

MONARCHIES IN THE NEWS

In many countries, monarchies are considered a quaint relic of pre-enlightened times. Yet, despite revolutions and democratic movements either abolishing or reforming them, there yet remain twenty-six monarchical families in the world, heading forty-three countries. Some reign ceremoniously, others with real, direct, political power.

CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHIES

Reigning monarchs are found in Spain, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Greenland, Luxembourg, Belgium, Lesotho, Cambodia, and Malaysia. Some are hereditary, others elected. They serve by consent. Where operative outside of the political fray they are valuable in uniting the populous.

Of these, the British House of Windsor is most renowned. Elizabeth II has reigned longer than most of us have been alive—an astounding sixty-nine years! She reigns not only over Great Britain and Northern Ireland but over sixteen other nations (including Canada and Australia). She is also head of the Commonwealth—a voluntary association of fifty-four countries (2.4 billion people).

For seventy-three years, Elizabeth was supported by Philip, her Prince Consort and her “strength and stay,” in what became the longest marriage in British monarchical history. Yet, Philip died on April 9, two months shy of 100.



Born on Corfu in 1921 as the sole son of Prince Andrew, younger brother to Greece’s King, his family was forced into exile in France, moving from there to England. Following commendations for valor on two fronts of World War II, Philip married Princess Elizabeth in 1947.

When Elizabeth became Queen in 1952, Philip took to his role as Prince Consort with much dedication. Over the next decades he took on 22,000 official engagements, making nearly 5,000 speeches, and representing British interests in 143 countries. He is credited with bringing the monarchy into the age of television, and founded in 1956



the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme for young people, now operative in 140 countries. Said Queen Elizabeth in 1997, “I, and his whole family, and in this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim, or we shall ever know.”

ABSOLUTE MONARCHIES

By contrast, monarchical rulers are found in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Swaziland, Brunei, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco, and, anomalously, the Vatican.

In the news of late is Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, son of King Salman. But thirty-five, he was initially viewed in 2017 as a domestic reformer, ending



the bar on women driving. Yet, to consolidate power he arrested many, releasing those willing to pay billions of dollars or to relinquish partial control of their companies. Specifically, he is suspected of ordering in October 2018 the torture and dismemberment of *Washington Post* journalist, Jamal Khashoggi. Then, in March 2019, he arrested his cousin Princess Basmah Bint Saud for advocating human rights and the development of a constitutional monarchy. The charges were dropped but she remains imprisoned with deteriorating health.



Meanwhile, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) fears rise for Princess Latifa Al Maktoum, daughter of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the



ruler of Dubai and Vice-President of the UAE. Having fled Dubai in February 2018 for a life free to drive and to travel, she was picked up in the Indian Ocean, but has not been seen since. The U.N. now seeks proof she is alive.

So much court intrigue, but what’s it got to do with us?

[Photos: Historyextra.com; gettyimages; www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-43308416; diplomatmagazine.eu/; www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-56085369.]

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WORSHIP : SUNDAYS, 9:30 AM and 5:20 PM



MONARCHIES IN THE BIBLE

Monarchies are relevant to us, because, no matter our citizenship and the political model in which we were reared, God has revealed his hope for man in terms of Kingship—the Kingship of Jesus which far exceeds the constitutional limitations of today’s ceremonial heads, while being diametrically opposed to the tyrants of history.

THE KINGSHIP OF HEROD

Jesus was born in 6 BC under the reign of Herod the Great (c.74-4 B.C.), King of Judah. Although Herod’s rule was subject to Roman approval, he ruled with some latitude. While very able—Herod built grand buildings (including the rebuilding of the Jewish temple), fortresses, aqueducts, and theaters, and improved the economic standing of his people—the more he aged the greater became his mental instability and the more cruel his tyranny.

Prey to the poisonous influence of his sister Salome, Herod obliged her schemes to destroy his marriage by murdering Mariamne his wife, her two sons, her brother, her grandmother, her mother, and a woman who aided Salome.



In his final years, Herod put down a revolt, fell out with his Nabatean neighbors, and lost the support of Emperor Augustus. Suchtumult explains his great agitation when, two

years after Jesus’ birth, wise men arrived from the East asking, “*Where is he who has been born King of the Jews?*” (Matthew 2:2). [Image: www.thetimes.co.uk/article/herod-the-great-obituary-jlksstgk2.]

Although Judea was his domain, Herod was not fully Jewish. He was born in Edom and was thereby of Arab origin. Moreover, when inquiring from the Sanhedrin about where this king was born, he learned via Micah’s prophecy (5:2), that the one promised was “*to be ruler in Israel.*” Truly powerful, this new king would, additionally, shepherd his people (Matthew 2:6). Such a heart Herod clearly lacked.

Indeed, when the wise men failed to report back to him on the whereabouts of the child, Herod,

became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old and under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men. (Matthew 2:16-18)

Clearly, the abuses of today’s monarchical rulers are not new, nor are they interminable. That very year Herod died from complications from his attempted suicide. His kingdom, already subject to Rome, was subdivided by Augustus among his sons. Archelaus became King of Judea, Idumaea, and Samaria, with Philip and Antipas becoming tetrarchs

of the remaining territories.

THE KINGSHIP OF JESUS

As is typical of God, when all is most dark and devilish, he is preparing a channel for his grace to flow toward us. Thus, against the backdrop of Herod’s dysfunction, God was in Christ establishing a kingdom on earth in which those taking refuge in Him receive forgiveness and reordered lives.

Unlike the kingdoms of earth, the kingdom of heaven has *an impeccable king*. Israel had had one once, when ruled directly by God, but the Hebrews rejected God in favor of the hereditary kingship found in the surrounding nations. Yet, every king of Israel fell short of perfection. When the kingdom split, the northern kingdom experienced twenty unrighteous kings and the southern kingdom at least thirteen out of twenty. Only in Jesus was there fulfilled Solomon’s yearning that the king be just and righteous (Psalm 72:1). Indeed, none who encountered Jesus found fault in him (Luke 5:8; 23:4, 41). He is one we can trust.

Unlike the kingdoms of the earth, the kingdom of heaven is *spiritual*. The kingdom is not identifiable on a map with agreed borders and limited sovereignty. The kingdom, said Jesus, is “*in the midst of you*” (Luke 17:21). It is found wherever he rules over our hearts and minds, and spreads each time a person forsakes his or her own kingdom for Christ’s.

Unlike the kingdoms of the earth, the kingdom of heaven *cannot be destroyed*. Kings come and go, “sleeping with their fathers,” and dynasties rise and fall. King David was promised a millennium earlier, however, that from his posterity would come one to reign forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). The kingdom is guaranteed by the King (he is the same, yesterday, today, and forever), by his work (he has died to ensure his people a place in his kingdom), and by his resurrection (he is rewarded with “*All authority in heaven and on earth*” [Matthew 28:18] to run and to grow the kingdom).

Now, few of us are born into royalty, and, thank God, fewer still gain a tyrannical hold over others. But we each need King Jesus. Left to ourselves, we are, even if on a smaller scale than Herod’s, capable of running ourselves and others into the ground amid the pursuit of our own sovereignty. [Image: www.facebook.com/groups/christianinspirationalquotes/.]

The Kingship of Jesus is the surest safeguard for our lives. His blood cleanses us and his power remakes us. Doing his bidding grants us a joy we never experience when filled with ourselves.



MONARCHIES IN THE HEART

The Kingship of Jesus is such good news, because Christ promises, on the one hand, to sit in judgment on all earthly abuse of power, and, on the other, to reconstruct in love and in mercy lives wrecked by sin. Why, then, is there such hatred today for Jesus?

THE MONARCHY TO WHICH WE CLING

Who hasn't said, "It's my life, I'll do with it what I want!"? This is a layman's way of insisting on our kingship over our lives. Yet, God gave us our lives to live out his purposes and to discover the joys he has for us. We prefer, though, to run our lives our way. In our fallenness, however, our reigns are:

- *Self-serving.* Created to glorify God and to enjoy him forever, our great interest lies in worshiping and serving ourselves. Even when our actions coincide with God's will, our motives for following it are ulterior. We have neither the desire nor ability to put God first in our lives.
- *Sin-seeking.* Since obeying God implies his rule rather than ours, and thinking we know better than God, how often we willingly oppose his revealed will for our lives.
- *Self-destroying.* In our conceit we think we can sin with abandon and escape the consequences of abusing God's gifts. Life, though, goes awry when we ignore his manual, the Bible.
- *Sin-loathing.* Only as we feel the destructive power of sin do we think again. Yet, so engrained is sin that our ruin does not guarantee our repentance.

THE MONARCHY TO WHICH WE MAY COME

It is when we come to our wits' end that we go beyond the lamenting of our ruin to the abdication of our reigns (Psalm 107:23-32). Repentance entails not simply remorse for the disastrous effects of sin, but a readiness to hand over to Christ everything we have and are. Repentance means not simply relinquishing the "right" to run our lives, but humbly requesting Christ that he come and run them for us.

It is conviction of personal sin which explains why some who, left to themselves, would have no more desire than another to submit to Christ, gladly come to him, surrendering their lives entirely to him.

This coming to Christ entails, first, conversion. To convert is to turn away from the sin which so dishonors God and disfigures our lives. It is also to look to God for his mercy.

This looking to God involves faith in Jesus Christ. Shorn of confidence in our own ability to attain either forgiveness or liberation from our sins, we rest completely on Jesus Christ for the saving of our souls and of our lives. Enveloping faith is personal repentance for our sin. Our faith in Christ is, then, penitent, and our repentance is a trust in Christ that we may be forgiven.

While neither faith nor repentance earn our admission into Christ's kingdom, none may enter it without them. They are as indispensable to becoming a citizen of Christ's kingdom as they are to entering a sovereign territory on earth. We may describe them as our "two-page passport" into the kingdom.

Second, coming to Christ entails capitulation. Those applying for admission to Christ's kingdom look not

simply for a quick fix in life but for a new life altogether. Indeed, there can be no forgiveness for those wanting God to get them out of the hole they have dug for themselves, only so that they can return to their sins and their old way of life. Rather, true faith, resting on Christ, gladly receives him as *both Savior and King*.

A Christian, then, is a person who has experienced two monarchies: the one we nurture in revolt against God, the other received by grace in Christ. The latter is great news because it undoes the devastation of the former. (Photo: www.discoverpointchurch.org/who-sits-on-the-throne/.)

THE MONARCHY FOR WHICH WE MAY LIVE

Note that while monarchies are experienced consecutively, they cannot coexist in the heart of the Christian simultaneously. Said Jesus, "**No one can serve two masters**" (Matthew 6:24). When Christ takes up residence in our hearts he does so to spread his exclusive reign over the entirety of our lives.

First, Christ so **subdue our hearts** as to inject order into their chaos. In other words, Christ, in love, imposes his law on his people to terminate in radical fashion the rot of their own lawlessness. The experience can be painful, but it is critical to the return of health to our lives.

Second, Christ, taking ownership of us, **defends us from our enemies**. He opposes our sinful flesh within, but also defends and delivers us from the world and the devil without. "When," writes Thomas Watson (1620-86), "the hearts of Christ's people are most humble, when their prayers are most fervent, when their faith is strongest, when their forces are weakest, when their enemies are highest; then is the usual time that Christ puts forth his kingly power for their deliverance."

Can you testify to this?





Residential Address:

"WE WILL ALL SEE THE KING SOON"!

"We will all see the King soon; for me, I suspect it will be very soon. Starting hospice. Love you all so much." These were not only among Joel's final words on Facebook, they were the climax of a journey that had led him from personal chaos to Christ.

Joel had had something of a Christian upbringing, but early in life he got in with the wrong kids, smoking weed, lying, concocting scams, and ended up in jail for an affray. Humbled by his circumstances, but yet to repent, Joel



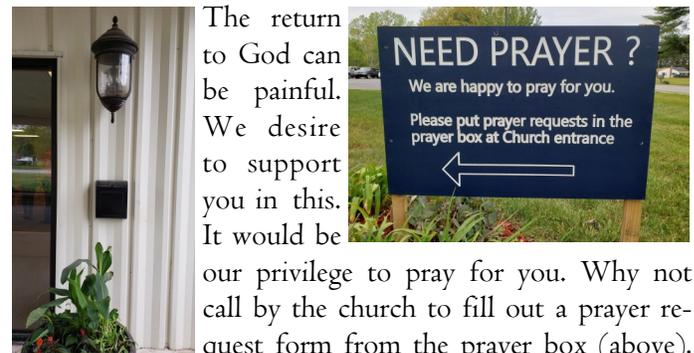
JOEL TIEGREEN, JANUARY 2, 1985 ~ APRIL 13, 2021

called an old friend, David Taylor, to come and to bail him out. God was in the call! David challenged Joel to turn from his sins to Christ, but also invited him to come and to live and to work with him. Joel did so, and for the next eighteen months David mentored Joel in the Scriptures, the gospel, and in Christian living.

King Jesus changed Joel's life. The Judge saw the change and acquitted Joel. Subsequently, Joel chose a Christian wife, Emily, parenting their five children according to the Scriptures. Off to Turkey they went to spread the good news of Jesus. Yet, nowhere was Joel's transformation better seen than in his facing of cancer. When he died, Emily wrote: "Ever since Easter, my husband had been saying he was excited to see the King. Tonight, Joel's faith has become sight. He's face to face with His King Jesus. Too many prayers have been answered to list. God is faithful and kind. May we count his death as gain and worship the Only Wise God." Amen ("So let it be!").

WHAT'S ON OFFER TO YOU?

Prayer: Are you sensing your life needs rescue, too? God invites you to call on him. Know that he grants King Jesus to those who seek him for mercy and who humbly submit to his gracious reordering of their lives.



The return to God can be painful. We desire to support you in this. It would be our privilege to pray for you. Why not call by the church to fill out a prayer request form from the prayer box (above). Your prayer requests will be treated discreetly. We'll connect with you to the degree you request.

Christianity Explored: To go a step further, and to learn more about Christianity, call the office to notify your interest in our next *Christianity Explored* course. The course is a safe place to bring your sincere questions. It lasts seven sessions, utilizing a DVD format with free studyguide. You won't be asked to read aloud, to pray, or to sing. Just come as you are!



YOU, TOO, CAN COME TO KNOW KING JESUS!



"If I die this year, I will have lived fifteen years knowing Christ, and they have been the most amazing, blessed years that anyone could live. I wouldn't want to live a hundred years apart from Christ."

JOEL TIEGREEN

NEXT ISSUE DUE OUT: SEPTEMBER 1