

The Ruler We All Need

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Date: 26 July 2017

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[0 : 0 0] We'll do come and have a seat and we'll begin just in a moment or two. Next week, Bob File will begin another little series, so he'll be here for the next few weeks.

But this lunchtime we're back again to the book of Deuteronomy. So you might like to turn with me there if you have a church Bible to page 161.

161 and we're going to read from verse 14 of chapter 17 right through to the end. Continuing on from where we were last week as we looked at the first part of chapter 17.

Remember this is all a section where Moses is speaking about the leadership and the authority in the land of Israel among God's people. And we looked last time at the judges and all that that meant.

And we're going to look today at what, in fact, quite little is said really, but what is said about Israel's kings.

[1 : 0 2] Those who would become the rulers, the leaders of God's people. So Deuteronomy 17 then at verse 14. When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me, you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose.

One from among your brothers you shall set as a king before you. You may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother. Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses.

Since the Lord has said to you, you shall never return that way again. And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away. Nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.

And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law approved by the Levitical priests. And it shall be with him.

And he shall read in it all the days of his life. That he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them.

[2 : 2 5] So that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers. And that he may not turn aside from the commandment. Either to the right hand or to the left.

So that he may continue long in his kingdom. He and his children in Israel. Well keep your Bibles open and let's just bow our heads in prayer as we come to God's word.

Heavenly Father, you have promised us light and life from your word. Which is the vehicle of your life to us.

That your Holy Spirit breathe out these very words. That we should know your will for our lives, for this world and for eternity. So Lord, open our hearts now and our eyes to your perfect word.

That we might see in it and hear from it. Your living word for our lives today. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

[3 : 28] One of the most important things that we need to remember about the law of Moses. This first part of the Old Testament. Is that it is above all prophetic. Jesus himself makes that very clear in Matthew chapter 11.

When he's talking to his disciples and about John the Baptist. He says all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. John the Baptist. John's ministry ushered in at the kingdom of God.

Long prophesied. And in Luke chapter 24. Jesus said everything written in the law of Moses. And the prophets and the Psalms. About me. Must be fulfilled.

Because the law too. Prophecies about Christ. And about his kingdom. And not just of course. About the inauguration of that kingdom.

In the earthly ministry of Jesus. But indeed. In the ultimate fulfillment. Of his kingdom. That comes at last. When the Lord returns forever. So. Above all things.

[4 : 28] The law is a law of promise. If you want to read a little more about that. You can find on our website. A little booklet. By that title. That I wrote some years ago. I think it's there in the section on.

The Deuteronomy studies. The law is a law of promise. And therefore it's no accident. That the law and its commandments. Are often explicitly quoted. By the New Testament writers.

Paul quotes the fifth commandment. To the Ephesians. Ephesians 6. He says remember. It's the first command with a promise. And he quotes from Deuteronomy chapter 5.

Honor your father and mother. That your days may be long. And that it may go well with you. In the land the Lord your God. Is giving you. Now if you look carefully. You'll find.

In our passage this morning. That actually that promise. Brackets this chapter. Deuteronomy chapter 17. Look at chapter 16. Verse 20. Justice and only justice.

[5 : 24] You shall follow. That you may live long. And inherit the land. That the Lord your God. God is giving you. Look at the very end of chapter 17. Verse 20. About the king.

So that he may continue. Long in his kingdom. He and his children. Forever. And in between. It's all this material. About leadership. And about authority. In the land.

Of Israel. And you see. The whole realm. Of authority. And of leadership. In all areas of life. Is what that fifth commandment.

About honoring. Our parents. Is actually all about. Because it begins. In the home. But that honor. For authority. And leadership. Extends out. In the community. And into all society. So the Westminster catechism.

The larger catechism. Question number. One. Two. Four. For those who are interested. The question is this. Who are meant. By father and mother. In the fifth commandment. Answer. Not only natural parents.

[6 : 22] But all superiors. In age and gifts. And especially such. As by God's ordinance. Are over us. In place of authority. Whether in family. Or church. Or commonwealth.

So. You see. It's to expand. That it's to apply. Into all these different areas of life. What the fifth commandment implies. That we have this section. In the law of Moses.

All about the civil authorities. In Israel. In chapter 17. And indeed. In chapter 18. Also. About the spiritual authorities. And last week. We looked at this whole area of. Judges.

And of justice. The justice. That we all long for. In the world. And we saw. That if we want. Justice. And only justice. So as to live long.

To live well. Then we need. The Lord. And only the Lord. That is. We need to be. Abiding by his rule alone. No rival gods. Can have any place.

[7 : 17] And we need to be listening. To his revelation alone. We must be receiving his words. And revering his words. And no others. Of course. That can only be.

In the church. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can't it? Because we are the ones. Who are to show the world. The light. Of God's rule. If we live. Truly under his rule. If we live.

Ruled by. And listening. To his revelation alone. The word of God. In scripture. And of course. As we think of the church. And seeking that righteousness. That we all long for.

And are called to. And we need to think also. About. What verse 14. To the end of this chapter. Describe. And that is. The ruler. That we all need.

We'll only have the righteousness. That we all long for. If we in fact. Have the ruler. That we all need. The servant leader. Through whose obedience alone. We can be secure.

[8 : 12] In a lasting kingdom. Which is what this is all about. What are we to look for. Do you think. In a leader. I guess that's a question.

That's hardly been off our airwaves. In this last year. As we've had. Presidential elections. In America. As we've had. Leadership elections. In the political parties. In this country. In general elections.

And so on. The problem is. That the world. Wants leaders. That will impress the world. But the people of the world. Are very fickle. And we keep changing our minds.

As to what it is. That does impress us. So it wasn't long ago. Was it. When all the stromash. Was going on. About the leadership. Of the Labour Party. And all the parliamentary MPs. Could not stand. The fact that Jeremy Corbyn.

Was being. Going to become their leader. They were all against him. Trying to get rid of him. They tried and failed. And then along comes. The general election. And all of a sudden. Actually. Jeremy Corbyn.

[9 : 06] Has become the hero. Of so many in the party. Even though in fact. Let's not forget. He didn't actually win. The general election. And again. A year ago just. Theresa May's polls.

Were I think. The highest. Of any. Any leader. In this country. Since Margaret Thatcher. In her heyday. What a difference now. My goodness. And it wasn't so long ago.

Either. Was it. That. Nicola Sturgeon. Was riding high. And conquering all. Before her. Well. Her star. Has certainly waned. Pretty rapidly. And that's the problem.

Isn't it. When the world. Wants leadership. To impress the world. The goalposts. Keep shifting. And it's very hard. And the problem is. That God's people.

The church. Very often. Also. Want. The kind of leadership. That is impressive. To the world. And have a very worldly. View of leadership. That's where the success.

[9 : 59] Is going to lie. Just the right person. Who. Who will in worldly terms. Do all that we want them to do. That's why very often. When you have a church. That is vacant. Because a minister. Moves on or retires.

And very often. These days. Alas. The church is. Is largely full of. Very elderly people. What do they always want. In their new minister. A young man in his thirties. With two or three children. Why? Because they think.

That will suddenly. Magically transform their church. And fill it full of young families. All over again. Well you see. It's always been so. That God's people. Have very often.

Looked for the same qualities. In leadership. As the world. All around about. And Israel here. Was absolutely no different. Look at verse 14. God says. The time will come. When Israel would say.

We want a king. A leader. Just like all the world. Round about us. All the nations. And so God says to them. Verse 15. Well. You can have a king.

[10 : 55] Although notice. This isn't actually. A command of God. Is it? This is something. That he allows them. In response. To their request. That may be significant. Given how many times.

We're reminded in the Bible. That actually. The Lord alone. Is to be the true king. Of his people. Moses repeats that. In his last song. In the end of chapter. 33 of Deuteronomy. The Lord became king.

Over his people. At Sinai. He says. But God says. Yes. All right. You can have a king. But because. God. Would always be the true king.

Of his people Israel. Then their king. Could never be. Just like. All the nations round. He could never be a king. Instead of God.

A leader. Instead of God. He would have to be. For Israel. A leader who would represent. God to the people. And represent the people. To God. And lead the people. To their true God.

[11 : 49] So what kind of. Ruler. Does God say. That his people. Really need. And of course. Remember that. What is good for God's people. Will demonstrate.

Won't it. To the world. What is good for all people. Well look at verses. 14 to 17. What is good. In a ruler. He says.

Is not. The rule. Of a man of the world. First of all. God chooses him. Because. He knows best. Better than human beings do.

Remember David. When David was chosen. After all. His more impressive brothers. Had passed over in front of him. And even Samuel. God's prophet. Was very surprised. And shaken. At God's choice. So God chooses him.

Not man. And then we're told. He must be a true Israelite. Well obviously. Somebody outside. God's covenant. People couldn't possibly. Lead. God's people. In God's true ways. Could he? So those are the positives.

[12 : 47] But notice in these verses. Particularly in verses 16 and 17. The emphasis is on the negatives. There's great realism. Isn't there? In God's word here.

Because. Even among God's people. There is a great pull. To be like the world. And to be impressed. By the things that impress the world. And the mark of ancient kings.

Of course. Was their warrior status. Verse 16. You have many horses. And chariots. That in our language. Is tanks. And aircraft carriers. And intercontinental ballistic missiles.

And all these sorts of things. Your warrior status. Was impressive to the world. And verse 17. So was your wife status. You have to have a great big harem.

And also your wealth status. Oodles of silver and gold. But you see. God says that among God's people. The one from among their own brothers.

[13 : 43] Who was to be elevated among them. Was not to be elevated. By the trappings of worldly power. But in fact. In a very different way indeed. Well what was that? Look at verses 18 to 20.

He's to be not. A man of the world. But instead. A man of God's word. A king. Marked out. By having his own copy.

Of all God's words. To cherish. To read. To know. And above all. To do. All the ways. Of the Lord. All the days of his life. You see.

A king. Or any leader. Of God's people. Is only of value. If he will give a lead. In loyalty to God. And loyalty to God's covenant. And so he must be a leader.

Who will. Lead his people. In obedience. To God's word. And that. Notice verse 20. Is what will protect him. From being lifted up. In pride.

- [14 : 41] Protect him. From the hubris. That always leads to a nemesis. In a human leader. Isn't that so? And that again. Verse 20. Look again. That is what will protect him.
- From turning away himself. From God's ways. Only one who remains. A man of the word. In living reality. All his life.
- Will be kept from pride. And from presumption. And those he leads. Will only be led. And be like that. If he is like that. And so he is not to seek warfare.
- He is not to seek wives. He is not to seek wealth. Like the world. But. He is to seek. Verse 19. Wisdom. The fear of the Lord. Which is the beginning of wisdom.
- Says Proverbs. And look at the second half. Of verse 20. You see. That is the way to. Well what would we call that. In the second half. Of verse 20. I think we could probably call it.
- [15 : 39] Strong and stable leadership. Couldn't we? We've all heard that phrase. Plenty of late. This would be a good meditation. I think. Wouldn't it? For Mrs. May. As she walks the Swiss hills.
- In her summer holidays. And there is a word. Isn't there? For the world. And for our nation here. Because good government.
- Will never come. From power seeking people. From those who think. They're above the law. Who are above their own peers. For those who seek. To warmonger. Out of their pride.
- As it seems. The diminutive. Little Mr. King. Kim. In North Korea. Seems to want to do so much. Good government. Will not come. From those who are wealth seekers. For themselves.
- Especially if they seek their wealth. From the people they're meant to lead. No good government. Will come from those. Who are humbled. By the fear of the Lord. Because only there.
- [16 : 34] Is wisdom. Did you know that our monarch. At. Their coronation. Receives. A copy of the Bible. And it's given to her.
- With these words. This book. Is the most valuable thing. This world affords. Here is wisdom. This is the royal law. These are the lively oracles of God.
- I thank God. That our queen. Does believe that. And is humbled. By the word of God. And we must pray. Mustn't we. For her successes. That they would be likewise. But there doesn't seem to be much sign.
- That our parliament. Takes these things very seriously. And we should pray for them. And we should pray. For churchmen. For Christian leaders. In the nation. Who do have a high profile.
- Who do have access. And influence. With our parliamentarians. With our monarchy. With our leaders. We must pray. That they will actually believe. These things themselves. And that they will teach it.
- [17 : 32] To those in public life. So there is a word. For the world here. And for our society. But there is certainly also. A word for the church. And in all our thinking. About leadership. What did the Lord Jesus say?
- The rulers of the pagans. The Gentiles. Lord it over their people. But not so. Among you. Whoever would be great.
- Must be your servant. For even the son of man. Came not to be served. But to serve. You see the church. Is to show the world.
- The kind of rule that it needs. The servant leaders. Who lead by obedience to God. And who are kept humble. Towards others. And humble toward God.

Because their lives. Are permeated in every place. In every way. By the ruling. Of the word of God. In scripture. How is that going to be?

[18 : 30] Well verse 19. Only if. Those who lead God's church. Through teaching his word. Are themselves. Readers and doers of that word. All the days of their lives.

Not men of the world. But men of the word. That's why the New Testament church. Was held responsible. As the people are here.

In the Old Testament. Not only to select. Men like that. To be their leaders. That's what. Paul insists on. Isn't it? In 1st Timothy.

3. And. In his letter to Titus. And so on. Not only to select. Men of the word. But also. And this is very important. To keep them. To being. Men of the word.

That's implicit here. Isn't it? The people. Are responsible. For the kind of king. That they're going to have. You've got to keep your king like this. If you want good rule. And in the Christian church today.

[19 : 26] We mustn't make the mistake. Of thinking that. Christian leaders. Whether they be pastors. Or missionaries. Or evangelists. Or whoever they might be. That if we just choose them well. At the beginning. Then everything will be fine.

And they'll never go astray. Don't make that mistake. They're sinners. Just like the rest of us. They're fallen human beings. Just like the rest of us. They need our prayers. They need our encouragement.

And they need our admonishment at times. And our correction. To keep them true to God's word. And therefore to keep the whole church. True to God's word.

And to God's ways. And that's why Paul reminds the Ephesian church. About the promise of this commandment. The fifth commandment. Because it's an abiding principle.

You see. If you want to have good and stable leaders. And good and flourishing churches. Then together we need to honor. And help right leadership. And right authority.

[20 : 21] To prevail in the church. At every level. All the time. It's the responsibility of Christ's church. To have the leadership that we need. And we all have responsibility.

To purge the evil of pride and presumption. We all have the responsibility. To ensure reverence. To the Lord.

That there are no rivals to the Lord. In our midst. That we are revering his word alone. That's something that's so important. For all of us to hear. Everyone here today.

In your churches. Wherever that might be. We're all responsible. Let's be close. Remember what I said. At the start. About all the law.

Being prophetic. About speaking about. A true fulfillment to come. In the kingdom of Christ. That is so obvious. Isn't it? When we read verses like these today. When did a king.

[21 : 17] Like the one described here. Ever arise. In Israel. That was a brief glimpse. In the heyday of David. And Solomon. But even Solomon was sunk.

Wasn't he? What by? By women. And by wealth. There was a little recovery. A brief time. In one or two of the good kings. Like Hezekiah.

Like Josiah. Good kings. Who sought God's word. And of course. As I said also. There was the recognition. All the time. Wasn't there?

That the only real king of Israel. The only true lord of his people. Was the Lord himself. The king of heaven. You might remember. That when the people came to Gideon.

In the time of the judges. And said. You. You and your family. Rule over us. He said. I will not rule over you. The Lord. Will rule over you. They all knew. That their true king. Was only.

[22 : 11] Ever going to be the Lord himself. So. So what kind of a man. An Israelite. From among his own brothers. Could ever be. Everything that these verses.

Speak of. A man utterly in harmony. With the will of God. Among exalted. Exalted among men. And yet. Humble. And not haughty. A man whose kingdom.

And whose reign. Would continue so long. As to bring blessing. And blessing. And blessing. Without end. To his people. What kind of a man. Could that be.

And how could. Such a one. If he could exist. How could he possibly. Not rival. The true king of Israel. The God of heaven. Well of course.

You know the answer. Don't you. Only if. The God of heaven. The king of heaven. Himself. Became. One of his brothers. And being exalted. Not through.

[23 : 09] Being served. But by. Serving his people. So that through. His obedience. Even to his own death. He would. Purge away. The evil from them. Forever. And save them.

From their sins. And lead them. To his everlasting kingdom. Only then. Could there ever be. On this earth. A king like that. Isn't that so? The Lord Jesus Christ.

Obviously. Is the ruler. That we all need. And through. Through his obedience. Alone. We can be secure. In an everlasting kingdom.

Forever. His kingdom alone. Is. The place of righteousness. Justice. That we all long for. And he alone. Is the supreme lord.

Under whose law. Alone. We can find all of that. Peter says. According to his promise. We are waiting. For a new heavens.

[24 : 07] And a new earth. The home. Of righteousness. Justice. And only justice. And so you see. The great message. Of the bible. Is that we can.

Trust. This promise. Because we can trust. The Lord Jesus Christ. Look at verse. 20 of chapter 17. That is true. Of the Lord Jesus.

His throne. Will never fail. His glorious resurrection. To life everlasting. Proves that. Beyond all doubt. To the whole world. And therefore.

Because that is true. Of him. Verse 20 of chapter 16. Can be true. For us. We can live. And we shall live.

And inherit the earth. The place where true. Justice and righteousness. Reigns. The justice. The rightness.

[25 : 03] That we all long for. Can be ours. And will be ours. If we will trust. The Lord Jesus. Because he is. The leader. That we all need.

Well let's pray. Heavenly Father. We thank you. For the promise. Of this. Your law. And we thank you. All the more. For its great. Fulfillment. In our Lord Jesus Christ.

Who is. The King of Kings. And Lord of Lords. One exalted. Even through his own humility. One. In whom.

Dwelt. The very word. Of God himself. So we rejoice in him. And we pray that you would. Keep our trust in him. And that is your church.

In the world today. We would always seek. And. Always seek to preserve. The leadership. That reflects him.

[26 : 02] And leads others to him. So that we all. Knowing him. Might know the peace. The joy. The gladness. And the hope. That is coming to us.

In the home of righteousness. To help us. We pray. To rejoice. In these things. For Jesus sake. Amen. So may the grace.

Of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God the Father. And the fellowship. Of the Holy Spirit. Be with you all. Amen. Amen. Amen.