

In Psalm 2, God declares that he has set his King on his holy hill of Zion. He says from eternity, “You are My Son. This day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the peoples for Thine inheritance and the uttermost ends of the earth for Thy possession.” And in Psalm 110, David declares, “The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” The Son of God does not receive the crown from anyone but God. No one crowns Jesus but his Father. He would crown him first by having him bear a crown of thorns and be rejected by this world. This is how he wants us to recognize him as King. He is the King who bears our sins and saves us eternally. He isn't a king by and of the people. His kingdom is not of this world. His kingdom is not in food and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. His kingdom comes when sinners find refuge from their sin in the mercy of his cross. This is why Jesus did not allow the people to take him with human force and crown him king. He left them and went to a mountain by himself.

Jesus fed five thousand households with only five loaves of bread and two small fish. How was he able to do such an amazing thing? It was because he is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity. He is God in the flesh, the creator of heaven and earth. With his Father, he causes it to rain upon the just and the unjust. He gives daily bread to all people, even to all the wicked. He performed this great miracle to reveal this very thing. The people weren't wrong to see Jesus as the great prophet. They weren't wrong to see him as king. They were wrong to think they could take him and make him their king. They had forgotten why God gave their fathers manna in the wilderness in the days of Moses. He gave them bread – and he still gives us bread – to teach us that man does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. So if they truly saw him as their king, then they would not have seen him as a worldly ruler who merely gives them more earthly blessings. No, if they truly saw him as king, then they would hear him, listen to him, and hold onto his words of eternal life.

Jesus remains the King of kings and Lord of lords. He declares in Proverbs 8, “By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.” Whoever gets elected this November will govern and reign only by the permission of Christ, the Son of God. Regardless of how free and fair the election will be, no one will ever rule without the authority of the Lord of lords. The strength of the economy, the safety and welfare of the nation, or any other earthly blessing will only happen by the providence of Christ whom the Father has crowned above all authorities in heaven and on earth. Every ruler, both good and bad, is a servant of Jesus Christ whether he acknowledges it or not. Any evil that comes from someone's rule is used by Christ as discipline for his Christians, teaching them to turn to him in their every need. Any good that comes from someone's rule is used by Christ as relief to teach us that earthly comforts are not what give us life. He teaches us to pray for our rulers, not so that we can compile a bunch of stuff and worldly wealth, but so that we would lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

Christ is already King. We don't need to make him King. Many scoffers and unbelievers like to accuse Christians of trying to make a theocracy out of our country. They throw around the term Christian nationalism, and a lot of Christians are quick to disown such a notion. Maybe you've never heard of the term Christian nationalism.

Maybe you have. It's a term that has been thrown around a lot in the wider culture especially over the past few years. But before we rush to condemn or embrace this label of Christian nationalism, let's first get some things straight about Christ and the nations.

First, Christ is the King of the nations. But how is he the King of the nations? He is the King of the nations because he has purchased every nation with his own blood. He has died for the sins of all people. There is no single person on this earth, regardless of ethnicity, who was not purchased by the blood of Christ. Jesus died for all. "Ask of me," the Father said to him, "and I will give you the nations for your inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession." They are all his.

Second, Christ is the King of the nations regardless of how Christian these nations are. The Muslim nations, the pagan nations, the secular nations, the red states, the blue states, the cities, the rural lands – they all belong to Christ. He causes it to rain on all of them. He gives daily bread to all of them. Whether it is Biden, Putin, Khamenei, Charles, Trudeau, Caesar, Pharaoh – whoever it is – they get their ability to rule from Jesus Christ, the eternal Son and Wisdom from the Father.

And finally, this means that Christ's reign in no way depends on us shifting the culture to reflect his reign, or more absurd, to prepare for his reign. Those who insist that this must happen as a way to advance our Lord's kingdom are mistaken. Christ's kingdom comes, not when we make the civil culture reflect his kingdom, but only when our heavenly Father gives us his Holy Spirit so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead godly lives here in time and hereafter in eternity. God's kingdom comes when the gospel is proclaimed and believed, and Jesus rules our hearts and minds with his peace, which surpasses all understanding. The kingdom of God comes when faith lays hold of the forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and salvation, won for all people by the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world.

If, by Christian nationalism, the world is accusing you of believing that Christ's kingdom is advanced by your cultural and political victories, then sure, you can say you aren't a Christian nationalist, at least not according to this definition. You believe that Christ's kingdom comes only by the preaching of the gospel and faith in this gospel, regardless of whether every nation in the world embraces every abomination in the book. But don't be fooled. As long as you confess Christ in your life and insist that his Word influence your decisions, judgments, thoughts, actions, and conversations, the unbelieving world will accuse you of something, whether this is mixing church and state, theocracy, Christian nationalism, religious extremism, or whatever popular boogey-man term they decide to use. The world hates Christ. Don't take your queues from the world.

Instead, learn from Christ. He is your God and King, not because you made him king, not because you won a cultural or political battle for him, but only because he came into the flesh and shed his blood for you. He called you to faith by his Holy Spirit through his words of life joined to the washing of your baptism. He teaches you to turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, be merciful as your Father is merciful, and seek peace with your neighbor. Whatever station God places you in, whether you are a father, mother, prince, governor, judge, or a milkmaid – it doesn't matter! – you are called to confess your Savior.

About seven years ago, the Senate was interviewing nominations for the president's cabinet. One man was being questioned by the Senate. This man was a Christian who had been outspoken about his faith in Christ. A certain senator decided to drill this man over an article he had written in which he said that Muslims do not know God and that they are condemned because they do not believe in Jesus Christ. The senator, who is an unbeliever, questioned the man about what he had written, implying that the man was unfit for his office because of his Christian views. The senator asked the man if he believed that Muslims and other non-Christians stand condemned. The man didn't directly answer the senator's question. Instead, he responded to the senator by saying that as a Christian he believed that all people were made in the image of God and that he would treat all people with honor and respect regardless of their religious beliefs. What this man said was true. It was a fine response by itself. But what really bugged me was when one of the other senators came to his defense and said, "I hope we are not questioning the faith of others and how they are interpreting their faith to themselves."

Now, I understand that when you are in the heat of the moment, especially before a panel of very powerful people, it can be a bit daunting to respond to someone trying to intimidate you for your Christian faith. But if you are ever in this situation, this is how you should respond. You should say, "Yes, Senator. That's right. This is what the Bible says. Jesus says that those who believe and are baptized will be saved, and those who do not believe will be condemned. Jesus died for all people, including you, Senator, and he wants you to believe in him and have the certainty that your sins are forgiven and that you are saved forever. I hope the Holy Spirit draws you out of the darkness of unbelief and into the light of Christ." Or something like that. Enough with this nonsense about "how you personally interpret your faith." What does that even mean? Is Christ Lord or not? Did Christ die for the sins of the world or not? Did Christ rise from the dead or not? If not, then your faith is a complete sham. Confess the crucified and risen Lord Christ. And if that means that you don't get approved to sit on some government seat, then what's that to you? You didn't lose anything. Christ will still provide you with your daily bread. He will still work through scoffing senators and unbelieving governors. You don't need to worry about them. Only confess him, and don't be afraid. You always win when you confess Christ, whether it is to your children, your neighbors, or before Senators and princes.

And if people call you a religious extremist, a Christian nationalism, or whatever stupid thing they like to label you, then don't fall for it. Don't worry about what you will eat and drink. Instead, confess your Savior who has already taken his throne as King. Who knows? If we all confessed our Savior in every station in life, then perhaps the name of Christ would influence our culture for the better. Perhaps our culture and rulers would reflect the faith the people confess in their Lord Jesus. That wouldn't be a bad thing at all. Or maybe we would have our bread taken from us for a while by being persecuted for our confession. That would be even better. Regardless of what happens, Christ remains our prophet, priest, and King, comforting us with his gospel, interceding for us by his wounds, and ruling us with his grace. To him be the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

4 Laetare – John 6