

Destined to Be King

“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”
—John 18:37

ON SATURDAY, MAY 6 OF this year, a new British monarch was officially crowned for the first time in seventy years—King Charles III. According to governmental authorities, he is the king of the United Kingdom and fourteen Commonwealth realms in various parts of the world. His mother, Queen Elizabeth II, held this position for more than seventy years, the longest reign in the history of the British monarchy. In fact,

most of the population of the United Kingdom only knew of one monarch in their entire lifetime—Queen Elizabeth II.

King Charles III was the longest-serving heir apparent to the British throne, and at seventy-four years of age, is the oldest person ever to be crowned king or queen in the English monarchy’s history.

Charles was only three years old when his mother became Queen, and it was perhaps a number of years later before he realized that he was in a position to inherit the kingly throne at some time in the future. When his coronation took place a few weeks ago, it was estimated by various news sources that the cost was upwards of 100 million British pounds, which is the equivalent of about \$125 million U.S. dollars.

A GREATER KING PROMISED

As newsworthy and full of pomp and ceremony the crowning of earthly kings and queens might appear to many in the world, the Bible speaks in great detail about one destined to be a King. His kingdom has been promised for thousands of years and is assured to encompass the entire world. Furthermore, it will endure forever! This is the kingdom of the Messiah of promise, Christ Jesus our Lord, the King of kings, and we believe its establishment is nigh at hand.

In our opening text, Jesus confirmed in his statement made to Pilate that one of the main purposes of his birth was that he might bear witness to the Truth, and that those who were striving to understand his teachings would be blessed by his ministry. He also spoke the great fact of his own future kingship, and of the entire plan of God which was centered in him.

When Pilate asked the Master whether or not he was the king of the Jews, Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my

kingdom not from hence.” (John 18:33,36) Jesus was speaking of his future kingdom, and, as he proclaimed, all who are truly drawn to him are attracted by that wonderful message. Jesus’ kingdom will be established on the basis of righteousness, and those who would devote their lives to its ultimate purpose will become joint-heirs with him during his majestic rule.

The Apostle John wrote concerning Jesus and his footstep followers, “As he [Jesus] is, so are we in this world.” “The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” (I John 4:17; 3:1) One of the ways in which dedicated Christians may become more like the Master is in the desire to walk in newness of life with him, and not according to the ways of this present world. Only in this manner can one cooperate with him in connection with the wonderful arrangements concerning his coming kingdom.

JESUS NOT UNDERSTOOD

Throughout the present Christian age, countless numbers of people have believed in Jesus and his teachings. All of these have no doubt known something concerning our Lord’s earthly ministry, and to whatever extent his life has influenced them they have been blessed accordingly. Few, however, have truly understood him and the vital role he plays in the Heavenly Father’s ultimate plan and purpose for the reconciliation and recovery of the whole sin-sick human family, all of whom are under the divine sentence of death.

Jesus has not been fully appreciated for giving his life for the sins of the people, and neither has he

been seen by most as earth's rightful ruler under the establishment of his kingdom for the blessing of all mankind. Few indeed are those faithful followers who have been inspired by his ministry and the prospect of reigning with him in that government of truth and righteousness. However, this "little flock" have been willing to devote their entire lives to the grand work of his kingdom and its many and varied provisions.—Rev. 20:4,6; Luke 12:32

THE LITTLE FLOCK

When attempting to make a distinction between the mass of churchgoing Christian people and the little flock of truly dedicated followers of Christ, we note Jesus' parable of the wheat and tares in which he illustrates this important distinction. We read, "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. ... The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil."—Matt. 13:24,25,38,39

The "children of the kingdom" to which Jesus refers in this parable are those who have been begotten of the Holy Spirit of God, and who are inspired by the kingdom hope and message. The "children of the wicked one" are those who put their trust in man-made institutions of this present world, instead of devoting their lives to the Heavenly Father with the hope of sharing with Christ in his future kingdom.

THE KING OF PROMISE

In the Master's answer to Pilate in our featured scripture, he pointed out, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." Indeed, Jesus was the future king of promise, the one through whom the Father's plan to bless all families of the earth was centered and that would ultimately be accomplished. (Acts 3:20-25) God sent forth his Son into the sin-sick world, and he gave his perfect human life as a willing sacrifice for the sins of Adam and his human posterity. (John 3:16,17) As earth's righteous monarch, the Master was destined to bring to an end this present world order based on the proud institutions established by fallen man, and set up a "new heavens and a new earth" based on principles of righteousness.—II Pet. 3:13

For these great truths Jesus died, not merely because he cherished them in his heart, but because his entire life was governed by them. His total commitment to his Heavenly Father caused him to refuse Satan's offer of giving him all the kingdoms of this world. We read, "The devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."—Matt. 4:8-10; Deut. 6:13

Jesus knew that it was not God's plan that he should set up his reign through the kingdoms of this present world that are established on selfishness and pride, but that he would receive these kingdoms in due time from his Father and establish a

righteous government. The psalmist foretold: “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”—Ps. 2:6-8

WHAT IS TRUTH?

When Jesus told Pilate that he had come into the world to bear witness to the truth, Pilate asked, “What is truth?” (John 18:38) Although Jesus did not give a direct answer to the Roman governor, he had earlier prayed to his Father on behalf of his followers, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (John 17:17) This “truth” of God’s plan was the theme of all God’s holy prophets of old. Jesus’ teachings were concerned directly or indirectly with their teachings, and taken all together, they are the basis of the apostolic writings in the New Testament.

For example, the writings of John the Revelator include the glorious vision of the Lamb that was slain, and exalted to Mount Zion with a hundred and forty-four thousand who are joined with him in kingly authority. Together they will live and reign for a thousand years for the resurrection, uplifting, and restoration to everlasting life of all mankind who manifest heart obedience to the righteous laws of that kingdom. (Rev. 14:1; 20:4,6) Furthermore, beyond that first thousand years, under the supreme authority of the Heavenly Father, Christ’s kingly position will continue, and “He shall reign for ever and ever.”—Rev. 11:15

BEING SET APART

By the authority of God's Word, Christians are to be sanctified, or set apart, for divine service. The Apostle Paul encourages the Lord's people, and says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."—Rom. 12:1,2

We present our bodies as a "living sacrifice" to our Heavenly Father and endeavor to be transformed by the "renewing" of our minds by the Holy Spirit. This renewing takes place in our mortal bodies and is an evidence of God's spirit and influence controlling the thoughts, words, and actions of our lives.

FAITHFULNESS TO THE TRUTH

Our full dedication to God and service of the Truth of his Word is demonstrated by our continued faithfulness to it. This is what occurred in the life of Jesus, and it is also shown in our willingness to share in his sacrificial death. We demonstrate our desire to die with him by devoting our lives, time, strength, and means in bearing witness to him and the message of God's Word to which he bore witness. No matter how faithful we may be in emulating Jesus in other ways, we must bear witness to the Truth as he did in order to be counted worthy to live and reign with him.

In our proud and selfish world, faithfulness in bearing witness to the Truth has been very difficult.

Darkness covers the earth, and the darkness hates the light. Darkness and error are the opposing forces of evil that stand against light and truth. Throughout the present Gospel Age, honored centers of education have often been channels of error regarding the ultimate plans of God. Jude reminds us, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) The Apostle Paul tells us that Satan is the great enemy of the Truth. “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”—II Cor. 4:4

CHILDREN OF THE KINGDOM

When speaking of our Lord’s ministry, in disdain the Pharisees asked, “Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?” (John 7:48) The minds of the chief priests, Pharisees, and other Jewish leaders were closed to anything Jesus might have to say. However, “the common people heard him gladly.” (Mark 12:37) The primary repository of divine understanding has always been in the hearts of the humble and meek followers of the Master. These are the faithful little flock and children of the kingdom who have seen the vision of God’s wonderful plan for a new world. These realize that nothing but the Messianic kingdom will ever solve the problems of our fear-filled and chaotic present world.

The Gospel message of truth has been carried from heart to heart throughout the present age, and it

has been as a light in a dark place. It has not enlightened the dark world, but it has served as a beacon light to point others to Christ and to show them the way by which they might enter into and enjoy the wonderful mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.—Isa. 60:1,2; II Pet. 1:19

HIS MARVELOUS LIGHT

Through the witness of the Gospel message as taught by Jesus and continued by his consecrated followers from generation to generation throughout the age, each one of the prospective joint-heirs of the kingdom have been separated from the world of darkness. The Apostle Peter explains, “You are a chosen race, a priesthood of kingly lineage, a holy nation, a people belonging specially to God, that you may make known the perfections of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.”—I Pet. 2:9, *Weymouth New Testament*

The light and knowledge of God’s glory will ultimately fill the earth. Isaiah prophesied, “The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” (Isa. 11:9) However, as long as Satan, the prince of darkness, continues to blind the minds of the people, the work of testifying to the wondrous plans of God will not dispel the darkness. In Jesus’ day, he was as a great light shining in a dark place, but only a few saw the light. The rest were blinded and walked on in their darkness. However, the “light of the world,” was not deterred from letting the light shine forth.—John 8:12; 9:5

JESUS’ ENDURANCE

In the great economy of God’s plan, this witnessing for the Word of Truth has been the means both

for calling his people and testing them. It tested Jesus and demonstrated his loyalty to the Heavenly Father and his glorious plan. It was a demonstration of faithfulness which called for endurance against Satan's attacks, and ended in the giving of his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.—John 1:29; Gal. 1:3,4

The prophetic words of Isaiah speak of Jesus' faithful endurance. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth."—Isa. 53:5-9

A few days before his death, Jesus declared that the testimony concerning his kingdom would surely be given. Luke records his response to some Pharisees who had witnessed the enthusiastic joy displayed by the multitude who had gathered together to sing praises unto God when he entered Jerusalem. These said, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." The Pharisees told Jesus

to rebuke the multitude who had proclaimed him as King. Jesus answered, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."—Luke 19:38-40

THE BIBLE—SOURCE OF TRUTH

When writing to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul pointed to the earthly life and ministry of our Lord Jesus, and said, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26) It was not Jesus' life of perfection that caused him to receive the animosity of the world, but rather his testimony to the truths concerning God's plan.

In Jesus' day the giving of a witness to the Truth was limited almost entirely to the spoken word. In the case of the Master, the spoken word was made more powerful by his miracles that demonstrated the authority by which he spoke. The testimony of the written word was restricted to a few copies of Old Testament manuscripts. These enabled the more earnest ones to verify the truthfulness of the words spoken by Jesus. He urged them to do this, saying, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."—John 5:39

OUR BELOVED JESUS

At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus gave an indication of the cause for which he had come into the world as earth's future King. He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and went to the synagogue. "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when

he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister. ... And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”—Luke 4:17-21; Isa. 61:1,2

Three and a half years later, our beloved Master confirmed to Pilate the purpose for which he had been anointed by God: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world.” (John 18:37) The Apostle John gives us these climactic words concerning Jesus, the Lamb of God, and earth’s rightful king. “He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev. 19:16) How blessed are the words of the hymn:

Hail to the Lord’s Anointed, Jehovah’s
blessed Son!

Hail, in the time appointed, His reign on
earth begun!

He comes to break oppression, To set the
captives free,

To take away transgression, And rule in
equity.