

Portrait Of A King

Preparing for our Future Positions

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If you would take a look at today's modern globe, the world has very few kings or queens left. There are some there, but I am really talking about a monarch who makes laws, and passes judgments, runs their countries, and commands their armies.

Most modern monarchs do not seem to rule very much. They are just figureheads. They are kings and queens in name only. In most of the western countries that still have kings, they have what is known as constitutional monarchs, such as Britain, The Netherlands, and others of Northwestern Europe. But still, they are essentially figureheads without much power, or so it seems. Perhaps they really do wield a great deal of power—but behind the scenes—so we cannot see it right now. Who knows?

Just what is a king?

If we would open up a dictionary, we would get a definition something like this: "The member of a royal family who is the supreme ruler of his nation." That is pretty simple. And, we already knew that. This has not helped us very much at all. So, a more full definition may go something like this: "A usually hereditary head of state, who may or may not (depending on the style of government) exercise monarchial powers over a nation, typically known as a kingdom, or realm. Often a king will have both political and religious functions acting as high priest of their national religion, or as a divine king."

Now, this starts to get us going on what a king really is. A king then, who by his family connection, and by the fortune (or misfortune) of his birth, governs a nation primarily in its secular affairs, but who also may have religious powers and functions. Think of the Queen of England. She is the head of the Church of England, as well as being the secular constitutional monarch of England.

If we would use the examples of monarchs of historical nations, kings were responsible for the following various functions:

1. Enacting and enforcing his nation's laws.
2. Acting as the supreme judge of the land.
3. Being the kingdom's chief diplomat.
4. Encouraging and expanding his nation's productivity.
5. Leading his nation in war.

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6. Being the nation's cheerleader in times of calamity and stress.

In that last example, some of you may remember World War 2 where King George leading the nation of Britain during the time of the London Bombings, setting the example to the people. And he really endeared himself and his wife to the whole nation.

So, if we would take all of these various functions and responsibilities that a king or queen has, the monarch is president, congress, supreme court, and all the departments of government rolled up into one person. That is kind of scary is it not? To think that one person could have that much power in a nation.

Now, that resume should give us a great deal of respect for any monarch. And we must remember also that this does not happen in a vacuum. His job becomes all the more complex when internal politics and external conflicts heighten the tensions in the court. It could really become a hairy job. I am sure that it is.

I wonder how Queen Elizabeth has done it lasting as long as she has. And Queen Victoria lasted about 60 years as well. How could they stay in a job like that for so long? But then you think about most kings, and they often lasted only about 7 or 8 years at the most. It has something to do with women, I guess.

Kings and queens have advisors, and counsels, and historical precedent to help them, or guide them; but ultimately every final decision, every big decision rests upon them. They have to make those choices. They are responsible for the lives and well being of every one of their subjects, ultimately. They affect millions of people. That is quite a heavy job and responsibility; one that no one in their right mind would probably take on willingly.

That said, we must not be in our right mind, eh?

Because, whether we have realized it or not, we have taken on that responsibility! When we accepted Jesus Christ as our personal savior, and made the Kingdom of God our goal in life, we signed on to be kings or queens. You could say, then, that the Christian life is God's royal school for training future monarchs!

Please turn to Revelation 5:10 to see some of this. The context is the heavenly choir singing praises to Jesus Christ, and I want to read a verse of their song,

Revelation 5:10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

They are singing as if they are us—the saints. This is speaking about God's children. We have been made kings and priests to our God, and we reign on the earth. God is not joking. This is not a metaphor. This is not some prophetic, symbolic, atypical thing. This is for real. He will reward us with real power over the nations as kings and priests.

Turn back a couple of chapters to Revelation 2 in the letter to Thyatira; he expands on this just a little bit.

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.

Did you catch that? This is not speaking about Jesus Christ ruling over the nations with a rod of iron, but it is speaking about *those of us who overcome* being given rods of iron, and ruling over the nations. How about them apples!

Now, this figure of the rod of iron suggests great strength, and durability—meaning no one is going to take you down, because you are much stronger and able to outlast them, or opponents. It also implies the firmness of will—your will is set. This is the way that things are going to be. It also implies superior skill, that you are not only more powerful, and that you can last longer; but you also have the talent, mind and ability to make good use of it. And of course, the one we usually jump to first thing, it also suggests the thought of overwhelming violence—that is what a rod of iron does. It strikes. It smites. It beats. It is not some little thing that you go around tapping people on the head with. You do not wield a rod of iron that way. You rear back and whack away if need be. That is the threat of overwhelming violence that this rod implies. In the verse, He uses terms like, "breaking into pieces."

But with so much power at our disposal, the question becomes, "How will we wield it?" Will we be tyrants like the colonists thought King George III was in taking advantage of the people? Or, will we go in the other direction and withhold our power too much, and allow the people to live in anarchy because we are not willing to use the rod of iron upon them in the way that they need?

Will we be good kings? Will we be ready to rule when we are given our rod of iron? Have we ever really thought about this? I am sure that we have to some degree, but have we ever thought deeply about this, considering what it is going to be like, the skills

that are going to be needed, and that sort of thing? Have we tried to figure this out in our own minds?

I have heard people in the past remark, "I do not really want to be a king!" They do not mind the priest part; they could probably handle that, dressed in nice linen with the occasional sacrifice to oversee. (They are just animals. There is not much to that, they think!) But that king part—"Oh boy, politics. That is getting down and dirty with stuff you got to do to organize, and you got to be over people, and tell them what to do, and people bring you all their problems, and you have to solve everything, and that is just way too much work and responsibility for me. I mean, is this not supposed to be club med or something in the Kingdom of God?"

Not on your life! Not on your eternal life either! God did not call us to be sponges on society. He called us to be the workers and leaders of society. And you know, when He does something like that, when He calls, and He makes promises, He never leaves us without the ability to do it.

Turn to John 14 and see some of the last words of Jesus to His disciples, because perhaps they were thinking about these things too. He has already told them that they were going to be kings with Him ruling over the tribes of Israel, so maybe they had some of these ideas, and there were saying, "Jesus! You are leaving us! It has only been three and a half years, and we are not ready yet for these responsibilities!" And Jesus maybe picked up on these vibes. And so He said,

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, places, positions]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

So, rest assured, we have already begun training for this position in God's kingdom. It started before you were even converted. Jesus is preparing a place for us, and we can also flip that over and say that Jesus is preparing us for that place. He is working on both ends at the same time. And when He puts His mind to it to get something done, as we find out in Isaiah 55—when His word goes out, it does not return to Him empty. It fulfills what He sent it out to do. So, if He has called you out of this world, and said that He wants you as His son or daughter, "I want you as a king or queen in my kingdom," well, it is going to get done. That is how He works. He is not the kind of God who fails.

So, He has a position and office in mind for us to fill, and it has something to do with ruling this earth and the people in it, because that is what God does. God is the ruling

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family of the universe, and each one of God's children will be responsible for ruling some part of it. So, we need to be prepared.

The question is, then, how will we rule? How will we do as kings and queens? What have we done to prepare ourselves? Have we done anything consciously to prepare ourselves for that position? Have we ever really thought about it—thought it through? Have we ever tried to see how our daily lives help in preparing us to be a monarch? Or have we not?

Does the Bible provide any specific instructions about how to prepare for this? Of course it does. We know that. The Bible has included within its cover everything we need to know to qualify for our place within God's kingdom. It would not be fair for God to make us this promise, and not include instructions on how to achieve it. God is ultimately the fairest of all.

We will achieve this goal—to be prepared to be kings in His kingdom—with His help, of course. It will be done.

Now the wandering of the children of Israel in the wilderness is a type of the Church of God preparing to enter the Kingdom of God. The Israelites needed instruction on how to be a nation, and they spent 40 years in the wilderness learning that. And, they were in effect being taught how to be ruled by a king, even though they did not have one at the time. God was their king. But God knew that after a while, they would want a person—a figurehead—a man to lead them, and rule them, and they would ask for a king.

He knew—God planned—this before Israel was even a nation; this is found in Genesis 49:10 within the prophecies that Jacob made about his sons. It says specifically there that the scepter will not depart from Judah. So God planned that there was going to be a king coming from the tribe of Judah, first of all David, but ultimately Jesus Christ, the Messiah, and from David onward.

Whenever they asked for a king, or when He gave them a king from Judah, there would not ever be a time when there was not a man of David who could sit on that throne. So, He raised up a king through whom the Messiah would come.

He knew hundreds of years before the time of Samuel that they would want a king. But He also knew that if there were to be a human king, He would have to lay down some ground rules for this king, and for the nation, so that they would have a basic instruction to follow.

But before we go to these instructions specifically, turn to I Samuel 8 where it was that they did ask for a king. And the reason is because I want to show you why these basic rules are necessary, and they are spelled out here. We remember that up until this time, Samuel had been their judge, and it looked like maybe his sons would be following him, but they were discovered to be corrupt. And so the Israelites told him, "We do not want your sons."

I Samuel 8:4-5 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, this did not sit well with Samuel, and he complained to God about this. And God said, "Go ahead, and give them a king. But, I want you to tell them how he will be before they make their final decision."

I Samuel 8:10-19 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." Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, "No, but we will have a king over us."

So, this is why there are basic ground rules of what a king should do, and why they were necessary. He knew that any human being who was going to take the power that he had been given, and could abuse it. And so he said, "So this is what you want? You have a king already who is just, fair, perfect and wise. Why would you give that up for someone who is only going to take, and take, and take, and take?" That is what a king does. He takes, and takes, and takes. He takes your power, and then your money, and

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then your children, and your servants, and then your livestock, and all of your livelihood. And then, what do you have left? Nothing. You become essentially his slave, subject, or serf. And that is all you are, that is just how human nature is.

This is what God and Samuel laid before the children of Israel, about the way that human kings are.

Not every king is just and fair, and as a matter of fact, very few kings ever were, or are. If you re-read about the kings of Israel and Judah, very few of them would be called good kings. There were some okay kings. There were a few (count them on one hand) good kings, and they were all from Judah. The Israelite kings just failed across the board it seems.

So, it is for that reason—the lessons of history learned over many hundreds of years—that modern peoples have steadily eroded the power of their monarchs. They have even put them under the power of a parliament, or knocked them off altogether like in France. So, this is how it has been ever since.

How much power a monarch has behind the scenes is debatable, but generally the power of modern monarchs has been checked and balanced in some way. And it is because of these things we have been discussing from I Samuel 8.

So then, in the Pentateuch we have God's basic instructions for kings. Please turn back there with me to Deuteronomy 17. In the New King James Version, it is titled, "Principles Governing Kings." And, that is exactly what it is. It is very instructive, not just for kings back then, but certainly for us too as we prepare for the Kingdom of God.

Now, we must understand that these instructions given here are in archaic language, and idiom; they were for the people of the times that he was speaking to. So it is in language that would have made sense to the people of that day—15th century BC. So, we must update this a bit—spiritually, symbolically—so that we understand it for ourselves at this time in our preparations for the Kingdom of God. We can, every easily, derive spiritual lessons and principles from the physical institution of the monarchy as God originally set it up to be practiced. So, let us read this:

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 [notice how early this is compared to I Samuel 8],' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as

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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.

What we have here are basically five different principles.

1. He must be an Israelite whom God chooses.
2. He is not to multiply horses.
3. He is not to multiply wives.
4. He is not to multiply silver and gold.
5. He is to read and write out the law for himself.

1. He must be an Israelite whom God chooses.

What this means to us, is that it signifies our calling by God and election by His grace. Now, we must be aware, and I think we are, that God has chosen us. (John 6:44) The Father Himself has drawn us to Jesus Christ. He looked down upon all the billions of people on this earth, and he chose you. And it was not for anything that you did, but rather because He was gracious (I Corinthians 1). He has a plan for each one of you. He was the One who made the decision to go with you. And so, He opened up your mind, and drew you to His Son, Jesus Christ. This is what it truly means to be an Israelite, because Galatians 6:16 says that we are the Israel of God. We are the new Israel. We are spiritual Israel. We have to be, as said in another place, the seed of Abraham. We, in yet another place, have to have His Spirit that He gave us. We must be the people in whom the Spirit dwells.

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

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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.

See? You have been born into that royal family. It is by your spiritual heredity, now, that you have been made a prince or princess of the realm. And once you go into the Kingdom of God, then you will be given your inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

So, this has already happened to us. We are already spiritual Israelites. So, we are past this step. But, this is a vital step. If we never get past this step, then we will not qualify at all. God is not just going to pick somebody up off the side of the road, and make him a king in the Kingdom of God. He must go through the process first, which He has already started with you and me.

So, the ruler must be of the same kind as those he rules. He must be familiar with, and follow the beliefs, laws, customs, traditions, and even the expectations of the people he rules.

Have you ever thought about it, that if someone from Venezuela came here and suddenly was made president of the United States, how things might change? Well, if it was Hugo Chavez, that would be bad. He is a communist. That would be bad. (I will refrain from saying anything about our present president.)

I thought it interesting that a few weeks ago I read an article about Obama, and this particular pundit was saying that he may in fact be an American, but he does not think like an American. He spent too many formative years in other places—Indonesia for one. Indonesians do not think like Americans. And so, here we have a president who thinks, at least in part, like an Indonesian. And it worked for a while, but you are seeing his poll numbers come down because more and more people are beginning to understand that this president does not think like us. The things that he wants to do are not the things that we want a president to do. We are freedom loving, constitutional type people in this country, and he does not seem to have that mindset like we do.

And that is why God said that a king must be an Israelite whom He chooses. He wants a king over Israel who is an Israelite, who thinks like an Israelite, and is going to uphold Israelite traditions, customs, and beliefs. And that is why we are going through this lifelong training process. He wants to make sure that we spiritual Israelites think like the rest of the Israel of God, which is the way that God Himself thinks. So, we are being trained to think like He does. And when we are finally made a king in the Kingdom of God, we are going to do exactly what God would do, because we are already trained in

the mindset.

Now, this works the other way around too from the standpoint of the people who are being ruled. We touched on this a moment ago in the example. People normally do not trust rulers who are not like them. They are far less likely to trust a foreign ruler than they would a native son—even one with the best intentions. Let us say that Obama does think that the things he is doing are right for us. But, just because he has good intentions does not mean that they are right for us. Maybe there are good laws that are not Israelite laws, and they also work fine for non-Israelite people. But, Israelites need a certain governance in order to work properly. And when they are not given that type of government, they tend to do some very bad things, being led around by the nose.

Enough of that. It must go both ways. You have to be of the same kind as your people, and your people expect their ruler to be of the same kind as them. It just works better that way. It is alike a marriage.

They say that opposites attract. And some people think that that is just wonderful. But when it gets down to the day by day living in a marriage, the best is two people who are highly alike. That is what makes them compatible. Differences usually cause them to fight, because they are pulling in opposite directions. But a marriage needs to be one in which they are gladly and joyfully yoked together, pulling in the same direction. And that means that they must have common beliefs, common goals, etc. And, that is what God is getting to in this particular principle—that the king must be like the people; the people want a king just like them, giving them what they need.

So, the lesson here is that a leader must be like his followers in order to be effective. Please turn to Hebrews 2, and we will see this in the life of Christ. You see? We are going through, now, what the people we will be ruling over in the Kingdom of God will have to go through under us. And this is how it worked with Jesus Christ here:

Hebrews 2:17-18 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. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

This is looking at it from His priesthood's job, but it certainly works from the standpoint of being a king too. And so, we are going through now, what the people will be going through under us in the Kingdom of God in the millennium. So, we will have already

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gone through it, and we will be able to understand them, and they will understand by looking at us, that it can be done, and they will say, "I cannot believe that that person actually made it! And, if that person can make it, well, we can too!"

Does it not say in I Corinthians 1 that God called the weak and the base (and the dumb and the foolish, and the idiotic and the stupid, and the mindless...I mean that is the way that I feel sometimes)? We are just basically average people. But, God says that He will confound the mighty and the powerful, and the "wise." And they will say, "Wow! If they can do it, what can I become?"

2. Do not multiply horses.

Now, this is one that it is in an archaic idiom. We must transfer it to our own times, and our own understanding.

Horses symbolizes war material—weapons, armies, and that sort of thing. In effect, what God is saying is that you are not to build armies to make yourself a military powerhouse. That is not the way a king is supposed to be under God.

Why?

It is simple. God was supposed to do all the fighting for them. Specifically, here in Deuteronomy 17, He says that the reason why He did not want them to build up their armies was that He did not want them going back to Egypt. That was the specific reason that He gave.

So, building up armies can cause a king to "go back to Egypt"—to go back to this world that they had come out of. You see? This idea of accruing power, of conquering other peoples in the region, is a worldly idea of human nature. And that is what He is indeed talking about. He would start acting like Pharaoh. He would start acting like a king of this world. But, that is not what God wants at all. It is a worldly ambition to amass power, and not only over your own nation, but over other nations as well, and that requires military alliances with other nations. And that is not good. God does not want us making military alliances with other nations. He wants us making our only alliance with Him.

Because, you know what happened in Judah, and Israel? Every time they made an alliance with somebody else, like we heard last night, eventually it came back to bite them, because that other party/person/nation became powerful and eventually overran them, and all their neighbors. It happened with Assyria, and it happened with Babylon.

So, let us turn this around toward us spiritually.

In our preparation for ruling with Christ, we have to be careful; we have to consider fully where we turn for help when faced with a problem. You see? That was their problem (Israel, and Judah). They would be faced with a problem. A neighboring nation would become powerful. Now, where did the king turn for help?

The good kings, the ones we remember fondly, are like Hezekiah, who decided to do it with God's help to defend the nation; or Jehoshaphat who is another king of Judah who did it right. Asa, for a while, did it right. These were good kings, and God praises them for turning to Him and not to another.

But then there were others who were bad kings, like Ahaz, who did not do it right at all, and it ended very badly for him.

So, the question, then, for us, is, where do we turn? Do we, as Psalm 121 says, look to the hills from whence comes our help—to God? Or like Psalm 118, which says, "Or do we trust in princes?" Do we trust in powerful and influential people? Other men? Which do we do? Where do we turn? Do we turn to God? Or, do we turn to other men? Or do we turn yet someplace else? We heard in the sermonette today, do we turn to the almighty dollar? Is wealth the thing that we turn to? Or, let us put it into terms of persons: Do we trust in the doctor, or the lawyer, or the politician to solve our problem? A lot of people in the country sure do. Do we trust in our own knowledge, and our own abilities to get us out of fixes? Are we going to stand alone, because we are going to get through this without anybody's help? "We do not need anybody!" Do we have faith in our customs and traditions, and "the way that things have always been done?" Some of those things are indeed good. And God says in certain places that we should keep those traditions and customs. We are supposed to look for the old paths. But there are other times when those traditions and customs go the wrong way, opposed to God, and it is not good to stick to those things.

That is the question. To whom, or to what do we turn to for help when the screws are tightened? God? Man? Money? Skilled people? Ourselves? Customs? Traditions?

What comes to mind first? Sometimes, that tells us that is where we really put our trust. Is God just an afterthought when it comes to putting our trust in one thing or another?

Now, ultimately this warning in Deuteronomy 17 is about amassing power. People always try—always—it is invariable—people always try to amass power in some area. They always try to become powerful in some sector of life, whether financially, or

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politically, or socially; even religiously—they try to become powerful in one area or another, and the reason that they do this is because they need to secure themselves against difficulty. And that is not a wrong thing. Security is not a wrong thing to want. We all want to be safe.

I mean, it does say that we should prepare for hard times. However, this inclination of human nature can turn to the dark side, if our aim is to become absolutely self-reliant. And do you know what happens when you become self-reliant? You have taken God out of the picture. And, we begin to see ourselves as our own savior. We do not give credit where credit is due.

Let us look at the example of David in II Samuel 22. This passage is the way that David thought about God. David was the king, with a fairly long reign of about 40 years, and he had acquired many enemies. He frequently found himself in difficult positions. But, even though he made mistakes from time to time, he ultimately trusted God for deliverance. So let us look at the way that David approached this.

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

See? He did not go to amass horses. He did not go to Egypt. He did not go to Assyria for allies. He relied on God to teach him how to make war, and to give him the strength to do what needed to be done.

II Samuel 22:36-37 "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."

We could go on. David gives us the right example. He was one of those good kings. He made mistakes. But he learned from his mistakes, which we could also learn from. But ultimately, he trusted God, and that is what makes him such a wonderful person to emulate in that regard.

Now notice, though, that David still had to fight. The enemies were still there. He still

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had to go into battle. But it was God who provided the winning difference.

And that is the way that it is going to be with us. It is not going to be all peaches and cream, especially the first part of the millennium. When we are put onto our thrones, and given our portion to rule, we are going to have to fight. And of course, we are going to have the power of God on our side. But we are preparing now for that time so that our inclination then just as it should be now is to turn to God for what He can provide, the solution for all our problems.

Proverbs 21:31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but deliverance is of the LOORD.

So, we have to make preparations. We have to get ready. But ultimately, the thing that is going to set us apart from other kings will be our trust in God, not in "horses." God is our Savior, both physically and spiritually. We have to realize that. We have to live our lives with that understanding.

So the lesson here is, do not be ambitious for might, nor for power; learn to trust in God for victory and any kind of success.

3. Do not Multiply Wives.

This is similar to the previous one in that it involves foreign entanglements. Monarchs in ancient times and down even near to our more modern time used marriage as a way to cement alliances with other nations. But, God says not to do that. Why?

Well, just like war material, it could turn the king and the people to "Egypt." Multiplying wives usually turns the kings heart to idolatry.

I Kings 11:1-4 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 LOORD 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 LOORD his God, as was the heart of his father David.

So, we see here in his life what multiplying wives meant, and what it did. It turns the king's heart to idolatry. And He punished Solomon severely by taking away ten tribes. They have never returned to that line.

Now, the warning against multiplying horses involves our external public activities and interests. But the warning against multiplying wives involves our internal, intimate activities—it is very personal. It takes in the king's private life.

Most folks look at a king, at least in historic times, and they thought of a great leader of the army—like Nebuchadnezzar, David, and others of the great kings of England who led their armies into battle. They did not think of him as a husband. Multiplying wives had to do with the king's personal life, and their influences upon him—not just the influence of the woman, but the influence of her father too, who may be a king of a neighboring nation. And the things that would be done in order to turn the king's heart away from God, and away from ruling his people the way God wanted him to rule them.

I mean, it does not get much more personal and intimate than marriage. So, both the external life, and the private life of the king has to be straight, true, and loyal to God.

This is a warning about not how the king acts in public, but what the king takes into his bosom, into his heart.

Proverbs 6:26-29 For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent.

Now, part of this has to do with harlotry and prostitution, but the principle idea is the same—one cannot dally with ungodly beliefs and practices and not get burned. We saw that in the life of Solomon. It must be God's truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Any kind of syncretism, any kind of compromise, any kind of 'adding this because she loves me' is not going to work. It will draw us away from God.

II Corinthians 6:14-15 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

This is what happened to Solomon. He was ostensibly a believer. And then he began to mix his life with perhaps a thousand unbelievers. Wow! He truly became messed up by the end of his life!

And so, like Jesus said, we have to be faithful to the right one, and love that one, and despise the other one. Our eye must be good and single. It has to be focused so we can be full of life (Matthew 6:22-24).

The lesson regarding not multiplying wives is do not meddle at all with any kind of foreign beliefs. It is a snare that will lead us away from God. Stick to the truth. If we want to be kings and priests in the Kingdom of God, we have to be like is described here,

Revelation 14:4-5 These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

4. Do not Multiply Silver and Gold.

God commands the future king not to pursue the accumulation of wealth. And the reason for this is that because ultimately it is a distraction and a waste of time. Money is not the answer. It only gives temporary satisfaction—if that much! This is greed, pure and simple. We saw there in I Samuel 8 that the king would take, take, take, accumulating power and money.

See for yourselves the scriptures on greed and be reminded of the Bible's condemnation of greed. It does not condemn wealth—many of the men of the Bible were wealthy. But, it does condemn the corrupt and obsessed pursuit of gain. We do not need to be reminded of all the pain and sorrows it has caused countless people down through the centuries.

We have a much more worthwhile and important pursuit to spend our time doing, and that is the way of life that brings true happiness and contentment. God tells us where our pursuits should be. Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness. That is where our minds need to be focused. God will take care of all the rest. He will provide. Do not worry about money. That should never be our focus in life. Turn to Matthew 6

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and see Jesus' perspective on this.

Matthew 6:19-21 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Material riches, although so alluring, are so very fleeting. Spiritual riches are eternal. Why go after the temporary when you can have the everlasting? We have to make that switch in our minds, because our human nature always wants the here and now. So we must understand that our satisfaction has to be put off until later. And there is a great deal of satisfaction that God does give us now, but we must remember that our true reward is in the Kingdom of God, and not now. Instead of, "what is in your wallet," let us make it, "what is in your heart?" Is it money, or something that is pleasing God?

Obviously, the lesson is not to seek riches. Seek the Kingdom of God instead.

5. You Shall Read and Write out the Law.

This is the most important lesson of all. And, this may be why it was placed last. Often if you want somebody to remember something, if you are using a list, you put the most important item last, because it is going to linger in the mind the longest. So, reading and writing the law is very important.

God wanted us to remember this about the law. Now, the physical king of Israel was supposed to write the law out in his own hand on parchment. But, as Christians under the New Covenant, we are to write them on our hearts. This is also found in Hebrews 8:10:

Jeremiah 31:33 "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

So God is saying here, "Get to know my word! Make it a permanent part of you. Internalize it." That is what it means by writing it on your hearts. It means internalizing it—make it a part of your being, like your "DNA." Have you ever thought of it that way, so that it is actually written into the code of our very being? Our very life?

This law He wants us to write is the basic law of the Kingdom of God. In order to rule God's people, we must know what the rules are. I would hate to be under a king who did not know the laws of the land. He would be a tyrant. Everything would only go at his whim. Someday he might be for tuna fish, but the next day it may be chicken salad.

A king under God must have it in his mind, and in his heart, and it must be active. He has executive powers over the laws, and he has to know how to execute them—put them into practice—enforce them.

And, they must be such an integral part of us that we will not have to refer to the Bible for reminders. They will be in us. We will be walking and talking bibles ourselves. So, when any kind of question comes up, or dispute, we will immediately have the answer, because we have internalized God's law—written on our hearts. That is why we should be studying so much. Review for yourselves II Timothy 2:15, and II Timothy 3:16-17, where Paul tells Timothy to study to show himself approved of God. And then it goes on to say that scripture is profitable for everything. We have got to know it. It has got to be in us. And, knowing this law—knowing it so intimately—is what is going to make us humble, approachable, fair, and just—just as a king is supposed to be.

So, if that is not a plug to increase your study time in the Bible, I do not know what is. A major part of our preparation for the kingship is learning how to be complete Christians, quick to do everything in a godly manner, and that only comes through prayer and Bible study—and practice, practice, practice.

So, make yourself familiar with the law of God's kingdom until you become a walking, talking Bible. In other words, putting this a different way, we must imitate our Savior Jesus Christ, because what is His major title? —The Word of God. We must have this in us so much that we are just like Him.

I want to touch on the life of Josiah for a few moments. Josiah lived in a time where his nation was in decline, and he had come along after two very bad kings in Judah—Manasseh his grandfather, and Amon his father. They were both idolaters. And even though Manasseh later repented, he had done a great deal of damage in his 50 plus year reign. And Amon was no better at all. So, Josiah came to the throne, and things were already very bad in Judah. They were similar conditions to what there will be after the return of Christ—I am talking about the condition of the people. So, let us see what Josiah did, as an example to us. And maybe we can pick up some pointers about what we will need to do in the Kingdom of God when we are finally given our positions of rulership.

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II Chronicles 34:1-6 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left [this phrasing is the same as in Deuteronomy 17]. For in the eighth year of his reign [age 16], while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David; and in the twelfth year [age 20] he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images. They broke down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and the incense altars which were above them he cut down; and the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images he broke in pieces, and made dust of them and scattered it on the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem. And so he did in the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, as far as Naphtali and all around, with axes.

He was a king of Judah. The territory of Judah was mainly south of Jerusalem. And, Benjamin had the smaller portion up north above Jerusalem. Everything north of there was not his territory or domain. The old places of Ephraim and Manasseh were up there, while Simeon was further south of Judah, and Naphtali was way up north near the old places of Dan. He not only cleaned house at home, but he went on a campaign and cleaned up the old Israelite territory not his own. It was either Assyrian, or probably Babylonian by this time. But, he just went up there and knocked down, in modern language, every church with its steeples and altars. Every crucifix, every graven image he took down and burned and strewed the ashes of it all around. He killed their priests. And he did this all as a twenty year old kid!

II Chronicles 34:7-8 When he had broken down the altars and the wooden images, had beaten the carved images into powder, and cut down all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

In the eighteenth year of his reign [age 26], when he had purged the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

That was the next step.

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II Chronicles 34:29-35:2 Then the king sent and gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. The king went up to the house of the LOORD, with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem—the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LOORD. Then the king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LOORD, to follow the LOORD, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. And he made all who were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin take a stand. So the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LOORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LOORD God of their fathers.

Now Josiah kept a Passover to the LOORD in Jerusalem, and they slaughtered the Passover lambs on the fourteenth day of the first month. And he set the priests in their duties and encouraged them for the service of the house of the LOORD.

Now drop down to verse 17,

II Chronicles 35:17 And the children of Israel who were present kept the Passover at that time, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days.

Now, did you notice all the things that Josiah did? He was coming into a land that was totally idolatrous. First, he sought the Lord with all his heart. And then, he was inspired to begin taking that outward. Notice the actions that Josiah took.

First he purged all the land and adjacent areas of all the centers of false worship, and all the reminders of pagan practices, by even killing the false clergy. He was very thorough. Josiah was shown here ruling with a rod of iron.

Secondly, he began to repair the temple and restore the worship of God. That is, what he did was to make the way of God more accessible and attractive. He was replacing the bad with the good.

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Now, it is fine to take the bad down. But, you must have something good to replace it with, because you do not want to leave a vacuum there for people to make up their own minds about what they should do—they will glom on to anything if you do not give them the truth. They will make up their own (again).

And so, Josiah is here shown to be putting the right thing in place.

Thirdly, he required the people to take a stand for God, and he began to enforce God's law.

Jesus said in Matthew 12,

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."

So, what Josiah did was that he forced a choice upon the people. No one was allowed to opt out. No one was allowed to be neutral. They either had to accept it, or get out.

Zechariah 14:16-19 shows the same approach is used in terms of attending the Feast of Tabernacles. If they do not keep the Feast of Tabernacles, they get no rain. The people are going to decide to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Lastly, he publicly observed the Passover and the Spring Holy Days to show how it was done. He also by doing this showed how joyous and wonderful God's way really is. And by doing this all, he encouraged the people to follow his own example. He walked the walk.

In conclusion, turn to Matthew 20. Beyond Josiah, we must follow the example set by Jesus Christ Himself, the King of Kings. Here, He gives us maybe the most basic rule of rulership:

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

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Ultimately, to be a king in the Kingdom of God is to be a servant—to spend your life looking out for the best interests of your subjects. Now this is a quality—being a servant—is a quality that we can begin to practice in our families, and in the church. We have a great opportunity to practice this at the Feast of Tabernacles as well.

So, no matter how undeserving and unready we may feel about becoming a king or queen in the Kingdom of God, if we are diligent in our preparations, we will be good rulers under Christ in His Kingdom of God.