

Imagine a king or a queen. Seriously, picture a king or a queen in your mind. What do they look like? How are they dressed? What are they doing?

My mind always goes to Queen Elizabeth whose coronation happened on June 2, 1953 at Westminster Abbey in London. I discovered some facts about that day that helped me understand what that day was like.¹

- Elizabeth was “driven from [Buckingham Palace](#) to Westminster Abbey in [a] [Gold State Coach](#) – pulled by eight grey gelding horses”
- Her dress for the day was made of white satin embroidered with gold and silver thread
- On her way to the Coronation, she wore a diadem, a small crown, featuring 1,333 diamonds and 169 pearls.
- Once at Westminster Abbey the queen was given two gold cloth robes to wear
- She was then presented with golden spurs, a jewelled sword, large golden bracelets, a coronation ring, and a sceptre.
- Then a crown is placed on her head, weighing 4 pounds and 12 ounces and made of solid gold.
- After the coronation ceremony, the queen exchanged that heavy crown for a crown weighing just over two pounds, but still having 2868 diamonds, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds and 269 pearls.
- Then, once the queen is fully installed, all of the rulers come and pledge to be faithful and true.²

I could go on, but hopefully you get the point. The queen was honored greatly. In as many ways as possible, the Queen was shown to be set apart from others. She is different, to be honored above all others.

The story of Jesus’ crucifixion couldn’t be more different.

¹ <https://www.royal.uk/50-facts-about-queens-coronation-0>

² <http://www.oremus.org/liturgy/coronation/cor1953b.html>

- Rather than the opulent Westminster Abbey, Jesus comes to a place called “the Skull”
- Rather than being carried in a gold stage coach, he carries his own execution device.
- Where as the Queen was lifted up in honor, Jesus was lifted up to hang on a cross
- Rather than be given royal clothes to wear, Jesus is stripped of his clothes so that soldiers can gamble for them.
- Rather than receive pledges of faithfulness from rulers, Jesus is mocked by them. The soldiers mock Jesus by giving him vinegar to drink rather than the fine wine befitting a king. He’s even mocked by a criminal on the cross. Everyone, from the greatest to the least, mocks Jesus. **(except for one man. More on him in a moment).**

Of course, the whole scene is a mockery of a coronation, in a sense, with the charge “The King of the Jews” written above him for all to see.

Crucifixion was more than a tortuous way of killing someone. It was designed to cause the most shame possible. People were crucified naked, which was a special shame for Jewish people. Someone hanging on a cross couldn’t even shoo flies from their wounds. They couldn’t protect themselves in any way from the heat, the cold, the wind, and the rain. Add to that that they could not restrain their bodily waste while they hung and died, if not from blood loss and dehydration, then from asphyxiation.³

And yet, amid all of that mockery and shame, there is something else going on. Even though the sign “King of the Jews” was written both in mockery and as a criminal charge, it was in fact, true. As Jesus hangs on the cross he is the king of the Jews. He is the Messiah promised by the prophets, the royal figure who would come and bring salvation to Israel. And this very moment, the moment of his suffering and death, is the time when he is revealed as the

³ Craig S. Keener and John H. Walton, eds., NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible: Bringing to Life the Ancient World of Scripture (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 1676.

coming king. In a sense, this is Jesus' coronation. In the other gospels, we even learn that Jesus wore a crown of thorns.

If this is a coronation, then it is clearly a very different type of coronation. If this is a king, then clearly this is a very different type of king.

So what can we say about this king? What type of King is Jesus?

Jesus is a king who suffers

First, and perhaps most obviously Jesus is a king who suffers.

The Jewish people had been living with a variety of expectations for what the Messiah would do when he came. The Messiah was to be a royal figure, in the line of King David, who would bring victory over Israel's enemies. As far as I know, though, no one before Jesus understood that the Messiah would have to suffer. If the Messiah was to be victorious over the oppressive forces, then surely he must have military victory over them, not suffer at their hands.

But hundreds of years before Jesus, Isaiah wrote about a servant of God who would carry the sins of his people. It seems that everyone presumed that this would be a different figure than the Messiah. Isaiah says,

³ He was despised and rejected by others; **a man of suffering** and acquainted with infirmity;... ⁴ Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

Jesus' suffering may be surprising, but it is full of purpose. Jesus is not a king who stands far off from the suffering of his people, watching them languish from afar out palatial windows. Jesus identifies so completely with the suffering of his people, that he can even be said to bear their diseases and be

wounded for their transgressions. And yet, Isaiah says, that “upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises, we are healed.”

It is through Jesus’ suffering that healing and wholeness come.

Jesus is a king who forgives his enemies

A second trait of King Jesus is that he is a King who forgives his enemies. Kings usually crush their enemies with military might. Not this King. He prays for his enemies to be forgiven.

The last verse of Isaiah 53 says “he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”

Jesus was indeed numbered with the transgressors, crucified with criminals on his left and on his right. He also “made intercession for the transgressors,” saying “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Jesus lived out his own teaching, “bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.”

Jesus is a king who brings salvation

A third trait of King Jesus is that he is indeed a King who brings salvation, just perhaps not in the way that people thought he would.

The one criminal says, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” Yes, mocking criminal, he is the Messiah. But he isn’t going to save people *from* death. Jesus is going to save people *through* death.

⁴⁰ But the other [criminal] rebuked [the mocking criminal], saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been *condemned justly*, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but *this man has done nothing wrong*.”

In the words of Isaiah 53:8, “By a perversion of justice he was taken away.” Jesus was innocent, and the one man next to Jesus knew it.

He also knew that his own condemnation was just. He knew that his sentence was deserved. He also knew that he had no hope apart from entering the Kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. His own death was imminent.

He turns to Jesus and says, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Jesus replies, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Adam and Eve were cut off from Paradise. And Genesis 3:24 says, “[After God] drove out the man... at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a sword flaming and turning to guard the way to the tree of life.” The way to the tree of life was still there, but it was guarded.

Origen, a Christian writer from the 3rd century mused about Jesus’ statement, “Today you will be with me in paradise,” saying “Through saying this, he also gave to all those who believe and confess access to the entrance that Adam previously had closed by sinning. Who else could remove “the flaming turning sword which was placed to guard the tree of life” and the gates of paradise? What other sentinel was able to turn the “cherubim” from their incessant vigil, except only he to whom “was given all power in heaven and in earth”? No one else besides him could do these things.⁴

It’s personal

Jesus is a king who suffers, forgives his enemies, and brings salvation. But the criminal crucified next to Jesus shows that Jesus doesn’t merely do this in the abstract. He does it for particular people. It’s personal.

⁴ Thomas C. Oden and Cindy Crosby, eds., *Ancient Christian Devotional: A Year of Weekly Readings: Lectionary Cycle C* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 272.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, was on a ship making his way to America to be a missionary in the colony of Georgia. His ship was tossed around by strong storms and he was scared for his life. He didn't feel that he was ready to meet his maker. But during those storms, some Moravian Christians wowed him with their peace and deep assurance of faith. Even though he was an Anglican clergyman, it was something that John had never witnessed before. But when John saw it, he wanted it.

And so when he gets to Georgia, he decides to start meeting with some of the Moravian pastors to get spiritual direction. In particular, he met with a man named August Spangenberg. He wrote about it in his journal. Spangenberg says to him, "My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?" Wesley writes, "I was surprised, and knew not what to answer. He observed it, and asked, "Do you *know* Jesus Christ?" I paused, and said, "I know he is the Saviour of the world." "True," replied he; "but do you know he has saved you?" I answered, "I hope he has died to save me." He only added, "Do you know yourself?" I said, "I do." But I fear they were vain words.

It doesn't matter if you're lay or clergy, many people know that Jesus is the savior of the world in the abstract, but they don't know it on a personal level. John Wesley had prayed the prayers, but it wasn't personal for him. He didn't give up though. He continued to seek assurance of his personal salvation through Jesus.

What do you do if you find yourself in Wesley's situation? Well, why not at least *begin* by following the pattern of the criminal on the cross?

The criminal confessed that his condemnation was deserved. Look, I know we don't like talking like that. But there's truth in it. We believe that other

people's sins deserve to be punished, don't we? But it's not just other people's sins that deserve to be punished. It's ours as well.

Secondly, the criminal trusts in Christ to bring him into his kingdom, and he understands that his salvation will somehow come *through* the cross of this king. To get to paradise, you have to go through King's Cross. You can do this by just saying thank you. "Thank you, Jesus, that you bore my sins on the cross so that I could receive salvation."

Thirdly, receive his word of assurance to you, just as the criminal did. Say, "Jesus, will you please come into my heart by your Holy Spirit and be my savior and Lord forever."

It's really as simple as those three words: Sorry, Thank you, and Please. I'm sorry for my sin. Thank you for dying for me. Please come into my heart.

On this Christ the King Sunday, why don't make a trip for the cross of King Jesus and receive the forgiveness that you need, the salvation that you need. The gates of paradise are open through him.