

Preparing To Be King

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Given 27-Sep-07; Tape #FT07-03

What do you know about kings? Not the book of kings, but the office of kings?

Most of us probably know very little except what we have seen on television, or maybe have read in a book. We Americans got rid of our king 230 years ago, and have not looked back since! We called the King of England a tyrant, picked up our muskets, and won our independence so that we could rule ourselves, and become a republic.

We modern Americans really do not put all that much stock in kings. It is not part of our way of life. We might buy stock in Burger King, Incorporated. We might buy anything "king size" that comes on a platter. We might go to an amusement part named, "King's Dominion." We southerners know of Richard Petty, "King of Stockcar Racing." And of course, we all know about the "King of Rock and Roll, Elvis Presley."

However, these are not kings by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, the whole world has very few real kings left. I mean, monarchs who pass laws and judgments, and who basically run their countries, and command their armies. Most kings do not rule much anymore. In many western countries that have kept their kings, they are constitutional monarchies where the kings or queens are just figureheads without power.

However, God promises in Revelation 5: 10, "God had made us kings and priests unto our God; and we shall reign on the earth," He really means it! He is not speaking in figurative language here. He will reward us with very real power over the nations!

We have heard about those 144,000—those are the ones who follow Him, and are the ones who become the kings and priest under the Great King, Jesus Christ. He said in Revelation 2: 26 that we are going to rule with rods of iron:

Revelation 2:26-27 And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father...

What He is saying is that we will be given power over the nations—the ability to smite the nations, as it were, just as Jesus Christ is given the power by God the Father to do that very same thing. We will be under Him, given great responsibility and might, and abilities to do things. We will have learned a great deal.

That is the message of the whole sermon: How much will we have learned to rule by the time we are given the opportunity to do so? And, with so much power in our hands, how will we wield it?

Will we be tyrants like the American colonists considered King George III to be? Well, if we are in God's Kingdom I do not think that it going to be the case.

Will we not use our power enough and end up causing trouble allowing the people to run wild?

Will we be good kings? Will we be ready to rule?

Have we started our training? Of course! Anyone who has been called, and is baptized has begun to train for his position in God's Kingdom.

John 14:1-2 Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions [offices and positions]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

In addition, if He is preparing the place, then He is certainly going to prepare you to fill it! He has a position—an office—in mind for every one of us to fill. And, it has something to do with ruling this earth and the people who live on it.

God is the Ruling Family of this universe. And, each one of God's children who is chosen to be there, and specially prepared for that job, will be responsible to rule some part of that kingdom.

So then, how will we rule? What have we done to prepare ourselves for rulership? Does the Bible provide any instruction toward this goal, in how we should prepare for it? Well, of course it does!

The Bible has included within its covers all the instruction that we need to qualify for our place in God's Kingdom; besides the lessons that God puts us through to get us there!

It would not be fair for God to give us this promise—a place prepared for us, and that we will rule with a rod of iron—and not include instructions about how to achieve it—with His help, of course. That is always something we must remember!

Now, we know that from instruction over the years, that the children of Israel in the wilderness are a type of the church of God preparing to enter the Kingdom of God. We have known that for a long time. The children of Israel needed instruction on how to live in the Promised Land under a king.

Now, God was their king. That is what He was preparing them to do. He also knew that after a while, they would want a human representative to rule them. All the way back toward the beginning in Genesis 49:10 He told the children of Israel through Jacob their father that the scepter would not depart from Judah. He knew back then near 1700 BC that eventually Israel would have kings of Judah ruling them, and that the Messiah would come from that line years before they ever even asked for a king.

He knew that they would need a king, and He knew that those kings would need instruction on how to be good, godly kings. He had to lay down some ground rules for these human kings to follow. That is what we find in Deuteronomy 17.

However, I would like to turn elsewhere first, to the occasion when the children of Israel finally

asked for a king. They were nearing the end of the period of the judges, when they finally got fed up with the sons of Samuel—they were no good. Samuel was fine, but when he gave responsibility and power to his sons, verse 3 says that,

I Samuel 8:3 But his sons did not walk in his ways; they turned aside after dishonest gain, took bribes, and perverted justice.

Therefore, the elders just threw up their hands and said, "We need a king."

I Samuel 8:4-8 Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD [he did the right thing]. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken me and served other gods—so they are doing to you also.

God is saying, "Sam, buddy, I have been going through this for years. This is nothing surprising to Me! Now, you are getting a taste of it!"

I Samuel 8:9 Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.

Remember I Samuel 8 is many years after the instruction He had given in Deuteronomy 17. Chapter 8 takes place at about 1000 BC, roughly. God gave them the book of Deuteronomy in about 1400 BC. Therefore, this was about 400 years later.

God is going to tell them what to expect. Even though He has already given to them how a good king should be, and what he should do, He was now going to tell them that their king would probably not follow it.

I Samuel 8:10-18 So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who asked him for a king. And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and

bakers. And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the LORD will not hear you in that day."

You will get what you deserve, God says!

God gave them a good idea about how kings have traditionally behaved; both Israelite and gentile kings: They take, and take, and take, and they take. And what do they give? Not a whole lot. Most are not even good rulers. They just take, and the people end up being destitute. He gathers all the riches, all the power, and takes the best of everything from the land—from the livestock, to the crops, and the men and women; and everybody else had to make do with the residue of it. And there is not very much left at that.

Okay, they heard all this, and then their reply in verse 19:

I Samuel 8:19-20 Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

Moreover, God said, "Okay If that is what you want, that is what you are going to get."

Now, when Samuel finally anointed Saul, he should have told him, "Hey Saul, I have got something for you to read here. It is in the book of the law." However, from the way that Saul's life turned out, I do not think that it ever happened.

Now, we know that just about every king turned out to be just like one Samuel told the Israelites about. In fact, there have been very few kings, ever, who were just, and fair, peaceful, pious, and lenient. Most of them have been just the opposite. They just take things, have not been just, have been power-hungry, and have been money-grabbing greedy. Everything is just me, me, me.

It is for just this reason, and we have a track record of several thousands of years of kings, that the modern nations have steadily eroded the power of those monarchies, putting them under the power of parliaments, or other gatherings of the people. The people now rule the kings, rather than the other way around. How much power kings might have behind the scenes is debatable. We do not know, but generally, legally, and constitutionally, their powers are checked or balanced by the people.

This next section is called in the New King James Version, "Principles Governing Kings." It is very instructive, not just for them, but more so for us as we prepare to be kings.

Deuteronomy 17:14-20 When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that *are* around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; *one* from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, *who is* not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from *the one* before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, "that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment *to* the right hand or *to* the left, and that he may prolong *his* days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

Notice that there is a great overlapping with the Feast of Tabernacles, here, because we are talking about the Kingdom of God. We are talking about kings, and we are talking about learning to fear the Lord. We are told specifically that when we come to the Feast of Tabernacles, we are coming to learn to fear the Lord.

These principles all intertwine and overlap with one another.

The instructions given in Deuteronomy 17 are recorded in and translated from archaic idiom. They are set in ancient settings. This was given back in the Bronze Age and Iron Age. These instructions mention multiplying horses, wives, silver and gold, and writing out a copy of the law.

However, we must consider these things spiritually. We can derive spiritual lessons and principles from the physical instructions and the physical institution of monarchy as God set it up to be practiced in Israel.

This is one of the few places where there are any instructions directly to kings, especially in a format such as this.

I have five points of instruction today that God gave to kings that we are going to look at spiritually.

1) The King must be an Israelite that God chooses.

This signifies our calling and election by grace. We are aware that we have been specially picked out by God, as it says in John 6:44. He chose us, and has drawn us to Jesus Christ. He saw all of humanity and picked out you. Then He put us all together in one body, put us on a regimen so we would learn how to be His children, and to become kings with Christ.

He said that the kings must be Israelites. That is, spiritually, one who is inwardly of the seed of

Abraham in whom dwells the Spirit of God

We will go through some scriptures to see that in the New Testament.

Romans 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew [Israelite] who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew [Israelite] who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

We have to be an Israelite—inwardly, in whom is the Spirit of God, circumcised in the heart.

Galatians 3:7-9 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

Remember I said that we all have to be sons of Abraham. We see that again across the page:

Galatians 3:26-29 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 4:6-7 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Galatians 6:16 And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, upon the Israel of God.

Once we are called into the church of God, baptized, and given God's Holy Spirit, we are spiritual Israelites—the Israel of God—co-heirs with Christ of the promises to Abraham.

When we have all been brought into the church of God, we have all been made alike. We have all been made of one blood, of one spirit. We are now all Israelites, and in that sense, qualified for rulership. We are all of one body.

As called and chosen members of His church of God, we are all past this step. Nevertheless, it is a vital step. We cannot have foreigners ruling over us. We cannot have somebody who is not like us to be over us.

The principle is that the ruler has to be of the same kind as those he rules. The king has to be

familiar with, and follow the beliefs, laws, customs, traditions, and even the expectations of the people he rules. He has to know them. He has to know their history. He has to know how they work, what their strengths are, what their weaknesses are. He has to know what they hope for. In fact, he has to be one of them in order to be an effective ruler.

A foreigner coming in from outside to rule them would make changes in the way that things are normally done. Now, if normal was bad, then maybe that would be a good thing. However, over time a foreigner would change things to the point that the people would not be familiar with the country anymore.

I have been to South Africa several times on church visits. I have noticed the difference over the passage of time as the ANC has taken power over that nation. The ANC and the people in it are not the same as the Israelitish people who ruled South Africa before. And the country is changing. The Israelite peoples who ruled that nation before ruled it far differently—more prosperously, more Israelitishly—than it is now being ruled.

Mr. Gert de Jager, there in South Africa, tried to explain this to me just this past visit. He told me about the difference in mind between the two peoples. Basically, the current South African government goes by the strong man principle. "If you are strong, and you have the power, you can rule as you please." He said that certain laws bind them, but essentially underneath it all is that idea of "the strong-man."

Therefore, they give offices and whatnot to their cronies, and do whatever they can get away with under this system, because they are the strongman.

Israelites tend not to be that way. Israelites tend more toward democracy, republics—people's choice of those governing for them. It is just a difference in approach, but it is one that Jesus Christ recognized—that there is a difference.

There you have an example of different people coming in, and over the course of several years, the whole nation changes.

The people have to trust the ruler, too. In addition, they are far less likely to trust a foreign one—even a foreign man who has the best of intentions. There has to be mutual trust one to the other—the ruler to the people, and the people to the ruler.

It is kind of like a marriage. We have the saying that opposites attract. However, the best and strongest marriages are the ones in which the husband and wife have the most in common with each other.

God, all through His word is telling us that He wants compatibility—oneness, agreement. He does not want enforced multiculturalism. He does not want "a tossed salad." He wants a melting pot, because, those other ways tend to divide rather than unite a people.

Christ is the best example of rulership that works, and that brings unity.

Philippians 2:1-4 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish

ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Then he goes on to extol the example of Jesus Christ. He was of one mind with God, and acted in humility to bring all mankind into oneness with Him, and with the Father. That is what His prayer in the garden of Gethsemane is all about. He asked that we be one with Him, just as He is one with the Father. He is working toward oneness. His goal is unity, not just among us in the church of God, but eventually with all humanity; all humanity unified with God.

The rulers in the Kingdom of God will reflect this oneness with God, and with those that they will lead. They must be Israelites—the Israel of God.

The lesson from this first point, then, is that the leader must be like his followers in order to be effective.

Remember that I said that Jesus Christ is the best example?

Hebrews 2:17 Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

We could say the same thing in terms of His kingship. He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a just and merciful King over all the earth.

2) Do Not Multiply Horses.

Deuteronomy 17:16 But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, `You shall not return that way again.'

Maybe a bit strange to our ears nowadays, but this is saying that horses symbolize the materials of war—war materiel, weapons, and armies. Remember Samuel said that the king over them would take their sons to run before his chariots, and to be his horsemen?

God had a word of caution against that. He has said, in effect, "You are not to build armies in order to make yourself a military powerhouse." He did not mind them having armies. That was fine. However, the big part here is not to multiply them—to make them big, or to grow them large, and make themselves a military powerhouse.

Why? The answer is in the verse. It is because it can lead an even godly king back to "Egypt"—back to this world, and away from God.

If you need proof of this, just read II Samuel 24. This was one of the big sins of King David. He took the census so he could know how big his armies were, because he had power on his mind—he wanted to expand the kingdom. Except for God coming and plaguing him, and the people, he might have just gone on and done that.

Instead, he had to be brought down to his knees, because he had disobeyed this command, that a king should not multiply horses—war materials.

It is a worldly ambition to amass power. And to do that, a ruler would need to make military alliances with other nations, as well as to build his armies large and great. It is not good to make military alliances with other nations. As we have been finding out from "The Christian Fight" series, we can fight our own battles with God's help. We have to fight our own battles, because if we do not fight them ourselves, we will not learn anything from them. We are not going to be overcoming. However, God gives us help to do it.

In our preparation for rulership under Christ, then, we have to be careful—consider fully—where we turn to for help when faced with a problem. Do we, as Psalm 121 says, look to the hills from where our Help comes? Or, do we trust in princes—powerful, influential people—to help us solve our problems? Do we look to money to solve our problems? Do we trust in the doctor, lawyer, or politicians to solve our problems? Do we trust our own knowledge and abilities, and think that we have what it takes to overcome anything thrown our way? Do we trust customs and traditions like, "this is the way that it has always been done around here"?

Are any of these the way we solve our problems?

Then there are other people, not relying on anybody else, who try to become powerful personally in some way. That is how they are going to solve their problems! They become financially powerful, or they become politically powerful, or they become socially powerful so that perhaps in some way, they can ward off their difficulties.

Now, it is not wrong, necessarily, to make ourselves strong and prepared for the times that are coming—"making hay while the sun shines," as it were. This practice can turn to the dark side if our purpose is to become absolutely self-reliant. I say this to you all because we are mostly American, and self-reliance is our badge of honor. We believe in, "picking ourselves up by our own bootstraps; doing it all ourselves; nobody needs to help me; I have got it all handled; I can do anything." We have got to be careful about all this because it can become a tremendous source of pride—"hubris" as my dad was calling it. We can think that we can overcome anything as long as we have the time and the energy, and the wherewithal to do it. "I do not need any help."

We are going to read a Psalm by David recorded in II Samuel. I want you to think about the man David, the king, who of just a handful of people in the entire history of the world who maybe could handle just about anything—battles with giants; handling money; immensely talented literary and musician; charisma; and good looks.

Eventually, he did not rely on himself to get things done. He tried time after time to do things his own way, but by the time you get to II Samuel 22, toward the end of his life, he started listing some of the lessons that he had learned.

II Samuel 22: 31-35 As for God, His way is perfect; The word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield to all who trust in Him. For who is God, except the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God? God is my

strength and power, And He makes my way perfect. He makes my feet like the feet of deer, And sets me on my high places. He teaches my hands to make war, So that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

Is that not interesting? He did not rely on himself for the ability to make war, and he was quite the warrior. He allowed God to instruct him in that.

II Samuel 22:36-51 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your gentleness has made me great. You enlarged my path under me; So my feet did not slip. I have pursued my enemies and destroyed them; Neither did I turn back again till they were destroyed. And I have destroyed them and wounded them, So that they could not rise; They have fallen under my feet. For You have armed me with strength for the battle; You have subdued under me those who rose against me. You have also given me the necks of my enemies, So that I destroyed those who hated me. They looked, but there was none to save; Even to the LORD, but He did not answer them. Then I beat them as fine as the dust of the earth; I trod them like dirt in the streets, And I spread them out. You have also delivered me from the strivings of my people; You have kept me as the head of the nations. A people I have not known shall serve me. The foreigners submit to me; As soon as they hear, they obey me. The foreigners fade away, And come frightened from their hideouts. The LORD lives! Blessed be my Rock! Let God be exalted, The Rock of my salvation! It is God who avenges me, And subdues the peoples under me; He delivers me from my enemies. You also lift me up above those who rise against me; You have delivered me from the violent man. Therefore I will give thanks to You, O LORD, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name. He is the tower of salvation to His king, And shows mercy to His anointed, To David and his descendants forevermore.

So, by the end of his life, king David had figured it out! Even though he had been a man of war, even though he had been faced with great enemies throughout his life, he figured out that it was God who had given him every victory, and made him what he was. And even though he was a man of great talent, great strength, and great charisma, all those were gifts from God.

It was not his great armies. He did not need to multiply horses. He did not need to make alliances. God was strength enough, and He gave David victory

Proverbs 21:31 The horse *is* prepared for the day of battle, But deliverance *is* of the LORD.

As much as anyone would want to prepare armies with chariots and horsemen, it does not

matter. It is God who gives the victory.

This is what the king is supposed to learn. The lesson is, then, "Do not be ambitious for might or power, but learn to trust in God for victory."

3) Do not multiply wives.

Deuteronomy 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away;

Now, some of you women out there are probably thinking, "Why would they want to do that anyway?"

Well, it is more than that, of course. This is very similar to multiplying horses. This situation with multiplying wives involves foreign entanglements—looking to others for help in reliance for victory.

Kings in old times used marriage as a way to cement alliances with other nations. God says, "Do not do that! This would be a great problem! Your heart will be turned away!" He will lean to his wife, and his heart will turn to idolatry.

This especially happened with David's son Solomon.

I Kings 11:1-13 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the L