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The Crucified King STR Interviews Dr. Jeremy Treat

Introduction

It is a delight for *STR* to interview Dr. Jeremy R. Treat on the publication of his recent monograph *The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology* (Zondervan, 2014). Dr. Treat is a pastor at Reality LA, a church in Hollywood, California. He also teaches at Biola University in La Mirada, California. Dr. Treat completed his doctoral studies in systematic theology at Wheaton College and prior to serving at Reality LA pastored for a number of years in the area around Seattle, Washington.

Interview with Jeremy Treat

STR: *Jeremy, thank you for speaking with STR. Why did you write this stimulating and evocative book?*

Treat: I'll never forget sitting in church as a young Christian when the preacher bellowed, in that you-should-know-this tone, "What's the number one thing that Jesus talked about throughout his life?" Lucky for me, I was sure that I did know it. After all, I had grown up in the church hearing every week about what was central to all of Christianity: the cross of Christ. As the preacher allowed a few seconds of silence to let the guilt build up for those who didn't know the answer, I smirked and prepared to mouth the words along with him. "The number one thing Jesus talked about was..."—and then he said something that nearly knocked me off my pew—"the kingdom of God!" What! The kingdom of God? What about the cross? At that moment it was as if Conviction walked into the room and slapped me in the face; and then his friend Crisis came and sat next to me for an extended talk. How could the kingdom be the thing that Jesus talked about the most, and yet it had no place in my theology, church life, or my perception of what it means to be a Christian? That day was the beginning of a journey for me, in seeking to understand why two of the most important themes in Scripture—the kingdom and the cross—have been divorced in most Christian belief and practice.

I found similar trends when I began looking for answers more broadly in Christianity. Many Christians *either* cling to

the cross *or* champion the kingdom, usually one to the exclusion of the other. The polarization of these two biblical themes leads to vastly divergent approaches: cross-centered theology that focuses on the salvation of sinners or kingdom-minded activism that seeks to change the world.

When I turned to scholarship for help I found more of the same, although not necessarily for the same reasons. Tomes on the kingdom of God never even mention the atoning work of Christ. Book after book on the atonement ignores the entire Old Testament promises and New Testament preaching about the kingdom of God. So I set out myself to answer the question: How do the coming of God's kingdom and Christ's atoning death on the cross relate?

STR: *You bring together some theological concepts that have been kept apart. We are thinking of "cross" and "kingdom," to be sure, but also "biblical" and "systematic" theologies. Let's take the latter union first. Why have you brought biblical AND systematic theology together in your work? Is it not better to keep them separate?*

Treat: I understand biblical and systematic theology to be distinct yet inseparable disciplines. Both draw from the same source of Scripture and seek to understand its unity, albeit in different ways. Biblical theology emphasizes the unity of Scripture through the unfolding history of redemption or, in literary terms, the development of the plot in its story line. Systematic theology seeks to understand the unity of Scripture through the logic of its theology and the way in which individual doctrines fit together as a coherent whole. Furthermore, biblical and systematic theology differ in their language and dialogue partners. Biblical theology aims to set forth the theology of the Bible in its own terms, concepts, and contexts. Systematic theology seeks not only to understand the theology of the Bible, but to bring it into conversation with the tradition of the church and contemporary theology in order to communicate sound doctrine and correct false doctrine. Biblical and systematic theology, therefore, have a mutually enriching, bi-directional relationship. Systematic theology draws from, further develops, and informs biblical theology.

The integration of biblical and systematic theology is especially important for understanding the doctrines of atonement and the kingdom of God. Broadly speaking, systematic theology has given great attention to the doctrine of the atonement, but largely ignored the kingdom of God. Biblical theology, on the other hand, is dominated by the theme of the kingdom of God, and yet gives less attention to the doctrine

of the atonement. A holistic answer to the kingdom-cross divide, therefore, must bridge this gap between biblical and systematic theology, incorporating insights from both disciplines for both doctrines.

STR: *And to the former union: how do “kingdom” and “cross” go together?*

Treat: While many emphasize either the cross or the kingdom, I believe that you can’t understand one apart from the other. The kingdom is the goal of the cross and the cross is the means by which the kingdom comes. My thesis, in briefest form, is that the kingdom comes by way of the cross. Within the broader spectrum of Christ’s work (incarnation, life, resurrection, ascension, and session—all of which are extremely important), the cross is the defining moment in the coming of God’s redemptive rule. Scripture presents a mutually enriching relationship between the kingdom and atonement that draws significantly from the story of Israel and culminates in the crucifixion of Christ the king.

STR: *So how would you define “the kingdom of God”?*

Treat: I define the “kingdom of God” as “God’s *redemptive* reign through *Christ* and his *reconciled* servant-kings over the *new* creation.” Because the theme of the kingdom is unveiled progressively in Scripture, I find it helpful to break this definition into two stages: 1) the design of the kingdom in creation, and 2) the coming of the kingdom in redemption.

Genesis 1–2 presents the *design* of the kingdom in creation: God’s reign through his servant-kings over creation. The salient point is that God’s reign through humanity over all the earth is the *telos* of Genesis 1–2, not the reality. In other words, before the fall and redemption ever entered the picture, there was a creation-consummation storyline aimed at God’s glorious reign over all the earth through his image-bearers. Genesis 1–2, therefore, does not technically present a picture of the “kingdom of God” but rather a project moving in that direction, as well as the pattern by which it will be achieved. God reigning through his image-bearers over all the earth to the glory of God’s name—that is the project toward which Genesis 1–2 is aimed.

So the design of the kingdom in creation is “God’s reign through his servant-kings over creation.” The order of the sentence reveals the order of significance in defining God’s kingdom. The kingdom is first and foremost about *God’s* reign, secondarily human vice-regency, and thirdly the realm of God’s reign.

First, the kingdom is first and foremost a statement about God; that he reigns. The kingdom of God is not the culmination of human potential and effort but the intervention of God's royal grace into a sinful and broken world. Second, God reigns not only *over* humanity but also *through* humanity. Third, the message of the kingdom is not an escape from earth to heaven, but the very renewal of the heavens and the earth.

The design, of course, did not make it past Genesis 2 before sin fractured the relationship with God, shattered the goodness of his creation, and derailed humanity's mission to "fill the earth and subdue it" to the glory of God (Gen 1:28; cf. Psalm 8). Rather than going forth from Eden to expand the blessing of God's royal presence, they are banished from the garden to a wandering existence that instead spreads the curse.

This is where we see the coming of the kingdom in redemption. After the fall, God's kingdom remained the eschatological goal, although now in the form not only of eschatology but redemption. It was this kingdom—the *redemptive* reign of God—that Jesus proclaimed throughout his ministry. Jesus is the servant-king through whom God establishes his reign over all the earth. Christ not only fulfills the promises of the kingdom, he reveals the fullness of its meaning. The kingdom of God is God's *redemptive* reign through *Christ* and his *reconciled* servant-kings over the *new* creation. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the promises of the kingdom have *already* been fulfilled, though they will *not yet* be consummated until the second coming.

STR: *Why is the "kingdom of God" a vital concept to understand Jesus' cross?*

Treat: The theme of the kingdom of God both gives the narrative framework for the cross and captures in a very holistic way the aim of the cross. I'll explain each of these aspects briefly. First, the unfolding story of God's reign coming on earth as it is in heaven provides more than mere background for the cross; it is the story for which the cross is the climax. Not only is the kingdom a major theme from the Old Testament that begs for fulfillment, but Jesus himself frames his entire ministry with the coming of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:15). In the gospel of Mark, for example, Jesus proclaims his kingdom mission (Mark 1:1–8:21), explains its paradoxical nature (Mark 8:22–10:52), and then establishes the kingdom on the cross (Mark 11–16:8). While kingdom and cross are often set at odds, Mark reveals that the messianic mission culminates at Golgotha, where the crucified king establishes his kingdom by

way of the cross. One cannot properly understand the cross apart from the kingdom of God.

Second, the kingdom theme reveals the holistic aim of Christ's atoning death on the cross. Jesus came to bring God's kingdom (God's renewing reign over all creation), and he did so by going to the cross. This is why Paul glories in how God has "transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13) and then immediately declares the reconciliation of "all things" by the blood of Christ's cross (Col 1:20). Jesus went to the cross to save sinners, but he also "made us a kingdom" (Rev 1:6). The kingdom theme emphasizes the scope of salvation: God's loving rule over his creation (which also includes the defeat of his enemies; see Col 2:14–15). The creation-wide scope of salvation, however, does not flatten out God's purposes or priorities. Jesus went to the cross to save sinners, and in their wake, to renew all of his creation (see Romans 8). Christ's salvation is aimed at both the church and the cosmos, but in proper order. The church is the *focus* of salvation; the cosmos, the *scope* of salvation. At the heart of the coming kingdom is the covenant relationship with the king.

STR: *If this is the case, then how has scholarship and the Church missed this connection?*

Treat: Although there has always been confusion with or resistance to the paradoxical integration of kingdom and cross, such a stark division has not always been the case. In the first century, Barnabas declared that "the kingdom of Jesus is based on the wooden cross" (*Epistle of Barnabas* 8:5). According to Augustine, "The Lord has established his sovereignty from a tree. Who is it who fights with wood? Christ. From his cross he has conquered kings."

I believe that the kingdom-cross divide is an essentially modern problem (contra NT Wright, who blames the kingdom-cross divide primarily on the creeds of the early church and the theology of the Reformers). The kingdom-cross interplay, though largely absent today, has a rich heritage in the history of the church. I believe that there are at least six reasons that kingdom and cross have been divorced.

1. Reactionary debates: The collision between the social gospel movement of the early twentieth century and the ensuing conservative response often resulted in pendulum-swinging reductionism; either the kingdom without the cross or the cross without the kingdom.
2. The fragmentation of Scripture: If the Bible is not a unified whole, then there is no need to integrate the

seemingly incompatible ideas that God reigns and the Son of God dies.

3. The ugly ditch between biblical and systematic theology: The disciplinary divide that we spoke about above has often restricted the kingdom of God only to the discipline of biblical theology.
4. The gospels withheld as a source for theology: Kingdom and cross have not been integrated because the gospels (the place in the canon where the kingdom theme is most explicit) have largely been withheld as a source for theology.
5. Development of the states and offices of Christ: If Christ's work is divided neatly into the two categories of humiliation and exaltation, with the cross being only in the state of humiliation, then it is difficult to see how it could relate to the kingdom at all. If Christ's death is interpreted only in terms of his priestly office, then it will be troublesome to connect the cross to the kingdom.
6. Misunderstanding kingdom or cross respectively: To state the obvious, if one has a mistaken view of the kingdom or the cross respectively, then properly relating the two will be impossible.

STR: *One powerful point in your work is the idea that Jesus "establishes" his kingdom by the cross. What do you mean by this?*

Treat: Yes, the kingdom of God is established on earth by Christ's atoning death on the cross. *Establish* signals that Christ's atoning death is the decisive moment, though certainly not the only significant moment. God's kingdom was present in Jesus' life, proclaimed in his preaching, glimpsed in his miracles/exorcisms, established by his death, inaugurated through the resurrection, is being advanced by the Holy Spirit through the church, and will be consummated in Christ's return. The promise of the kingdom entailed forgiveness of sins, victory over enemies, and a new exodus—each were accomplished through Christ's work, the apex of which was the cross.

STR: *How does your analysis on kingdom and cross impact your understanding of the atonement?*

Treat: The implications are immense. The unfortunate trend in systematic theology has been to pit atonement theories against one another: on the cross Jesus *either* conquered sin and Satan *or* removed guilt *or* offered an example of self-giving love. But according to the biblical story of redemption, Jesus' atoning

death is a multifaceted accomplishment. The glory of the cross cannot be reduced to only one aspect of its accomplishment.

Penal substitution and *Christus Victor* have been the leading “theories” of atonement and they’ve often times been presented as mutually exclusive. I try to show that not only do we need to uphold the victory *and* propitiation of the cross, we need to understand how they fit together. I argue that Christ’s penal-substitutionary death is the means for his victory on the cross—*Christus Victor* through penal substitution. Yes, Jesus is victorious on the cross; but *how* does he accomplish this victory? It’s not by brute force. There are many different parts to this argument (and penal substitution doesn’t carry all the weight), but the most obvious is that Satan’s power over humanity is his power of accusation. But when Jesus, as the substitute, pays the penalty for sin and satisfies God’s justice, Satan is disarmed of his accusatory power. His power of accusation has been rendered ineffective against those who are declared innocent and righteous in Christ.

Inasmuch as the coming of God’s kingdom entails God’s defeat of evil and reconciliation of sinners, *Christus Victor* and penal substitution are both essential aspects to Christ’s kingdom-establishing death on the cross.

STR: *What are the implications of penal substitution and Christus Victor for your broader argument about the kingdom and the cross?*

Treat: There are at least three reasons why penal substitution must be attached to *Christus Victor* in connecting kingdom and cross. First, if our sins have not been dealt with, then the coming of God’s kingdom is *not* good news. Christ’s victory over Satan, demons, and death is a glorious accomplishment, but if our sins have not been atoned for, we remain under the wrath of God and outside his kingdom. *Christus Victor* alone implies that humans are merely victims of Satan who need to be rescued from the problem rather than sinners who are part of the problem. But even with Satan defeated and shackles broken, only those whose penalty has been paid can enter as citizens into the kingdom of God.

Second, penal substitution is crucial to the storyline of Scripture culminating in the kingdom of God. *Christus Victor* has recently been acclaimed by scholars who have sought to recover the eschatological framework of the cross. From Gen 3:15 forward, the victory of Christ is crucial to the story. Yes, but this argument is usually made in opposition to penal substitution, which is depicted as the result of abstract, ahistorical

systematic theology. The problem with this interpretation is that penal substitution should be understood within the story of redemption. The concepts of sin and the wrath of God are woven throughout the unfolding story of Israel, culminating in the song of the suffering servant (Isa 52:13–53:12). As Graham Cole says, “If we remove the wrath theme from Scripture, its storyline is eviscerated.”

Third, penal substitution is imperative for upholding the justice of the coming of God’s kingdom. The irony is thick: though the kingdom of God and a penal substitutionary interpretation of the cross both appeal strongly to the concept of justice, the two are rarely associated. The Old Testament declares, “Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his [the LORD’s] throne” (Ps 97:2) and prophecies that the messiah will establish and uphold his kingdom with justice and righteousness (Isa 9:7; cf. Ps 89:14; Jer 23:5). So if the kingdom is established with justice, then where is the justice of God revealed in its fullest? Justice is revealed at the cross, where Jesus was “put forward as a propitiation . . . to show God’s righteousness” (Rom 3:24–25). In other words, penal substitution upholds the justice of God in atonement, which is an essential aspect of the coming of the kingdom of God. The coming of God’s kingdom, including the defeat of evil and the salvation of his people, must be in accordance with God’s just character.

STR: *How has the threefold office (prophet, priest, and king) helped and hindered our understanding of the “crucified King”?*

Treat: I am greatly appreciative of the threefold office as a theological heuristic. I think it is a way of understanding Christ that draws from the story of Israel and emphasizes the multifaceted nature of Christ’s person and work. But unfortunately, the threefold office has often been over-systematized: Jesus is a prophet in his life, a priest in his death, and a king in his resurrection. Although there may be a hint of truth here, these clear lines separate what Scripture holds together.

According to Scripture, Jesus is anointed as king at his baptism (Matt 3:13–17); recognized as a king throughout his ministry (John 1:49; 6:15); and, as the triumphal entry makes clear (Matt 21:1–11), Jesus approaches the cross *as king* seeking to establish his kingdom. The gospel writers are bent on showing that the cross is a *royal* accomplishment. In the gospel of Mark, for example, half of the uses of the word “king” show up in the crucifixion account in Mark 15. What fallen human understanding fails to perceive, the centurion below

the cross recognizes: “truly this is the son of God”—a royal title.

So let’s continue to use the threefold office, but in a way where we uphold the importance of all three offices and where they are integrated in our understanding of the person and work of Christ.

STR: *If you don’t mind, can we turn to the relationship between “the kingdom of God,” the “cross,” and the gospel of Jesus Christ? How are these three concepts related? In your view, what is the essence of the gospel and how should we define the gospel?*

Treat: Kingdom and cross are, of course, tied together biblically by the proclamation of the gospel, which is defined as both the coming of God’s kingdom (Mark 1:15) and Christ’s death and resurrection (1 Cor 15:3–4). There is one gospel with many aspects and a variety of entry points. In this fully-orbed gospel, the kingdom and the cross need not vie for position because they play different roles in the gospel story. The cross is the climax of the kingdom story, where the Messiah brings the kingdom by way of the cross. The kingdom is the aim of the cross, and the cross is the foundation for the kingdom.

Although the gospel could be defined in an assortment of ways, I offer the following summary definition (rooted in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4 and Mark 1:14–15): *The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose from the dead as the fulfillment of the promised kingdom of God.* Through Christ’s death “for our sins” and resurrection from the dead, the lost are forgiven of sin, reconciled to God, and given new life in the living Christ. However, in 1 Cor 15:3–4, the twice-repeated phrase “according to the Scriptures” reveals that Christ’s death and resurrection are part of a broader story. And what story is that? I would say that it is a kingdom story; the same one that Jesus said he was fulfilling (Mark 1:15). In other words, the “according to the scriptures” of 1 Cor 15:3–4 places Christ’s death and resurrection within the coming kingdom that the Old Testament anticipated and that Jesus announced (Mark 1:15).

The good news of the kingdom and the cross sprouts forth from the soil of the Old Testament. Although these paradoxical themes are intertwined throughout the story, the apex of Old Testament prophecy is the suffering servant of Isaiah. While the fourth servant song (Isa 52:13–53:12) has often been upheld as one of the clearest explanations of substitutionary atonement (and rightfully so), most do not acknowledge its royal context. The book of Isaiah builds an-

ticipation that God would restore his rule over creation through a messianic figure (ie, Isaiah 9, 11, 35), culminating in the “good news” of God’s reign in Isa 52:7. The promise of God’s kingdom, also expressed in terms of a new exodus, then finds its resolution in the surprising figure of the suffering servant of Isa 52:13–53:12. Understanding the suffering servant within the proper canonical context provides a kingdom framework for the sin-bearing, sorrow-carrying, punishment-averting, guilt-offering, place-taking, atoning death of the royal servant. The coming of the kingdom of God hinges on the suffering of the servant.

If Isaiah provides sweeping narrative for understanding the good news of the crucified king, Paul sums it up in a phrase: Christ crucified. This phrase is often heard as sheer emphasis on the cross, but when one remembers that “Christ” meant a messianic, and ultimately royal, figure, it is easy to see how Paul held Christ’s majesty and meekness closely. The gospel is news because a king died. It’s good news because he died for us.

Lastly, there’s a lot of talk these days about “what is the gospel?” and some have rightly overcome the false dichotomy of gospel of the kingdom *or* gospel of the cross. But let’s be clear here: we are not the first to care about this, nor the first to uphold kingdom and cross. Martin Luther focused immensely on justification through the cross, and yet could say, “The gospel is a story about Christ, God’s and David’s son, who died and was raised and is established as Lord. This is the Gospel in a nutshell.” Yes, Jesus’ death and resurrection, but within the broader story of Jesus reclaiming God’s rightful dominion.

STR: *What does one lose if they neglect either the cross or the kingdom in their understanding of the gospel?*

Treat: The cross is absolutely indispensable to the good news of Jesus Christ. From the bruised heel of Gen 3:15 to the reigning lamb of Rev 22:1, the Bible is a redemptive story of a crucified messiah who brings the kingdom through his atoning death on the cross. Lose the cross and you lose the storyline of Scripture; in fact, you lose Christianity. As Paul said, “The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.” The kingdom comes in power, but power of the gospel is Christ crucified.

Furthermore, without Christ crucified, we’re left to a kingdom without a king. As H. Richard Niebuhr once de-

scribed liberal theology: “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” To press even further, without the cross, the coming of God’s kingdom is not even good news (for us at least), for if we are not justified by the blood of Christ then we are enemies of the king and guilty before his righteousness. Only through the good news of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection can we rejoice as sons and daughters of the king.

We cannot, however, forget that the one who died for us is our king. The kingdom of God is essential to a biblical understanding of the gospel. There are four reasons as to why we need this kingdom aspect of the gospel. First, we need the kingdom aspect because it emphasizes the narrative of Scripture. We need this so that we don’t slip into rationalist propositions, only thinking of the gospel as bullet points—God, man, sin, salvation—in a way that has nothing to do with the storyline of the Bible.

Second, the kingdom aspect of the gospel rightly emphasizes community. We are ransomed *into the church*; the community of the king. We need this community emphasis of the kingdom so that we don’t slip into American individualism where it’s all about me.

Third, the kingdom emphasizes the scope of salvation. Salvation is not a matter of God tossing his creation and plucking our souls. Rather, through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, God is restoring his broken creation. We need this so that we don’t slip into a Gnostic anti-materialism. God cares about your soul, your body, and all of his creation.

Fourth, the kingdom aspect of the gospel emphasizes discipleship. We are saved not only by the King, but in order to follow the King. We need this so we don’t slip into a cheap grace or an easy believism that amounts to saying a prayer or coming forward during an altar call while never having any change in your life. That’s not the call of Jesus nor is it the proper response to the gospel. We are ransomed by the blood of Jesus into a kingdom where we follow our King.

STR: *Where does the connection between cross and kingdom leave the Church? What we mean is this: how then shall the Church live in light of the connection between cross and kingdom?*

Treat: The kingdom-cross interplay significantly impacts following Christ today. We live on this side of the cross but in between the “already” and the “not yet” of the kingdom. So we must (1) understand the nature of God’s kingdom as a cruciform

kingdom, (2) find our role within it, and (3) discover what it means to be a disciple of a king who ruled by serving.

The cross creates a community of ransomed people living under the reign of God. Inasmuch as God's kingdom is founded and forever shaped by the cross of Christ, it is truly a *cruciform* kingdom. The resurrected Jesus still bore the scars of the cross and rules from the throne as the lamb who was slain. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, "A king who dies on the cross must be the King of a rather strange kingdom." A strange kingdom indeed. For while the kingdoms of this world are built by force, the kingdom of God is founded on grace. The French General Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) once said, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires; but what foundation did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ founded an empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him."

Furthermore, just as God *established* his kingdom through the humble means of Christ's cross, so does he *advance* his kingdom through Christians who have been united to the resurrected Christ and who by the power of his Spirit are being conformed to the cross. Christians have been swept into the kingdom story, but we do not build the kingdom for God, we receive it from God (Heb 11:28). Our calling is to witness to the kingdom of God and we do so, shockingly, by taking up our crosses. God's power is made perfect in weakness and his strength is revealed through our feeble dependence on him. What's true for Jesus is true for us: Greatness in the kingdom is characterized by service and sacrifice.

The inseparability of the kingdom and the cross is a constant reminder that we are not only forgiven through the cross but we are made followers of the king. We are saved *from* sin and the kingdom of darkness, but we are saved *for* Jesus and his kingdom of light. The self-giving love of God displayed in the cross creates a people who lovingly give of themselves for the well-being of others. The kingdom of God is marked by justice, and those who have been justified before God have more reason than any to seek justice for the weak, the poor, and the oppressed.

STR: *In your view, what do you hope your work offers productively so the Church can hear God better in Scripture?*

Treat: I believe the purpose of theology is to glorify God and edify the church, so that is my prayer for this book. May we glory in the cross of Christ as we receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The church is the people of the cross, and yet we are

an outpost of the kingdom of God, a proleptic sign to an evil age of life under the benevolent reign of a crucified king.

I also hope that this book spurs on others to continue the conversation. By no means do I think I've said the final word and I look forward to dialoguing with others. In fact, one of my greatest joys since the book has been published has been the global response from non-Westerners. The story of a slain lamb who reigns on the throne over those ransomed from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev 5:9–10) seems fitting for a world that is awakening to the beauty and necessity of global theology.

STR: *STR appreciates that you have a pastor's heart. What fruit have you seen develop (even in your local church) from understanding and embracing Jesus as the "crucified king"?*

Treat: Inasmuch as Christ is at the center of all we do, it affects everything. More specifically, we recently finished preaching through the gospel according Matthew and the kingdom-cross interplay was certainly present throughout the entire series. There were so many ways that many of the points I've made above came to fruition, but perhaps the clearest was the inseparability of Christology and discipleship (although we certainly didn't preach it in those terms). For Christ *and* Christians, the way of glory is the way of the cross.

STR: *Jeremy, thanks for giving of your time to talk with us about your important work. We pray that it would continue to serve to lift high the Name of Jesus.*

