

God's Rule in the Affairs of Mankind

***“By me kings reign,
And rulers decree
justice. By me
princes rule, and
nobles, All who
judge rightly.”
—Proverbs 8:15,16,
New American
Standard Bible***

A JUST AND LOVING HEAV-enly Father has allowed fallen man to rule over the affairs of the human creation during the long and tragic course of their history. Man had broken the covenant relationship that had been established with God as recorded by the Prophet Hosea. “I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. But they like men [Adam, *Marginal Translation*] have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me.” (Hos. 6:6,7) Having thus severed that relationship with their Creator, man was destined to suffer the consequences of his own proud and selfish actions.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

During the early period of the world's history, the Israelites were set aside to serve as a typical people under God's special providence. The Apostle Paul explains this relationship when he was invited to speak in the synagogue, during his stay at Antioch in Pisidia. (Acts 13:14,15) "Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience. The God of this people of Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an high arm brought he them out of it. And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness. And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Chanaan [Canaan], he divided their land to them by lot. And after that he gave unto them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet. And afterward they desired a king: and God gave unto them Saul the son of Cis [Kish], a man of the tribe of Benjamin, by the space of forty years."—vss. 16-21

THE RULE OF JUDGES

During the approximate 450-year period of what the apostle in this passage of scripture designates the 'time of judges,' the Israelites ruled their people under Divine supervision by an autocratic form of government. This was equitably administered under the providential hand of God in proportion as those in authority remained loyal and obedient to him and his supervision. During this time, each of the twelve tribes managed its own affairs with the heads of each tribe constituting a system of judgeship concerning everyday affairs. The separate tribes remained in a

loose union with one another because of blood relationship and a common language. "When the LORD raised them up judges, then the LORD was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the LORD because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them."—Judg. 2:18

The Divine promise to the sons of Israel was that as long as they would walk in the statutes of the Divine Law they would be God's special people and receive his care and blessings in all of their temporal affairs. However, if they should neglect him and his commandments, they would receive his chastisements of pestilence or captivity until such a time as they would repent from their wrong doings. In such cases of repentance, they were assured that God would raise up deliverers who, as his representatives, would provide them with the necessary instruction and guidance.

THE RULE OF KINGS

The Israelites grew dissatisfied with judges ruling over them, and demanded to have a king that they might appear like other nations on the world scene. They were warned, however, that their proud desires would not be a lasting and satisfactory arrangement. This came to pass when Israel's elders approached Samuel, who was an elderly man and about to turn the judgeship over to one of his sons. (I Sam. 8:1-4) They said unto him, "Behold thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy 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. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD."—vss. 5,6

Samuel immediately sought God's help by going to him in prayer, which was a proper response to the elders' request. "The LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which I have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them."—vss. 7-9

DAVID AND SOLOMON

God thus allowed a limited period of time for the Israelites to have a king to rule over them as his representatives on earth. Some of their kings were noble leaders of their people and were obedient to the commandments of God; while others, less noble and with proud and rebellious hearts, were neither loyal, nor obedient, to God. David was one of Israel's most beloved kings. "David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king."—I Chron. 29:20

The scriptural account then adds, "They sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, even a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel: And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they

made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed him unto the LORD to be the chief governor, and Zadok to be priest.”—vss. 21,22

Solomon became the new king after David. “Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.” (vs. 23) We note with interest that David and Solomon are both referred to as sitting on the ‘throne of the LORD.’ This arrangement thus provided for God’s overall provision and purpose for his typical people Israel, and for his long-term purpose for the ultimate recovery and reconciliation of the fallen human family.

A SELECT PEOPLE

As a distinct people, the Israelites had been chosen by God to serve him, and they had received much blessing in every way by his providential care. The Apostle Paul, a very prominent Jew, described this select relationship in his epistle which was written to the brethren at Rome. In that letter, he said, “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.”—Rom. 3:1,2

God had delivered the Israelites from their long centuries of Egyptian bondage by miraculous means. Moses had been selected to represent them and he was later given the Law of God to deliver to them. We read, “Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and

brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.” (Exod. 19:3-6) These were words with deep meaning that God spoke to his servant Moses, and subsequently through him to the entire nation of Israel.

THE REWARD FOR OBEDIENCE

Further instructions were also given to these people who had been set aside for special religious service. “Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land.”—Lev. 26:2-6

THE TRIBE OF LEVI

The family of Levi was one of the twelve tribes that comprised the nation of Israel, and they were given exclusive rights in connection with Jewish religious life, the Tabernacle and its priesthood. They were separated by God for a special purpose and to serve as a means to bless and instruct the

remaining eleven tribes. This selection is brought to our attention by Moses during the exchange that took place between Israel's firstborn that had been brought out of Egypt, and their subsequent acceptance into the tribe of Levi. The scriptural record explains this very important step in God's dealing with his people. In the Book of Numbers, we read, "The LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle; and the Levites shall be mine: I am the LORD." (Num. 3:44,45) Here the record states that all of the firstborn of Israel, including even their cattle, were exchanged for this acceptance as Levites.

THE PRICE OF REDEMPTION

During the transaction that took place, it is of particular interest to note that there were 273 extra firstborn over and above the 22,000 Levites that were being exchanged. The scriptural account says, "All that were numbered of the Levites, which Moses and Aaron numbered at the commandment of the LORD, throughout their families, all the males from a month old and upward, were twenty and two thousand." (Num. 3:39) Provision had to be made to include the total number of firstborn who exceeded the available number of Levites, who were only 22,000.

The scriptural record explains this provision, "For those that are to be redeemed of the two hundred and threescore and thirteen of the firstborn of the children of Israel, which are more than the Levites; Thou shalt even take five shekels apiece by the poll,

after the shekel of the sanctuary shalt thou take them: (the shekel is twenty gerahs:) And thou shalt give the money, wherewith the odd number of them is to be redeemed, unto Aaron and to his sons.” (vss. 46-48) The price for each of the 273 extra firstborn that needed to be redeemed was five shekels.

The scriptural record concludes the transaction, as we read, “Moses took the redemption money of them that were over and above them that were redeemed by the Levites: Of the firstborn of the children of Israel took he the money; a thousand three hundred and threescore and five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: And Moses gave the money of them that were redeemed unto Aaron and to his sons, according to the word of the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.” (vss. 49-51) Each one of the 273 firstborn was bought with a price. The Apostle Paul, writing from a new and different perspective many years later, pointed to the grander scale for which all mankind will ultimately rejoice. He explains, “Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”—I Cor. 6:20

GOD’S DWELLING PLACE

The wonderful provision and purpose of God began to take on new meaning and perspective for his people. “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it.” (Exod. 25:8,9) The very focus of Israel’s religious life was centered in their Tabernacle. In this scripture, God had made it known to them that they enjoyed a very special relationship with him,

and that he would dwell with them. He said, "I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the LORD their God."—Exod. 29:45,46

For God to symbolically dwell with the camp of Israel, there would be certain restrictions and obligations imposed upon them. "So ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are: for blood it defileth the land: and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it. Defile not therefore the land which ye shall inhabit, wherein I dwell: for I the LORD dwell among the children of Israel." (Num. 35:33,34) The camp of Israel was thus God's typical holy ground. "The LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee."—Deut. 23:14

Israel's priesthood, together with its religious service, included many important functions. The house of Israel also served in a typical fashion with far grander meaning toward the eventual outworking of God's plan of redemption and reconciliation. That long-term plan includes the salvation of the entire fallen human race. Israel's Tabernacle arrangements typify those who are presently walking in "newness of life" as New Creatures in Christ, and are being called by God to share in a higher purpose during this Gospel Age.—Rom. 6:4

The tribe of Levi was authorized and instructed by God to carry out the service of the Tabernacle and its arrangements. The importance of the Levitical

tribe as a typical people is thus demonstrated. “There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”—Exod. 25:22

GOD’S PROPHETS

The prophets of Israel had been moved by the Holy Spirit of God to record many wonderful prophecies, including the meaning and purpose concerning our Lord Jesus and his earthly ministry. After Jesus’ violent death, and his resurrection, we have his own words of explanation in this connection. “He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”—Luke 24:25-27

Luke also records Jesus’ further words to his disciples. “He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.”—vss. 44,45

DISOBEDIENCE AND CAPTIVITY

Because of Israel’s disobedience and lack of respect for God and their special relationship with

him, they were taken into captivity by Babylon and their kingdom was destroyed. "Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him." (Ezek. 21:25-27) There were four successive Gentile powers that subjugated the people of Israel after the overthrow of their kingdom by Nebuchadnezzar and his army during the reign of Zedekiah.

Daniel, when he was asked to give an interpretation of the king's unusual dream of an image with head of gold, breast of silver, thighs of bronze and legs of iron, told Nebuchadnezzar that he was represented by the head of gold. (Dan. 2:38) The Babylonian Empire was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire represented by the breast of silver; Greece in turn by the bronze; and the mighty Roman Empire by the image's iron legs. Although they returned from Babylonian captivity seventy years later, Israel had proven themselves unfit for any further exaltation in connection with universal dominion. They have therefore suffered through long centuries of trial, exile and, in recent times, the holocaust.

THE DIVINE RIGHT OF KINGS

In another of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams in which Daniel was given the understanding to interpret, he saw a tree that provided sanctuary and protection for the earthly Creation. It was cut down, however, leaving the roots for a new growth at a later time.

Daniel explained to Nebuchadnezzar that the tree represented man's dominion over the earth, and that the destruction of the tree symbolized that loss of dominion. The king was also told that he represented that lost dominion and that he would live like a beast for seven years. This became a prophecy foretelling the beastly nature of Gentile rulership that would last for a period of seven times, or 2520 years. This is spoken of as the 'divine right of kings.' Daniel wrote, "This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers, And the decision is a command of the holy ones, In order that the living may know That the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind, And bestows it on whom He wishes."—Dan. 4:17, *NASB*

The 'times of the Gentiles' was permitted by God as a period of punishment upon his typical people Israel. This prophetic measurement of their period of punishment thus serves as a measuring rod in the grand purposes of God. This was a period of seven times. "If ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins."—Lev. 26:18

The Prophet Hosea spoke of their being cast off from God's favor when he wrote, "My people are destroyed [cut off, *Marginal Translation*] for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children."—Hos. 4:6

During the future 'times of restitution,' the people of Israel will be enlightened by the wonderful word of Truth, and be given ample time and opportunity to turn from their ways of disobedience and seek the blessings of life in Christ's kingdom. ■