

## **The Constitution and Laws of the Kingdom in History**

### **Three elements of God's one, unified Law:**

1. **Religious/Ceremonial** – addresses man as a religious being; to guide him in relation to God
2. **Moral** – addresses man as a moral being, needs to know right from wrong
3. **Civil** – addresses man as a social being, needs guidance in relation to each other

Some argue that Jesus at His first coming established a “spiritual” kingdom in contrast to offering a physical, Jewish kingdom like past OT history.

However, by looking at God's Law in OT history, we see the kingdom of God always had a spiritual nature or essence.

Israel from birth was to be a God-centered, God-believing nation, a “theocratic commonwealth, having Jehovah Himself as the Head and Ruler.”

It would be only a common faith and allegiance to YHWH as King as expressed by allegiance to His Law that bound these 12 tribes together as 1 nation.

### **6 important insights on the kingdom derived from the Law**

#### **#1 This Historical Kingdom was Basically a Spiritual Kingdom**

Everything about the Kingdom in OT history was spiritual in nature

- Israel called God's son (Ex. 4:22-23)
- God is “the LORD your God”
- Entire sacrificial system designed to maintain spiritual fellowship
- God would meet with Moses, speak to him and commune with him as mediatorial representative, but also the people (Ex. 29:43-46)
- God's law with them was concerned about the heart of the people (Deut. 6:5-6)
- On doorstep of Promised Land, they were exhorted to “serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deut. 10:12)
- B/c of man's sin, the Law made nothing and no one perfect, but nevertheless it was essentially spiritual (Rom. 7:14)

## #2 The Historical Kingdom had a Political Aspect

God's Law would hold key for Israel's government

Tribes made up of clans and clans made up of families. Out of this arose "heads" of families and the "elders" of the people.

Moses was originally sent to these elders. They also were assembled by Moses at Sinai.

Some believe the "judges" and "officers" (Deut. 16:18) were selected from among these elders, forming a judicial and executive branch of gov't.

One unifying feature? Moses – the divinely chosen mediatorial ruler – and the Law given thru him.

But Moses was neither a dictator nor monarch. He was strictly limited to only executive and judicial functions, not legislative. All cases were to be decided based on divine law.

even in someone as great as Moses, not an absolute monarch over all 3 branches of gov't. for 2 good reasons:

- 1) freedom for people on local level to govern themselves and maintain a deep sense of political freedom. Unknown in surrounding pagan nations.
- 2) Kept Israel from seeking world-empire status. Without a strong unifying central gov't or dictator, Israel was to be unified by God's presence with them, not by a strong dictator or king seeking to conquer foreign lands. Israel would be different.

McClain: "In this important respect the gov't of Israel was absolutely unique (Ex. 33:16). Nowhere else in the history of gov't do we find any comparable solution to the difficult problem of striking a proper balance between national strength on the one hand and political liberty on the other."

All political entities are caught between the sharp horns of a dilemma:

Sacrifice individual freedom in the interest of national security

OR

Risk national security for sake of preserving rights of the individual

Until Jesus comes, the reconciliation of these two will continue to be a matter of political compromise and imperfection.

What was Israel's Foreign Policy? God promised political and economic superiority as a reward for full obedience under the covenant (Deut. 15:5).

“Therefore if Israel had any foreign policy, its central feature was reliance upon God with complete independence from all other nations.”

No treaties or leagues with other nations for national security. God was their security.

ALL alliances would be folly, lead to religious and moral decline. If they trusted Egypt, in the end, their fears would be confirmed and their security compromised.

Specifically –

#1 NO treaties w/ Canaanite nations within their Promised Land (Ex. 23:32 and Deut. 7:1-2); = snare.

Israel was to be God's divinely chosen instrument of punishment to destroy these degraded and utterly sinful people groups within the Promised Land, so that she might be preserved, so that she might bring forth the revelation of God and the Savior of the world.

#2 Regarding nations “far off” (Deut. 20) Israel authorized to go into battle if any of them became hostile, after an offer of peace in return for tribute. No submission to the terms, then attack until complete victory, killing all the men.

Conquest was not war. They were divinely ordered executions on a massive scale, with the armies of Israel serving as the instruments. Jehovah Himself was the real leader.

Jericho is a prime example of the supernatural and irresistible nature of these conflicts. ZERO Israelite casualties! Simply unheard of.

“The conquest of Canaan is too often treated as an enterprise of the Israelites, carried out with great cruelties, for which they claimed divine sanction. The OT presents the matter in an entirely different light. The war is a Divine enterprise, in which human instruments are employed ...”

Yes, Israel was called to be a spiritual and religious and moral light to the nations of the world. But they could only fulfill this calling if they remained separate from the world, from all entangling political or religious connections.

### #3 The Ecclesiastical Aspect of the Historical Kingdom

Ex. 19:6 “You shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests.”

Their civil and religious aspects could not survive without each other. Both based on a God-centered morality. Israel was inherently religious in nature.

Judaism not the religion of the philosopher, held as vague ideals to be studied and discussed but not lived. Concrete and practical, part of everyday life.

Evidence of the religious nature of the kingdom:

- Selected/chosen priesthood
  - first of Aaron and his sons; his line as part of the tribe of Levi. Not every Levite a priest, but every priest a Levite.
  - no “stranger” outside the priestly order could enter in or interfere, including civil rulers or kings (King Uzziah burned incense and became a leper)
  - Priests had no civil authority whatsoever
  - Priests and Levites were to own nothing; no inheritance, no land allotment
    - “In this wise provision at the very beginning of the new kingdom, there was set up a safeguard against the development of a rich priestly caste entrenched in the ownership of lands and other property ...”
    - God would be their portion and inheritance!
    - Material support would come from tithes and offerings from tribes who did receive land allotments
    - The union of civil and priestly functions unauthorized (contrast Melchizedek); served as a system of checks and balances until Messiah
- Ritual of worship prescribed in minute detail
- Central place of worship and sacrifice
- All supported by the state and enforced by the state. No freedom of religion under a theocratic gov’t, so the worship of false gods subject to death penalty. Can work no other way in a theocracy.
  - “For if there is but one true God, and if this God is Jehovah, and if the welfare of Israel and the world, both here and hereafter, depends on a proper acknowledgment of this one true God – then any religious deviation must be regarded as the highest kind of treason ...”

Question: Should sinful man ever seek the union of church and state, where the state recognizes one religion only and that religion supports the state?

## #4 The Economic Aspect of the Historical Kingdom

Israel had three main sources of wealth:

- 1) They entered Egypt with flocks and herds that multiplied greatly in Goshen over 430 years.
- 2) They “plundered” the Egyptians of gold, silver, clothing. Glad to see them go. Think of it as 430 years of back pay.
- 3) Divine land grant of Palestine, a land flowing with milk and honey.

God’s Economic Policy was novel and realistic

- No Utopia where all men are equal in ability and possessions
- Realistic grasp of life in a fallen world (Deut. 15:11 “For the poor shall never cease out of the land.”)
- One price a society pays for human freedom. If men of differing abilities and dispositions enjoy personal freedom in economic affairs, some will win and some will lose.
  - “Historically, no perfect way has ever been found to reconcile personal liberty with complete economic equality” for the nature of man himself is the root cause. We are different and we are unpredictable.

God’s economic policy recognized all this. Since man couldn’t be wholly free and fully protected from his own follies and mistakes and sloth, God established certain safeguards in the exercise of economic rights that didn’t eliminate all poverty by way of perfect economic equality:

Economic Safeguards:

1. Every family in Israel was given an original allotment of land (Num. 26) from God with right of inheritance. Owner given much freedom re: use, except the permanent surrender of title. It could not be “sold forever.” The land belonged to God, He parceled it out to families within Israel and it was to stay with them, as God established a theological basis for private property ownership/possession.
2. Israel was to open their hand freely “unto thy brother, to thy poor, to thy needy, in thy land” (Deut. 15:11). Some individuals would make unwise economic decisions with their land. The law granted to every person the liberty to lose property temporarily, but not liberty to starve. If able-bodied, required some activity on their part to eat. Leave corners un-harvested for the poor to harvest.

- a. Very inefficient system. Boaz's hired workers could reap those corners much faster, he could then send that grain to the poor.
  - b. Very wise system, for God had in mind the welfare of the person as well as their need for food. "The poor must be helped, but in such a way as to maintain his self-respect." God requires them to work in order to eat.
3. Sabbatical 7<sup>th</sup> year rest of the land produced a free crop to anyone who wanted it.
  4. A release to debtors every 7 years (Deut. 15:1-3). Biblical scholars understand this not as a cancellation of the debt but a one year "grace period" during the sabbatical year, since work slowed down.
  5. Greatest safeguard was the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25). Every 50 years ...
    - a. Every slave set free ... freedom from bondage!
    - b. All debts connected to real estate cancelled ... freedom from debt!
    - c. All land allotments reclaimed, whether lost by sale or debt ... freedom from hunger!
    - d. Abundant 48<sup>th</sup> year to cover the 49<sup>th</sup> Sabbatical Year and 50<sup>th</sup> Year of Jubilee and into the 51<sup>st</sup> year ... freedom from toil!

Not a communistic redistribution of wealth but rather a restoration of all real property to original private owners. Guaranteed and granted a fresh start, not protection from economic folly and foolishness. What was restored could be lost the next day.

Still allowed for human initiative and hard work to be rewarded while mitigating human poverty to some degree.

It also guarded against the evils of great concentrations of real wealth and power in the hands of a few.

6. The Law of redemption by kinsmen redeemer allowed for land or freedom to be redeemed if lost thru debt or selling yourself into slavery.

Conclusion: God gave much consideration to the matter of private possessions and the material well-being of everyone in the kingdom. The perfect Kingdom to come will do the same!

## #5 The Physical Aspect of the Historical Kingdom

God's system of rewards under the Old Covenant would include physical blessings in the land of promise. These would come in two ways: supernaturally and providentially.

### Supernatural Physical Benefits

- Extraordinary fruitfulness of crops, flocks, herds and parents
- Manna for 40 years
- Water from a rock, bitter waters made sweet
- Preservation of shoes and clothing for 40 years
- Health/freedom from the diseases of Egypt/plagues
- Long life in the land

### Benefits thru ordained, wise human means:

- God often required effort on the part of man to receive the physical blessing
- Provisions to preserve natural resources
- Provisions for rest and relaxation from daily grind
  - every 7<sup>th</sup> day and every 7<sup>th</sup> year
  - special Sabbaths, 3 great annual feasts, etc.
  - Sabbatical Year and Year of Jubilee
  - Not a prescription for complete idleness, but rather expounding of Torah (Deut. 31:10-13); rest thru a change of activities
- Sanitation laws to prevent diseases
  - Sacrifice disposal
  - Latrine provisions for the army
  - Soldiers quarantined upon return from battle for 7 days
  - Plunder passing thru fire to purify
  - Laws re: clean foods and clothes and safe eating of sacrifices
  - Laws re: leprosy

## #6 The Moral Aspect of the Historical Kingdom

The contribution of the 10 commandments to human morality:

1. Given directly by God and written down inerrantly and permanently.
2. Joined religion and morality striking down the ...
  - a. Ancient error that you can have a religion w/o morality
  - b. Modern error that you can have morality w/o religion
3. It asserted the vital connection between human welfare and morality.  
This would be particularly true for the Chosen Nation.

Non-Chosen Nations:

- See a time lag between the sin and the physical consequences.
- Slow to reap judgment in God's mercy.
- Judgments veiled behind providence using secondary causes.

The Chosen Nation during Historical Kingdom:

- Not much time lag
- Supernatural means of judgment, proving unique status

But if they obeyed God, it would be well with them in every way possible to the degree they recognize Jehovah as KING and obey His revealed will.

Deut. 28-30 is the summary of detailed and comprehensive blessings and curses depending on their obedience.

Raises Theological Questions:

Did God's Law require their moral perfection to know these blessings?

So what is the future of Israel in relationship to the Mosaic Covenant?

### **Conclusion:**

The Law of Moses is not only relevant to the Church today as God's good, holy and righteous expression of His will, to please Him, it will also provide basis of Christ's governing the nations.

He will enforce compliance and reward obedience as the benevolent ruler, as God Himself in the Person of His incarnate Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, reigns over Israel and the world, from the City of God.