

# Christ the King 2019

Jeremiah 23.1-6; Colossians 1.11-20 & Luke 23.33-43

*There was also an inscription over him.  
This is the King of the Jews.*

This week the Church of England published a very important teaching document called *God's Unfailing Word – theological and practical perspectives on Christian-Jewish Relations*.

The Bishop of Coventry writes that the report has been written to

1. encourage Christians to be confident in their dialogue with Jewish people about God's purposes for us;
2. in challenging antisemitism
3. and in working together for the common good of our society.

Today, as we come to the end of our Liturgical year and celebrate the Feast of Christ the King, it seems a good time to reflect on this challenge.

Through the centuries the Church as a whole has been complicit in feeding antisemitism through its theology and social attitudes.

Christians have committed sins against Jewish people through their attitudes and actions, but also through their sins of omission – not speaking up and challenging when they should have done. In the Second World War, sleep-walking, along with many others into a political situation where the Shoah was possible – the great catastrophe of the Holocaust for European Jewry.

Many of the historic negative attitudes of the Church to Jewish people come from pinning the death of Jesus on the Jewish community as a whole. In the minds of some, they have been the scape-goat for the sin of the whole world – every tribe and nation whose rejection of God and his love put Jesus on the cross.

Jesus died as the King of the Jews. He died for God's people; but the result of his death and resurrection was that salvation was won for the whole world.

Cast your mind to the beginning of John's gospel. When John the Baptist sees Jesus walking towards him he remarks: *'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'*

In the passage from Jeremiah set for today, the prophet speaks of God's chosen one, a descendent of David who will come and reign as king over God's people and deal wisely with them. The title he is given is *The Lord is our Righteousness*'.

Christians believe that Jesus fulfils this prophecy. He was the righteous one – the one without blemish. He described himself as The Good Shepherd and in his life and teaching he taught about God's kingdom of righteousness, love, safety and compassion.

The passage from Colossians tells us lots of things about Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, the chosen one of God. But the overall message is that Jesus the Christ is one with God the Father and that his kingdom, his rule is for everyone, and through him everything in heaven and on earth – all tribes of people are reconciled to God.

Gentile Christians are those who have been grafted into the true vine of Israel through faith in Christ. We are inheritors with all Jewish people of the promises of God. It is not our place to make judgements about who is or is not acceptable in God's sight.

Christians owe a huge debt of gratitude and love to our forbears in the faith as we read about them in the Hebrew Scriptures. The heroes of the faith were Jewish, Jesus was Jewish, the earliest Christians were Jewish. We owe them our love, respect and gratitude and we should honour those over whom Jesus was pronounced King.

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This is the King of the Jews.*