

Bible Study

Did God want or not want Israel to have a Human King?



King George V

By C. M. White
Version 2.5



Did God want or not want Israel to have a human King?

Authored by Craig Martin White.

Copyright © Craig Martin White, GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001.

All Rights Reserved.

This work is promoted through History Research Foundation (USA), History Research Projects (Australia) and Friends of the Sabbath (Australia)
www.friendsofsabbath.org

No part of this work may be edited. It may be freely shared as part of research projects or for educational purposes as long as quotes are properly cited.

Contents

Introductory Comments.....	4
What God wanted versus what happened.....	5
The Judaic Priest-King Line	8
Concluding Remarks	16
Addendum: Extracts from W. C. Kaiser's <i>Toward an Old Testament Theology</i>	18
References.....	19

History Research Projects

GPO Box 864, Sydney, Australia 2001

www.friendsofsabbath.org

No limitation is placed upon reproduction of this document except that it must be reproduced in its entirety without modification or deletions. The publisher's name and address, copyright notice and this message must be included. It may be freely distributed but must be distributed without charge to the recipient.

Our purpose and desire are to foster Biblical, historical and related studies that strengthen the Church of God's message & mission and provides further support to its traditional doctrinal positions.

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you"
(Genesis 17:6)

Introductory Comments

In the minds of many there appears to be a misunderstanding by some of 1Sam 8 which, on the surface, appears to suggest that God did not want Israel to have kings.

"When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel.

The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.

Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice.

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for 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 to the LORD.

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.

According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you.

Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." (1 Samuel 8:1-9)¹

It would **seem** from the above that by wanting a king that this was the wrong desire by the elders and Israelites. That this desire in effect rejected God. Lessons would be learned from both upright and bad kings for ancient Israel and us today.

However, when one reads Deuteronomy 17:14-20, one is confronted with a completely different view:

"When you come to 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 king over 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,

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

¹ Scholars still debate whether he was an Ephraimite or Levite. See for example <https://living-faith.org/2017/05/25/samuel-levite-or-ephraimite/>

continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.”

There is no hint that it was wrong to have a human king from this Scripture – in fact it appears quite legitimate, and this was to occur sometime after they entered the Promised Land. When exactly is not mentioned here, but it would appear that they were to be ruled by judges until a king was inaugurated – preferably at Jerusalem. Once settled in the land and Israel was putting down roots, a more mature administrative system needed to be established.

What God wanted versus what happened

The appointment of a king occurred after they entered the land as we saw in 1 Samuel 8, but it was the wrong sort of king that they sought. And more than that, it is supposed to be someone from the tribe of Judah:

The Pulpit Commentary explains:

“They wanted a king such as the heathen had, whereas **something far better and higher was possible for them, namely, a king who would be the representative of Jehovah, as the shophet had hitherto been.** The nation's real need was not a new power, but the permanent organisation of what up to this time had been a casual authority. And it was Samuel's high office to give the nation this, while he also changed the outward form of prophecy, and made it too into an orderly institution. A king to judge us. *I.e.* to govern us, as the shophet or, judge had done, only in a more regularly constituted manner. And Samuel prayed unto Jehovah. There had been no such submission to the will of God on the part of the elders; but deeply as Samuel must have been hurt by this determination of the nation to take the government out of the hands of himself and his sons, yet he leaves the decision to Jehovah. Moreover, we must note that it was as prophet that he thus acted as mediator between the people and God; and he gave them his services in this his highest capacity as faithfully when the question was one injurious to himself as he had ever done on more pleasing occasions.²

1 Samuel 8:7

In prayer then the answer came to him that the request of the people must be granted, however wrongly it had been urged. In itself it was wrong; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. As we saw above, **they wanted no theocratic king, whose first duty would be to maintain the Mosaic law** (Deuteronomy 17:18, Deuteronomy 17:19), and protect the priest and prophet in the discharge of their legitimate functions; **all they wanted was a soldier** who would put an end to their state of anarchy, and enable them to cultivate their fields without the danger of seeing the produce swept off by marauders.” (www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/tpc/1-samuel-8.html) [emphasis mine]

In 1 Samuel 8:10-18 Samuel warns about the **type** of king they would get, not having a king as such.

Then in the following verses, after the warning from Samuel Israel demands a wrong sort of king:

² “They were looking for a permanent military leader who would build a standing army powerful enough to repulse the invader ... God, graciously condescending to the people's desire (**a desire not in itself wrong but sullied by the motivation behind it**)” (Ronald Youngblood, *1 Samuel, The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 613) [emphasis mine]

"But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us,
that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

And when Samuel had heard all the words of the people, he repeated them in the ears of the LORD.

And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey their voice and make them a king." Samuel then said to the men of Israel, "Go every man to his city." (1 Samuel 8:19-22)

It seems clear from the cry of the Israelites that they wanted their king to "be like all the nations" which includes judging them and fighting their battles – even though Samuel led them to victory under God's inspiration (1 Samuel 7:10-13).

As such, the concentration of power of judging into the hands of the king and not calling on God to assist them in righteous battle would align them with the cruel despotic kings roundabout. It is hard to comprehend why they would want to be like them, but the lack of faith and trust in God led them to want to have a king "to judge us like all the nations".³

Note: the motive was wrong, not kingship itself. For God was already judging Israel through His system (Judges 11:27) and either performed miracles or helped Israel fight their battles (Exodus 14:14; Deuteronomy 1:13; 3:22; 20:4; Joshua 10:14, 42; 23:3; Nehemiah 4:20).

Tremper Longman explains:

"God is Israel's heavenly King, but there is also a human king who should serve as God's vice-regent among his people" (Tremper Longman, *Psalms. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*, p. 324).

"And when you saw that Nahash the king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king [like those roundabout] shall reign over us,' when the LORD your God was your king [and a good one]." (1 Samuel 12:12)

The question is 'how does God reign or rule over them' politically (cp Judges 8:23)? It is through righteous Judges or righteous Kings. Also, this seems to be referring to God as a Warrior fighting their wars and they, in turn, trusting in Him to win. But they wanted a human king they could see in the flesh to fight their wars – thus the issue wasn't whether God was opposed to human kings, but to whether they would trust in Him as a King to win wars.

When they are not righteous, He does not completely rule over them (but only individuals or families or sectors of society).

³ "It is later explained that Israel's king "sat on the throne of the Lord," reigning as king *for* Him (1 Chronicles 29:23; 2 Chronicles 9:6-8) ... Furthermore, in other countries, kings made law and were thus above it. But in Israel, God's prophet will explain "the rights and duties of the kingship" (1 Samuel 10:25, NRSV). The ruler was *subject* to the law (see Deuteronomy 17:14-20). **Essentially, the Almighty set up a constitutional limited monarchy**—in which He would send a prophet as His representative to the king to give him his "report card." (<https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-commentary/bible-commentary-1-samuel-72-822>) [emphasis mine]. "The state of monarchy is the supremest thing upon earth. For kings are not only God's lieutenants upon earth, and sit upon God's throne, but even by God himself they are called gods. There be three principal similitudes that illustrate the state of monarchy. One taken out of the word of God, and the two other out of the grounds of policy and philosophy. In the Scriptures kings are called gods, and so their power after a certain relation compared to the divine power. Kings are also compared to fathers of families, for a king is truly *parens patriae*, the politic father of his people. And lastly, kings are compared to the head of this microcosm of the body of man." (James I, King of Scotland and England, known for "King James' Bible" in a speech to Parliament in 1610 as quoted at "The Divine Right of Kings:4", *University of Cambridge Faculty of History*, <https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/divine-right-kings-4>

“And now behold the king whom you have chosen, for whom you have asked; behold, the LORD has set a king over you.

If you will fear the LORD and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, and **if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the LORD your God, it will be well.**

But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, then the hand of the LORD will be against you and your king.” (1 Samuel 12:12-15)⁴

Now we see that having a king was quite alright, provided he and the people “follow the Lord your God”. That included the king not concentrating judicial power in himself; and having faith in God to fight or to help them fight their battles.

So, does it make sense that a king is something God did not want?

Consider the Abrahamic promises (which were blessings, not merely prophecies):

“Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him,
“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, **and kings shall come from you ...**

And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” (Genesis 17:3-6, 15-16)

“God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him. And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel.

And God said to him, “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, **and kings shall come from your own body.**” (Genesis 35:9-11)⁵

Abraham was promised a kingly line and there was nothing negative and untoward about this – it was a positive promise (blessing) – prophetic indeed – but not a generalised prophecy that there would be (bad) kings that they would desire. Instead, a plain reading is that it was a blessing for Abraham’s descendants which would come to pass.

However, if people take their blessing in the wrong way and misuse it (as Israel did with their blessings; and how most kings mis-behaved), that is another matter. But kingship is a promised blessing, not

⁴ “After the people had been solemnly admonished of their guilt in requesting the appointment of a king on *their* worldly principles they were allowed to raise one of their number to the throne” and because Saul “was little disposed to rule in humble subordination to the will and authority of Heaven and was therefore supplanted by another who should act as God’s representative, and bear distinctively the name of His servant” (Patrick Fairbairn, *The Typology of Scripture*, vol 1, pp. 121-22.)

⁵ John Gill explains in *Genesis, Exposition of the Whole Bible*: “and kings shall come out of thy loins; as Saul, David, Solomon, and, many others, who were kings of Israel and of Judah, and especially the King Messiah; yea, all his posterity were kings and priests, or a kingdom of priests, Exo 19:6.”

meant to be a curse, though it can become a curse.

Any blessing (money, land, stock etc) can be misused, as Israel did with the type of king they wanted - a blessing can be turned into a curse.

The Judaic Priest-King Line

The main kingly line was to come through Judah, not any other tribe:

"Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him?

The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." (Genesis 49:9-10) [refer to the **Addendum** for further information]

"Yet the LORD God of Israel chose me from all my father's house to be king over Israel forever. **For he chose Judah as leader**, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel." (IChron 28:4)

This is reflected in the birth of the two sons that Judah had with Tamar:

"When the time of her labor came, there were twins in her womb.

And when she was in labor, one put out a hand, and the midwife took and tied a **scarlet thread** on his hand, saying, "This one came out first."

But as he drew back his hand, behold, his brother came out. And she said, "What a breach you have made for yourself!" Therefore his name was called Perez.

Afterward his brother came out with **the scarlet thread** on his hand, and his name was called Zerah." (Genesis 38:27-30)

Why scarlet? Because it indicates the royal inheritance for Zerah, but because Perez was born first, his line via King David became the legitimate royal line. Others set up their own kings, but the main line was from Perez through David in lieu of Zerah's.

Many view the scarlet colour as having royal significance (see Daniel 5:7, 16, 29; Matthew 27:28; Mark 15:17, 20; John 19:2) which certainly fits the narrative. It can also symbolise prosperity (2 Samuel 1:24; Proverbs 31:21; Lamentations 4:5; Revelation 18:12, 16); sinfulness and corruption (Revelation 17:3-4; Isaiah 1:18). In addition it points to Christ and His shed blood and Kingly role – the ultimate fulfillment of the blessing.

Of further significance is that the thread was tied on his hand – almost certainly the right hand. Why is this so? Because throughout the Bible the right hand symbolizes leadership, strength and covenanting (see Gen. 48:13-14, 18; Ex. 15:6; Deut. 33:1-3; Ps. 18:35; 20:6; 44:1-4; 48:10; 89:9-10, 13; 98:1-3; 118:15-16 Is. 41:13; 49:22; 52:10; 59:1, 16).

"A Psalm. Oh sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things! His **right hand** and his holy arm have worked salvation for him." (Ps 98:1)

"For I, the LORD your God, hold your **right hand**; it is I who say to you, "Fear not, I am the one who helps you." (Is. 41:13)

It seems that Kingship was going to commence with conquest of the Promised Land and in particular the taking of the city of Jerusalem by David (symbolic of the future reign of Christ on the earth). But Saul interrupted this Judaic promise – or so it would appear – the kings were supposed to come from Judah, not Benjamin, though permitted by God. From Jerusalem the Kings of Judah were to rule and as such, that was the time kings were to be appointed – at least, that is how it seems (cp Psalm 78:67-70).

John Sailhamer points queries why Benjamin had the first king:

“It is difficult not to see in this an intentional allusion to the dream of Joseph (37:10) in which his fathers sons would come to bow down before him. In other words, what was to happen to Joseph - and did, in fact, happen in the course of the narrative (e.g., 42:6) - has been picked up by way of this image and transferred to the future of the house of Judah. What had happened to Joseph is portrayed as a picture of what would happen to Judah "in days to come"...

Were the other brothers/tribes jealous of Judah's favoured position? Earlier Judah had taken the lead, and obtained the support of the disaffected brothers, to sell Joseph instead of killing him. Now it seems that the Joseph tribes will provide the leadership for the other tribes against the tribe of Judah.

(1) Did the sceptre originally go hand in hand with the passing on of the birthright?

(2) Did the sceptre or the position of being the leading tribe belong to Joseph, and, in the similar case of Reuben lose their 'position' through disobedience, but still retaining the birthright blessing?

(3) Why, if Judah was to receive the sceptre, did God choose the first king from the tribe of Benjamin?” (John Sailhamer, *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 2, p. 276 - note on Gen. 49:8-12)

First of all, similar terminology is used in Gen 37:5-11 pertaining to Joseph and that pertaining to Judah 49:8-11, yet there is no hint that the birthright blessings go hand in hand with the sceptre (ie the Crown). The Crown rules (or is supposed to rule) all Israel, including those tribes that are blessed with the birthright.

Secondly, the tabernacle was set up in Shiloh, within the territory of Ephraim (Joshua 18:1) during the time of the judges. Later Saul, the Benjamite, became king by permission of God, but it was always intended that the line of Judah hold the sceptre and fulfill the blessing of kingship after Jerusalem was taken and the land fully conquered. The tabernacle may have resided with the tribe of Benjamin for a while (Judges 20:26-28). It was moved to Nob (1 Samuel 21-22), then Gibeon (1 Chronicles 16:39; 21:29; 2 Chronicles 1:2-6, 13). While the tabernacle remained at Gibeon the ark was moved to Kiriath-Jearim (2 Chronicles 13:5-6) before David took it to the place it was always intended to reside in – Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6: 17; 1 Chronicles 15:1).

Notice the following insights from commentators regarding Solomon's statements in IIChron 6:5-6:

“Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there, and I chose no man as prince over my people Israel;

but I have chosen Jerusalem that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel."

Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges:

"5. neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel] The Chronicler regards Saul as rejected rather than chosen; 1 Chronicles 10:13-14."
Cambridge University. (1877).

Pulpit Commentary:

"Verse 5. - I chose no city,... neither chose I any man. The tabernacle and all it contained had but travelled from place to place, and rested at temporary halting-places; and from Moses' time all the leaders of the people Israel had been men in whom vested no permanent and no intrinsic authority (1 Samuel 16:1-15; 2 Samuel 24:18-25). 2 Chronicles 6:5."

Keil and Delitzsch *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament:*

"The words with which Solomon celebrates this wondrous evidence of the divine favour, entirely coincide with the narrative in 1 Kings 8:12-21, except that in 2 Chronicles 6:5. the actual words of Solomon's speech are more completely given than in 1 Kings 8:16, where the words, "and I have not chosen a man to be prince over my people Israel, and I have chosen Jerusalem that my name might be there," are omitted. For the commentary on this address, see on 1 Kings 8:12-21."

Reuben Torrey, *Treasure of Scriptural Knowledge:*

"neither chose: The judges and Saul were chosen by God, for a season, to be rulers of Israel; but not to establish a permanent and hereditary authority over that people, as was the case with David. This clause is wanting in the parallel passage of Kings; but it helps to clear the sense. 1Sa_10:24, 1Sa_13:13-14, 1Sa_15:23; 2Sa_7:15-16."

The throne was always meant to be with Judah, not Ephraim or Benjamin.

David Solomon Rehoboam Abijah Asa Jehoshaphat Jehoram Ahaziah Athaliah Joash Amaziah Azariah Jotham Ahaz Hezekiah Manasseh Amon Josiah

Jehoahaz
Jehoiakam
Zedekiah

Kings of Judah from David to Captivity

It may come as a surprise to some, but King David⁶ himself probably functioned as a sort of priest-king (somewhat similar to the order of Melchizedek it would seem). It is not clear when this function commenced for the kings, but it likely started with David thereby commencing a dynasty of priest-kings based in Jerusalem with Solomon building the temple and their descendants performing a role overseeing the temple (typological of Christ building the spiritual temple and overseeing the Millennial temple).⁷

By way of background Psalm 110 seems to make that proposition (and is further explained in my article *Study Notes on the Melchizedek Priesthood*):

"It may be, however, that David composed the psalm for the coronation of his son Solomon, that he called him "my Lord" (v. 1) in view of his new status, which placed him above the aged David, and that in so doing he spoke a word that had far larger meaning than he knew. This would seem to be in more accord with what we know of David from Samuel, Kings and Chronicles."⁸ (Kenneth Barker, *NIV Study Bible*, Note on Psalm 110, p. 906)

One of the most useful and famous books on the subject of Israel's history is *Kingdom of Priests. A History of Old Testament Israel* by Eugene Merrill. I present several quotes from him below which I trust will aid in understanding this concept:

"The juxtaposition of anointing and kingship in many other Old Testament passages, not least of which is Psalm 2. Though the Psalm is anonymous, there is every good reason to view it as a Davidic composition designed to attest to David's messianic kingdom and his status as the son of God. Ps 110 likewise speaks of David's kingship⁹ as transcending a mere political office. This time, however, it is not his sonship that is stressed, but rather his priesthood. Noteworthy here are the tie-in to Melchizedek, a contemporary of the patriarchs, and, once again, the complete bypassing of the whole Mosaic covenantal and cultic institution. **David functions as both king and priest not by virtue of his Israelite citizenship, but because he stands in the direct continuum of Abrahamic promise and fulfilment.**¹⁰

The link to the patriarchs is clearly seen in the initiation of the Davidic covenant (I

⁶ Although it is also not clear if this function covered both the kings of Judah and Israel or only Judah, it would appear that the Melchizedekian priesthood functions (in some sort of capacity) continued through the Kings of Judah, rather than Israel, after all, Judah was meant to contain the Royal line.

⁷ Even at His initial coming, there are allusions of Christ spiritually fulfilling a role of high priest in John 17 (see Ken Brown *Temple Christology in the Gospel of John*, pp. 109-110)

⁸ There is much debate surrounding this, but the Solomonic link seems to be the most credible. In fact, some have identified eight aspects to a coronation in this Psalm (Hebert Bateman, "Psalm 110:1 and the New Testament", *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct, p. 450)

⁹ As such this is regarded as a 'Royal Psalm': "Psalm 110, unlike Genesis 14, is not formulated as a narrating storyline; it is instead a 'royal psalm', the superscription of which (in both the Hebrew and Greek traditions) is linked to the figure of David." (Loren Stuckenbruck, "Melchizedek in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Sept 2018, p. 126)

¹⁰ Refer to works such as Walter Kaiser, "The Old Promise And The New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34", *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1972, pp. 11-23. And Walter Kaiser, "An Assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship Between Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christian Church", *Mishkan*, Vol. 21, 1994, pp. 9-20.

Chron. 15-17). Having prepared facilities for the ark and having appointed cultic personnel to serve as its ministers, David, clothed in the priestly ephod, brought the ark to its new resting place (I Chron. 15:25-28)." [emphasis mine] (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests. A History of Old Testament Israel*, p. 186)

Matthew 21:9 describes Christ as the Son of David:

"Jesus himself confirmed this when he pointed out to the Pharisees that by identifying the Messiah as the son of David, they were at the same time conceding Messiah's anteriority to and lordship over David, a matter patently clear from Psalm 110 (Matt 22:41-46). The same psalm describes the messianic king as a priest according to the order of Melchizedek. The author of Hebrews makes much of this point, and though he nowhere mentions David in this connection, he speaks of Jesus Christ as such a priest precisely as the psalm does of David. **David and Jesus Christ, as Melchizedekian priests, functioned outside the Mosaic priestly order ... The continuum Melchizedek – David – Christ is thus uninterrupted by Mosaism in the priestly role just as that of Abraham – David – Christ is in the regal.**" (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests. A History of Old Testament Israel*, pp. 187, 205) ¹¹ [emphasis mine]

"Being of the order of Melchizedek was also the basis of David's role as royal priest and of his selection of Jerusalem as the site of the ark and tabernacle. **He understood that just as Melchizedek had been king of Salem, so he, as successor to Melchizedek, must reign from Jerusalem. And just as Melchizedek was priest of God Most High, so he, as successor to Melchizedek in an order that was superior to that of Aaron, could exercise the holy privilege of priesthood before Yahweh.**" [emphasis mine] (Eugene Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests. A History of Old Testament Israel*, p. 265)

"David led the procession clothed in the priestly linen ephod, and sacrificing and dancing before Yahweh ... David and the Levites offered up burnt offerings ... Neither the chronicler nor the author of Samuel mentions a priest in the whole course of sacrificing. **Clearly David saw himself as a priest and was accepted by the people and the Levites as such.** His sacerdotal role is seen also in his appointing of the religious personnel to attend to the tabernacle." [emphasis mine] (Eugene Merrill *Kingdom of Priests. A History of Old Testament Israel*, p. 266)

"However, David was dressed as a priest (2 Sam 6:14), was in charge of the sacrifices (2 Sam 6:17-18), and gave a priestly blessing to the people (2 Sam 6:18). **This was also true of Solomon (1 Kings 8:14, 55, 62-64), as his authority extended over the high priest (1 Kings 2:27, 35) ...**"

"The irrevocable oath [of Psalm 110:4] is none other than what the Lord has promised to David pertaining to his dynasty (2 Sam 7:13; Pss 89:3, 28-29, 34-35; 132:11). David had shown a deep concern for the Lord's dwelling place; and with the divine appointment of Jerusalem as the focal point of his earthly rule, the Lord made great promises to David (see 132:13-18). **Here the Davidic king serves as God's priest "in the order of Melchizedek"**... The Davidic king is after the order of Melchizedek only

¹¹ Peter Lee's article makes similar statements: "The oath differs in that it is **the priestly nature** of the royal seed of David that is promised. The sons of David could not be priests in the order of Aaron, so **their priesthood comes by way of a divine oath in a different order**. This suggests that there was a latent priestly element to the Davidic kings (cf. 2 Sam 8:18) that becomes more explicit as the history of redemption progresses." (Peter Lee, "Psalm 110 Reconsidered", *Reformed Faith and Practice*, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 24)

in so far as the sacerdotal kingship is concerned. He is charged with responsibility over the true worship of the Lord..." [emphasis mine] (Willem VanGemeren, *Psalms, Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 5, p. 699)¹²

Concerning Solomon, was he the son David referred to as typological of the Messiah in Psalm 2?¹³

Many scholars of Biblical typology are of the view that, amongst other things, the Solomonic era (in part) and Temple portrayed the Millennium in a number of ways.

A number of authors have promoted the belief that King David was a sort of priest-king because Israel, they believe, was a royal priesthood (Exodus 19:6).

"Here, the palmist combined priesthood and royalty in the Messiah. **For just as the whole nation had been constituted a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, so now the Davidic monarchy was made a priest-king, after one named Melchizedek**, whose history and life paralleled the older man of promise, Abraham ..."

"In a totally unique way ... each Davidite stood in this relation of son to his God. Yet it is not said that any single Davidite would ever realize purely or perfectly this lofty concept of divine sonship. But should any person qualify for this relationship, he would also need to be a son of David." (Walter Kaiser, *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, pp. 161-62, 152. Refer to the Addendum for further proof of this)

After all, David

- Had authority over the priesthood (2 Samuel 6)
- Re-ordered the priesthood (1 Chronicles 23-25)
- Blessed the Israelites (2 Samuel 6:18)
- Wore an ephod (2 Samuel 6:14; 1 Chronicles 15:27)
- Ate the shewbread (1 Samuel 21:6)
- Offered sacrifices (2 Samuel 6:13, 17-18; 24:18-25; 1 Chronicles 21:18-28)
- His sons were regarded as priests (2 Samuel 8:18)¹⁴

¹² For a good outline about the kings of Judah refer to the article "The Early Kings of Judah – Miraculous Deliverance", *Good News*, Nov-Dec 1998, pp. 24-27.

¹³ "The submission of the kings of the earth to the Davidic monarch also appears in Psalm 72:8-11 — another royal psalm that reflects the official ideology of the Jerusalem monarchy... the "official line" of these Davidic kings was their right to rule all the earth by Yahweh's authorization and support..." (Gerald Wilson, *Psalms Volume 1. The NIV Application Commentary*, pp. 111-12). And, "Yahweh will ... appoint the Davidic line to its rightful place as vice-regent over the world" (Mark Boda, *Haggai. NIV Application Commentary*, p.166).

¹⁴ Other supporting Scriptures include Ps 51:12-16; 40:6; 2 Sam 21:4-6

Note also the insights by Barker: "110:4 The second oracle (see note on v. 1). *has sworn*. In accordance also with his sworn covenant to maintain David's royal line forever (see 89:35-37). The force of this oath is elaborated by the author of Hebrews (Heb 6:16-18; 7:20-22). *priest . . . in the order of Melchizedek*. David and his royal sons, as chief representatives of the rule of God, performed many worship-focused activities, such as overseeing the ark of the covenant (see 2Sa 6:1-15, especially v. 14; 1Ki 8:1), building and overseeing the temple (see 1Ki 5-7; 2Ki 12:4-7; 22:3-7; 23:4-7; 2Ch 15:8; 24:4-12; 29:3-11; 34:8) and overseeing the work of the priests and Levites and the temple liturgy (see 1Ch 6:31; 15:11-16; 16:4-42; 23:3-31; 25:1; 2Ch 17:7-9; 19:8-11; 29:25,30; 31:2; 35:15-16; Ezr 3:10; 8:20; Ne 12:24,36,45). **In all these duties they exercised authority over even the high priest.** But they could not engage in those specifically priestly functions that had been assigned to the Aaronic priesthood (see 2Ch 26:16-18). In the present oracle the son of David is installed by God as king-priest in Zion after the manner of Melchizedek, the king-priest of God Most High at Jerusalem in the days of Abraham (see Ge 14:18). As such a king-priest, he was appointed to a higher order of priesthood than that of Aaron and his sons. (For the union of king and priest in one person see Zec 6:13.) What this means for Christ's priesthood is the main theme of Heb 7. *forever*. Permanently and irrevocably; perhaps alluded to in Jn 12:34" (Kenneth Barker, *NIV Study Bible*, Note on Psalm 2:7 and Note on Psalm 110, p. 907 (note on Ps 110)) [emphasis mine]

Concerning the latter point, the translation priests is disputed by some. They are of the view that the word should instead be translated as chief ministers, chief officials, chief rulers and such like.

McCarter, however, concludes that

“Almost all critics, therefore, have agreed that the readings of I Chron 18:17 and the versions in II Sam 8:18 are interpretive paraphrases of the reading of MT by scribes who considered it impossible that there should be non-Levitical priests.” (P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel. The Anchor Bible*, p. 255)

And that is why they are wrong in their interpretation and the translation priests is the correct one.

Finally, what can we make of Hebrews 7:14 which states that

“For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests.”

Yet as we have seen, David and his descendants function as sort of Melchizedekian Priests. It may be that Paul means that Moses is saying that Judah did not produce priests that are like the Levites.¹⁵

Regardless of how we interpret the priestly function of David, it is clear he functioned in the tradition of Melchizedek and typified Christ's future reign on earth.



Though she is female, the Queen fulfills the Priest-King role

In this vein, I was reading an article *It's the Queen or tyranny* by Mary Harrington and my eyes fell on a very interesting statement:

“The Reformation and Glorious Revolution produced an England in which both spiritual and temporal rule had the same figurehead: a head of both Church and

¹⁵ Here is another thought: “... we must note that the instances where the king's personal action is beyond question are all very special or exceptional: the transference of the Ark, the dedication of the altar or sanctuary, the great annual festivals. Ordinarily, the conduct of worship was left to the priest (2 K 16:15). Anointing did not confer on the king a priestly character ... he was not a priest in the strict sense.” (Ronald Youngblood, *1 & 2 Samuel. Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 873 (quoting de Vaux, *Als*, p. 114)

Parliament. The change was subtle but profound, as the authority of England's **priest-kings** ...

For ultimately, progressive calls to abolish the monarchy — whether as head of Church or state — amount not to a democratisation of power, but a removal of the principal safeguard we have against a return of the political and moral absolutism that preceded England's Reformation and Glorious Revolution. Should the mounting demands for authority over the moral exception merge with similar calls for authority over the political one, the relative freedom guaranteed for us by our ceremonial **priest-kings** may be replaced by something far more direct and assertive." (published in *UnHerd.com*, 21 April 2021)

How interesting – the dual role of the British kings has been noted by observers and historians. So, even in relatively modern times, this dual role continues, even if in a limited way.

In this regard, many do not realise that British Royals – including Elizabeth II, had two ceremonies when she became Queen – the second is religious:

"The first was her coronation as Queen but the second was her 'coronation' as God's servant.

In this second, untelevised ceremony, the Queen stood dressed in a simple white dress, devoid of decoration.

As she entered a place too sacred to be televised, Handel's anthem 'Zadok the Priest' was sung and the symbols of the Queen's status were removed; including, the crimson velvet robe, the diamond diadem and the coronation necklace.¹⁶

The Archbishop anointed her with holy oil and poured it onto her hands and head, symbolic of the fact that she was being set apart as God's servant; to love and serve her people with all her actions, heart and mind.

This moment in the Queen's life was recorded by the Royal Biographer William Shawcross who wrote:

"It was the moment when the holy oil was applied to her, rather than her crowning with St Edward's crown of solid gold, that was of supreme importance to the Queen. Indeed, it was the most solemn and important moment of her entire life" ...¹⁷

¹⁶ The Zadok Priest coronation anthem can be viewed here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-QvFWTB5c>

¹⁷ "The sacramental act of anointing is a ritual of inauguration, which designates an individual for a specific office consecrated by Yahweh... **Prior to Samuel's anointing of Saul, the ritual was restricted in the Old Testament to the tabernacle and its priests.** This marks Israel's new monarchy as a divine institution on a level of the priesthood. Here also, anointing stamps Saul with a special character and privilege because of a unique standing before God" (Bill T. Arnold, *1 & 2 Samuel, NIV Application Commentary*, p. 164). [emphasis mine] Note also that Samuel anointed David as *anointed one* (mashiach) which is typological of Christ who fulfills both Priestly and Kingly roles. The anointing also reminds one of that applied to the priests. And because Saul was similarly anointed, David would not take up arms against him, so serious was the office occupied.

And "In the ancient Near East the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings, who ruled by his authority and owed him allegiance, was expressed not only by the words "lord" and "servant" but also by "father" and "son." The Davidic king was the Lord's "servant" and his "son" (2Sa 7:5,14)" (Kenneth Barker, General Editor, *NIV Study Bible*, Note on Psalm 2:7). As we can see, even the British Kings and Queens hold both civil and religious functions to this day.

Her sincerity toward God and her people was expressed in her coronation vows and her 21st birthday radio address.

I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service... But I will not have the strength to carry out this resolution alone unless you join in with me... God help me to make good my vow, and God bless all of you who are willing to share in it.¹⁸

Sixty-one years later, in her 2008 Christmas broadcast, she said,

I hope that, like me, you will be comforted by the example of Jesus of Nazareth who, often in circumstances of great adversity, managed to live an outgoing, unselfish and sacrificial life." (Graham McDonald, "Queen Elizabeth, the Five Dollar Note and Christianity", *Canberra Declaration*, 28 Sept 2021)

During this ceremony the Archbishop makes the following statement to the Queen:

"Be thy head anointed with holy oil: as kings, priests, and prophets were anointed. And as Solomon was anointed king by Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet, so be you anointed, blessed and consecrated Queen over the Peoples, whom the Lord thy God hath given thee to rule and govern."¹⁹ [cp. Jeremiah 33:17]

Thus, the tradition originates in ancient Israel (whether on an ongoing basis or periodically) continues down to this day! And in Ezekiel 21:26 the diadem can refer to a priestly role while that of the crown to the royal/political role of the Israelite king.

Concluding Remarks

There are other positive Scriptures about kingship:

"Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning!

Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of the nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness!" (Ecclesiastes 10:16-17)

"The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will." (Proverbs 21:1)²⁰

¹⁸ The address was made during a tour of South Africa in 1947 and can be heard here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIdbbpOj1iw>

¹⁹ You can read more about this in articles such as "Coronation 1953: Magic moment the TV cameras missed" by Mark Easton.

²⁰ Notice what is said of the Israelitish throne and its critical importance:

"Then **Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father**, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him." (IChron 29:23)

"And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen **Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD** over Israel." (IChron 28:5)

"Blessed be **the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, to be king for the LORD thy God**: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice." (IIChron 9:8)

Whenever He wishes to do so, God can appoint and remove kings and leaders (Job 12:18; Daniel 2:21, 37-38).

So, there is no condemnation of the actual office of king – it is impossible for human kings to be perfect – but at least they should strive for Godly conduct and abidance with Biblical law and standards such as justice. The lesson for all of us is that a blessing can be misused and become a curse.

However, no matter how righteous a human or king may be, the ultimate King will be Christ Himself (cp Matthew 1:1; 19:28; 22:42-46; Luke 1:33; 22:30; John 1:49; 12:13; Micah 4:7; Isaiah 9:7) and that is to Whom we should look to for justice and to help us in our Christian warfare.

“In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and **the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD** before them.” (Zech 12:8)m

Addendum: Extracts from W. C. Kaiser's *Toward an Old Testament Theology*

"True, Joseph did receive a double portion in the inheritance since his two sons were in a sense adopted by Jacob (cf. *bekordt* of 1 Chron. 5:1), but Judah became the "leader" (*ndgid*) among his brethren. The oldest son, Reuben, lost his birthright because he dishonored his father's marriage bed (Gen. 35:22). Simeon and Levi, Jacob's second and third sons, were bypassed because of their outrageous revenge on the Shechemites (34:13-29). So **the mantle of leadership fell to Judah.**

As Isaac had blessed Jacob in Genesis 27:29, so **Jacob now transmitted the same supremacy over his brothers to Judah in 49:8. His prowess would make him a princely tribe, and he would maintain his superiority over his foes.** His emblem would be the regal lion. To him are given the scepter (*sebet*) and the ruler's staff (*nfhoqeq*—49:10).

But what is the meaning of the phrase "until Shiloh comes" (*'ad ki ydbo' siloh*)? Again, the opinion of von Orelli merits careful attention:

The context on one hand, the oldest authorities in respect of reading on the other, conduct us to our translation. *&elloh* was the reading handed down from antiquity, and the LXX rendered this neutrally: *heds 'ean 'elthe ta apokeimena auto* [until there come the things stored up for him]. Instead of this abstract neuter subject we take the personal subject dominating everywhere here and render: *until he come into that which belongs to him, therefore into his own*, his possession described on the sequel. Cf. especially the blessing of Moses on Judah, Deut xxxiii. 7: *uf'el 'ammo tebi' ennu* ["to his people bring him"]. As champion of the other tribes, he will display untiring energy until he has won his territory without curtailment; and then not merely will the tribes of Israel do homage to him but other nations also will bow to his rule."

Of the last phrase of Genesis 49:10, viz., "he shall take to him the peoples" (*welo yiqqehat 'ammim*), he continued:

[peoples] cannot apply to the Israelites merely, . . . but must refer to the more general national rule, which according to xxvii. 29 is part of Jacob's heritage, **and will be Judah's special portion.**" [footnote 16] *ibid* Von Orelli, *Prophecy*, pp. 121-22.] (Kaiser, p. 96)

Speaking of the promised Ruler (Christ) prophesied in Genesis 49:10, Kaiser notes:

"The symbols of that office, a scepter and a ruler's staff, would not depart from Judah until the one to whom they legitimately belonged came". (p. 146)²¹

²¹ "In Gen 49:10, Jacob predicts: "The scepter *Vebetr* shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver [*inellaqeq*] from between his feet, until [*'ad ki*] Shiloh [*Mad*] comes; and to him shall be the obedience of the people." **This verse indicates a succession in the royal line of Judah that will not be interrupted till the appearance of Shiloh.** The appellation Shiloh, probably coming from the Hebrew verb *Rh*, "to be at ease, quiet, tranquil, to prosper," in contrast points to a future royal messianic figure who would usher in an age of peace and prosperity and obedience to his rule. The picture of the Messiah is highlighted in the preceding verses (vv. 8-9), with the imagery of a warrior victorious over his enemies, and a lion resting after taking his prey. It is also further developed in the succeeding verses (vv. 11-12) with the imagery of an exuberant, invigorating, abundant Golden Age (with choice vines so plentiful they are used as the Messiah's hitching posts for his donkey; and wine so abundant it is used for washing the Messiah's clothes).

“... the lesson was designedly allowed by God to show men that God alone was the supreme King, and any government had to function under His authority. Hence the lot temporarily fell to Benjamin (10:20) rather than Judah” (p. 147)

“Under the kings “Israel had a theocracy of sorts where the king merely reigned as a viceroy of Yahweh, the heavenly Sovereign ... it is too simplistic to label I Samuel 8 and 12 as antimonarchical. These passages do give a more conditional acceptance of kingship as an institution from God, but that was mainly because the monarchy carried with it the greater danger of apostasy. These chapters are no more antimonarchical than Jotham’s fable of Judges 9:7-24” (p. 148). [emphasis mine]

References

Barker, K. (1995).	<i>NIV Study Bible</i> , Note on Psalm 2:7 and Note on Psalm 110. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
Bateman, H. W. (1992).	“Psalm 110:1 and the New Testament”, <i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i> , Oct, pp. 438-53.
Boda, M. J. (2004).	<i>Haggai. NIV Application Commentary</i> . Zondervan Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
Brown, K. (2010).	<i>Temple Christology in the Gospel of John</i> . Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in Biblical Studies at Trinity Western University, Langley, B.C, Canada.
Cambridge University. (1877).	<i>Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges</i> . Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Davidson, R. M. (2000).	“The Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament,” pp. 349-66, <i>Creation, life, and hope: essays in honor of Jacques B. Doukhan</i> , Moskala, Jiří (Editor), Berrien Springs, Mich. Old Testament Department, Seventh-Day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University.
Easton, M. (2013).	“Coronation 1953: Magic moment the TV cameras missed”, <i>BBC News</i> , 4 June. https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-22764987
Fairbairn, P. (1965).	<i>The Typology of Scripture</i> . Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
Gill, J. (1700s).	<i>Genesis, Exposition of the Whole Bible</i> . https://www.studydrive.net/commentaries/eng/geb/genesis-35.html
Harrington, M. (2021).	“It’s the Queen or tyranny”, <i>Unherd.Com</i> , 28 April. https://unherd.com/2021/04/our-democratic-queen/
Kaiser, W. C. (1972).	“The Old Promise And The New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34”, <i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i> , Vol. 15, No. 1, pp. 11-23.
Kaiser, W. C. (1991).	<i>Toward an Old Testament Theology</i> . Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
Kaiser, W. C. (1994).	“An Assessment of Replacement Theology: The Relationship Between Israel of the Abrahamic-Davidic Covenant and the Christian Church”, <i>Mishkan</i> , Vol. 21, pp. 9-20.
Keil, C. F. (1866-91). Delitzsch, F.	<i>Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament</i> online. T & T Clark, Edinburgh.
Lee, P. (2017).	“Psalm 110 Reconsidered”, <i>Reformed Faith and Practice</i> . Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 17-47.

“The whole cluster of messianic imagery in this passage is picked up by later Old Testament writers with reference to the Messiah (see Zech 9:9 [cf. Matt 21:2, 5]; Isa 63:1-6) and in particular by John the Revelator in the New Testament in describing Christ. It is interesting to note that Revelation’s usage of this imagery refers first to the Messiah’s coronation/inauguration at the commencement of his heavenly reign (Rev 5:5, 9; see the imagery of Lion, Judah, triumph, blood, nations). It also refers to the consummation of history at his second coming (Rev 19:11-15; see the robe dipped in blood and the treading of the wine press). Both the inauguration and consummation of Christ’s salvation history is envisaged in the fulfillment of this imagery.” (Richard Davidson, “The Eschatological Literary Structure of the Old Testament,” in *Creation, life, and hope: essays in honor of Jacques B. Doukhan*, Moskala, Jiří (Editor), pp. 353-54) [emphasis mine]

Longman, T. (2015).	<i>Psalms. Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries</i> . IVP Books, London.
McCarter, P. K. (1984).	<i>II Samuel. The Anchor Bible</i> . Double Day, New York, NY.
McDonald, G. (2021).	"Queen Elizabeth, the Five Dollar Note and Christianity", <i>Canberra Declaration</i> , 28 Sept. https://blog.canberradeclaration.org.au/2021/09/28/queen-elizabeth-the-five-dollar-note-and-christianity/
Merrill, E. H. (1996).	<i>Kingdom of Priests. A History of Old Testament Israel</i> . Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI.
N. N. (1953).	"Zadok the Priest, The Queens coronation", <i>YouTube</i> . https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-QvwFWTB5c
N. N. (2021).	"The Divine Right of Kings:4", <i>University of Cambridge Faculty of History</i> , https://www.hist.cam.ac.uk/divine-right-kings-4
Nat R. (2017).	<i>Samuel: Levite or Ephraimite?</i> https://living-faith.org/2017/05/25/samuel-levite-or-ephraimite/
Robinson, T. (2002).	<i>Bible Commentary. I Samuel 7:2-8:22</i> https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-commentary/bible-commentary-1-samuel-72-822
Sailhamer, J. H. (1990).	<i>Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> , Vol. 2. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
Seiglie, M. (1998).	"The Early Kings of Judah – Miraculous Deliverance", <i>Good News</i> , Nov-Dec, pp. 24-27.
Spence-Jones, H. (1890s). Exell, J. S.	<i>The Pulpit Commentary</i> www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/tpc/1-samuel-8.html
Spence-Jones, H. D. M (1899). Exell, S.	<i>Pulpit Commentary</i> . Funk & Wagnalls, Peabody, MA.
Torrey, R. A. (1990).	<i>Treasure of Scriptural Knowledge</i> online. Hendrickson Publishers Inc, Peabody, MA. https://tsk-online.com/ (original c1830).
VanGemeren, W. A. (2008).	<i>Psalms, Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> , Vol. 5. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI.
White, C. M. (2021).	<i>Study Notes on the Melchizedek Priesthood</i> . Sydney, Australia.
Wilson, G. H. (2002).	<i>Psalms Volume 1. The NIV Application Commentary</i> . Zondervan Academic, Grand Rapids, MI.
Youngblood, R. F. (1992).	<i>1 & 2 Samuel. Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> . Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI.



***Did God want or not want Israel
to have a Human King?***

By C. M. White
GPO Box 864
Sydney, NSW 2001

