what the word Christ means.

So I'm going to take a few minutes just to remind us of it again. However, if you've been with us at church for any length of time, you should by now know that Christ is the English word of the Greek word Christos.

That's how they would have said it. Something like that. Christos. Which is translation of the Hebrew Messiah. And in fact, it's a title, not a name. So in your thinking, you've got to link Christ with Christos, with Messiah, and really King.

[ 7 : 04 ] Jesus Christ means Jesus the King or King Jesus. So what they would do in the olden days to make a person a king is pretty much what we did in church today.

Except they would have done it with oil. This was a, in many church traditions, a christening. Because we've christened them, you get that word Christ in what we've just done?

We've poured water. We've anointed them. In the ancient world, they would have anointed a king with oil to make him a king. In our days, we put a crown on their head. In those days, they anointed them with oil, signifying the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, that this person has been set aside by God to rule over his people and given special abilities and powers.

Because Jesus is the culmination of these ancient prophecies and promises in the Old Testament, he is a king like no other. But he is a king and we need to treat him as such. Like the Magi in the story, we need to bend our knees in worship to him.

And trust and obedience in his rule, his rulership. We're to be joined to him and to his rule and to his kingdom. And in fact, baptism does that.

[ 8 : 27 ] Matthew and you were anointed, the two Matthews were anointed with water. And by trusting in what baptism signifies, they've received the promise of forgiveness of sins, the Holy Spirit, union with Christ.

They've become oath-sworn subjects of Christ the King. It's a very important thing that they did. And if you've been baptized, you yourself are an oath-sworn subject of the King.

Not just your oath that you will serve him, but his oath. That the promises signified in baptism become yours as you trust him as your Savior.

Now because Jesus is a king, and because he's the greatest king in the world has ever seen, we need to think how Christianity and politics mix.

Now we don't often do that, especially in our church tradition. And so it's worth thinking through how Christianity and politics mix or don't mix.

[ 9 : 38 ] First thing I think is for Christians, we mustn't be bullied or rather maybe duped into the idea that Christianity and politics don't or mustn't mix.

They cannot but mix. Jesus is not only the king of my heart, he's not only a king sitting in heaven, he is the king of the kings and the rulers of the world.

And so, instead of aligning themselves against Jesus, the kings of this world, the rulers of this world, should be paying homage to him, just like the Magi did.

Because that's when this cosmic king, who's been elevated now to God's right hand, releases his blessings onto nations. It should be no wonder to us that we're struggling in South Africa at the moment, really struggling.

It's in part because our leaders totally discount following Jesus as the ultimate king. But also it's because Christians often don't even think to vote for a leader or leaders who do honor Christ.

[10:52] You may have done so in the past, that's good. You may not have done so. I know many Christians that haven't even begun to think of integrating Christianity and what happens in the world out there.

Knowing that Jesus is the king should make you think through these things. So you want to think how to apply your Christianity to how you vote. Have you, for example, considered how the political parties align with Christian values?

Now, I've got a slide that shows us, goes through a bunch of questions. You don't often see this, again, in our church traditions.

So just to say that I'm not now going to tell you who to vote for, that wouldn't be right of me to do.

But it's worth thinking through these questions and then seeing, oh, okay, there's some parties that align with these things and some parties don't.

Maybe you've never thought through this. Just to run through them quickly, I can't go into any detail of them. I just want to see if you, I'm not sure if you can read, but from the top it says, does this particular party acknowledge God in their party constitution?

[12:02] Do they want God to be acknowledged in South Africa? Do they believe in a free market economy? Or more of a socialist Marxist economy that's controlled?

Do they believe in the rights of parents to discipline their children? Or do they want the state to take all control of their kids? Do they want the content of education to be decided by the parents, or again, let the state take care of it?

Does the party promote biblical marriage? And to support and strengthen biblical marriage? Are they against abortion or for abortion? Are they against legalizing pornography or promoting it, for it, in the name of freedom?

Are they against legalizing prostitution? Are they opposed to legalizing assisted suicide? And various other questions.

Now, I'm not saying who you must vote for. You need to think through that yourself. But you need to think through how does this person or this party that I'm going to vote for embrace, embody, or practice, or promote the rule of Christ in society.

[13:16] If Jesus is the best leader in the world, then your voting needs to reflect that we believe that Jesus is the best leader that the world can have, and vote in a way that aligns the leaders that we want with the leadership of Christ.

Does that make sense? I think it's worth thinking through before you go and make your mark. That means you might need to do some praying, might need to do some investigating, but you will need to give an account for who you decide is going to run this country because you're a Christian, and we should be having, we should be wanting leaders that lead like Christ.

But Jesus is not just like any mere earthly king. He's much more than that. And so the second point I want to sort of highlight is that Jesus is our divine king. Jesus is our divine king.

Now, you know in our culture, when people have gender reveal parties, when they have, they've got a new birth, well, it's not quite a birth yet, it's a bit late for a gender reveal, isn't it?

When they're still pregnant, and they have this big party to find out what gender the child is going to be, well, this is kind of like the mother of all gender reveals, this story in Matthew chapter 2, because Jesus gets a star to show people who he is and where he is.

[14:57] He gets a visit from the wisest men on earth. He gets hugely extravagant gifts. And at the top of it all, he has this ancient prophecy that stretches back not just 500 years, the one in Micah, but actually stretches even further back through time and space, into eternity.

Now, just to orientate ourselves, the ancient world was full of these signs and omens indicating who was going to be the next big leader, the next big emperor. And it's interesting to compare the signs that the pagans all looked at and said, oh, that's a sign that this guy's going to be the next king.

And you compare it to the signs that God throws down for us here in Matthew chapter 2, and it's a bit embarrassing. So, the emperor Vespasian is one of the great emperors of the first century. He actually, he was the one that destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. But he knew that he was born to be emperor because an oak tree on his family's estate grew a new branch every time his wife had a child.

That was his sign that he was going to be the emperor. Okay. I don't know if it slipped his mind that oak trees generally grow new branches every now and then, but that's his sign.

[16:11] Then later on, he had a dream that Nero, the then emperor, would have a tooth extracted, and the next day, he did have a tooth extracted. And so that's another sign that Vespasian took, and that all the whole Roman world knew.

It was promulgated. These are the signs. These are the great, wonderful signs that this guy's going to be the ruler of the known world. Deep, man. Deep. And you compare this to the sign that God sends.

And it's just so much bigger and cosmic. Jesus gets his very own star. Now, we're going to go back to Micah in a second, but there's so many different prophecies that come to sort of coalesce around this event in Jesus, and one of them comes from earlier than Micah at the time of Moses, actually. So now that would be going back 1,500 years at the time of Christ. So Moses is roughly 1,500 years before Jesus. And it's seen as a prophecy, as a fulfillment of prophecy, this star that these people are following, the star that has risen, is seen as a fulfillment of prophecy from the time of, well, I said Moses, but from a certain account from Balaam and Balak, if you remember those characters in the book of Numbers.

So Numbers chapter 24, verse 17, I'll put up on the screen. You don't have to turn there. And there's a prophet, he's a seer, he's like a magician, this guy, Balaam, and he warns Balak, a king that was trying to get him to curse the Jews, Balak was a king of Edom, that a future king would rise from within Israel that God will use to protect his people.

[17:57] And this is what the prophecy says. I'll put it up on the screen. The prophecy is, I see him now, I see him, but not now. I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of Jacob, a scepter will rise out of Israel, he will crush the foreheads of Moab, the skulls of the people of Sheth.

Now the strange thing is, is that we've been looking at this star of Bethlehem, you know, the Christmas story, the star, the Christian church has been looking at what that star is for over 2,000 years.

And no one is actually really sure what it was. It's a little bit mysterious. Various things have been put forward for what the star is. It could be an alignment of planets, it could have been a comet, or a supernova.

But when you look at those things, none of them really line up to what happened here, because the star rose in the east, travels for some time, stops, and then shows them exactly the city, and then shows them exactly the town, and the house that Jesus was in at the time.

And stars, it's very difficult to exactly pinpoint that with a star. So it's not an ordinary star or planet, but it certainly was at least that.

[19:16] Maybe it's a combination of something that was happening in the heavens. If you remember the stories we did in Revelation, there's a very interesting prophecy from Revelation 12, that talks about signs in the heavens, at the birth of Christ.

But maybe it's a combination of that, and then some miraculous thing, that God draws them to this place in Bethlehem. Now that's an ancient prophecy.

Imagine you could, imagine your child was born, and there were prophecies attached to your child. A, you would tell everyone, and B, it would make that child very special.

Jesus has got prophecies stretching back 1,500 years. But, when you look at the prophecy of Micah, it stretches way beyond that. So, you might want to turn there, but I'll have it on the screen. This coming leader is older, even in Balaam's prophecy. But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, that's the prophecy from Micah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times.

[20:30] Some translations have from days of eternity. This king has his origins in eternity, and that puts all other origin stories of the ancient world and every claim to be a ruler in the shade.

The picture here is of God turning the clockwork of the universe to point times and seasons, that's what the signs in the sky do, the stars and the sun and the moon, and God takes it and turns it like a

giant grandfather clock or like a big compass.

He takes these stars and he makes and shapes them to point to roughly 3 or 4 BC to a certain time, a certain space, this little place, this little town in Bethlehem.

and the whole cosmos, the whole universe is pointing out that that child is going to be born, it's going to change the world. I sort of picture God doing this to the, you know, to the, to the galaxies and the stars because that, that's what would have happened if, if these things that, but you know, he's the God of the universe.

He probably called over to Gabriel and said, man, listen, I need to change the stars a little bit, can you just, that little magnifying glass and the little tweezers that you, I just need to do a little bit of operation here, takes the suns and the universe and the, and the, and the galaxies and like little marble flicks them around to make them bow the knee to Christ.

[ 22 : 25 ] It's a kind of picture behind this language of stars showing who Jesus is. Now if God takes suns and makes them bow down to Christ as his son, what excuse do you have for not doing that?

I can't think of a good one. And anyway, wouldn't you want to worship a king that has existed from eternity and that has the movement of the stars revolve around his birth?

And just imagine the mathematics that goes into that. God didn't actually have to move those things. He had planned it way in advance. He had wound up that clock at the beginning of time. He knew exactly how the stars would align and how they would, how they would show where Jesus is at the exact time that he needed it. That's an incredible mind that can do that.

And then this prophecy is about this king that is already in that time. God, with God, is God, and himself is planning this whole thing.

[ 23 : 33 ] It's amazing. It's amazing. That's why the major come here and say, listen, there's this God that's going to be born. We followed his stars. We know what the stars mean.

They don't just do this by themselves. Something is going on and they bring their gifts and they fall down and they worship him. Don't you think it's worth worshipping a king that has existed from eternity?

How much more trustworthy? How much knowledge? How much wisdom does a being like that have? And how much more able is he able to give you the things that he promises? promises. He's got power that we can't imagine. And if he's made promises, you can be sure that this king is going to keep them no matter what. So that brings us to our third point, our last point, that Jesus is our shepherd king.

Jesus is our shepherd king. He's the promised king, he's the divine king, and he's our shepherd king. This king that can give you everything that he's promised, he's got the power to do what he promises.

[ 24 : 49 ] And that's exactly the kind of king that Jesus himself has promised to be, one who leads in order to protect from harm and provide all things necessary for the flourishing of life.

It's the image of a shepherd king. So, back in Matthew, in that prophecy from Micah, you'll notice that Matthew actually changes the last wording of that Micah.

he doesn't talk about Jesus coming from all eternity past, but he uses some other prophecies from Samuel chapter 7, 2 Samuel 7, and maybe Ezekiel 34.

You might jot those down and go and look at them later. They will be helpful. 2 Samuel 7, and Ezekiel 34. But notice what they'll say about this ruler. What kind of ruler is he going to be?

So, Matthew 2, verse 6 again, For out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people, Israel. Out of you will come someone who will shepherd my people, Israel.

[ 25 : 54 ] A shepherd, in the ancient world, the kings were known as shepherds. It's a good image to think of what a king is to do. And it's that dual image of a shepherd is there to protect his sheep.

He wants them to grow up and not be eaten by lions, but also to provide for them. So the two things that Jesus is going to stand out as his kingship, as we must expect to see it through the book of Matthew, is that he's going to protect and provide for his people.

In fact, in Matthew 5, that prophecy continues and it says this, Micah spells it out in a bit more detail about this shepherd thing. He says, this coming king, this coming ruler, now in Micah 5, verse 4, I think it's on the screen, he will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God, and they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth, and he will be our peace.

Jesus' greatness is going to be seen in how he protects and provides for his people. Not like our rulers, they make all these promises, they take all our money and they, oh, we'll protect you, oh, we'll provide for you, and we all know we get hardly anything back.

We're all praying for our paying and praying for our own protection, and we certainly haven't received much from the government. Instead, they just take. They won't lift a finger to sacrifice anything for you, but they're happy to take money from you and then help the people that they say need help.

[ 27 : 39 ] Most of the times, they're just ensuring that they stay in power. Jesus is the exact opposite of this kind of leader, because at the cross, he sacrifices everything to give you a source of eternal life and protection from the worst of your enemies, from sin, what we saw in the ceremony earlier, sin, death, and the devil.

The world, sin, death, and the devil. That's why Jesus, later on in Matthew, says this. He says, Matthew 11, 28, Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I'm gentle and humble in heart, and you'll find rest for your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Friends, as a good shepherd, Jesus gives us everything we need to be able to trust him through life, to follow him, to receive blessing from him, and to give blessing out to others.

Takes away the weight of guilt and sin and shame, he lightens the loads of our anxieties and stresses, and he sets us free to serve him and serve others with renewed energy and joy and a good heart.

[ 29 : 09 ] But let me just ask you, what kind of a sheep are you then? Considering that Jesus is our shepherd, we're in his sheep, what kind of a sheep are you? Are you letting Jesus be your shepherd?

Or are you trying to be the shepherd of your own life? Now one thing about sheep is that they make really bad shepherds. Sheep make really bad shepherds. Because shepherds protect the sheep from the things that sheep can't protect themselves from.

So just imagine, the greatest shepherd up until that point, up until Jesus, is David. He's the picture of what a leader, a shepherd does. David's running around 1000 BC with his flocks before he becomes the king.

And you know what he, you know, he tells us what he did. He protects them from the lions, he protects them from the wolves, he protects them from everything that wants to feed on them, from the bears. Now facing those enemies as a human is scary.

Imagine a bunch of sheep got together and said, yeah, you know what, listen to the other sheep.

No, we don't, David, we don't need him. We'll take on the lions, we will take on the lions, we can do it.

[ 30 : 22 ] Yes, those sheep are going to be eaten. And the only thing that's going to happen is that your anxiety levels are going to go up because you're not trying to do the job that the shepherd is doing for yourself.

But you're being silly because you've got someone who can do it for you. So why are you trying to do something that you can't do? And this is the thing that causes anxiety in many of us.

We're trying to tackle the problems of the world on our own. We're trying to be our own shepherd.

And we've got a far greater, a far better shepherd to follow who does these things for us.

So why are we trying to do them ourselves? We need to come under Christ's protection. We need to humble ourselves and admit we're sheep. So that might be the problem. No one likes to admit that they're not the ruler of their life, that we're but a sheep.

But don't let your ego get in your way. Humble yourself. Everyone needs help. Jesus is a way better shepherd than you can ever be. So the call is to trust him.

[ 31 : 30 ] Open yourself up to receiving from him. And then you'll find that your anxieties and your fears and your worries and concerns will diminish as you trust and rest in his abundance and rest in his victory.

And just a few questions then. Where do you fit into this birth story that we've got in Matthew chapter 2? You've got Herod. He's trying to be the king. He doesn't want to give up his throne to this upstart king that he doesn't know anything about.

Maybe you're trying to be the king in your own life. Decide for yourself what's right and wrong and good and bad. Desperately trying to be your own puppet king. Provide your own care. Provide your

own rest.

Thinking you're doing a great job. And meanwhile everyone can see well there's pretty much a train wreck coming around the corner. Your life is falling apart under the strain of trying to be something you're not.

Instead of living in the joyous freedom that this shepherd is providing for you and then just going and enjoying the grass not worrying about the things that are trying to kill you. So if you're like Herod and trying to be the king of your own life you need to repent of that.

[ 32 : 44 ] There can only be one king and he's going to do he's doing a way he will do a way better job of it than you can. He was born for it and he died for it. And so there's no reason for you to try and be the king of your own life.

It's just not going to work for you. God has only got one king that's going to rule and it's not you it's Christ. But maybe you're like the magi that come waltzing into this picture looking for something seeking they've got something there they know something's happening but they're not 100% sure what it is where you'll find it.

It's like that with so many people they know that something is out there for them there must be a God there must be something they sort of revolve or orbit around the church they gravitate around the church they're not quite sure where to find it they're not looking deep enough into the message of the gospel into the message of Jesus that the magi in the story for them to find Jesus they needed a word from God they needed this prophecy they needed God to explain something to them that they didn't know of themselves and again they were humble enough to accept that and then follow it and then meet Christ like the magi you need help from God's word from his promises but so many people don't look deep enough they sort of orbit around church they come and they dip their feet and blah blah blah and then they oh I tried I never really got anywhere I didn't quite get there and meanwhile this church in particular but any good Christian church is opening up God's word to you and showing you who Jesus is showing you where your problems are showing you how you can get change and how you can get help man if you if you don't go deeper into these things you're going to be missing out on so much my challenge to you is to read the Bible just read the Bible we're going through the book of Matthew make it a point of reading through Matthew if you've never read through it before get a Christian to ask them to read it with you just say amen listen would you read through this book with me and help me understand what it's about we've got many groups in our church that you can join that's going to do that for you and then my last question to us is how do you relate to this king this amazing king that's been promised in these ancient prophecies that was there before they were even written down that created the stars that pointed to who he was God incarnate how do you relate to him how should we relate to him well recently we looked at Psalm 2 in our daily readings we've got to do the same thing that they do in Psalm 2 which is the same thing that the magi do here we should be bending down kissing his feet and paying being in total humble homage to Christ as the king acknowledging his total leadership in your life and in this world he's your shepherd you can trust him he'll lead you beside still waters he's going to refresh you give you life and give you all the things you need to enjoy life now and to enjoy him for all eternity isn't that a king worth following yeah I think so let's pray Lord Jesus you are this mighty Lord of heaven and earth and you've come into this world to be our shepherd and Lord we're so thankful that you are we know that we've messed up

Lord we are like sheep we just make up our own mind and run hither and thither all over our lives making a mess of things Lord you are gracious and kind and you call us you've called each of us to serve you to follow you Lord will you be our king in every aspect of our lives in how we relate to others and in how we think of how how politics impacts our country Lord we want to lift you high as our king and as our lord and to serve you as our master bless us Lord as we do that in your service Amen Amen