

The King of Higher Power

Series: Who is this King?

Brad Bailey – Dec. 18, 2022

Intro

Welcome you into this time of looking towards the celebration of Christmas... **final week** before the **holiday**.

We do well to realize that the very word holiday... means "holy day." The word holiday has become associated with days off from work and school... but the deeper meaning refers to that which is holy.

Beneath all the cultural sentiments...lies something holy... something of a deeper wonder... in the birth of Christ.

Christmas... "Christmas" is an Old English word, constructed from the combination of two words, namely "Christ" and "Mass". The term "Christ" is not a name...but a designation... that comes from the Greek word Christós (Χριστός) ... meaning "anointed" one. [1] Jesus is referred to as Jesus the Christ... r Jesus Christ... because he is the fulfillment of the representation of God coming to rule.

Those God had called out and formed as the nation of Israel... had said they wanted a king... so they could have the same symbols of power as the other nations around them. God warns them where that can lead...but allows them to identify a king. Over times some were better than others...but each had some weaknesses. When Israel was now divided and under oppressions, God spoke through the words of the prophet Isaiah ...and spoke of one to come.

Isaiah 9:2,6-7

On those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.**

**And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

**Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.**

These words were spoken 700 years before the birth of Christ.

And then a messenger from God comes to a young woman named Mary... pledged to be married... telling her that she would give birth to a son...who will be called the Son of the Most High... and of his kingdom there will be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)

In Jesus Christ, **time and eternity meet**. As the Apostle Paul writes in the Scriptures, Colossians 1:15-17 [2]

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷ He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. - Colossians 1:15-17

That which exists before and beyond all of creation... will now be among you... and he represents that which transcends all time and space as you know it. [3]

The source of all of creation... was embodied in human flesh.

He who is Spirit is born into boundaries of time and space...

As C.S. Lewis described in The Chronicles of Narnia:

***"Once in our world, a Stable had something in it that was bigger than our whole world."* — C.S. Lewis**

Jesus is NOT just a king, as in one of many. He is **THE King**. The Ruler of all the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5). He is **directly given the title: “King of kings and Lord of lords”** (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). **To be a king** means to have **power and sovereignty**. To be King over all kings is to **have ALL** the power and sovereignty...**as king of heaven and earth**.

And if we dare to look... what we see is that child confronts the powers of this world at their core. He was born amidst arguably the **most dominant empire in human history**... the Roman Empire... just after it's **emperor...Ceasar...**had declared himself akin to a deity. Here the **powers of this world ...ruled in all their glory**.
> And into this empire... **on the outer edges... a child was born.**

What arose was dramatic...and defining.

When he was finally brought before Pilate... the representative ruler of the Roman Empire... Pilate found himself facing a power unlike any other. On the one hand.... He didn't feel threatened as Jesus made no claim to be a king interested in overthrowing Rome...but at the same time... Jesus seemed indifferent to Rome's power.

John 18:36 (AMP)

Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world [nor does it have its origin in this world]. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting [hard] to keep Me from being handed over ...but as it is, My kingdom is not of this world.”

My kingdom - the kingdom that is mine - is not of this world. **Neither now nor at any future period will it derive its origin from this world.** His royal power and state are not furnished by earthly force, or fleshly ordinances, or **physical energies**, or **material wealth**, or **imperial armies**. [4]

The kingdom **derives its resources** and its **energies "from above."**

Today, all we see of ancient Rome is ruins. Caesar's mighty legions and the pomp of Roman imperial power have faded into oblivion. Yet how is Jesus remembered today? What is his enduring influence?

- **More books** have been written about Jesus than about any other person in history.
- **Nations have used his words as the bedrock of their governments.** According to Durant, “The triumph of Christ was the beginning of democracy.”²
- His **Sermon on the Mount** established a new paradigm in **ethics and morals**.
- **Schools, hospitals, and humanitarian works** have been founded in his name. **Over 100 great universities** — including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, Columbia, and Oxford – were begun by his followers.
- **The elevated role of women** in Western culture traces its roots back to Jesus. (Women in Jesus' day were considered inferior and virtual nonpersons until his teaching was followed.)
- **Slavery was abolished in Britain and America** due to Jesus' teaching that each human life is valuable.
- **More lives claim him their Lord and Savior than any other.**

What we see is a King who **bears a higher power**...and a defiance of this world powers...

Earthly kings are known for being **born into royalty**... for **lavish lifestyles**... for being **lifted up from where they can look down** on others....for being served...for demanding loyalty by fear and force. And most notably...all such kingdoms.... are brought to an end. [5]

And it would be easy to **simply see in Christ a critique** of the power of **kings and dictators of this world**. But as we look at Jesus... I believe that **the powers of this world which he defies... are still powers we still trust in varying degrees**.
So I encourage us to let his defiance challenge us.

And the first is this...

1. Christ defies the power of prominence and prosperity.

An earthly king is known for their prominence and prosperity.

The castle and the palace are theirs... and the people find security in the power of such prominence.

And a king is known by their claim to all wealth.

The people may resent it ...but the truth is that everyone wants it...it becomes a source of strength and security.

The power of prominence and prosperity affects us all.

The most embraced power in this world is prominence... social status... being recognized and affirmed by others.

In his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), **Oscar Wilde** teased: ***“There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.”***

The world has always had some element of social status... and then of a few famous lives...and then celebrities...and now social influencers.

While the lavish wealth and attention may cause a rolling of the eyes...may be a little offensive... there is a far larger reality...in which we live vicariously through the bigger than life life.

Marketing has found that celebrities provide the most profitable returns in advertising. [6]

We may cringe at the idea of social status... we may pretend it doesn't matter... but it does. And there is **nothing wrong** with a **basic desire for attention**... but when we trust in our social position and social status as a means to power... we will seek prominence and prosperity...which by their nature... are **based on superiority and separation from others**.

Jesus defied the power that resides in a fortress ...and to which one must be granted permission to speak to them.

Jesus is born into social obscurity. He had come with nothing that separated him from the most common condition of humanity.

Born to **two social outcasts**...in a barn. It might correlate today with being born in a homeless encampment... or a housing project in Watts... small town everyone left when the coal mining ended. He became a refugee in Egypt by the age of two....until about 6. (Matthew 2:13-14)
And eventually worked as a carpenter.

And then his ministry we see Jesus in places kings seldom go.

We see Jesus **stopping for those on the side of the road**... who no one saw any more.

We see him **engaging a Samaritan woman** who had had five husbands and was living with a man who wasn't her husband! We see Jesus bending down on the ground to be with a woman accused of adultery. He leans in close to hear her voice when nobody else bothered to listen.

And we can be certain that today...Jesus is in **refugee camps** among the displaced...**those incarcerated for their wrongs**.... in shelters where women have sought refuge from abusers...and **those left on the side of the roads by religious leaders**.

1. Christ defies the power of prominence and prosperity ... and bore the power to meet humanity in all it's weakness.

We tend to vie for equality based on everyone being just fine.

Christ came to the sick and the broken... because he saw everyone as equally in need.

He cared for the unseen.

It didn't matter if others saw it... liked it...or valued it.

And that may be at the root of the issue.

“Jesus wasn't defined and driven to perform for the audience around him...as much as the audience within him. He had an inner spiritual attention and prominence in his relationship with the Father.”

He cultivated his relationship with the Father. He said I do what the Father is doing and speak what the Father is speaking.

He called us into that relationship.

That is why he is focused on us being reconciled with God...and knowing the Father.

The ruler of all creation is not some indifferent king...he is also our heavenly father.

- Fathers delight in the successful emerging of their sons and daughters while kings are often threatened by the growth of their subjects.

The point is not that gaining **attention or affirmation for what we do is bad**. In our various fields or focus of fascination... whether academics or arts or athletics.... the **contributions can be significant**... sometimes to human good... and it's **fitting to have such accomplishments valued** by other who they served.

The point is to value the one who sees first and fully...which is God.

The point is that **we generally fear obscurity ...because we have no internal life with God.** [7]

This is the liberation Christ brings.

While every earthly king brings a prominence that separates them... **Christ brings the presence of God.** And it is a liberating presence.

There is **no gift we can receive this Christmas...**that can **bring more peace...**than the **presence of Christ.**

2. Christ defies the power of using authority to be served.

The way of the king in this world...is that which uses their authority to require others to serve their personal needs.

Whether the position one has is deemed to be by some **special heritage** ...or by some **governing structure**... we have come to deem that **power lies in being served by others.**

But Christ confronts this very idea.

Mark 10:41-45

Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

These are the words that describe the way of the eternal kingdom... the eternal realm...and the higher power that rules.

2. Christ defies the power of using authority to be served... and bore the power to give himself in service and sacrifice.

If we take a look at those who demand the service of others most.... We will find not strength...but weakness.

When we look at Jesus...we see the strength that is able to give.

And he was quite clear.... That **no one simply “took his life”...he said he gave it.**

So we must ask...who is more powerful...he who takes a life or he who gives up their life?
The answer to that question will determine who the one born in Bethlehem long ago will be to us.

This world believes that the greatest power lies in what we get.
Jesus defies such power... and teaches us that **it is better to give than receive.**

I can't help but **think of a man who was born around 280AD...** in Patara, Lycia... a **small Roman town in present-day Turkey.** At a young age, **Nicolas lost both of his parents.**

He could have held onto his inheritance as a source of social identity... but he found freedom in his life with God...and began to give to those in need... with as little attention as possible.

One story tells how he helped three poor sisters. Their father did not have enough money to pay their dowries and thought of selling them into servitude or worse. Nicholas secretly went to their house at night and put bags of money inside. **He served his city** as a businessman, a judge and a lawyer who stood up for justice. **He also served as a pastor...and later as bishop...and finally was given the title of Saint. Saint Nicolas.** You may have heard of him. While his reputation spread and took on a lot of different cultural forms over time... the **real root of his life was following the higher power** that comes in giving even more than receiving...and serving even more than being served.

It was the way in which Nicholas gave in secret, alert to others' needs, and expecting nothing for himself in return...that he showed the way of Christ.

Such acts of charity were almost unknown before his time...but their impact spread. When he began his life... in his town....those who followed the way of Christ were a small and persecuted group...but by the end of his life... faith in Christ had become the prevailing force. [8]

And finally... we see that...

3. Christ defies the power of human force.

This world has long known the power of fear and force.
It seems inherent to powers that every kingdom and king must hold over those they rule.

While the Bible speaks of the governments of this world bearing the sword as a means to contain evil... there is a very different tendency to use force and fear to simply to maintain personal positions and power.

Many will recall that there were magi that had discovered signs that this child destined to be king was being born in Judea...so they traveled there... and when the local king heard about this child...he was so threatened that he had every male child less than two years old killed...just to kill this potential competition.

It is such a dramatic start to the coming of Christ that raising the striking contrast.
He did not receive the throne by killing his enemies, but by dying at the hands of his enemies for the world under their power.

While none of us carry the violence of King Herod... there is still a part of us that has a strange relationship with control and force. A part of us doesn't like control...but can also believe we need to control even what we can't. A part of us doesn't like the use of force...but sometimes we justify using coercion rather than accepting the power of choice that others have.

But Jesus defied such force.

When he was being arrested...one of his followers pulled their knife and began to attack the soldiers... and Jesus instructed him to put down his sword..
He said his kingdom is not won by such force.
He said, those who kill by the sword will die by the sword.
Violence only begets violence.

We tend to see physical force as the ultimate power.
But force and coercion are actually among the lowest forms of power.
The highest power is that of love. It is love that transforms the human soul from within.

This is the power highest power.
As the Bible says...God is love. That is the at the core of Gods nature.
And it is that love from which God engages human life and seeks to elicit a choice.

As the disciple closest to Jesus wrote:

“We love him because he first loved us.” -1 John 4:19

There is nothing, absolutely nothing that will keep us obedient to God except love.

Jesus said:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command.” - John 14:15

That is the New Testament motive for obedience. It begins when you begin to realize how much God loves you—not because you deserve it, but because He just loves you.

When you really love someone it is your desire to please that person. Love will cause you to simply want to delight the heart of God. Love will cause you to long to please the one who loved you and gave himself for you.

3. Christ defies the power of human force...and bears the power of love and choice to those he created.

If we dare to look at the child who was born...we see that he is the lion....who has come as a lamb.
He has come to as a sacrifice for our sins.
He is described as the great lion...who has the power to consume...but comes first as a lamb to be slain...to provide a sacrifice for our sins.
It is the power of divine love.
Here we see God’s power... the nature of the lion and the lamb are not two separate beings...nor opposites. The one who gave himself as a sacrifice for others...is the lion who rules. [9]

Closing

As we begin this final week before the celebration of the birth of Christ....I want invite us to **look at the manger... to see what is truly revolutionary...** to see the declaration of higher power.

Our culture has tended to look down on the child in the nativity scene...with sentimental sympathy for the poor child born in a manger because there was no room.

I invite us to sit up ... not with merely a sympathetic “aww” but in awe of such higher power that was at hand...and is at hand...and face the challenge to actually choose the higher power

It is not a matter of simply denouncing that prominence and wealth and physical force may serve some fitting ends...but that they are not the powers which ultimately rule.

It is a matter of letting Christ challenge what we trust... and what we will give ourselves to.

He is calling us not to simply be inspired...but to follow.

To follow him into the Kingdom that is not of this world...the kingdom in which those who want to be first...will choose to be last.

He is the king of kings who defines what is good and right.

We can try to defy it...but it will not change.

In earthly terms... it is akin to gravity... no denial of it's existence will change it's nature.

Prayer

Responsive song

A closing word: As Saint Nicolas reminds us...there are stockings to fill ...and feet to wash.

Notes:

1. The origin of the designation Christ is also not without interest. It comes from Greek Χριστός (Christós), meaning “anointed”, which is a translation of Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ *māšîaḥ* (“anointed”) that has been incorporated into the English language as “messiah”. Hence, “Christ” and “Messiah” mean essentially the same, the former originating in Ancient Greek and the latter in Classical Hebrew. – Origin of the words Christmas and Xmas by Jakub Marian - [here](#).

Other words often heard around the Christmas celebration focus on the birth that lies at the center.

- Nātiuited (nātīvitās in Latin) or “Nativity” means “birth” and has often been used as an alternative to the word “Christmas”
- “Noel” is an English word which became popular during late 14th century and which is derived from the Old French term “Noël” or “Naël,” literally translating to “the day of birth”

2. Consider also: Jesus, in one of His final moments with His Disciples prayed: “And now, Father, glorify me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began” (John 17:5). The glory that Jesus had BEFORE the world began. The Bible describes the incarnation ... God becoming man ... in this way: “[Jesus] who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made Himself nothing ... taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6-7). – From Eternal – sermon contributed by Gordon Pike [here](#)

When Jesus is called “King of kings and Lord of lords,” it means that, in the end, all other rulers will be conquered or abolished, and He alone will reign supreme as King and Lord of all the earth. There is no power, no king, and no lord who can oppose Him and win. There are myriad references to this absolute rule of Jesus and His preeminence over other rulers throughout Scripture. To mention just a few, [Isaiah 40:23–24](#) says that the Lord brings “princes to nothing” and makes earth’s rulers “emptiness.” The mere breath of the Lord will “carry them off like stubble.” Daniel’s vision of the son of man in [Daniel 7:13–14](#) is of one whom he calls “the Ancient of Days” whose everlasting dominion is over all people, nations and languages. In the New Testament, we get a better view of the One these passages refer to. The writer of Hebrews speaks of the Lord Jesus: “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power” ([Hebrews 1:3](#)). The next verse speaks of Jesus being “much superior” to the angels. Clearly, His rule over creation is absolute.

Fundamentally, the idea of Jesus being King of kings and Lord of lords means that there is no higher authority. His reign over all things is absolute and inviolable. God raised Him from the dead and placed Him over all things, “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” ([Ephesians 1:21–23](#)).

– From “Got Questions” What does it mean that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords?

- [here](#)

3. Consider also: Ephesians 1:20-22 tells us that Jesus is now seated at [God's] right hand in the heavenly places, "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."

4. Some have taken this to mean that Christ has no interest in effecting this world... others have assumed that the kingdoms of this world must become the kingdom of the Lord by relying upon the powers of control and force. But it is neither.

"The influence and authority of Heaven works upon the spirit by truth and righteousness and peace, and thus transforms institutions, permeates society from the ground of the heart, modifies the relations between the members of a household, and transfigures those between a ruler and his subjects, between the master and his slaves, between labor and capital, and between man and man. Whenever it is triumphant, whenever the lives of kings and their peoples are sanctified by supreme obedience to Christ the King, then war will be impossible, all tyrannies and slaveries will be abolished, all malice and violence of monarchs or mobs will be at an end; then the wolfish and the lamblike nature will be at peace. Then all the means for enforcing the will of one against another will be done away. He will have put down all rule, authority, and power; for he must reign, and he alone. This kingdom is not (ἐκ) "from," "out of," this world's methods or resources; does not begin from without and establish itself, or propagate or preserve itself, from the world, which is a rival, and is not to be coerced but drawn to itself." - [Pulpit Commentary](#)

5. Among many who have written of the differences:

Jesus Christ: Our King - CLAYTON KRABY - [here](#)

Christ, the (Subversive) King By Anderson Jeremiah & Rebecca Aehtner - [here](#)

6. The Power of Celebrity as a Medium of Coercing Behaviour - [here](#)

7. One of the sobering lessons of history is that humankind is an idolater at heart. Removed from the worship of the true God, we descend and worship the creature more than the Creator (Rom 1:25). -See: A Christian Worldview: The Celebrity Culture - Higgins, A. J.- [here](#)

8. Some references to more information about Saint Nicolas:

Who was St. Nicholas? - CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY – engaging the extended work of Professor Adam English of Campbell University in North Carolina and his book, The Saint Who Would Be Santa Claus: The True Life and Trials of Nicholas of Myra. - [here](#)

St. Nicholas Center - [here](#)

9. The lamb is the center of the whole human story.... not by nature of the animal itself...but of the sacrificial role.

- The word first appears in Genesis 22 when Isaac asked his father Abraham, "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham responds,
- "God will provide himself the lamb" -Genesis 22:8 The human race needed a substitute sacrifice. We needed a Savior.
- God foretold of the coming Messiah... that he would be the "suffering servant" who was "led like a lamb to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7 NIV).
In the New Testament, John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
- In the gospels, Jesus said that he had come "to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).
- And when he is at the center of the throne in the vision given in the Book of Revelations, he is called the lamb...and bears the scars. "Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne." Revelation 5:6