

Jesus is more than a spiritual consultant, He is King.

King Jesus

by Nathan Derenski

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KING JESUS

LIVING WITH A KING, IN A WORLD OF CONSULTANTS



NATHAN DERENSKI

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Chapter 3: Is He a Consultant or a King?

“In some circles, God has been abridged, reduced, modified, edited, changed and amended until He is no longer the God whom Isaiah saw, high and lifted up.”

AW Tozer

We love Jesus the Savior; we love the imagery of Him being on the cross dying for our sins. Christianity as a culture has even adopted the cross as our global symbol. There are literally thousands of songs that we sing about the redemption that Jesus has purchased for us. We also love the image of Jesus being our *future* King. There is an inherent problem, however, with viewing him as our *current* Savior and *future* King. Jesus is our King right now. In the very moment that you read these words, He is our King. We are quick to defer His Kingship to some future date. We are fine with the future King that’s spoken of in the book of Revelation that has Lord of Lords and King of Kings written on His thighs, riding on a white horse in power and victory. But the victory has already been won, friend. Jesus is King, right now, in this moment - Jesus is our King.

If Jesus is just our Savior, then we need not obey Him. As Savior He offers us the gift of salvation, which we may choose to reject or not. But if He is our King, then we must submit to His Kingship and dominion over our lives. It is not just about believing in Jesus; millions of people do that. But do we obey His commands? Jesus said, “If you love me you would keep my commands”. Obedience is a requirement. But somehow we try to rationalize our way out of this full and reckless obedience to Jesus. We maintain only token obedience to Him as long as it aligns with our desires or worldview.

When we don't view Jesus as our King, we turn Him into more of a consultant than an actual King. Consultants gather information, present it, and then we are left to make the final decision on if we will follow their recommendations or not. We use them to make ourselves or our businesses better. But if we think that their proposals are too costly or will in some way be ineffective, we are able to reject their thoughts and find a better consultant, one who is more apt to tell us what we want to hear.

But if Jesus is a King, then we *must* humbly submit to His purposes and plans for our lives. Consultants

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come and go, but like Psalm 10:16 states, “The Lord is King forever and ever.” His kingship does not come and go after a few passing decades, but continues throughout eternity.

Perhaps the story of the rich young ruler illustrates this point better than most. It reveals that Jesus is always more concerned with the condition of our hearts than our token obedience.

Mark 10:17–22 (ESV)

¹⁷ *And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* ¹⁸ *And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”* ¹⁹ *You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’* ²⁰ *And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.”* ²¹ *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”*

²² *Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

So we have this man, this Rich Young Ruler, as Matthew and Luke call him. One of the very odd parts about this interaction is that his name is never mentioned.

NEVER. This is odd because in so many of Jesus' interactions we clearly read the names of the people; both those who were in authority (Joseph of Arimathea, Caiaphas The High Priest, Herod and Pontius Pilate, Jairus) and those who were not (Mary Magdalene, Blind Bartimaeus). Rich or poor, so many people who interacted with Jesus are named. Yet, here is this young man who probably had a large amount of influence and fame that remained nameless.

His entire identity is summed up in three words: Rich, Young, Ruler. This young man completely became his labels. I think many of us do the exact same thing. We become the guy who is funny, or the strong silent type. The woman who is always willing to stay late and work overtime. Maybe you're the guy who always shops at that certain store, the girl who swears she's going to be famous one day or the guy who is

really good at acting. Then there's the really nice girl, or the person who won't take anything off of anybody, the rich kid, the jock, the gamer. The list could go on and on.

And slowly our lives are completely summed up in a few short labels - just like this young man: He was the rich – young – ruler.

I love that Jesus is so personal in this interaction. He cuts through all of the exterior labels that this man has become when we get to verse twenty-one:

²¹ And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing..."

What I believe this rich young ruler lacked was a full and unmeasured devotion to the Kingdom of God. He failed to identify who Jesus was. Without that, our hearts will always lack a measure of fullness. I imagine someone in this young man's position probably had attended the very best of schools. He very likely had spent his life interacting with some of society's best and brightest. He would have been used to hearing advice and tips on everything from life to business to religion.

So when the young rabbi named Jesus began to rise in fame and power, this rich young ruler probably looked to him for the latest piece of advice on serving God under Roman rule. Little did he know that Jesus was going to tell him so much more.

Jesus' point in leaving heaven to come live among us was not to provide His followers with a new rule book, a list of do's and don'ts that you could tick off one by one, in order to sit back satisfied at the end of a successfully moral day. The point was to illustrate an attitude of heart and a lightness of spirit in the face of all that the world can throw at you. At the center of all of this is what motivates and gives color to the whole: you are to live this way, because that's what God is like.

When you begin to truly recognize the Kingship and authority of Christ, regardless of situations, circumstances or season of life, everything changes. The good, bad, and even the ugly parts of life matter less, because God is enough. You can trust Him when He tells us in Psalm 34 that those who trust Him will lack no good thing. This is what it looks like when Jesus is your King.

Or do you live with a consultant mentality? This stems from denying the reign of Christ, and will only lead to empty habits in our lives. Ask yourself these questions:

Does your relationship with God depend on if you've had a good day, or if you've done all of the right stuff? Does your mouth speak things you are not proud of? The Bible states that, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. If you have gossip, doubt, petty discussions, arguments, or vulgar things come out of your mouth, you are revealing the condition of your heart. Do you think getting the right person's approval or achieving a higher social status will make you feel better?

We must understand that obedience is the currency of the Kingdom. Our lives will always be about obedience. Our natural tendency is to constantly think about how other people perceive us. What do they think about us? Will they still like us if we do what Christ has called us to do? What happens if they no longer approve of me? But Jesus' primary concern is this: are we willing to follow and obey him?

²¹ *And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”* ²² *Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.*

You always have a choice to call Jesus your King or your consultant. If He is your consultant, you have the option to take what he says and do it or not. He becomes just another subject matter expert whose advice you can take or leave. There is no pressure to adhere to His statements; they become more like suggestions than commands.

Jesus the consultant points you into the direction of moralistic therapeutic deism. This means in essence that God only desires for you to be a “good” person who lives a good life. This version of Jesus will give you a ten-step guide to living a long and “blessed” life. He is a twisted combination of the Son of God and the American Dream. Thankfully, that man is not the Jesus of the Bible. That Jesus required obedience; He didn’t simply suggest it.

If, however, Jesus is your King, there is no choice. It is obedience only. There is no other option in the

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equation. To this rich young ruler there was always a choice. Jesus was merely another voice telling him what he should do. He was not *the voice* telling him what to do. The one thing this rich young ruler lacked was unrivaled devotion to God.

Following Jesus is not about you being a big deal. The rich young ruler was probably pretty famous; let's face it, he was rich, he was young, and he was a ruler. This has all of the trappings of fame and influence in a society. It is extremely likely that he was well known and had some social circles that would demand an answer if he began to recklessly follow Jesus. I can imagine him thinking, "What will people think if I sell everything and follow this man?" Sadly, he missed Jesus's point.

Jesus isn't against you if you're popular or famous. He loves you the same, regardless. But perhaps this rich young ruler liked the fame and notoriety a little too much. We are not privy to why, but at the core of what's happening in this interaction is this: Jesus is asking this particular young man to give up his identity and wealth in order to become who Jesus wants him to be.

And the rich young ruler walks away sad, probably a little upset that Jesus would ask him to give up everything. How could He do such a thing? Didn't Jesus know who he was? Or perhaps more likely it was because to this rich young ruler, Jesus was a consultant he could walk away from, not a King demanding obedience.

Our struggle to live with Christ as our King lies in the core belief that what we have is truly ours. When we begin to recognize that everything we possess belongs to God, we surrender our rights of ownership. When we are simply stewards of our possessions, it becomes much easier to give up everything for the sake of Christ.

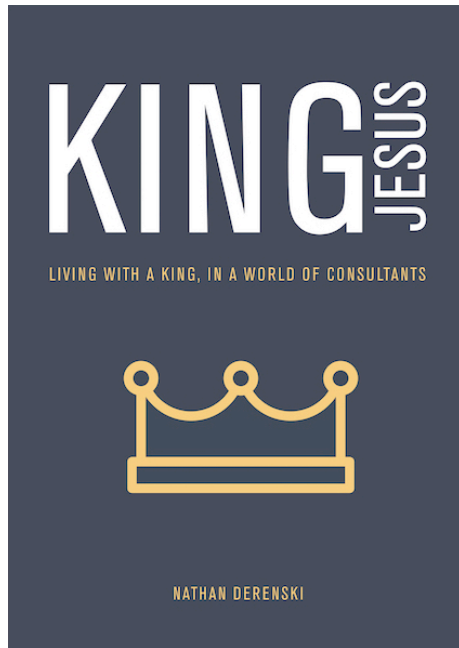
This is the great conundrum of our lives. We think we are giving away our rights, our identities and even our possessions. But in reality we are not simply giving these things away, we are releasing them from our grasp in order to obtain something of far greater worth.

In a stark contrast to the rich young ruler, Jesus tells a parable describing someone who found a hidden treasure. That man goes out and sells everything he has to purchase the field that the treasure was hidden in. I imagine this man's friends and family were questioning

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what he was doing going around and selling everything that he owned. Think of his children's concerns as they began wondering if there would be an inheritance for them. His wife may have started questioning their family's financial security, while the neighbors began to gossip that he was ruining the family. On and on this would go while sales were made and deeds exchanged, over the course of weeks or months. Yet this man's sole focus would be on one thing: the great treasure he would be able to obtain when everything else was gone.

He knew something the others had not comprehended. He knew that if he was willing to let go of everything that he had, he would in turn gain more than he ever imagined. When we view Jesus as a consultant, we only look at what He asks us to give up or what we may be losing. Is he asking us to give money to some cause, or perhaps challenging how we treat certain people in our lives? When we allow Him to become our King, we are able to see all that He desires to give us. His desire for us will always be far better than even our desires for ourselves.



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