



King Jesus-Part 4
Submitting to His Sovereign Authority
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Well some days just make you feel powerless. You know what I mean by that? Powerless. Like a story I read, published in several papers years ago, which reported that one early morning, just outside of Ann Arbor Michigan, there was an aspiring criminal who walked into a Burger King. He brandished a gun, he demanded cash from the clerk, but the guy behind the register said, "Well, I'm sorry, I can't open the register without a food order." So the would-be criminal said, "Well then give me some onion rings." And he looked at him and said, "We can't order onion rings during breakfast hours." This was reported in many papers. So the man threw up his hands in frustration and marched out of the store.

Talk about feeling powerless. You walk in with a gun or what appeared to be a gun and, you know, you wake up that morning thinking you're going to be the king of crime and you get stymied by a teenage king of burgers, a Burger King employee. I mean that would just have to be a bad day for you.

Now, I don't care what your job is, what your profession is, what your business card says, whoever you are in life, your titles are, there are days, we all have like that, where we feel like, well, we're not all that we imagine ourselves to be. We're not as regal as we think we are. And I'm telling you, that's not a bad thing. Matter of fact, that kind of reality check can be helpful. Helpful for anyone, but, you know, for Christians, having that kind of reality check about who you are and who you're not, I mean that's essential for the Christian. I mean you'd better have those days where you really get yourself in perspective, because a Christian who gets himself out of perspective is in for a lot of trouble. That is the door that swings open to all kinds of problems in the Christian life. So we need to think of ourselves appropriately so, as Paul said, to have sound judgment, to think properly about ourselves.

And when it comes down to it we just got to realize that we are not reigning sovereign monarchs. We're not. Matter of fact, there's only one sovereign king in the universe and it's not you and it's not me. There's only one, one who has absolute jurisdiction over all things and of course he's presented to us in the Bible as Jesus Christ. It's very clear, here he comes, he is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. He's the one in charge. When it comes to people having authority and jurisdiction, it is Christ. Now that's important for us to catch, important for us to get that.

I hope every day you are in contact with the sovereign of the universe, that you pray to him every day, that the King of the universe speaks to you as you open up his Bible, you turn the pages and you hear from him in his Word, and you have that kind of submission to the King. Well there were some who encounter the King in the passage that we've finally reached here in Luke Chapter 20, who are presented to us in the last chapter with some pretty big titles, "principal men of the city." I mean, people who are chief priests, not just priests, they're the head chief priest and the scribes, the professorial types, the smart intellectuals of the town, those who were the elders, the ones looked up to. And they had watched, in the last few days here, Jesus come into town with throngs praising him with a palm branch parade. They watched him then, as we studied last time, come into the Temple Mount, their jurisdiction, and flip tables over. And now, as we reach verse 1 of Chapter 20, they're watching him preach over here in the corner with crowds around him and he's preaching with all this supposed authority like he's somebody. And these guys who felt themselves to be very important, felt like kings of the Temple Mount, they said, "Listen, we've got to confront this guy."

And so the story unfolds.

Look at it with me in Luke Chapter 20. We'll study the first eight verses this morning. As it says in verse 1 that, "One day as Jesus was teaching the people in the temple," not the actual building of the temple but the temple grounds, probably in the royal portico, Solomon's colonnade, if you know the geography of that, if not, maybe you can find a picture in the back of your Bibles there in the map section. He's in the temple grounds where lots of people can gather, thousands of people can gather, and he's preaching the good news. It goes all the way back to the beginning of Luke, when here you had John the Baptist and he was being born and he was told to be the one who would come and bring this great message of salvation to the people, the forgiveness of sins, the good news, the message of repentance and faith. And "the chief priest and the scribes with the elders came up and they said to him, 'Tell us by what authority you do these things.'" What things? Well, he came in with throngs of crowds praising him, palm branches, the red-carpet treatment with all these cloaks laid on the ground, he tipped over tables that upset everyone, certainly it did these Pharisees, the chief priest, the scribes, and now he's teaching. Who gave you this authority? "Who is it that gave you this authority?"

And he responds, as often he does, not directly but with a question. Verse 3. "He answered them. I also will ask you a question. Now, tell me, was the baptism of John..." Now, remember that? Three and a half years ago John is out there, outside of Jerusalem in the desert area by the Jordan River, and he's preaching and he's baptizing all these people and he's telling them exactly what Jesus was telling them right now and that is, "You're sinners. You have a problem before a Holy God. You need to repent of your sins." And then there was this symbol that God had him inaugurate here among the people, and that is to be baptized, this picture of an external sign of new life and washing and forgiveness and all that. And he was having all these people lined up to do all that. And he said, "Let's talk about that, the baptism of John. I got a question. Was that from heaven, was that divinely sanctioned, was that a God thing or is it just from man? Crazy guy eating locust, is that just his crazy thoughts?" Verse 5. "They discussed it with one another, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' if we say this is a God thing, well then he's going to say,'" they anticipated his next move, "Well why didn't you believe him?" They thought, "well, we can't say that." Verse 6, but if we say, "'From man, that's just his own thoughts,' well then all the people will stone us to death. I mean there are thousands of people here, gathered around Christ, listening to him teach, man, all the people are going to stone us." Why? Because they're convinced that John was a prophet. And so, they kind of broke from their huddle, in their little conference, and they come over and they say, "Well, we don't know where it came from." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

What an interesting passage. Jesus being asked, "What gives you the right to do all this?" And he says, "Let me ask you. John the Baptist. Good thing, God thing? Bad thing, earthly thing?" "Well, I don't know." Then he says, "OK, I not going to answer you." What kind of flippant responses is that? It's like Christ is being evasive. Is that what's happening here? No. Christ has a very strategic purpose for doing what he's doing. We see it all over the rest of the Gospel of Luke and all over the Bible. Jesus has got a response that is very diagnostic, it's very thought provoking, it's very, as we look back on it 2,000 years later, we're going, "Oh, this gets to the heart of what the New Testament is all about, kind of getting us to look inside of ourselves."

Now again, paint the context and put yourself in the sandals of these leaders. Jesus has just walked into your domain. This is your backyard. This is my house. Right? I'm a chief priest here. I'm a scribe, I'm a teacher here, and you're coming in teaching. You're coming in here telling us we can't have these money changers here, these merchants. Not only that, we're here to direct people to God



and you're taking all this praise, and people are singing praises to you. We told you to shut your disciples up and you said, "No, the rocks would cry out if I shut them up." I mean they were offended. It makes sense they would ask the question, "What gives you this authority? Who gave you this authority? You claim it to be from God?"

Why were they so offended? Well, I think just on a natural, simple, one dimensional response to this particular scene, I would say, "Well, because I don't like anybody coming into my house and telling me what to do. I don't like people telling me, 'Well, I know this is your place, this is your place of work, this is your home, this is your life,' and telling me what I'm supposed to do, or what I'm doing right, what I'm doing wrong. I like to be my own kind of sovereign. I'm in charge of my own life. Don't you start nitpicking in my life."

Today I think in essence all of us deal with that particular temptation. It's not just the Pharisees or the scribes or the Sadducees or the chief priest. All of us really want to be kings of our own lives and that's just a natural tendency. And as simple and elementary as that maybe as an observation, let's just start with that, because this is what caused all the problems in the rebellious hearts of the critics of Christ. They wanted to be in charge and they don't want anybody else telling them what to do.

Number one on your outline, let's just make that observation from the first two verses of this passage. We need to say, "Well, wait a minute, I need to be careful of my desire to be king." I know I'd like to be the manager, the autonomous, independent, free agent of my own life. I don't want other people telling me what to do. See, I don't mind watching those stupid commercials where the guy gets on and says, "I am the king," as long as you're the king of mattresses and bedspreads and big screen TVs, I don't care.

But if a guy like you comes into my sphere, you want to walk into my place of employment, you want to walk into my house, you want to walk into the relationships I have, and start claiming you're some kind of authority, I don't want that.

See, I'm sure Jesus was irritating to the Pharisees, to the chief priest when he was out and about in the countryside in Galilee. But all of that was irritating doing his thing watching it from afar. But when you step into my house and telling me what I'm supposed to do. When you start taking over and starting to teach people when it's my job to teach people, when you start flipping over tables that I'm surely getting some kind of fee for them sitting there, giving those merchants a place to do their money changing and their sacrifice-selling. I don't like you taking from my bottom line. I don't want you doing that.

See, it's one thing for me to say everyone can be the king of their own lives until your sovereignty starts to impinge on my sovereignty. Right? Isn't that where we are as a culture? Number one, let's just start with the fact that "Everyone Wants To Be a King." Everyone wants to be in charge of their own domain. Isn't that true? The last verse of the Book of Judges, I know I quote this often and it's quoted twice in the book, but the very last verse of the very last chapter of the Book of Judges shows us what a low point it was when there was no king in Israel. It says, "There was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right..." You know the rest? "in their own eyes." Everyone did what was right in their own eyes. That's where our country and our culture is. Matter of fact, our country, let's talk about that. For all the freedom loving Christians I may be preaching to this morning, when it comes down to it, our culture, in terms of our political origins, is to really despise and disdain monarchs. We don't want kings telling us what to do. Isn't that the origins, the impetus of our own freedom and independence as a country? We don't like that. We don't want monarchs,



we don't want kings, we don't want people telling us what to do. And I can understand, there are times when monarchs and sovereigns can become tyrants. I understand all that, I know the political beginnings of our country and I understand there's a time to resist. There's even a time, I suppose, in some situations, to say I'm not going to take this anymore, but it really has left us with a cultural impulse to say, "I am my own boss."

And as it often is, when we start to try and tell people, well, this is right, this is wrong, this is true, this is not, this is what is moral, this is what is not, they say, "Get your laws off my body." Remember that phrase from back in the day? And they say it in one way or another, "Don't you start imposing your morality on me. Don't you start telling me what to do. Certainly don't start opening a book of some ancient set of rules, telling me that God wants me to live this way, you just get your stuff out of my life. I want to be the king of my own life." And while we live in a culture like that, with some, what is it, chief priest, scribes and elders who say, "Listen, what gives you the right to march into my house and tell me what to do?" You need to realize that we live in such an environment that makes that the kind of thinking that we might default to, even as Christians.

Now I know it's dangerous for me to stand up here and open up the Bible and have us take the POV, the point of view, of the chief priest, the scribes, the elders and the principal people of the city, because usually we like to identify with Christ. Right? Give me a passage where I can say, "I need to walk as he walked." Matter of fact, so many preachers have taken this passage and said, "Let's take the first eight verses of Luke 20 and let's learn how to deal with our opponents, let's learn of the genius of Christ." Or we could just detach ourselves even from any applications and say, "Let's just look at the great things Jesus was doing here in establishing his own credentials in a very strategic and subtle way." But you know what, God's word is to be responded to. The truth demands a response. When I look at a passage like this, I want to find myself in the text somewhere and though it's easy for me to identify with, "Well, I want to be like Christ" or "Aren't the disciples in here somewhere?" "Can't we learn from the apostles?" Really, I want you to put yourself in the sandals of the chief priest, the scribes and the elders and say, "Well, when do I start acting like that."

Oh, I know you say Jesus is Lord. I know this is a sermon that you think doesn't apply to you because, "I'm already a Christian, I'm already submitted to the Lordship of Christ," but sometimes even those of us who are Christians start to be influenced by our culture to think, "Well, this really is my domain." Even in our tradition as Protestants. Overthrowing, not only in our country, a kind of political structure, but even in our ecclesiology as Christians saying, "Well, you know, we're not into the ecclesiastical authority of Rome." And, you know, we are independent churches and we kind of certainly have this democratic flavor to us. And you know, I'm not fighting against our politics as a country or as a church, I'm just simply saying don't let that value start to creep into the way you make decisions as a Christian. Because you're not an independent, free agent, you are not some kind of unrestricted monarch who gets to pick and choose what you apply in your own life. I really want to ask you this morning the question, those of you who say Jesus is Lord, Christ is my King. What happens when the King gives commands in his Word that impinge on your freedoms? What happens in your life and in your heart when the truth that you read about, that you see there plainly in black and white, when it conflicts with your desires? I mean how do you handle your Christian walk when his directions within the Bible start to derail your dreams for your future?

How do you understand, in your own heart, as you think through what you're going to do about this particular passage or this particular principle or the application of this particular sermon, when the prohibitions found in it do not comport with your values. And let me say this upright and forthright, as clearly as I can. Most of us come to Christ before we view and read the entirety of the Bible and I'm not knocking that. I'm just saying, at some point, we start to apply, early on in our Christian



lives, our set of expectations as we read the Bible and we expect what the Bible says to really be in harmony with what we are expecting to find in the Bible. And all I'm telling you is what happens when our expectations get shattered because we are seeing in the Scripture something that really doesn't connect with my cultural values or the way I was brought up or even what I kind of heard things should be like as Christians? What do we do with those conflicts?

Well, I'm saying it's easy for us, if we're honest, though it may not happen verbally, we may not share it with our small group, but when Christ walks into our domain and tips over a table, when he starts taking the spotlight from you, when he says that job that you're doing, I'm going to do it now or I'm going to do it differently, when really the things in your life that you've kind of got in place all of a sudden now get overthrown by Christ saying I'm going to exercise my Lordship here, how do you respond to that?

It's important for say, "Well, I guess I go back to the reality that Christ is King." That's a great theory and it's a wonderful creed, it's a great line, it's a good doctrinal position to hold, but when push comes to shove how do you deal with that?

Psalm 50, that may be worth looking at real quick. Turn with me, call up Psalm 50 verse 17, a passage I sometimes quote the latter end of, but I don't always give you the whole context. I know on the fly I'll quote a lot of passages and this is one that I often refer to, at least an allusion to it. But look at this context where God is confronting his own people and he's saying, here's the problem, you've gotten to a place where you are settled into your life and what it means to be a devoted follower of God. And what's happening now is you found distance, as I said last week, between what ought to be in Scripture and what is in your life and you're starting to try and live with that tension and make it non-tense. You want to be okay not applying the truth of God.

And when I try to correct you, you hate it. I might try to correct you through a verse that you read on Thursday morning. I might try to correct you through a sermon you heard on the weekend. I might try to correct you through some good, solid Christian book that you're reading and there it is, coming off the page, the application of God's truth and you don't like it when it starts to impinge on your freedom, when it doesn't support your desires, when it derails your dreams, when it doesn't comport with your values? Verse 17, "You hate that discipline." Well the only way to continue in that kind of thinking is to take the Word of God and simply do what so many do, and that is, even as Christians, "I don't want to see it," "Cast it behind me." "I don't want to look at it. I don't want to focus on that. It's uncomfortable for me to think about applying that particular part of the Bible.

And then what you find is a kind of applause, a kind of affirmation of those who break my law. "You see a thief and you're pleased with him." Yay! It's like watching the Grammys last night. I mean I didn't do it, I can tell you that, I haven't done that for years, unless Keith Hancock is on it, then I'll watch a little bit of it. "Who's that?" you're saying. One of our guys who won a Grammy last year. Like I had anything to do with it, I had nothing to do with it, I just think it's kind of cool. It's cool that he's recognized for his talent but, you know what, when they have all these shows, and whether it's something in music or theater or all the celebrities of our day, it can be the ESPN awards and all the things that go on with our culture, clapping and clapping and loving and affirming and cherishing people who openly, outright, blatantly, egregiously take the truth of what God values and loves and trash it. I need to say, "Wait a minute, am I starting to be like that? Do I find my heart," as this particular passage says, "being pleased with people who openly abandon any kind of loyalty to what God has clearly revealed in nature and in the Scripture and in our conscience? Do I find myself, even in my own life, keeping company with people who say, 'I don't care what God says?'" He says, "You keep company with adulterers." Well you know that's wrong,



you know that grieves God, you know that God hates that and yet with you it's all right. You might even use ministry as an excuse for it, but in reality you're not ministering to those people. It's just that you've found the distance between what God says, his royal commands, and your life and you say, "Well, I just take the Word and kind of push that behind me and I'm OK with the values of the world." Then it starts to affect what you say, "You give your mouth free rein for evil." It's funny the things coming out of your mouth that really ought not.

Your tongue, you're starting to be OK with just deceiving. I mean, you realize, "Well I don't know how I'm going to keep these clients if I don't bend the truth. I mean this is the way they taught us to do what we do, and in business you've got to kind of do these things. With my neighbors, I want to keep up appearances," so you find all these kinds of things coming out of your mouth, you know lying is wrong, but "Your tongue frames deceit." When it comes to the church, "You sit and speak against your brother," maybe not to his face, but behind his back. "You slander your own mother's son." You tear down people you ought to be supporting and encouraging.

"These things you have done and I have been silent." Oh, that's the thing. We have this sense that, if it were wrong, God would make it clear. Oh, he's made it clear in Scripture. "But he would step in and correct me." Well I've already proved in verse 17, I don't like that correction. Matter of fact, I have stiff-armed the kind of correction God has brought. But if I do that long enough, look at the next line in this verse, verse 21, then I start thinking like they did back here in Psalm 50, "You thought I was one like yourself."

See, if I think really, when it comes down to it, I want to be the king of my own life, my own values, my schedule, my expenses, my expenditures. I want to be the king of all those things and I just think, if I can keep God's Word out of it, from harshing out my perspectives and priorities, well then listen, I'll get around to the place of thinking, "God is like me. God agrees with me. I mean, he supports and applauds the thief like I do, he would hang with the adulterers, isn't that what he did when he was here in his earthly ministry? I'm sure he's fine with that. You know when it comes to things I'm saying, it's truth, you know, it's really sad to say it and I hate to slander those people, but you know, they need to shape up and I need to tell people. When it comes to my own deceit in my mouth, I mean, there are reasons for it. God certainly would applaud all those things."

Well, at some point the King is going to speak. The King will get off the couch, as I like to say, and correct his children. And so he says to the people of Israel, bottom of verse 21, "But now I rebuke you and lay the charge before you." And then it goes on and it's so difficult to even read. I mean, you need enough commentary here as I read through it to say, "Wow, you got to be careful." I need to make sure that in my life I don't sit here and usurp an authority position in my own life that Christ should occupy. Beware of your desire to be king. I understand there are authorities to avoid, resist, ignore. But the real authority of Christ has presented himself in the domain of your life and maybe he's tipped over a few tables. It's time for us just to recognize, "Listen, I get it. Christ is King. I'm not. I can't go along with my culture and keep on thinking, 'Well, get your laws off my body. I'm in charge. I'm the master of my own fate.'"

Well, we wouldn't say it out loud, but do we act the same way non-Christians do? Sometimes I think we do. I mean the only reason I'm preaching this passage to you this way, I mean, even as I study it, I get to the place where, "Ouch, that's how I am with God sometimes." As matter of fact, I start asking him questions and I get frustrated, verse 3 Luke 20, that he doesn't answer me. I say, "God, give me more information." And he doesn't give it to me. Matter of fact, he gives me diagnostic questions like this sometimes, "Hey, look back in your life." Look at it with me, Luke 20 verse 3, "He answered them, 'I also will ask you a question. Now, tell me, back three and a half



years ago, when John the Baptist was out there baptizing, what did you do with that?" Did you know that was the truth when you read that passage, heard that sermon, read that Christian book, when you were confronted with the truth of God's Word, what did you do with it in the past?

Now they demand an answer and they have an audience there that's going to listen and they're concerned, "Well, if we say 'from heaven' then he's going to say, 'Why didn't you do it? You're a hypocrite, you're disobedient,' and we don't want to admit that we're disobedient. And if we say 'from man' it's just a man thing, then all the people going to stone because they're convinced, the evidence is enough to convince them, and we're afraid they're going to kill us, because they think he's a prophet. So we're just going to go, 'I don't want to answer that.'"

What's going on here is very interesting. The kind of diagnostic that Jesus brings with his question, he's trying to get them below the surface. I mean, I can simply posit here the distinction between Christ is King and I want to be king. I've got two "want to be kings" here. One is the real King and one is just me. If I start to analyze some of the questions that I ask God, if I start to really think about the things that he does in his Word to ask me questions, and I start looking at, really, he's analyzing in my own heart, how I make my decisions, how I make my choices, I'm going to find that, yes, the domain of my life, I would like to be king. And even as Christians, I find out the decisions that I make really are in deference to things going on under the surface that I really enthrone as important. The Bible calls it idols. But let's just talk about them as kings, because that's what idols are, they direct my thoughts, they direct my decisions, they influence how I value things and prioritize things. Therefore, I've got to think about, in my own life, what really in every crossroads of obedience, like they had when they met John the Baptist, "what do we do with this," at the crossroads of that, do I obey God or do I disobey and rationalize and make excuses. I am at that crossroads, making decisions based on the kings, plural, within my own life. What does that mean? The things I value most, the things that to me I really think are most important.

Number two on your outline, let's start with that. We need to "Discern the Real King of Your Choices." When you look below the surface of your life, Christ is asking questions to try and get to the place of "Why did you do this? Why did you reject John? Why didn't you respond earlier?" He's not going to give more answers to these leaders of the people until they look back and start to bring some kind of examination to their past decisions.

Let's start at the bottom, because even their answer shows their priorities, doesn't it? Let's think about this. Start at the bottom, verse 6, "If we say 'from man', if we want to blow off the fact that we think John was not really a prophet of God because, of course, we didn't obey him, I'm afraid they might kill us." Now that's a serious concern. If you thought you're going to get murdered in the parking lot you might try to, you know, get out some other way. I mean that's a serious concern. Your own well-being, your protection, your safety. I mean that's a concern.

But if this is true, I mean if it's really true that he is a false prophet, John the Baptist is not really from God, you shouldn't do what he says, he's leading people astray, then you are the governor, the guide, the shepherd of the people. You are the chief priest, the head spiritual leaders, shouldn't you stand up and tell the people, shouldn't you shout it from the rooftops, "that guy is a false prophet." But you're saying, even if we think that's true, because we don't really know what their thoughts are, we have a guess, but let's just say and just go with their thinking. Let's say they think he's a false teacher, wouldn't you, for the sake of God, tell them that, even if it did cost you your life? No, you value your own comfort, you value your safety, you value your self-preservation more than you value standing up and saying, "This is the truth." You don't love the truth. If that's the truth of God and the Bible says you ought to watch out for false prophets, the Old Testament said that



repeatedly, "Watch out for false prophets." It even says in the Bible you better be a watchman and warn the people of false prophets, and yet you're not even willing to do that because you're afraid you might get rocks thrown at you today. So the god of your decisions, the king of your choices, is you're looking at the fact that I value most in my life self-preservation, protection, safety.

Or to analyze it a little further, that one's easy to see. Go back to the historic period, over three years earlier, when they were standing there listening to John the Baptist say, "You're all sinners. You all need to repent. You need to now get baptized as an external sign of this repentance and you need to know that the one coming after me, the one whose sandal I'm unworthy to untie, is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Put your trust in the coming Christ and repent of your sins." That's the call to the Pharisees.

Now what does the Bible say? That they showed up, the Matthew account makes it clear that they were there, the leaders of the temple, these people who led in Jerusalem on the Temple Mount, they were there listening to John the Baptist. What did they say? Well we don't have their words, all we have is John's response. And he called them a "brood of vipers," a pit of snakes, you gang of snakes. He said, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come?" And then he gives a response that shows us what they were thinking. And that is this, he says, "Don't go and say you have Abraham as your Father, I tell you, God could raise up children of Abraham from rocks." That's no protection for you.

In other words, you think that you don't have to repent because you're fine, and one of the things you show is your pedigree is, "I'm a child of Abraham. We're the favorite people of God. I'm alright. You don't need to correct my life. I'm fine just the way I am."

So you could say, in the present case, they certainly value, the king of their choices, is self-preservation when it comes to them not coming out and saying he's a false prophet. And when it comes to them refusing this three and a half years earlier, really what they were saying is, "I like my life the way it is and you're wanting me to change," which is exactly what John was preaching. If you're a Roman soldier, be content with your wages, don't extort any money. And if you're out there and you have two cloaks and see someone who needs one, give one of your cloaks to them, share. All these things that he said they didn't want to do. "I love my sin."

And if you look at the bottom of Chapter 20. Are you there still in Luke? Look at Luke Chapter 20, drop down to verse 45, Luke 20:45, "In the hearing of all the people..." he's going to get around to this, "he said to his disciples, 'Beware of the scribes.'" They're named in our passage up here. Right? The scribes in verse 1. Now he says, "Beware of them. They love to walk around in their long robes. They love the greetings in the marketplace. They love the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts and they devour widow's houses." What is that? They're trying to make gain off of these people who are weak.

"And they, for a pretense," and for a fee in most cases, "they make long prayers." They love people who think their godly, they love to take advantage financially, "they'll receive the greater condemnation." These guys are really bad.

Here are people who love all the valued perks of being a leader in Israel, which by the way, one of them, I'm quite sure, was all the financial revenue and gain they got from the people making the temple of God, the house of God, a den of thieves. All of that marketing and merchandising and all that went on for those people, yeah, they got gain out of it, they got rich, but the leaders got a cut of that, that's what helped them buy those nice long robes and all their greetings in the marketplace,



made them think, "Oh, he's the boss, here he comes. He lets me set up my table."

Now what's the point? They love their sin, they love their greed, they love the perks of disobedience more than they loved God's Word, which is clear about these things, all the way back to Jeremiah's day, the exact same words Jesus used to tip over the tables were the words of diagnosis back in Jeremiah's day, 600 years before Christ. And what's the point? They said, "John, I'm not going to repent. I like my life just the way it is. I'm fine. I'm a child of Abraham."

Now flip that over as a Christian if you would. The Pharisees love their gain or their pleasure from sin. They didn't want to stop that, they weren't going to bow to the words of Scripture. They certainly loved their lives enough to say, "We're not going to tell the truth about John the Baptist," if indeed they believed that to be the truth, "because I might get hurt, I might get killed." Let me ask the question about someone who enthrones Christ as the King of their lives and ask the same exact questions. The sinful things that you love, if Christ is really in your life, pardon this analogy because it's overused in the past, but here it is, Christ is enthroned as King in your life. Let's just say, "I am resolved Christ is my King. I follow him." And you open up the Bible and it says, "Hey, those desires, not in keeping with my Word. Those dreams that you have, nope, it's not the values of my Word. The appetites of the things that you want to do, the things you should do, they don't match what my Word says. So do what my Word says. Well here's the right response, Colossians Chapter 3 verse 5, it says, we find these things that we love so much and he lists a bunch of them: "Covetousness, sexual immorality, impurity, the perversion and twisting of my sex life." All these things, it says, "Listen, we put them to death in our lives." The old-fashioned word in the old translation, "mortify" we mortify it, we kill it, we put it to death.

So I'm going to love Christ the King more than I love my sin. That's exactly what the Pharisees would not do as they listened to John the Baptist preaching about sin and repentance. They didn't want to repent because they loved their sin.

"Well, if there is something that's true and I'm supposed to believe it's true or proclaim that it's true, what if people are going to throw rocks at me and kill me." Well, John is a great example of that and yet the Apostle Paul's an even better example of that.

I mean, no one had, at least in what we know from the New Testament, during the New Testament period, more opposition than the Apostle Paul in trying to present the truth of Christ. And at one point, when he was moving into the eye of the storm from Ephesus in Asia Minor, modern day Turkey, he was going to go over to Jerusalem, and in that trip, those people knew he is going to go into this hornet's nest and he is going to be persecuted, he'll be imprisoned and he's going to die. And so they begged him not to go.

And in Acts 21, there they were weeping and hugging him and saying, "No Paul, rethink this." And the Apostle Paul responded this way, Acts 21:13, Paul answered, "Why are you doing this and weeping and breaking my heart, for you already know I'm ready to be imprisoned and even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." That's a far cry from the Pharisees who said, "Well, if we tell the truth, if we really think it is the truth, that John the Baptist was a false prophet, we might die. I'm not willing to die for the truth." What does Paul say? "Christ is the King of my life. If he wants me to go to Jerusalem, even if that cost me my life, I'm going to go.

That's how the Church started with guys like that, we see in the Old Testament too. Here's how the Church age ends. Once we go, if your eschatology comports with mine, you now got this period, in the tribulational period, where all these evangelists go out and start winning people to Christ during



the tribulational period. And here's what it says about them in Revelation Chapter 12 verse 11. "They conquered...", they were the winners, they were the heroes. Oh, I know in human history they looked like they were all being defeated and beheaded and all the rest of that, but "They conquered, by the blood of the lamb," they were committed to Christ the same way we are, washing of our sins away, we trust in the finished work of the Cross, "and by the word of their testimony," they were willing to be obedient to speak up when God asked them to. Well, that's going to cost them in the tribulation, just like it costs a lot of people now, just like it cost Paul. And here's the explanation, "for they loved not their lives even unto death."

I know we're a long way from that as you sit here in a nice cushioned seat and an air conditioned building, but are you ready to die for the King? As some have rightly said, I wonder if you're really ready to live for him, if you're not already convinced and resolved that you would die for him. The Apostle Paul sat in prisons and said, "I understand this. I'm going to glorify God whether by life, if I get out of this prison, or by death."

I just wonder, I mean, I know it's very uncomfortable and we're not sitting here in China where they're blowing up our churches and you're not in Syria and places where they're killing Christians, and even in Jordan, it's been relatively friendly but now, you know, the screws are kind of coming down on Christians. I just wonder, as you sit here in our "free country" to exercise our own religion in a church like this on this day of worship, I just wonder, if push came to shove and you had to die for the truth of Christ and what he says, would you be willing to do that? Or do you have, maybe like these guys, my ultimate concern is my own safety. My ultimate concern is the safety of my family. My ultimate concern is keeping my paycheck. My ultimate concern is my comfort. The ultimate concern I have is my reputation or the affirmation of people around me. The ultimate concern I have is for being a happy person, a fun person, taking adventures with people. I don't know, my respectability.

What is your ultimate concern? Because whatever that ultimate concern, as you make decisions, not only are you the king, identify those things, the king of your choices, and I bet you've got a lot of those, just like I do. From a Christian perspective, we call those idols and we've got to keep our lives from idols, we got to topple the idols. We got to let Christ in his Word turn over the tables with all the idols on them that say, "Well, I would have obeyed that passage but I don't really want to because I value these things more."

Well this passage, ends this way, one verse, verse 8, Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things," because these guys weren't even willing to answer his question. And he says, I'm not going to answer your question. Well, you think, "What kind of petty response is that? Is that a quid pro quo, is that some kind of tit for tat? They wouldn't answer and that's insulting, so he's not going to answer and insult them back. Do you think that's what's going on here? No.

Jesus is not depriving them of information because he's being mean. He's not trying to mislead them. He's not saying, "Well I know you're asking a really good question about my authority but I'm not going to tell you. I'm going to play word games with you so that you don't have to know, and I just want you to be lost or confused." Jesus is not trying to be unclear. As a matter of fact, his lack of an answer, the fact that he does not answer their question, makes it very clear, the answer to the question is not what they needed. The issue wasn't they needed more information, more confirmation. What they needed was already exposed by him going back to that time when they had that sweaty palmed experience going, "You know what, John the Baptist's truth is convicting. It's real. I need to repent. But I dare not, because what would the rest of my Pharisees think, what would the scribes think? I mean, what kind of deal would it be for me to be baptized by some guy



wearing a camel hair vest and eating, you know, grasshoppers, I can't do this." They knew the right thing to do and they didn't do it, not because they didn't have enough information, but because their will was not engaged, they were unwilling to do it. That's a distinction you need to make. It's not about them knowing, you understand.

Number three. It's really about whether or not you're willing, distinguished between knowing and willing, those two distinctive categories are super important for you to make the distinction, because often times, we, even like the Pharisees, like the scribes, like the elders, we want more information and we think, if we just had more information, then we would do the will of God.

That happens, though we'd never say it out loud. And you've got to come to grips with the reality that what God wants from you is a willing heart to do his will. Now let me make a little sidebar note here. I am not, in any way, saying the Christian life is about you resolving to obey God without any proof that he's worthy of your obedience. Did you follow that? Let me say it again. I am not, in any way, trying to say to you, as many people characterize the Christian life, make some kind of foolhardy cartoon of our theology saying, "I know what you Christians are, you're putting your faith in something and what that means is you have no evidence for it and you're believing against the evidence that this is true. It's like chasing fairies and leprechauns and it's about, you know, the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus for you guys. That's what Christian faith is, it's believing without evidence." That is not at all what I'm saying. I'm saying this: that Jesus is not in the business of giving extraneous data to people who don't need any more data. He's not in the business of giving you superfluous evidence when there's enough evidence already on the table.

And I just want to know how, much evidence was on the table? Tons. He just marched into Jerusalem fulfilling all the Zachariah prophecies to a "T". And before that, you had John the Baptist who Malachi Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 says is going to come before the day of the Lord. He fulfilled everything in that passage regarding what Elijah was supposed to be, the spirit and power of Elijah. Here comes John the Baptist and he was going to be the forerunner of Christ. All of it happened exactly as Scripture said and it wasn't that they didn't have enough data, they didn't have enough information. Their heart was unwilling to submit to the King.

When Job started asking God a hundred questions from Chapter 3 to Chapter 37, God breaks on the scene, not to answer his questions, you understand that, but to ask a few of his own and much like this, they didn't seem to have anything to do with the questions he was asking. Jesus was asked the question, "What authority you have?" and he starts talking about, "Now, think back when you felt the conviction of John the Baptist, what did you do?" It seemed to have nothing to do with it. When God stepped on the scene and Job 38 and says, "I've got a few questions for you. Gird yourself like a man, stand up, tuck in your shirt, it's time for me to ask you questions." What were those questions about?

They had nothing to do with his questions, "Why am I suffering?" They had to do with the fact that, "Are you the King? Are you the King? Did you make this world? Did you structure the earth? Did you create these animals? Did you?" What's the whole point? You are not the King.

You have plenty of reason to know that I'm the King and it's all around you, the data is everywhere. Would you just let me be the sovereign King of your life, which means you may not get all the answers that you want for where you're headed? You may be led down the Good Shepherd's path that you think, "This is not still waters, this is not green pastures, this is the valley of the shadow of death. Why are you leading me here?" And you're going to have to recognize that you have adequate information to know that I am the shepherd, I am the King. Follow me. It's very



disappointing in passages of Scripture when the best questions seemed to be asked and God steps on the scene and says, "Who are you to answer back to me? Pot - Potter. Come on. I'm the King."

If that sounds too heavy-handed for you, I'm sorry. Between here and eternity, you're going to have to get used to the fact that what God is not going to always give you is more information to convince you to obey him. He's given you plenty. And you see non-Christians, don't you, that you roll your eyes at the incredulity of those non-Christians who you think, "They just won't believe because, really, their hearts are not willing to believe," and you mock them for it. Like the 42 radio-telescopes in Northern California that are pointed up to the sky and they're looking for extraterrestrial intelligent life. Remember that? It's called SETI. That's the acronym for it. Right? SETI. It's the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. And what they're doing in pointing their telescopes up into the sky, these radio telescopes, is there waiting to hear, like, the FM station from Alpha Centauri. Right? This is like, "If I can just get their equivalent of an Elvis song, I'll know there's intelligent life out there." Let me invert it, as we Christians and theists look at these atheists and we say, "You guys are silly," because what they're looking for is non-random information. They want something that's non-random. They want some linear information that makes sense, coded intelligent information that makes sense, as they look past our moon, our solar system, our sun, all the dynamics of physics that make all that possible, past the stars, the constellations, the novas and supernovas, the black holes. We'll look past... We're just we're waiting to hear Casey Kasem of Mars. Maybe then we'll know there's intelligent life out there." And you think, "What are you looking past? When the Bible says the heavens declare the glory of God, you want to talk about symmetry, you want to talk about mathematics, you want to talk about physics, you want to talk about reality, look around you. The evidence and handiwork of God is on display everywhere. You want to look for non-random information? Turn off your telescopes and let's look in your microscope and let's do a little work on the human genome and ask the question, "Is there any intelligent strings of data there?" They say, "Oh there is, but we're atheists, you know, we don't believe that any intelligence beyond that intelligent information. But if we could just hear some Morse code from the universe, we'd know. Yeah! Yeah! Intelligent life out there." And you think, "Well, how foolish is that.

We could have looked at the entire passage that way. But I want you to put yourself in the shoes of the atheists in Northern California at the SETI operation looking for intelligent life and realize how foolish we are, so often opening up our Bibles, reading clearly what God's Word says, looking past all the evidence of God's authority and then saying, "Well, I know that if I were to apply that passage the way you're telling me, really what I need is more information. If I could just get some confirmation from God on this..." and we start acting like Gideon, "Well, I've got a fleece here, I'm going to put... If just by 3:00 on Tuesday I could get a call from the someone.

What are you doing? You look like the incredulous atheist who will not take evidence at face value and God says, "I've given you all kinds of evidence. Why do you ignore the obvious?" You don't need more information. It's not an issue of your knowing, it's an issue of you being willing, are you willing to do my will? When they came to Jesus, there's a great passage in John 7, and they said, "We want to know what kind of authority you have." Same kind of scenario in John 7. He said this, "If you were willing to do God's will, you would know whether my teaching is from God or not." Because there's plenty of evidence there. You hold a Bible that is filled with what no other religious book has, predicted prophecies. Penned over 1400 years in our Bibles, from Moses's day to John on the island of Patmos, all this information about predictive prophecy, so much of it, with all that time lag clearly between Old and New Testament, being fulfilled in stark detail, in exacting detail, and you sit there and say, "Well if I just knew that God really wanted me to do that, well then I just need more confirmation."



You don't need more information 99 times out of 100. I'm not saying if you're brand new to all this, you've never read the Bible, you may need more information, but most of us don't need more information when it comes to obedience. We need to realize my heart is not willing.

Speaking of hearts, I see this on display every time I read the stats about heart disease. We have over half a million open heart surgeries every year. And you know this is not like getting your blood taken. This is a big deal. They crack open your chest, they pull out your heart, they try not to drop it, they put new valves in it and all that stuff and then they put it back in, they sew you up, you get the train tracks on your chest. Some of you, you're sitting here, you have those scars, you been through open heart surgery. Do you know the stats consistently over and over again, I read the one from Johns Hopkins University study, and it's one that they said had been confirmed by so many other studies, when it comes to America's cardiac patients, who are all taught in one of the best post-operative campaigns of education on cardiac patients all across the country, everyone gets this great information in America. Over half a million of these people are told, "Now, if you want your heart to be healthy, you got to do this, this, and this. All the things that got you here are the bad diet, if you can do some exercise, here's what keeps your heart healthy. You know what the percentage of people that blow that information off is? You know what the percentage is? 90% consistently. And the doctors are basically saying and the nurses are saying, "Change your behavior or you're going to die." And the patients go, "I didn't quite understand what she was saying." 90% of post-operative cardiac patients revert to the same bad eating and exercise habits because, when it comes down to it, they'd rather sit and eat their Cheez-its, right, and get their heart clogged up, because they love the things that they love to do even though they have full knowledge... You can go on the Internet and learn 18 million different reasons why diet and exercise have something to do with your heart, and they get right back to where they were. Knowledge is not the problem. As my Dad always used to say, "People do what they want to do." And do you know what people want to do? When it comes to that, they want to stuff their face and skip the gym and whatever else they're going to do to get right back to where they were even though they know this is a life and death decision.

And you and I, dealing with our sins, when Christ's Word is there before us saying, "Here's how you need to live your life, here's how you need to make decisions, here's how you need to invest your life. Do it this way." And you read that and you say, "I know that," and you still say, "but I don't want to do it." Now, we can say that from a non-Christian perspective that they're incapable of wanting to do it. But you, as a Christian, are no longer fighting the core of your desires, because the Bible says, speaking of heart surgery, he has taken out your old heart of stone, he's giving you a new heart with a whole new set of desires. The problem is we're encased in flesh and it's got competing desires and it constantly here, it's not you, but the flesh that you're encased in, I guess it's a component part of you, but it's the firmware, as I like to say, not the software, and it is constantly battling, it wages war against your soul, but you have a soul that has been recreated, the Bible says, "Old things pass away, new things come," not just in your heart, but they flesh themselves out, pardon the pun, in everyday life.

Why? Because God has remade your desires. And yet you've got to, even as a Christian with a new heart, say, "God, I need your help. I need your Spirit to continue to convict me and affirm." And as it says in that he Ezekiel passage, not only do we get a new heart, you get a new spirit within you, that's a small "s", he will put his Spirit in you to guide that, to blossom that, to cultivate it, to develop that, and some of us are saying, "Nah, I don't want to get to that place." So we continue to place his Word, cast it behind our back, and keep saying, "Well, God's going to be just like me."



Ask God to change your desires. If you're a non-Christian here, you can't live the Christian life, because you need a new heart. If you have that new heart, don't be like the Pharisees, the chief priest, the scribes, the principal people of the city. Recognize that when God comes into the domain of your life, your work life, your domestic life, your personal life, your thought life, and says, "I'm turning over these tables," you stand back and say, "You know what, I know that's right because you're the King. And I'm gonna ask that you would help my new desires in Christ to move me forward in obedience," to be just like Jesus here, by his absence of an answer, you don't need more information 99 times out of 100. You just need to pray to God that you would be willing to do his will.

Speaking of Burger King, they got into trouble lately, the corporate Burger King company, because they were growing and advancing their brand and for the first time ever they're going to put a Burger King into Belgium. They had never done that before. So this last summer they were setting this up and, of course, their marketing people and all their advertising people said, "OK, how are we gonna get all these people in Belgium to get excited about Burger King?" So they came up with a way to do that and their advertising campaign was to put these websites together and campaigns together where, of course, they have a royal family in Belgium and King Felipe, 57-year-old King Felipe in Belgium, is the king right now. And they said, "I know what we'll do, we'll take our really weird and creepy Burger King mascot guy and we'll put him on this page on the left side of the page and on the right side of the page we'll put King Felipe, and we'll put a line between it and we'll say, "OK, you get to vote for who the king is going to be." All right?

And here is the slogan: "Two kings, one crown. Who will reign?" Well, you know what? The royal family didn't really think that was a great advertising campaign. Look it up, man. They gave a BBC interview and they said, "Listen, this is offensive." They took umbrage. This is our king. You don't take our king and pit him against a caricature of a Burger King. That's absurd. Now, they're very stuffy over there, apparently, in Belgium and they did not like that. They found no humor in it at all.

The wording of the website, "Two kings. One crown. Who will reign?" may be offensive if you think you're the king of the country. But when it comes to you and Christ, that is a perfect slogan for you to bounce around in your home, in your heart, in your small group this week. Because though we want to be kings, we fancy ourself as the king of our own lives and our future and our world, our little world, our little corner of the world, there is a real King, only one who has absolute sovereignty and jurisdiction over all things. There's only one crown. The question for you and I this week is who's going to reign? I hope that you and I, with the empowerment of God's Spirit, will choose wisely this week, when it comes to the big decisions and the small ones in our lives.

Let's pray. God help us, please, in a world that's telling us that we should be our own man, we should do our own thing. Everyone should keep their laws off our bodies. Everyone should keep their opinions to themselves. We should be free to be the kinds of unrivaled monarchs that we want to be, directing our own lives as long as we don't bump into other people and mess up their sovereignty. And yet in reality, we are not sovereign monarchs. We are servants, slaves the Bible would say. The King has ascended his throne in the universe and he is now calling individual hearts to have Christ be enthroned in their lives. And as hard as that is in a world like ours, I pray this week we would prove, by the way that we're willing to defer to the King, that we really believe that you are the King of our hearts, the King of our lives. And when there are challenges this week, in the privacy and the dark corners of our own temptations, and we make a decision, I pray that your Spirit might help us define those core desires as Christians that we have, retooled, rewired hearts, be able to say to you that we going to let you reign as King in this area of our lives. That's a silly thing to even say, to let you reign as King. But God, because of the agency you've given us, we know



that's part of our experience, our feeling of saying OK, we're not going to do this by our own sovereign decision making, we're going to allow your Word to govern our hearts.

And for those that are always looking for more information, more confirmation, more answers, more Bible study, when they really know before them what they need to do, what they're supposed to do, what God the King would ask them to do, I pray that you would help them be able to stop fighting, and concede and submit to the sovereign authority of the King of kings. Make that a reality for us in multiple ways as we increasingly put to death the deeds of the flesh in our lives.

In Jesus name, Amen.