

Is Jesus Really King of the Jews?

Is He King of the Jews today or of dedicated Christians only?

B Y R A Y G A N N O N

As prayerful prelude to the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*), the modern Jewish religious calendar calls for 10 Days of Awe, a sobering season of spiritual introspection and repentance, in preparation for the new religious year. The Days of Awe officially begin with the Jewish New Year, *Rosh HaShanah*, and conclude 10 days later with the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*. These Holy Days come in September or October in keeping with the Hebrew Bible's lunar calendar.

Rosh HaShanah (literally "head of the year") is biblically termed "a day of blowing the trumpets" (Leviticus 23:24) and is commonly known as the Feast of Trumpets. According to the *Mishnah* (the late second-century written compilation of the rabbinical oral tradition), the Feast of Trumpets is also considered the annual Judgment Day. The Book of Life is opened and God makes decrees for the following year largely in response to the sincere

(Ah-KAY-dah), the powerful story of Abraham's readiness to offer Isaac in sacrifice to God (Genesis 22). In concert with the *Akedah* is the custom of *Tashlich* (TAHSH-leeekh), one of the most fascinating religious practices associated with the Days of Awe still practiced in many Jewish Orthodox communities today. *Tashlich* dates back to the Middle Ages or earlier and is based on a fictionalized legend found in the Talmud that combined the story of Abraham's offering of Isaac and old European superstitions involving evil spirits and streams. Crumbs were thrown into the stream to appease the evil one's appetite so no harm would come to the people. The scapegoat idea also played a part as the concept held that the fish and stream would carry away the sins of the people symbolized by the crumbs. One rendition of the *Tashlich* prayer reads: "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, and may You cast all the sins of Your people, the house of Israel, into a

to signify Jewish good wishes for a sweet and prosperous New Year. The greeting, *L'Shanah Tovah* (Happy New Year) is followed by a delicious *Rosh HaShanah* meal.

Declaring God King

One of the primary functions of *Rosh HaShanah* is the reaffirmation of God's kingship. In fact, this is chief reason given for the first of the three soundings of the *shofar* (ram's horn) during this 2-day worship occasion. The first trumpet sounds to honor God as King and Ruler over all the universe. The second sounding is to remind the Jews that God is Judge of all humanity. The third is to emphasize God's worthiness of all Jewish faith and confidence. One line in the *Machzor* summarizes the holiday's lesson: "The Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; He will save us."

Jesus As King of the Jews

We know from the Gospels that the sign posted over Jesus on the cross read, "The King of the Jews." This was done in Roman derision of Christ and served as a public indictment against Him. Yet the functionary religious leadership of that hour protested Pilate's sign since it did not sufficiently make clear to their satisfaction that Christ's claim to kingship was mistaken. They proposed, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews'; but that He said, 'I am King of the Jews'" (John 19:21, NASB).

But is Jesus really the King of the Jews? Is it appropriate for us to entitle Jesus "King of the Jews" even before He is officially recognized and fully appreciated by the Jewish people as their national

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repentance, faithful prayers, good deeds, and charitable acts of the Jewish people. At the culmination of the 10 Days of Awe, the fate of humanity is divinely sealed for the next 12 months (e.g., whether one will experience life or death, health or sickness, prosperity or poverty, etc.).

The Torah (Pentateuch) reading for *Rosh HaShanah* includes the *Akedah*

place where they shall be no more remembered or visited or ever come to mind."

After lengthy liturgical services at the synagogues as recited from the *Machzor*, or special High Holiday prayer book, the Jewish worshipers return home in their customary *Rosh HaShanah* white apparel to be welcomed with apples dipped in honey

King? Is He King of the Jews today or of dedicated Christians only? Does not His kingship over the Jews await a future millennial utopia that only becomes possible subsequent to yet another dreadful Jewish holocaust? And what of the modernly proffered dual-covenant theology suggesting that Jesus is pertinent only to the new covenant and Christian salvation? This teaches that Christ is not germane to the distinctly Jewish covenant with God and is totally irrelevant to Jewish salvation.

Unfortunately, apart from the *Rosh HaShanah* liturgical services, there is little evidence in contemporary Jewish life to challenge the perception that the Jewish world presently regards God as occupying a mostly symbolically post in a manner similar to the largely ceremonial and figurehead position of the modern British monarch. God may be publicly addressed with a measure of Jewish religious feeling on what is considered appropriate ceremonial occasion, but any suggestion of His present sovereign activity in space and time or intervention in the affairs of men is considered a rather far-fetched notion. Yet God's perceived irrelevance to everyday Jewish existence would in no way intimate to religious Jews that God is not King. The fact God is not consulted, His Scriptures not searched, or the instruction of His Spirit not sought, does not lessen Jewish religious insistence of the identification of God as the King of Israel. Of course, to

honorary post while neglecting to acknowledge His active mastery over the whole earth.

The good news is that God is King in spite of human response. He is Master of the universe even should mankind manage to almost entirely forget Him as in the days of Noah. He does not need to qualify for His throne nor does a straw vote need to be taken to first establish His popularity or

be the Son of God, the Davidic Messiah, and the very King of the Jews.

Acknowledging Jesus As King

In 1972, we conducted our first *Rosh HaShanah* service in a large Jewish home in Beverly Hills, California. The home was packed with scores of Jewish people who gladly trumpeted their love and honor of Jesus, King of the Jews. A fair number of Jewish unbelievers were

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approval rating. He is currently and forever the Master of all the nations and of every breathing human whether he or she realizes or approves of it or not. Plainly, all persons and nations would be greatly advantaged to humbly recognize God's eternal kingship and His applied mastery of the universe.

In an identical manner, the Messiah Jesus is "King of the Jews" not by virtue of Jewish popular sentiment but by the expressed will of the Sovereign Lord and Creator of all. No human action or inaction can alter God's decree. God has made Christ the Lord, the federal Head, the only Savior, and the coming King of all Jews everywhere. Non-Jewish followers of Christ may correctly apologize to the Jewish

also present. In that Jewish New Year solemn assembly, in full harmony with God's own biblical testimony, we boldly proclaimed the kingship of Jesus without apology or hesitation. Several Jewish people were born again into the kingdom of God that evening. Since then we have witnessed many thousands of new Jewish believers in America, and tens of thousands worldwide, coming to terms with King Jesus, the saving Deliverer of "all Israel" (Romans 9:25,26).

Christians need to do less equivocating in the pursuit of social acceptability and make greater prophetic effort to boldly proclaim Christ's kingship to the Jewish world without apology or fear of social rejection. Jesus is surely the King of the Jews and Messianic Lord of Israel, although only a growing remnant (150,000 to 200,000) of Jewish people worldwide presently acknowledges Him as King. But the day will surely come, according to Paul's Romans 11, when "all Israel will be saved."

Now is their accepted time; today is their day of salvation. Since Jesus is the King of the Jews yesterday, today, and forever, let us boldly proclaim Him to "all Israel" in this acceptable hour. Jesus is Israel's Judge, Lawgiver, and King; He will save His Jewish people from their sins. **E**

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be fair, many professing Christians make no appeal for daily guidance from the King of the universe either. Unfortunately, too many Jews and Christians alike perceive of God as King merely in terms of His official religious and community-recognized

people for past episodes of Christendom's persecution of Jewish people, but no one needs to apologize for proclaiming Jesus King of the Jews. He is King of the Jews and of all mankind because the God of Israel has both anointed and announced Him to