

**A King Who Goes Hard After God's Heart**  
**Deuteronomy 17:14-20**

**Intro: Illst:** *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*: Indiana Jones (Harrison Ford) and his father (Sean Connery) are looking for the Holy Grail (the Holy Grail supposedly was the cup that Jesus drank out of at the Lord's Supper and then it was used to catch his blood at the crucifixion, this is all myth by the way).

In the movie, after a series of booby-traps and obstacles, Indiana Jones and the two expendable German characters make it to the location to a cave where the cup is and is guarded by an old knight. There are hundreds of cups lining the wall of the cave and the German archeologist (who has been trying to kill Indiana Jones) looks around at the cups in the cave and says, "Which one is it?" The old knight tells him that he must choose but to "choose wisely." The man looks around at the cups trying to decide which one and finally chooses one and says, "This is the cup of a king." He drinks from it and dies. The old knight says, "He chose poorly." Then Indiana Jones chooses a cup and said, "This is the cup of a carpenter." because it was a plain, humble looking cup. The old knight says, "You have chosen wisely." Indiana Jones drinks and lives and then pours the water on his father's gunshot wound and his father is healed.

**Movies like this are entertaining but they often fall short of the real truth.** It is not the cup of the king that we need to save us, it is the King. It is the King that God has sent. He is the real Hero.

TV shows, movies and novels like this create shadows of the real thing but none of them satisfy, none of them fill our longings for a Savior. It seems we are hardwired to look up to and long for heroes. This is why we love movies like Indiana Jones, Spiderman, and Superman because they tap into our desire to be rescued and our desire for a hero.

This is similar to the reason we love to watch the Olympics. We enjoy watching, what ESPN calls, the world greatest athletes, win the gold medal and represent our country as the champion of that sport. Our heroes represent us when they stand at the top of the podium. We find our victory in their victory.

This morning we are going to be looking at the King God has chosen for His people. It is not like *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* where there are hundreds to choose from, no there is only One. *The question is will you choose wisely and choose Him.*

**Here is the main idea of the message this morning:** We do not just desire a king we need a king. Jesus is the King God has chosen. He is the only One who has ever fulfilled the criteria and responsibilities of what it means to be King and now we must embrace Him as our King and walk in His ways.

**Here is why Deuteronomy 17:14-20 is important.** You and I are going to have something or someone rule our hearts. We may not think of it as a king but it will rule like a king. The question is will you embrace the True King that God has chosen? *Choose wisely and live, choose poorly and you will be destroyed.*

**Transition:** Just a quick recap before we jump into the text. We are working through Deuteronomy. In chapters 6-26 Moses is unpacking the Ten Commandments and applying them as Israel takes the Promised Land. **Deuteronomy 17:14-20** is under commandment five, which is about honoring parents and their authority but it addresses the larger exhortation for authority in the covenant community.

**Last Sunday we looked at judges, their authority and the process of justice.** Today we will examine Israel's desire for a king and how his authority flows from being grounded in the word of God. God was concerned with the heart of the king because it is from the overflow of the heart of the king that would guide the nation of Israel. If the heart of the king is set on Yahweh and His word then the king will rule reasonably well although he was still a sinner.

- Read the text and pray

### I. How to Choose a King (Deuteronomy 17:14-15)

**Verse 14a:** Israel is going to want a king. [1 Samuel 8:4-5] (We are going to want a king.)

**Verse 14b-15:** Let God Choose Your King:

- **Verse 14b: Let God choose your king because you will choose poorly.**
  - The people would choose a king that would rule like the nations surrounding them.
  - It would be like peer pressure or they were following the crowd when they choose a king.
  - What **1 Samuel 8** tells us is that when Israel **requested** a king they did not do it out of right motives. They didn't ask for a king like the nations that surround them but v. 14b said that was not the kind of king they were to choose.
- **Verse 15: God's plan for choosing a king.**
  - Notice that God never objected to Israel having a king. It was in His plan all the while for them to have a king. The important point for choosing a king is that God chooses the king.
  - **Yahweh had two criteria for choosing a king:**
    - **He had to be from among your brothers.** The Hebrew word "among" in v. 15 is an interesting word. It is often used to describe the *inward parts of a person or the fleshy entrails. It is often used parallel to the word heart or soul.* What this tells us is that he had to be an Israelite who loved the soul of the covenant community.
    - **He must not be a foreigner** is the opposite or the contrast of what it means to be *among* the people of God.
    - **The point is** the king must be an Israelite who loved God, loved God's covenant and God's covenant people.

### Application:

1. **In our fallen condition we will always choose the wrong thing or king to rule over us.** We do not tend toward wisdom or righteousness. Apart from the grace of God working in our lives we will always choose evil. What we need is the word of God to break into our hearts and minds and give us direction and leadership. We need God to send His king to rescue us from ourselves.
2. **The good news is that Yahweh had planned to send a King of His own choosing from the very beginning (Genesis 3).** We do not just desire a king but we need a king and not just any king we need the King that God will send to be the Perfect King. Jesus is that King.
3. Jesus is the King who came from among his brothers, their own entrails, and their own flesh and blood. He was fully human and fully God. Is Jesus your King?

### II. How to be a Bad King (Deuteronomy 17:16-17)

Kings are a popular motif in any culture. You may have heard many titles for kings. Elvis was the King of Rock and Roll, Michael Jackson was the King of Pop, Jim Morrison, who was the lead singer for the Doors, was the Lizard King and there was the movie a few years back starring Duane "The Rock" Johnson called the Scorpion King.

If we were to give a title to the in vv. 16-17, he would be called **the Redneck King**. This king loved guns, girls and glory or another way to say it is weapons, women and wealth. **Verses 16-17** lays out the things the king should not do as a leader.

- **Weapons: Horses and chariots represented military power.** Horses and chariots were the tanks of the ancient world. It was not that a king could not have chariots and horses it was that he, according to the text, *must not acquire many for himself*. Kings in the surrounding nations wanted to make their names great on the backs of the people. One of the ways to do that was with

military power. It also meant that the king was trusting in the strength of the horses and chariots instead of Yahweh. As **Psalm 20:7**, "*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God.*"

The caveat to not trade with Egypt for horses to build the military may have been because Israel was slaves in Egypt. Trading with other nations usually involved slaves as part of the purchase and the king might be tempted to trade some Israelites back into the land where they had been slaves. Yahweh was forbidding this trading with Egypt.

- **Women: One of the marks of the surrounding kings was a large harem.** Here's the problem. Many wives usually meant many military alliances with surrounding nations to ensure peace. Wives from other nations bring their own religious practices with them. Three things were happening when a king has many wives: (1) the king is distracted sexually from his responsibility; (2) the wife's religious practices could be a snare for the king. He might want to join with her in her religion or blend it with his worship of Yahweh; and (3) finally to take a wife as part of a military alliance meant he was trusting in his political savvy instead of Yahweh.
- **Wealth: Acquiring a lot of wealth for himself was the final caveat.** It was not that he could not have wealth, he could. The question is: "*why was he amassing it?*" Kings in the surrounding nation acquired wealth on the backs of their people in order to make their names great. For the king of Israel to gather much wealth for himself meant he was doing it for himself.
- **Illst: What is notable is that King Solomon failed at all of these points as king.** Many of the kings of Israel and Judah failed at one or all of these but Solomon surpassed them all. It is as though he never read this passage.
  - **1 Kings 10:28** says that he imported horses and chariots from Egypt.
  - **1 Kings 11** says that Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines and that because of this his heart was turned away from Yahweh. Politically, sexually and religiously Solomon did not walk in the way of the king.
  - **1 Kings 10** also tells us about Solomon's wealth. When he was king silver wasn't worth anything because it was so common. It says his income annually was 666 talents of gold. The number 666 is probably symbolic for a man who was full of himself for Solomon was full of wealth, full of women and full of weapons. He had no room for Yahweh in his heart so he did not trust God and it was his downfall. *Guns, girls and glory . . . Solomon was the original Redneck King of Israel.*

#### Application:

1. **One of the obvious things we can learn from this text is how to fail as a leader.** We find in this text three common areas where leaders fail: insecurity, sex and pride.
  - a. There is no shortage of leaders throughout history who have become paranoid of losing their leadership and go off the deep end or sexual scandals have ruined their careers or pride has been their downfall. A leader must guard his heart from these trappings.
  - b. According to Author and Pastor Bob Thune there are two large umbrella categories, which a leader, especially a Christian leader, must keep a close watch.
    1. **First is his disposition.** A godly leader will be careful to not allow his insecurities cause him to compare himself to other leaders so that he becomes envious, prideful or competitive. A preacher might get compared to John Piper or Matt Chandler, a musician might get compared to Chris Tomlin or the Gettys or a teacher to D. A. Carson. Then it is no longer about celebrating the gifting of the person but becomes one-up-manship based on performance or results. How can a leader keep the proper disposition?

- i. A leader must celebrate his unique gifting and guard against becoming fearful or timid because he does not believe he is smart enough, speaks well enough, sings well enough or does not have adequate education or has written a book.
- ii. A leader must celebrate the unique gifting of others.
- iii. A leader must strive to be positive instead of overly critical or judgmental of himself or others. Leaders must practice affirmation.
- iv. A leader must give jobs away. People have different giftings and a leader should be able to give ministry away to other gifted leaders and celebrate their success. What I have found is that the church is filled with gifted leaders that quite often do ministry better than I do.<sup>1</sup>

2. **Second: sexuality and marriage.** Sexual sins are one of the leading causes for disqualification of a leader. There is no question that temptation will come in one form or another. It is the goal of the enemy to disqualify Christian leaders. A Christian leader will need to keep watch of areas of sexual temptation, frustration and tension. He or she needs to know where his/her weakness is so that he or she can prepare for attack by the enemy.<sup>2</sup>

2. **When we think back over the text on how to be a bad king what we realize is that there was no shortage of bad kings in Judah and Israel.** As soon as King David was gone the line of kings who ruled well grows thin.

- a. The criteria in **vv. 16-17** laid out what the king must not do. What we find after Deuteronomy is that all of the kings failed in at least one if not all of these points.
- b. Even the greatest king in Israel, King David, accomplished the list of *what not to do*.
- c. **What this does is leave us wondering** is if there will be a king who is to come who will not stumble at any of these points?
- d. **It also leaves us longing** for the King who will fulfill what God has called the king to be and do.
- e. Remember, deep down, we want a king and what we need is the King God has chosen.
- f. **Transition: Verses 16-17** teach the king what he must not do and **vv. 18-20** teach what the king must do along with the benefits for doing them.

### III. How to Be a Good King (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)

- **Verses 18-19a:** The king was to write, read and remember. He was to . . .
  - **Write** out his very own copy of the Law/Torah under the oversight of the priests. They didn't have Gideon Bibles back in this day and time. A copy of the word of God was rare and very valuable.
  - **Read** it all the days of his life so that he would . . .
  - **Remember** it all the days of his life (remembering is implied). By writing, reading and remembering the word of God the word of God went from being on stone, to on papyrus to being written on the heart. It taught the king . . .
    - The priority of the word of God.
    - The priority of knowing the word of God.
    - The heart of the king saturated by the word of God.

<sup>1</sup> Bob Thune, *Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders*, pp. 75-77.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 78-79.

- **Verses 19b-20:** These verses layout the benefits of writing the Law, reading the Law for the goal of remembering the Law. Deep intake of the word of God meant the word would be on the heart of the king and God's word accomplishes a few things for the king:
  - **Verse 19b: Fear** – The word of God taught the king to *fear* Yahweh so that he would lead the nation as the model Israelite. Remember to fear God was to love, respect and be in awe of God. It was fear that paralyzed and repelled but drew the person close out of desire to be with God.
  - **Verse 20a: Humility** – The word of God would keep him humble and on the level with his fellow Israelites. As he plowed through the word the king would realize and remember he was a fellow sinner just like everyone else. While he functionally had authority over his people; covenantally he was equal with them. He was a servant to the covenant not above it.
  - **Verse 20b: Faithful** – The word of God would help him to be faithful to Yahweh. It would enable him to lead the nation well. Scholars believe the **Psalm 1** was actually the picture of the meaning of this verse.
  - **Verse 20c: Legacy** – Fear of Yahweh, humility among his people and faithfulness to the word of God would leave a legacy in his family.
  - **The king was to model what it meant to be a true Israelite.** He was to model covenant faithfulness by keeping the Law, by trusting God. He was an example for the people to follow so that all Israelites would live this way. He embodied the word of God for the people because His heart and mind were saturated by it. *He was to be as close as he could come to the word of God made flesh for them.*

**Application:**

1. **When we examine a text like this we cannot help but think of leadership within the church.** Jesus is the only King in the church but as we examine a text like this we can learn some leadership principles for the leaders in God's new covenant community.
  - a. **Those who lead set the example for all:** The role of leadership within the people of God is not that leaders live at a higher level than the average Christian but that they set the model for all believers to follow. Leadership does not mean being exempt but being more involved and having more expectations.
  - b. **Those who lead need to feed on the word of God.** Regular Bible intake is crucial for those who lead in the church.
  - c. **Those who lead according to God's word ought to have a growing love and fear of God.**
  - d. **Those who lead according to the word of God should cultivate humility in their lives.**
    - i. Humility is best hammered out on the anvil of God's word and cultivated in community with other Christians.
    - ii. Leaders are not perfect so humility will be seen in the practice of repentance among his brothers and sisters in Christ. A good leader is often the lead repentor.
  - e. **Those who lead according to the word of God strive for glad-hearted holiness in every area of their lives.** The word of God forces leaders to take an accurate assessment of their lives.
  - f. **Those who fear God, lead humbly and faithfully will leave a legacy of faith for others.**
    - i. Discipleship is key for a leader.
    - ii. Leaders must reproduce themselves in others so that leadership is shared and passed down to future generations.

iii. Remember not everyone is going to be a leader so how a leader leads is by discipling and modeling for the ordinary Christian how to follow Christ. Sometimes a leader is discipling others leaders but most of the time he is simply discipling others on how to live the ordinary Christian life.

2. **When we consider the leadership principles we learn in this text what we realize is that there has never been a king of Israel that has ever kept Deuteronomy 17:14-20 perfectly save One—Jesus Christ.** Jesus, the Son of God, is the King God has chosen. He is the King we need. Jesus is the King who was called away from His throne room in Heaven and humbled Himself by taking on our flesh. He was born as a child in a stable in Bethlehem. In **John 1:1, 14**, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

**On His journey to rescue His people, He was tried and tested; He was tempted by the enemy but never sinned.**

His ultimate goal was the cross and that was where He was plunged into darkness. On the cross He endured the ultimate humiliation by taking on our sin, our shame, our pain and drank the cup of the wrath of God down to the dregs. Yet three days later Jesus emerged out of the darkness victorious. From there Jesus prepared to return His Heavenly home with His Father and take His place on the throne.

**But before He ascended to Heaven He told His disciples,** *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”<sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

**Jesus is the King we long for and He is the King we need.** He is the King God has chosen and so He is the only King who will ever satisfy our needs and desires. The fact of the matter is that our hearts are restless and will find no rest until they rest in Him. It is by admiring the beauty and greatness of the risen Christ that our hearts are satisfied. **Psalm 16:11** says, *“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”*

## Conclusion

**Here are some questions for application as we close:**

1. **Is Jesus Christ your King?** Has He saved you? Everyone is called to submit to and follow the King God has sent into the world to save it—are you following Him? Is He your King?
2. It is important to choose the right king because this king will be your judge one day. Your king will exonerate you or condemn you. Jesus is the only King who had stood in the place of His people and was condemned and died for their sin. If Jesus is not your king then your king will condemn you because Jesus is the only King who saves His people from their sin. Jesus is the King who is the Ultimate Hero!
3. **Brothers and sisters in Christ, I have some bad news for you; you may never be a king?** I know this is crushing news.

**However I do have some good news.** The Bible says in **1 Corinthians 6:2**, *“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world?”* It also says we will reign with Him. No . . . we will never be king but we will reign and judge with Him so we need to learn how to lead and learn how to follow our King of kings and Lord of lords.

**We must remain close to our King. He is the Only One who has ever led perfectly.** We follow Him, rest in Him, repent when we find that we do not follow Him perfectly and we join Him in His mission to save the lost. Let’s work together to do follow our King in these ways from this day forward. The people of this world do not need to see the shadows and caricature of

the king in movies, TV and media. World needs to see real followers of the King of kings and Lord of lords—Christians who point them to the True King.