

Who Is Your Potentate?

The word **potentate** is not one we hear very often today. It sounds like a word from another time — a word associated with kings, emperors, thrones, and kingdoms. Yet its meaning raises a question that is just as important today as it was when the apostle Paul wrote to the young evangelist Timothy.

A **potentate** is a powerful ruler or sovereign—one who possesses great authority and power. The word comes from the Latin *potens*, meaning “powerful” or “having power.” In older English, it described someone who exercised ruling authority. With that meaning in mind, consider a very personal question: **Who is your Potentate?**

Who truly rules your life? Who has the final word when you decide what you believe, how you live, what you value, and whom you obey? For the Christian, the answer is **Jesus Christ**.

As Paul neared the end of his first letter to Timothy, he charged this young preacher to remain faithful until the appearing of Jesus Christ. He then described the greatness and authority of the One whom Christians serve:

“which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen..” — 1 Timothy 6:15–16

Those words remind us that Christianity is more than believing certain facts about Jesus. It means living under His authority. Earthly rulers possess authority for a little while. Kings surrender their crowns, presidents leave office, governments change, nations rise and fall, and human influence eventually comes to an end. The authority of Jesus Christ does not.

After His resurrection Jesus declared, ***“All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth”*** (Matthew 28:18). That leaves no room for divided loyalty. Jesus is not simply one religious teacher among many whose advice we may accept when it suits us. He is Lord. He is King. He possesses all authority.

Yet every one of us faces other things that compete for the throne of our lives. Money can become our ruler. Popular opinion can rule us. Political loyalties, family traditions, careers, possessions, pleasure, and social pressure can influence us. Perhaps the most difficult ruler to remove from the throne is **self**. The world encourages us to follow our own desires and decide for ourselves what is right. Jesus calls us to something very different—submission, obedience, and faithfulness.

He asked, “***And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?***” (Luke 6:46). Calling Jesus “Lord” means much more than speaking a religious title. It means allowing Him to rule.

If Jesus is our Potentate, His Word must have the final say. When His teaching conflicts with popular culture, Christ must come first. When His Word conflicts with political opinion, Christ must come first. When it conflicts with family tradition, personal preference, or what we simply want to do, Christ must still come first. That is what it means to have a King.

Revelation 19:16 describes Jesus with the words, “***KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.***” Every earthly authority stands beneath His authority. Every human kingdom is temporary, but the kingdom of Christ endures.

There is great comfort in knowing this. Christians do not serve a defeated King or place their hope in a ruler whose kingdom may disappear tomorrow. Jesus conquered death, rose from the grave, ascended into heaven, and reigns with all authority.

So when the world seems uncertain, when human leaders disappoint, when temptation pressures us to compromise, or when we must choose between the voice of the world and the Word of Christ, the question remains:

Who is your Potentate?

For the Christian, there can be only one answer—**Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords.**