

The King of Kings

Meditations on the Coronation

A reprint of the proceedings of the
23rd Annual Conference of
THE SOVEREIGN GRACE UNION
held in May 1937



Ettrick Press

2023

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ISBN: 978-1-915777-04-1

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Ettrick Press

98 The Brow, Brighton

BN2 6LN

ettrickpress.co.uk

Contents

Introduction	5
The Gift of a King	
Rev. J. Macleod	11
The King's Person	
Rev. J. Macleod	27
The King's Oaths	
Rev. J. Tolland.....	45
The King's Promises	
Rev. H. A. Lewty	53
The King's Robes	
Pastor Sydney W. White	57
The King's Jewels	
Pastor Charles Breed.....	63
The King's Sceptre	
Pastor Herbert Moore.....	91
The King's Throne	
Pastor John Raven.....	99
The King's Coronation	
Henry Platts	107
The King's Palaces	
Pastor George Rose.....	111
What is the Protestant Reformed Religion?	
Rev. J. Macleod	115

Introduction

When King Charles III is crowned it will be the first time many of us have witnessed the full pomp and majesty of the coronation. It is perhaps easy to forget, or not realise, the full significance of the office of king, and the ceremony and decorations involved in a coronation. This is especially the case when 70 years have passed since such an event was last held in the United Kingdom.

The contents of this book comprise a collection of lectures, devotional addresses, and a sermon, delivered at the 23rd Annual Conference of the Sovereign Grace Union, held in May, 1937. The Sovereign Grace Union was established in 1914 to proclaim and defend the biblical doctrines of free and sovereign grace. The conference papers were given by a variety of speakers from the Church of England, the Strict Baptists and the Free Church of Scotland. They were subsequently published in the Union's magazine, *Peace and Truth*.

The subject of the conference was *The King of Kings*. The previous year, no fewer than three kings had occupied the throne – George V, Edward VIII and George VI. The attendees had seen kings come and go, though death and unfaithfulness. Then the Wednesday following the Conference, 12 May 1937, was set for the coronation of George VI in Westminster Abbey. It was therefore a topical subject for the conference to consider – as

The King of Kings

Christians our ultimate king is Jesus, the King of kings. It was fitting to use the opportunity to lift their thoughts above the dignity and grandeur of the state occasion to the spiritual splendour and true majesty of King Jesus.

While the detail contained in these addresses from the 1930s will not be exactly identical to the ceremonies of the coronation of Charles III (the arrangements of which have at the time of writing not been made public), the subject they deal with is of timeless comfort to the Lord's people. The contents of this little book use various aspects of the coronation ceremony to remind us of the acts and attributes of King Jesus, and in doing so we pray they will spiritually profit the Lord's people while witnessing the earthly ceremony.

Things have of course changed since the 1930s. When King George VI ascended the throne on the abdication of his brother, Edward VIII, there was some sense that the nation had been spared a bad king, and gained a good. Today perhaps the sentiment is felt to be in measure reversed, with a queen who appeared to delight in her faith in Jesus being replaced by a king who seems to support religious pluralism.

Across the political spectrum people may have reservations about Charles's personal life, his opinions and interests, and his suitability for kingship, but we must distinguish between the office and the office-holder. God's Word is clear that the office of king (or, more

Introduction

generally, the ordinance of civil government) is something we must respect, even when the individual holding the office may fall very far short of the ideal and may even be detrimental to the welfare of the nation (Romans 13:1–2; 1 Peter 2:13–16).

The comfort of the Lord's people is that whoever holds power on earth, their power is only delegated, and they remain in the complete control of King Jesus. Although we should mourn that our king is not more conformable to the image of King Jesus, we should be thankful to God for, among other things, an orderly secession, and that he has given us a king that is not openly hostile to the church. We should be prepared to appropriately challenge the governing authorities when there are failures to rule in righteousness and to remind them of the whole counsel of God (e.g., Acts 24:25; Acts 5:29). The Bible calls us to be respectful yet not servile.

It is also our God given duty to pray for the king he has appointed over us in the pattern he has given us, a pattern suitable for however godly or ungodly the individual may be – ‘God save the king!’ The committee of the Sovereign Grace Union ended the original introduction to their Conference report by praying ‘that the King of kings would abundantly bless His Majesty in the high office to which he has been called by divine providence.’ We could equally pray the same for our king, by the grace of God, King Charles III.

The King of Kings

What is perhaps the most sublime theme of the Coronation, however, may not really be very prominent in this book. These addresses chiefly study the glory of the king in his exaltation, but perhaps, for sinners saved by grace, the sweetest aspect of the kingship of Jesus is seen in his humility – he is our servant king! He stooped. He humbled himself. He became man. He died for his people. Jesus came not to be served, but to serve. It is on that aspect of his kingship that his glory hangs: the Son of God ‘made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name (Philippians 2:7–9).

Our late queen often referred to her 21st birthday speech in which she made the following vow:

I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong.

The devotedness she promised was indeed characteristic of Elizabeth II throughout her reign and it is her service which many people remember with admiration and thankfulness. Let us pray that the reign of King Charles III will be characterised by the same commitment to service. When rightly viewed, such self-sacrificial service

Introduction

over a lifetime will eclipse all the splendour of the coronation day. May we all seek grace to personally serve, with all humility, our King of kings and Lord of lords, following his own blessed example.

We would acknowledge the kind permission of the committee of the Sovereign Grace Union to republish this material.

Matthew J. Hyde

March 2023