

how god became king the forgotten story of the gospels

How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels

The tale of how God became king is intricately woven into the fabric of the Gospels, yet remains a largely overlooked narrative in contemporary discussions about Christianity. The Gospels, primarily Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, each tell the story of Jesus Christ, but they also serve as a profound exploration of divine kingship and the transformative journey of faith. This article delves into the seldom-discussed elements that illustrate how God, through Jesus, redefined kingship and established a new covenant with humanity.

The Concept of Kingship in Ancient Israel

To understand how God became king through the Gospels, it is essential to first explore the historical and cultural context of kingship in ancient Israel.

1. The Monarchy of Israel

- Establishment: The Israelites initially operated as a loose confederation of tribes. The demand for a king arose during the time of the prophet Samuel, leading to the anointing of Saul as the first king.
- Davidic Covenant: King David became the archetype of a godly king, and God's covenant with him established a promise of an everlasting dynasty. This promise was rooted in the belief that a king would govern in accordance with divine law.

2. Prophetic Visions of a Future King

- Messianic Expectations: Throughout the Old Testament, prophets spoke of a coming Messiah—an anointed one who would restore Israel and reign with justice and righteousness. This expectation was deeply imprinted in the Jewish consciousness.

The Gospels: A New Understanding of Kingship

In the Gospels, the notion of kingship takes on new dimensions, as Jesus embodies a radically different interpretation of what it means for God to be king.

1. Jesus' Birth and the Declaration of Kingship

- Nativity Narrative: The Gospels of Matthew and Luke narrate the birth of Jesus, introducing him as the "King of the Jews." This title, bestowed by the Magi and later used by Pontius Pilate, underscores the royal implications of his arrival.
- Incarnation: The concept of God becoming human is central to the Gospels. In Jesus, God assumes a new role—not just as a distant sovereign but as an intimate participant in human life.

2. Jesus' Ministry and the Kingdom of God

- Proclamation of the Kingdom: Jesus begins his ministry by preaching about the Kingdom of God, emphasizing that this kingdom is not a political entity but a spiritual reality that transforms individuals and communities.
- Teaching and Parables: Through parables, Jesus illustrates the nature of the Kingdom. For example, the Parable of the Mustard Seed shows that the Kingdom starts small but grows immensely, symbolizing the transformative power of God's reign.

3. Miracles as Signs of the Kingdom

- Healing and Restoration: Jesus' miracles—healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind, and raising the dead—serve as tangible signs of the Kingdom's presence, demonstrating God's authority over illness, sin, and even death.
- Feeding the Multitude: The feeding of the 5,000 exemplifies Jesus' role as a provider, echoing the biblical narrative of God providing for His people during their exodus from Egypt.

The Passion Narrative: The Ultimate Declaration of Kingship

The culmination of Jesus' life and ministry occurs in the Passion narrative, where the theme of kingship is both affirmed and challenged.

1. The Triumphal Entry

- Palm Sunday: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on a donkey is a direct fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, signaling his kingship. The crowds proclaim him as the Son of David, waving palm branches—a symbol of victory and peace.

2. The Trial and Crucifixion

- Mockery of Kingship: During his trial, Jesus is mocked as "King of the Jews." Ironically, the crucifixion is where Jesus' kingship is most profoundly revealed, as he willingly sacrifices himself, embodying the servant leader model of kingship.
- The Inscription on the Cross: The sign placed above Jesus on the cross reads "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," a powerful indictment against the political powers of the time, suggesting that true kingship transcends earthly authority.

The Resurrection: God's Ultimate Victory as King

The resurrection of Jesus is the defining moment that solidifies God's reign.

1. The Empty Tomb

- Defeating Death: The resurrection signifies Jesus' victory over death, establishing him as the eternal king. This event reassures believers of God's ultimate sovereignty and power.
- Commissioning the Disciples: After his resurrection, Jesus commissions his disciples to spread the good news, emphasizing that the Kingdom of God is meant to be shared globally.

2. The Ascension and Promise of Return

- Ascension: Jesus' ascension to heaven is a declaration of his divine kingship, seated at the right hand of God. This event also reinforces the notion that the Kingdom of God continues to unfold on earth through the actions of the church.
- Second Coming: The promise of Jesus' return serves as a reminder that God's kingship is not merely a historical event but an ongoing reality that will culminate in the renewal of all things.

The Implications of God's Kingship for Believers Today

Understanding how God became king through the Gospels has profound implications for contemporary believers.

1. A Call to Servanthood

- Modeling Jesus: Jesus' example challenges believers to embrace a model of leadership

grounded in service, humility, and love, contrasting sharply with worldly notions of power and authority.

2. Living in the Kingdom

- Kingdom Values: Believers are called to embody the values of the Kingdom—justice, mercy, and compassion—reflecting God's reign in their daily lives.

3. Hope in God's Sovereignty

- Trust in Divine Authority: In a world filled with chaos and uncertainty, the understanding of God as king provides believers with hope and assurance that God is ultimately in control.

Conclusion

The story of how God became king through the Gospels is a rich tapestry of prophecy, fulfillment, and transformative power. It invites believers to explore the depths of their faith and to live according to the values of the Kingdom. By understanding the radical redefinition of kingship that Jesus presents, believers can engage with the world in meaningful ways, embodying the hope and love that the Kingdom of God represents. In doing so, they participate in the ongoing story of God's reign and the promise of a restored creation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main premise of 'How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels'?

The book argues that the Gospels have been misunderstood, emphasizing that they present Jesus not only as Savior but as the King whose reign is central to the Christian faith.

How does N.T. Wright interpret the concept of kingship in the context of the Gospels?

N.T. Wright interprets kingship as a key theme that reveals Jesus' mission and identity, focusing on His role in restoring God's kingdom and addressing the political and spiritual realities of His time.

What are some common misconceptions about the Gospels that the book addresses?

The book addresses misconceptions such as viewing the Gospels solely as spiritual texts disconnected from historical and political contexts, and emphasizes the importance of their narrative about God's kingdom.

Why does N.T. Wright believe understanding Jesus as King is essential for modern Christians?

Wright believes that understanding Jesus as King helps modern Christians grasp the fullness of the Gospel message, encouraging them to participate in God's kingdom work in the world today.

What role does the Old Testament play in the understanding of Jesus' kingship according to the book?

The Old Testament provides the backdrop for understanding Jesus' kingship, as it contains prophecies and themes of a coming Messiah who would establish God's rule, which Jesus fulfills.

How does 'How God Became King' challenge traditional views of the Gospels?

The book challenges traditional views by urging readers to see the Gospels as a cohesive narrative about God's kingship rather than isolated stories, reshaping how they understand Jesus' life and mission.

What implications does Wright suggest this understanding of kingship has for Christian practice?

Wright suggests that recognizing Jesus as King calls Christians to live out their faith actively, engaging in justice, mercy, and the promotion of God's kingdom in their communities and the world.

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