

# Following Christ: Servant of the King



## Slice F14

### Servant of the King

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## 1 Memory Verse

### John 14:21 (NIV)

21 Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

## 2 Obedient Servants of the King

How believers in Western cultures relate to the Lord has been influenced by our cultural background. We tend to read Scripture and attempt to understand it from a worldview that has been influenced by centuries of Greek philosophy, even though the Bible was written by people with an Eastern worldview, the Hebrews. It is very important to solve this dilemma when dealing with our relationship with God. So how do we relate to God the Father; is He our Lord, or is He, our Father? The Western mind tackles the problem from an either/or perspective, so some Christians become legalistic, demanding that we be obedient to our Lord God, while other Christians behave like spoilt children who treat God as a doting Daddy. The Hebrew mind has no problem with this question as it accepts that both are true. It is not either/or but rather both/and. God is both our Lord and our master, and we should show Him reverence. He is also our ‘Abba’ father, who loves us and wants the best for us. We need to remember that what we believe is good for us, does not necessarily meet with what God believes is good for us (Romans 8:28).

For the duality of our relationship with God to work, we need to understand that a responsible child will be obedient to their father, and this then allows the father to develop a relationship with His child.

### 2.1 *We are Called to Serve*

Scripture tells us that, before the earth was formed, God knew we would accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour:

### Ephesians 1:4 (NIV)

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

This scripture leads some Christians believe that we were predestined (chosen by God) for salvation because of. Other Christians believe that we have freedom of choice, so it is the individual, not God, who chooses. Once again, we have the influence of Greek philosophy and the either/or problem yet it is again not either/or, but rather both/and. God chose me because in His foreknowledge, He knew that I would choose Him and He planned accordingly.

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God, therefore, has a plan and purpose for each of our lives. We are called into service, just as Jesus called the disciples.

## **Matthew 4:18–20 (NIV)**

**18** As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. **19** “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” **20** At once they left their nets and followed him.

In Slice F2, we looked at the fact that we are students (disciples) of our teacher (Rabbi), Jesus. This scripture reveals the first step a disciple takes; they change from living a worldly existence to living a spiritual life following their Master.

There is a widespread belief in many churches today that on accepting Jesus as your Lord, the individual is then able to determine how to relate to Him. They teach that it is possible for a person to truly believe in Christ as Saviour, even though that person never submits to Him as Lord.

The relationship we develop with our Saviour starts with obedience. How quickly we are able to follow this requirement will determine how quickly we mature into service for our King. When Christians speak about scripture, the focus tends to be on the Love of Jesus. We forget that Jesus combined love with obedience:

## **John 14:15 (NIV84)**

**15** “If you love me, you will **obey** what I command.

## **John 14:21 (NIV84)**

**21** Whoever has my commands and **obeys** them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.”

So obedience to Jesus is not optional because it is at the very foundation of the Christian life. Jesus worked on His disciples, training them to become the apostles who would be the building blocks for His Church. Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus also works on us to enable us to become productive building blocks in our church.

Because of the great things He was doing, Jesus gained a large measure of recognition while He ministered in Galilee. Jesus would not tolerate this behaviour and He confronted the people, saying:

## **Luke 6:46 (ESV)**

**46** “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”

Many of the people were following Jesus as the new great attraction to enter their lives; they spoke to Him with deference but were not taking His words to heart. It is worth noting that Jesus made this statement at the end of His great message entitled *The*

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*Sermon on the Mount.* The people were hearing what He was saying but would not obey Him. To be a disciple of Jesus, you must both hear *and* obey. Jesus concludes His Message by telling the people the parable of the Wise and Foolish Builders. The wise man built on the rock, while the foolish builder built his house on the sand. So when the storm came and the flood waters flowed, the house that was built on the sand was washed away, while the house built on the rock stood firm:

## **Luke 6:47–48 (NIV)**

**47** As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and **puts them into practice**, I will show you what they are like. **48** They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.

Jesus is our rock and if we want to be able to weather the storms of life, we need to obey His words and build on Him.

## **2.2 Jesus Demands Priority**

The modern worldview focuses on self and influenced by Greek philosophy; the person is indoctrinated to focus on themselves. A person is even able to lie openly, but still claim their version of the story is correct by saying the words ‘it is my truth.’ Therefore, obedience and a disciplined life of service may be very difficult for the modern new believer to attain. What must be made clear, however, is that God is not requesting our obedience; so that God’s judgment will Passover; Jesus in fact demands that we make our relationship with Him a priority over everything else in our lives.

## **Matthew 10:37 (NIV)**

**37** “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

This demand made by Jesus requires a major commitment; put Him above everything in our lives. The believers who make this choice and commit to serving the Lord find themselves on a life Journey designed by God where they have Him as their close companion. Jesus will be leading the way, so the storms of life will have a purpose and He will lead us through them. As the journey progresses, the relationship builds, and a closeness and an understanding will develop that is more precious than any earthly gain. Jesus can make this demand upon us, not only because He is our Rock, our firm foundation but because He is our Lord.

## **3 Jesus Is Lord**

Slide F6 covered the fact that Jesus is God, He is God the Son, the second person of the Trinity. However, the Term ‘lord’ needs clarification before we continue because the term may have a cultural bias. It may be equated with an aristocrat who is ‘lord of the manor,’ or a slave owner. In the Old Covenant when God is called ‘Lord,’ the Hebrew name *Adonai*

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is used, which implies that God has total authority, He is Lord and master over all. So, when a believer reads the following scriptures, they must recognise that the scripture is pointing to Jesus as the supreme authority in their lives:

## **Romans 10:9 (NIV)**

**9** If you declare with your mouth, “**Jesus is Lord,**” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

## **1 Corinthians 12:3b (NIV)**

**3** No one can say, ‘**Jesus is Lord,**’ except by the Holy Spirit.

A statement of faith made in difficult circumstances has been made by believers through the centuries. They state, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ revealing the confidence they have in Jesus being in control. A question every believer must ask themselves is, is Jesus the Lord over *every* aspect of their life. Is Jesus only allowed entry into your life when you need Him, or does He reign supreme, where you bring all matters in your life before Him?

## **3.1 Disciples, Servants or Slaves?**

When the disciples first followed Jesus, they did what many other young men of their time did; they became *talmidim* (students) and followed a rabbi (teacher) to learn from him. However, this was not the only goal of Rabbi Jesus; His plan was to train them to a level where they would become leaders of the Church and, at the same time, become His servants. The turning point for the disciples was at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus asked the disciples who the people thought He was. They answered that some said He was John the Baptist, while others said He was Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. Then Jesus asked the question He actually wanted to know the answer to, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ This is what Jesus wanted to hear, the disciples no longer viewed Jesus as Rabbi, they understood that He was the Son of God. Now Jesus could go to Jerusalem and die for the sins of mankind, and His disciples would come to understand that they too would be required to die to self in order to be able to serve God fully.

When we call Jesus ‘Lord’, we too are recognising that Jesus is ‘the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ We too are then called to serve our Lord and Saviour. However, it is worth noting that the apostle Paul did not call Himself a servant, but rather chose the word ‘slave’:

## **Romans 1:1 (HCSB)**

**1** Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle and singled out for God’s good news

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On checking your Bible, you will most probably see the word 'servant', not 'slave' but the Greek word used by Paul is *doulos*, which means 'slave.' Interestingly, because of the connotation the word 'slave' has for modern society, translators chose to translate *doulos* as 'servant' when the word is used for believers in Jesus. However, scripture is clear, we are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20) and we are, therefore, slaves to our Lord Jesus. We are not hired to perform a duty as a servant. We are owned by Jesus, bought and paid for. It is extremely important for believers in Jesus to understand this.

There is a very interesting connection between believers being called *doulos* and an Old Covenant requirement for slaves. When a slave had served their master for seven years in the Old Covenant times, they were then to be set free. If the slave loved their master and preferred life in his household to attaining freedom, a strange ritual would be required to be a record of the fact that the person was a slave by choice:

## **Deuteronomy 15:16–17 (NIV)**

**16** But if your servant says to you, "I do not want to leave you," because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, **17** then take an awl and push it through his earlobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your female servant.

Moses recorded this law some 1 500 years before Jesus was born, and this ritual points to the relationship between the master and those who chose to become His slaves. The nailing of the ear to the doorframe to pierce the ear seems a very strange practise but note the significance of a nail piercing flesh and blood on the doorpost. The Jews are required to shed blood as part of their covenant bond with God, which was fulfilled when Hebrew baby boys are circumcised at eight days old. In the blood covenant, both sides are required to shed blood and have a scar as evidence, so where is God's covenant wound? Jesus fulfilled the covenant requirement on the cross when His wrists and ankles were pierced by nails and a spear pierced His side. On the resurrection of Jesus, all the wounds He received before His crucifixion were healed, only the wounds Jesus received on the cross, the covenant wounds, remained. Jesus willingly went to the cross, obedient to the Father. He was the ultimate *doulos*, having his flesh pierced against the wood as a symbol of His love.

Jesus was crucified during the Passover festival. He died at 15:00, the exact time that the High Priest cut the throat of the Passover lamb. Jesus is the Passover Lamb whose blood was shed so that God's judgment will pass over those who are under His blood covering. Jesus is also the door upon which the blood of the Passover lamb was painted:

## **John 10:7–9 (ESV)**

**7** So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8** All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9** I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

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The blood of the Passover Lamb was to be put on the lintels of the doorway to the home, and the slave who agreed to serve his master willingly had his ear pierced on the doorpost, leaving his blood on the lintel of the door. To be a true follower of Jesus, we must be willing to become bond slaves to our master and, in doing so, come under the care of the master of not just a household, but of the universe.

God rewards faithful servants at the Bema Judgment seat, where the assessment of the individual's service for the Lord is measured (1 Corinthians 3:13). Those who served their self-interests receive ash, while those who, in self-sacrifice, served their Father will receive eternal rewards. Every believer should be striving to serve God so that on that day they hear Jesus say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

## 4 Jesus is King

When David was king over Israel, God promised him that one of his descendants would be the Messiah and rule as king over Israel:

### 2 Samuel 7:12–13 (ESV)

**12** When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. **13** He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

### 2 Samuel 7:16 (ESV)

**16** And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.' "

Jesus is that promised 'Messiah,' a word which means 'anointed one,' which is the requirement for a king who was invested with authority when oil was poured over his head. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the crowds shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' (Matthew 21:9). 'Hosanna' means 'save us' and the crowd believed that, as the Son of David, Jesus was going to ride up to the fort of Antonio and proclaim Himself as king, overthrowing the Roman rule of Pilate. Jesus instead turned left and went to the Temple Mount; He was to first become the Lamb of God before He could become King.

When Jesus was arrested, He was taken before Pilate who asked Him if it was true that He was King of the Jews. Jesus replied 'Yes, it is as you say' (Mark 15:2). So, when Jesus was crucified, Pilate had a placard nailed above His head on the cross which stated in three languages: 'The **King of the Jews.**'

The Kingdom of Jesus is already, but not yet. It already exists within the people who are the *ecclesia*, the Church, but it will only come to fruition when Jesus returns to earth as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to reign on earth for 1 000 years.

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## 4.1 *Humble Yourselves before the King*

If we are slaves and Jesus is a King, what does that mean for our relationship with Him? The only conclusion to reach is that we owe Jesus our complete obedience. In days of old, worthy knights would come before their king and be required to swear allegiance to the king, which compelled them to a lifetime of dedicated service. The king sat on his throne, a symbol of his authority, and the knight knelt before the king as a symbol of humility and submission. Surely no less a commitment would be required of a slave before their king?

It is an act of great pride and arrogance to come under the protection of a great king and to refuse to submit to His authority over your life. God hates Pride; to confirm this one need only read Daniel Chapters 4 and 5. The apostle James emphasises it by writing:

### **James 4:6 (NIV)**

**6** But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:  
“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

### **James 4:10 (NIV)**

**10** Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

We are all to follow the example of Jesus who said: ‘Not my will, but yours be done’ (Luke 22:42).

## **5 A Friend of God**

This ‘Slice’ has illustrated the awesome role of Jesus as divine Lord and King overall. Every believer owes Him their life. This King laid aside His crown and came to earth to die for His people on the cross, as ‘a ransom for many’ (Mark 10:45). Because of whom He is and what He has done, we understand Him to be the absolute Lord and absolute King. We are His subjects, His obedient servants. However, there is an amazing truth revealed in the Gospel of John, which records a statement Jesus made to His disciples:

### **John 15:15 (NIV)**

**15** I no longer call you **servants**, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you **friends**, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

In this is amazing revelation, Jesus showed what it meant to be the ultimate friend by dying for our sins. Now it is our turn to be Jesus' friend, which means that we love one another as He has loved us.

The great significance of our friendship with Jesus is revealed in the life of Joseph as a shadow of the reality that is the life of Jesus. Joseph, a slave, was in the dungeon, and he was elevated to the palace of the pharaoh and became his friend and confidante. Jesus, in a similar manner, was raised from the tomb to the right-hand side of God the Father.



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Then through our friendship with Jesus, believers are raised from the mud and mire of the pigpen of sin to have access to God the Father. Believers are elevated from the pigpen to the palace!

This is truly an amazing revelation but can only come to fruition if we fully understand our relationship with Jesus. We can only be true friends of Jesus if we continue to remember that we should *want* to honour Him by following His example - service before self. You have started a lifelong journey with Jesus; who is going to drive the car?

## 6 Practically

- God has a plan and purpose for your life, you have been called into service, just as Jesus did with the disciples.
- Accepting Jesus as Lord requires that you are obedient to His commands and that you live a disciplined life. Your relationship with Him must take priority over everything in your life. Jesus paid a great price for your salvation; you are to remember the cost of your eternal life and to live a life worthy of that sacrifice.
- You are to appreciate the gracious position you have in the Kingdom of God; you can contribute directly to the establishment of the Kingdom. You should not take this for granted.
- You are to seek God earnestly so that you do not miss His purpose for your life.

## 7 Proclamation

'I declare that Jesus is my divine Lord and King, to whom I owe my eternal salvation. I understand that I am one of His subjects and submit to His Lordship over my life. I, therefore, honour Him by following His example and commit to service to God the Father before seeking to fulfil my own selfish desires.'

## 8 Prayer

'Thank you, Lord Jesus that you chose me and called me into service with You. I am deeply grateful for Your loving care over my life, and that through You I can truly become all that I was created to be. I recognise that I am flawed and prone to error, so I humbly repent of the times when my selfish pride put my priorities ahead of your plans and purposes for my life. I thank you that I can trust in you for my wellbeing and can have the confidence to accept Your authority over my life.'