



## The Case For Christmas



### Matthew: The Promised King - December 1, 2019

#### OPEN

Have you ever been to the Canadian Supreme Court, at 301 Wellington Street in Ottawa? What would it be like to make your case in the highest court in our nation? How would you argue before Judges Martin, Brown, Rowe, Kasirer, Karakatsanis, Abella, Moldaver, Côté, and Chief Justice Richard Wagner?

As we launch into Advent 2019 we are considering “The Case for Christmas.” We have a great little resource to help us. It is a book called **The Case For Christmas** by Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 2005) – get a copy from the church office.

Over these next four Sundays of Advent we will see the “case for Christmas” as given by each of the four Gospel writers – Matthew, Mark, Luke John. They each provide a unique “lense” through which we understand Jesus’ life and mission. Today we consider what Matthew wrote as a “case for Christmas”.

It would be reasonable if we started in the first chapter of the book of Matthew. It is there that we read the **genealogy of Jesus** (see verses 1-17). In contrast to the genealogy found in Luke, the one in Matthew is from a legal or patriarchal (Joseph) perspective.

It would also be reasonable to consider what Matthew tells us about the **conception and birth of Jesus** (see verses 18-25). So essential is this record of Jesus being born of a virgin. So foundational is the importance of His name Jesus or in Hebrew, *Jeshua* which means *Jehovah Saves*.

But in the bigger picture, Matthew points us to the **royalty of Jesus**. He featured Jesus as the promised and long awaited King who would once again rule His people. We were looking in recent weeks at Matthew 5 – specifically, the Beatitudes which are the first segment of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Today we are studying events just preceding, found in **Matthew 4:12-25**.

#### DIG

N. T. Wright suggests the Gospels must be read as “biographies with a difference.” They are indeed the biography of Jesus yet they tell a much bigger story. “The four Gospels present themselves as *the climax of the story of Israel*.” In the book of Matthew, God’s redemption story is reaching its goal in the Person who is the promised King! (**How God Became King**, Harper,

Consider how Matthew 4:12-25 shows the arrival of the awaited King onto the scene, and how Jesus launched into His earthly ministry.

#### [A] Anonymous ascension - vv. 12-16

When Queen Elizabeth II was ceremonially crowned as the new English monarch on June 2, 1953 it was viewed by 27 million people just in the UK alone. This was the first time the 900 year old ceremony could be televised. And it was not only viewed across the globe. Upon the death of her father, George VI, in February 1952, Elizabeth ascended to the throne and was declared queen in all the parts of the British Empire over the next several days.

However, Matthew 4:12-16 provides us with a very non-descript launch of Jesus the King into His ministry role. His “ascension to the throne”, if you will, was rather anonymous. Notice the timeline that Matthew records.

- The arrival of John the Baptizer and baptism of Jesus - 3:1-17
- The temptation of Jesus and departure of John the Baptizer - 4:1-12

This set the stage for Jesus to begin His ministry. And He did so, wonderfully bringing to completion the promises from the Old Testament. Specifically, in verses 15-16 we have a reference to Isaiah 9:1-2 and 60:1-3.

**What is the case for Christmas according to Matthew?** Jesus was born to be the King. That is exactly what we see in Matthew 2. Notice in verse 2 what the magi asked Herod, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews.”

N. T. Wright makes this comment, “Whenever the church forgets is call to engage in the task of understanding more and more fully who Jesus actually was...idolatry and ideology lie close at hand.” (**The Challenge Of Jesus**, IVP, 1999, 21) Are you just looking at Jesus as a cute little baby? Better yet, you might agree that He is indeed an actual historical figure. But if we only leave it at that level, it can easily become idolatrous or merely ideological. No, He is more than an icon to be kissed...or a philosophy to be espoused.

Jesus is the King of Kings...with all it implies: “Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.” (Isaiah 9:7)

When asked by Pilate, “are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus replied “yes” (Matthew, Mark, Luke) and “my Kingdom is not of this world” (John). But the question remains – will we bow to His authority? As believers, we are called to walk in His authority (see II Corinthians 10:3-5).

#### [B] Polarizing proclamation - v. 17

On July 1, 1969, the oldest child of Queen Elizabeth, Charles was invested as the Prince of Wales. His speech at his investiture at the medieval fortress of

Caernarfon in Gwynedd, was unique. Why? He spoke in Welsh. When Jesus launched His ministry many did not fully understand his speech also. It was a profound but polarizing proclamation...as the response to Him would reveal. Jesus invited people to [a] **repent** of their sin and [b] **receive** the at-hand Kingdom. Not only is Jesus the King, but He came to usher in the Kingdom.

Verse 17 begins with a seemingly unimportant small phrase “from then on...” But it is significant because not only does it mark the beginning of Jesus earthly ministry, but Matthew also used it when Jesus pivoted from His ministry to His crucifixion (see Matthew 16:21).

**What is the case for Christmas according to Matthew?** Jesus was born to be the King who would usher in God’s Kingdom. After Jesus sermon we read, “the crowds were amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.” (Matthew 7:28-29)

Humanly conceived religion is based on uncertainty. It is mechanical and manipulated. But true faith is based on the certain, life-giving truth that Jesus is the promised King. At the close of Matthew Jesus assured us of His power to save us when He said, “all authority is given to Me.” (Matthew 28:18) Yes, it is a polarizing message. But it also is the King’s promise of eternal life!

**[C] Fickle followers - vv. 18-25**

The last part of this passage tells us about the people who first followed Jesus. And even this reveals something about Jesus as the promised King, sent to deliver humanity from the grip of sin.

First, the disciples gave an immediate but immature response - vv. 18-22

Second, the crowds offered impressed but impulsive response - vv. 23-25

**What is the case for Christmas according to Matthew?** Jesus was born to be the King who would usher in God’s Kingdom and welcome the willing to Himself. As N. T. Wright puts it, “Israel’s story is thus the microcosm and beating heart of the world’s story...What God does for Israel is what God is doing in relation to the whole world.” (**How God Became King**, Harper, 2012, 74) Jesus was born to be King of the Jews...and King of your heart.

**REFLECT**

Are you a monarchist? This is usually a question of whether you support and appreciate the British monarchy. Many debate the value of the ceremonial ruler of the UK being involved in Canadian affairs of state.

But the real question is whether Jesus is allowed to affect the affairs of your life! The infant Christ is the King of Kings. He ushered in the King of Heaven. By childlike faith in Him we may enter God’s Kingdom.

But we cannot pick and choose. Jesus must be ruler of all the realms of our lives. Charles Wesley wrote this response...perhaps it could be yours today...

*Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set Thy people free  
From our fears and sins release us, let us find our rest in Thee  
Israel’s Strength and Consolation, Hope of all the earth Thou art  
Dear Desire of every nation, Joy of every longing heart  
Born Thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King  
Born to reign in us forever, now Thy gracious kingdom bring  
By Thine own eternal Spirit, rule in all our hearts alone  
By Thine all sufficient merit, raise us to Thy glorious throne*

You might want to discover more about Jesus in Matthew. Remember, “All our historical study, then, must be done to energize the church in its mission to the world.” (**The Challenge Of Jesus**, N. T. Wright, IVP, 1999, 32)

**Recommended reading...** Read chapter 1 - “Can the biographies of Jesus be trusted?” in **The Case For Christmas** by Lee Strobel (Zondervan, 2005)

**The authority of Jesus in the book of Matthew...** You can read through the references to “authority” in Matthew 7:29; 8:9; 9:6-8; 10:1; 20:25; 21:23-24,27; 28:18. What do these passages reveal about Jesus as the promised King?

**A “royal outline” of the book of Matthew...**

1. Advent of the King	1 – 2	Genealogy, birth, adoration of Magi, flight to Egypt
2. Preparation of the King	3 – 4	Kingdom principles; Sermon on the Mount, 5-7
3. Power of the King	8 – 9	Kingdom leadership; commissioning the twelve, 10
4. Rejection of the King	11 – 12	Kingdom parables; seeds, weeds, treasure, 13
5. Mission of the King	14 – 17	Kingdom relationships; who is greatest, 18
6. Triumphal Entry of the King	21	Kingdom consummated; wedding/signs/parables, 23-25
7. Passion of the King	26 – 27	Passover, gethsemane, betrayal, trial, crucifixion
8. Resurrection of the King	28	Power over death, authority to spread the Gospel