



The Thirtieth Century of His-Story: The Church Enjoys a King After God’s Own Heart

The 30th century of His-Story begins with the rather strange scene of a tall and robust young man hiding among the baggage of his family and the people who had come to crown him king. His name was Saul. God had sent Samuel some days earlier to anoint him king privately, and now it was time to make the first king of Israel known to the nation. His name was called out from among his brethren, but strangely he had disappeared. He was not exposed until God made clear exactly whom he wanted and search was made to find him out. There he stood before all the people who had come, perhaps with a sheepish grin, standing a full head taller than everyone. He looked like a king, even if he didn’t act like one, but appearance was enough for the majority of the people. This was the kind of king they were looking for; here was a man after their own heart. They shouted “God save the king,” and went home satisfied that a “worthy” king would soon be leading them to fight against and conquer their enemies – just like the other nations. Something was missing in Saul, but enthusiasm for a king and his impressive looks distracted any inquiry into his spiritual character.

Any doubts about Saul’s leadership qualities and bravery were soon put to rest by his courageous call to arms and crushing defeat of Nahash the Ammonite. With this confirmation of his kingly qualities, the people gathered at Gilgal and had a real coronation ceremony for Saul. In his noble speech that day, he confessed “The LORD hath wrought salvation in Israel.” See, he was even a godly man! Then “they sacrificed sacrifices of peace offerings before the LORD; and there Saul and all the men of Israel rejoiced greatly” (1 Sam. 11:15). The only critic of Saul and the people on that day was Samuel, and he did not hesitate to speak boldly about the fact that this type of king was not at all what would be good for the people of God. He even declared that the heart and attitude of the people had been wicked in asking for this king. God had revealed to Samuel that in their request for this king they were rejecting God (8:7). He told them straight to their faces, “ye have this day rejected your God” (10:19). The people had too much respect for Samuel to throw him out of the party, but they nodded politely and tried to assure the old Samuel that everything would be alright. Nothing could have been farther from the truth.

Samuel watched in grief as Saul followed his own will, and not the will of the true King of Israel. The courage and strength necessary for godly rule departed from Saul and he cowered before the Philistines (13:6-7). He trusted in his own personal judgment, and was willing to compromise in his

obedience to God. Finally Samuel had to confront him and tell him that God himself had removed from him the authority to rule his people (15:23). The only king suitable for rule over God's people would be one who loved God, and such a man is not one who will get the natural approval of men. While Saul was fighting battles his own way against the Amalekites, sometimes attacking but more often cowering before the Philistines, God was preparing a young boy to be the king who would serve as a picture of Christ, the King. God himself was preparing him for this work by working within his heart to make him a man who walked with God in covenantal fellowship.

God had already revealed to us some of the family history of David in the story of Ruth and Boaz, the great-great grandparents of David. Jesse was their grandchild, and he now had a busy family with eight boys. David was the youngest, and he was now old enough to take on the responsibility of leading the sheep out into the wilderness and finding the green pastures. Despite his youth, David made an excellent shepherd with all the right qualities of love and care for the sheep along with wisdom and musical talents. Above all, he walked closely with Jehovah God, who gave him the courage and boldness to fight off the lions and bears that would attack the flock. In fact, a top-notch shepherd was exactly the kind of man who would make a good king for the people of God.

After Saul had been given enough time to make clear that a king after man's own heart would only lead the nation farther from God, we find Samuel again with a horn of anointing oil. He had been mourning over the direction Israel was being led by Saul (16:1). This time God told him to go to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse. Once again the one whom God had chosen to be king seemed to be missing, but this time he wasn't hiding. He was still out caring for the sheep because even his father could not imagine that he was the one whom God had chosen to be king. There was nothing outward in him that marked him as a king. He was the youngest. There was a certain youthful attractiveness to him; he was "ruddy, withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to (16:12), a similar description of our Lord in the Song of Solomon 5:10, 16. But he did not strike anyone as "royalty" the way Saul had done. The royal qualities were deep within his soul where they needed to be. His heart and thoughts as a young man caring for sheep was deeply concerned for the glory of God (Psalm 132).

Here, some 3000 years after Adam's fall into sin, the old testament church was on the verge of seeing and experiencing the full and complete picture of the one who would crush the head of the serpent and deliver them from the terrible bondage of sin. These were very exciting days! After this relatively brief glimpse of the brilliant picture, the picture will be shattered, leaving the church in a dark and stormy world with only lightning flashes of God's word in the prophets directing them to dwell not on the picture, but on the reality of the coming Christ. So this is it! This is the picture of the coming Savior. In this young man God will reveal to his church a glorious picture of the coming Savior from sin as a victorious king who delivers his people from all enemies and tenderly cares for them as a shepherd does his sheep. The church also learns that the seed of the woman who will crush the head of the serpent will be born from the line of David. The church must keep her eyes on the line of David. The picture is glorious, but relatively brief. It reaches a climax at the end of this century and the beginning of the next when Solomon builds the temple.

We know well and love the stories of David. God has been pleased to reveal many details of his life so that we grow to love him even as we love Jesus who experienced all of life even as we experience the joys and trials of this life (Heb. 4:13). David boldly fought the enemies in the name of God. He suffered and willingly gave of his life for the people of God just as he did for his sheep. In David we especially see that part of the office of king that fights and defends against the enemy. David was so involved in warfare all his life that God used his son Solomon to build the temple. David desired to build a house for God where God would dwell in covenantal fellowship with His people, but David was a man of war and God gave this job to Solomon (1 Chron. 28:3). The part of the office of king that brings peace and comfort to the people under his rule belonged to Solomon.

By the time David grew old and the time for Solomon to take over the throne came, the people were beginning to enjoy the fruits of a king who ruled under God as a man after God's own heart. They were eager to taste of this blessed life with God within the sphere of the covenant by joining in David's desire to build the temple. We read in 1 Chronicles 29:9–12: "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy. Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." In these words we clearly see what it means to have a king ruling in harmony with God's rule.

At the peak of Solomon's rule, we find the picture of the glory and majesty of Christ's rule as king come into full brilliance. The battles are over. Peace reigns. Every want is satisfied. All glory and honor is directed to the author and finisher of such joy and happiness. We read in 1Chroncles 29:25, "And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel." Dreamers might imagine that heaven was existing here on earth. If there ever was a time in history when the church came close to heaven right here on earth, it was during the reign of Solomon. But anyone with his spiritual eyes open could plainly see that it was but a picture. Sin was just as powerful. The child of God could smile and rejoice with the taste of heaven, but his yearning to be without sin and living in perfect fellowship with God only intensifies and he longs for the new heavens and the new earth.

There were many indications that life under David's and Solomon's reign was only a picture. Both David and Solomon clearly fell deeply into sin, but Christ is without sin. Peace under an earthly king is exceedingly costly, but peace under Christ our king is perfectly free. "Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). The righteousness we have is freely imputed unto us. The church under Solomon enjoyed peace, but began to groan under the oppressive taxation that paid for it all. Like a dream, the picture quickly faded away and the people of God were called to cling to the promises and wait for the reality of Christ. The picture and promises gave hope and encouragement even as we also wait for his return in glory.

