

Ministry Success & Finances...

As we seek a New Covenant perspective on *money and the church*, it is in the typically accepted "goal" of ministry that we come face to face with the crux of the issue. It involves the idea that the *assumed purpose* of any church leadership is to be overtly "successful", meaning perennially expanding the church's membership, facilities, and media outlets. There is certainly nothing wrong in any of these, but the question is, *whose responsibility is it, and what is the methodology?* The answers are clearly exhibited in the very first church (*Acts 2:41*)

Whose responsibility is it to grow the church? *The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47). He said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18). All that the Father gives me shall come to me (John 6:37). Without Me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5). What methods does He use?* They continued faithfully in the Apostles' teaching (proclaiming the doctrines of Christ), in fellowship, in breaking bread, in ministering to each others needs, in praising God, and, in acting favorably in the sight of all people. That these activities *necessarily* involve financial issues is clearly borne out in the rest of the New Testament. These include supporting those who minister the word - at home and on the "mission field", and the caring for those in need, first within the church, and then to others as the Lord gives opportunity. But, most importantly, the money was to be provided by the *free and joyful giving of the members*.

The problem arises when we begin to assume that "successful" ministry is *always expanding* ministry. For pastors, or other church leaders, to embrace that assumption and to take the responsibility upon themselves, is to wrest the reigns of the church from the hands of the Lord, and to set out on a dubious course. Inevitably, money becomes as the preeminent issue, and the "expansion of the ministry" far outpaces the supply of "free and joyful giving." Soon brow-beating people for money and/or *unbridled fund-raising tactics* replace the Lord's pattern for financing *His* church. The Lord's *Word-centered methodology* is abandoned for pragmatic marketing, and artificial enticements "to get people in." But, according to Christ, *being faithful is success*. That faithfulness begins with the *"stick" in our hand (Ex 4:2)*, and it proceeds only as God guides and provides. **The true joy and success of ministry are found in walking hand in hand with Christ - wherever the pathway leads.**

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Through the Bible... Part Thirteen

David's Throne

And David reigned over all Israel; and David executed judgment and justice unto all his people. 2Samuel 8:15

When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 2Sam 7:12-13

As we have seen, under the prophet-priest, Samuel, the *Word of the Lord* had returned to Israel (*1Sam 3:1, 3:21*), and the Lord maintains a presence among them, thus preserving them *in spite of themselves* for His own name's sake, and for the sake of the *Promised Seed*.

Because of the people's rebellion, and their demand for a human king "just like the other nations", there are now **two thrones** in Israel. One above the mercy seat, in the most holy place of the tabernacle, and one occupied by "the people's choice" - Saul. This *dual throne motif* reverberates from beginning to end in the scriptures. The first Adam, in sin and rebellion, rejects the throne of heaven, and causes the establishment of a wicked throne to rule over creation; but a *Second Adam* is promised.

As Saul takes the throne, he is revealed to be a miserable leader, whose self-will, foolish decisions, and pseudo-acknowledgment of God, quickly leads to his rejection by God. Samuel is led to anoint an unlikely replacement—a young shepherd boy, the 'runt' of the litter—David.

But David's ascension to the throne must be greatly delayed. Though Saul has been rejected, and the Spirit's anointing removed and placed upon David, yet Saul lingers upon a now *illegitimate* throne, *led by an evil spirit (1Sam 16:13-14)*. Before his own coronation can take place, David must first serve under the old regime, and, in spite of his utter faithfulness, will suffer great persecution and exile. The question naturally arises, "Why did Samuel anoint David so long before was he able to take the throne?" Or, "If David was *God's choice*, why was Saul not immediately removed to make way for David?" The

answer lies in God's providential purpose: David must fulfill his appointed role *typologically*. In that *type* there emerges yet another great shadow-picture of the *Promised Seed*, part of a mosaic that is growing sharper in detail in its *transition from shadow to reality*. In fact, David would become the penultimate figure of Christ in the Old Testament, and the *Promised Seed* would be revealed to be *his seed* (2Sam 7:12-13). Through him it is revealed that the Messiah must first be despised and rejected before reigning—*the Stone must be first rejected by the builders before it is made the Chief Cornerstone* (Ps 118:22).

Here we have the amazing work of God's sovereignty. As would be clearly seen at the cross a millennium later, even the most wicked choices and actions of leaders and subjects alike, only serve to fulfill the will of Him who sits upon the *throne* (Acts 2: 23; 3:14-18). **The establishment of two thrones in Israel came by the wicked demand of the people. Yet it would be in the union of these two thrones—the divine and the human—that true and complete redemption would come to Israel, and to the world!**

And so, after persecution and exile, David eventually does take the throne, even as the *Son of David*, rejected, though faithful unto death, would be raised up to sit upon the throne "of His father" (Lk 1:32). In this *God-Man's* rule, the two thrones would be reunited, and *of His kingdom there shall be no end*.

Just as the life of David *prefigured* the pathway of Messiah's exaltation, so we, after the fact, are called to *reflect* that pathway; not as a meritorious work for our salvation, but in the stark reality of being *one with Christ* in this present evil world. We, who are His children, are, in essence, living in that time between David's anointing as King, and Saul's final destruction. At present, the now *illegitimate* throne of 'Saul' lingers on, occupied by spiritual wickedness. All earthly kings and their kingdoms are but extensions of that throne. We are strangers and pilgrims here (Heb 11:13; 1Pet 2:11), sent forth by the true King to proclaim His Kingdom; and to also proclaim the certainty of the judgment and destruction of all remnants of that dark pseudo-throne. Like our Head, we must be rejected and despised here if we are known to be associated with Him. United to Him, we are prom-

ised that *all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution* (2Tim 3:12); that *we must suffer with Him if we are to reign with Him* (Rom 8:17; 2Tim 2:12); that *we must through great tribulation enter the kingdom* (Acts 14:22). In all this we remember that our "David's" anointing is of God, and not of man. Therefore, his Kingdom is established and sure; He *shall* reign until *all* his enemies are made His footstool (1Corinth 15:25; Heb 10:13). Then the *sufferings of this present time will not be worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us* (Rom 8:18; 2Corinth 4:17).

There is another connection we have with David: though a chosen vessel of God's grace, he was a *terrible sinner*. He became an adulterer and murderer (and this, *after* his God-appointed ascension to the throne!). **In an external moral comparison with Saul, David wasn't that much better.** But when viewed from the perspective of the heart (as God does—1Sam 16:7), there was a huge difference between David and Saul. David's heart was tender with an intimate relationship with God. This is vividly displayed in so many of his psalms. He was a *man after God's own heart* (1Sam 13:14), for his heart was *broken and contrite* (Ps 34:18; 51:17; Isa 57:15; 66:2). Saul's heart, on the other hand, is hard and aloof. He never even acknowledges God as "*my God*", but as "*the Lord your God*". When rebuked for his sin David *never* makes excuses, but is crushed beneath its weight until he is purged with hyssop - washed whiter than snow in the blood of his Redeemer (Psalm 51). Saul, however, *always* ends his pseudo-repentance with excuses. David tasted of the heavenly inheritance, longed for it, and would not be turned aside. Saul tasted of the heavenly gift, and yet preferred the throne of this world. (Heb 6:4-6).

May we heed the inspired examples. For each of us, **our life is our service to the throne.** The question is... which throne is it?

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