

The Spirit-Anointed King

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Professor of philosophy at Boston College, Peter Kreeft, said:

“Though we do not have kings in America or want them, our unconscious mind both has them and wants them. We all know what a true king is...” What does he mean? That deep down we long for a ruler who will live up to our ideals (goodness, truth, justice). But often we grate against the idea. Why? Look at our politics! Our politicians are a lot like *us*. We know there are no *true* kings *because we know ourselves*. But, without rule chaos ensues. We need a true king. This passage shows us a Truer, Better, Grander King.

Truer

When King Ahaz was ruling Israel, he made an alliance with his enemy (Syria) to save his skin. But to get Syria's help, he sold out the southern kingdom of Israel. Betrayed his own people. So Isaiah prophesies against him saying Israel will be reduced to **smoldering stump** (6:13). History bears it out. Ahaz's strategy backfires. The Assyrians conquer Israel deport thousands. *Turns out, collusion with another country to betray your own people is not a good idea*. Yet, hope remains. Isaiah issues a prophecy of another king who will emerge as “**a shoot from the stump of Jesse**” (11:1). Now to our ears that's nothing special, but Jesse was the father of David, the greatest king of Israel. David was selected by the prophet Samuel from

among eight brothers, and yet, whenever “son of Jesse” in Scripture only *one* son is identified, David. There are seven others! Isaiah is making a bold claim—a new king will emerge worthy of the name. Eight centuries later, on cold, Christmas night, Jesus was born “in the city of David” “of the house and lineage of David,” and placed in a manger (Luk 1:27,69). His stock is pure. He is the *rightful* king. But is he the *true* king? Isaiah goes on to say the green shoot of hope is also [the root](#) of Jesse. How can this king be both shoot and the *root* of Jesse? Don’t roots come before shoots? This would mean the promised king *precedes* Jesse, that he’s in the line *and* before the line of Jesse. How’s that possible? By a promise given to David, [“I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever \(2 Sa 7:12–13\).](#) A Davidic King reigning on the throne *forever*. For that, you’d need a king who lives forever. John, disciple of Jesus describes him as [the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David who conquered death so he can open the scroll of history \(Rev 5:5\).](#) Further, [“him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God *and* eternal life \(1 Jn 5:20\).](#) There it is. The true, eternal King who conquered death with death and rose again. This is *disturbing*. Most of us will never see this King in these bodies. But then again most citizens never see their rulers. What matters is the visibility of his rule in his people.

And here's where it gets truly disturbing. If Jesus is a king who gave his life, rose from the dead, and lives eternally, what would it look for his rule to be visible among his people? It would mean as Oliver O' Donovan put it, *living in postures, patterns, initiatives that are not immediately comprehensible to other people*. One posture would be living as a people of joy in a culture of pleasure. Instead of stringing together experiences for pleasure, we would be known as a people of indomitable joy. Joy in suffering, joy in sadness, joy in community, joy in solitude, joy in worship. Living as a people of joy in a culture of pleasure. A people of joy in spite of circumstances. A people of joy under the demands of work. A people of joy in the face of fear. A people of joy surrounded by crisis. Now that would be incomprehensible. To have gained life from death, is to have every reason to be *joyful*. To have gained Christ, *even greater*. A joyful people in a culture of pleasure reveals the true and rightful King.

Better

Jesus is truer, but is he better? One way we know is by his inauguration. Like many kingdoms, Israel anointed their kings. And when David was anointed "[the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward](#)" (1 Sam 16:13). But when Jesus is anointed *the seven-fold Spirit of God* rests upon him, [And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear](#)

of the LORD” (2). The number seven conveys perfection. When God perfected the world, he rested on the seventh day. The Holy Spirit is described as: “the seven spirits before the throne” (1:4); “the seven eyes of the Lamb” (5:6); “the seven torches” (4:5). Perfect being, knowledge, and power. This King’s anointing is off the scale. King David was usurped; King David committed adultery; King David proudly took a census, and King David failed to discipline his sons. *But not King Jesus.* Jesus has the Spirit of **wisdom and understanding**. This doesn’t just mean he’s smart, but that he possesses *morally rich discernment* that enable him to make right judgments, *He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness (a king of another scale) he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth* (4). He is not limited by powers of investigation, but possesses the power of perfect judgment. Notice he extends justice and equity to the marginalized. He stands up for them, but he also does not give a free pass so as to compromise justice. He gives them full attention, a fair trial, which they often lack. What would it look like to live under the rule of that King? It would look like the City Groups who advocate for foster parents and children at Austin Angels; like those who feed, counsel, and serve the less fortunate through M2 and Shop with Care, like those who advocate for racial justice, standing up for equal treatment of all persons of color.

People who embody, faintly, the character of their King. The Spirit empowers Jesus with perfect discernment. He also possesses the Spirit of **counsel and might**. This isn't just good advice but *potent military strategy*, the ability to devise a plan for victory, execute it, and run up the flag. Although it may not feel like it, his counsel and might are fully operative now. Living under his strategy means embracing his cruciform approach, *victory through a cross*. When celebrities visit children in hospitals, we ooh and ahh. Jesus disrobed himself of his celebrity status *from the very beginning*. He was born a servant in an animal trough when he deserved a palace. And served us *to the death*. His potent military strategy was to upend sin, death, and hell by throwing himself on the tracks *where we should have been bound*. Serving under this king should produce a kind of chivalry, which CSL described as “**bloodthirsty enough to fight for what was right, and meek enough to be a gentle and humble person in the company of others.**” King Jesus produces people who *fight gently*. People like MLK who in a recently restored video answered the question, Why did “Negros” struggle more than other immigrants? He patiently, gently, but forcefully makes the argument that while European immigrants were given millions of acres, African immigrants, who came involuntarily and worked for free in chains for 244 years were given *nothing*. “emancipation for the Negro was really freedom to hunger.” MLK fought for what was

right, but did so with meekness and gentility. The Spirit empowers Jesus to exercise cruciform justice. The final pair of qualities are the Spirit of **“knowledge and fear of the Lord.”** This isn’t just intellectual knowledge; it’s *reverent knowledge* that comes from *intimacy with God*. See even though Jesus is the Son of God himself, he retains a fear, a reverence for Yahweh. He recognizes his authority. And all who are in authority would do well to recognize we too are under authority. But Jesus does not cower. Doesn’t go rogue. Why? *Because he knows the Father’s character inside and out.* Together with the Spirit he has known and delighted in the Father from eternity past. Knowing the Lord, up close, **his delight is in the fear of the LORD** (3). His joy isn’t in circumstances, experiences, work, but in fearing the Lord. Joyful reverence is something many of us find difficult with authority figures. One day I was backing my dad’s new sports car out of the garage and scraped up one of the wheels. I felt awful. I took a picture of the wheel and planned to send it to him. But it took me a couple days to actually send it. I revered my Dad enough to report my mistake, *but I didn’t do it joyfully*. I was afraid of how mad he would be. Finally I bravely sent the text and waited and waited and waited. Hours later, I followed up with another text, “Hope the silence isn’t your disappointment.” He replied, “Just got this. Things happen. Don’t worry about it.” What?! That easy? I thought to myself, Does dad have a track record of

flying off the handle when I've busted something? No. He's not like that; he loves me. I had been looking at my dad, from a distance, not from up close. We often do the same thing with God. We relate to him through a broken prism, the distance of our sinfulness or sin done to us, *not* through an intimate knowledge of his love. We distort him, expect him to fly off the handle, when in reality, he looks over at the Son and the Spirit and says, Don't worry about it. We love you. I forgive you. The Spirit and the Son show us the character of the Father, inside and out, so we can delight to fear him.

Grander

Jesus is not only truer and better; he is grander. The rest of our passage describes a just and peaceful future, where righteousness is the king's belt and none will be destroyed. Animals formerly at odds live together in harmony, an image of peace, flourishing. How is this possible? "[for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea](#)" (9). Why would the earth being full of the knowledge of the Lord secure justice and peace? Just think if every single person knew the Lord, like Jesus knows him, inside and out—there would always be joy, always be justice, always be peace, reverence. As far as the waters cover the sea. How far is that? The waters always cover the sea because they *are* the sea. In the new heavens and new earth there will be an endless horizon of the knowledge of God. It will be grander than anything we can conceive.