

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

B0913 – March 29, 2009 –The Background For Kingship

Let's go to the handout. I want to use this as a review; the idea is to match the doctrine(s) in the right column with the historical events in the left column. The doctrines can link up with multiple events. That's the nature of our God, if we miss it the first time; He gives it to us again a little differently. What we're trying to train you to do is link the doctrine of Scripture to actual history. If you don't do this, you wind up thinking of what you read in the Bible as some sort of religious story, and if you keep thinking of the Bible as a religious story, you isolate it from the real world over here in a little compartment where never the two shall meet. That's not the way God teaches. God teaches through history. History is pedagogical, it carries a message, it's full of content. Just think how much of the Bible contains history, and how little of it is really didactic, i.e., like the NT epistles. That's a very small portion of the Bible. It's important, we're not knocking it, it's just that preachers preach the NT a lot but they downplay the OT, and the basic reason is because they're too lazy to study history. People get glassy-eyed when you go into history, but I hope you are starting to realize the importance of history and why we keep coming back to it. We'll see some more of it today as we set up for the Rise and Reign of King David.

Looking at the handout we're trying to match the doctrines to the historic events. What doctrines link with **Creation**? God is the Creator, so we learn about who God is through that great event. That's the defining event of who and what God is. Forever and ever God is praised for His work of creation. What's another doctrine we can link to creation? Man. Man is the creature. And what do we learn about man? Man is not an animal. Man is the image of God. He's unique. Most Christians pay lip service to the idea that man is made in the image of God, but they still suck up the evolutionary taxonomy and say that man is an animal! Man is not an animal. If man were an animal

then why is it that man can hunt animals but man can't hunt man? Only creationism can answer that question. Evolution can't answer that question. Why, if man evolved from the ape and we share 99% of the DNA, I can hunt the ape but not man? Who decides where to draw the line? Creation says that from the very start God drew the line; only man is made in the image of God. What do we mean when we say man is made in God's image? What we mean is when we sketch our Creator-creature distinction and among the creatures we have the man-nature distinction, but man, this is a big deal, this is a key. If man is made in God's image and God is sovereign, He's righteous, He's just, He's loving, He's omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, immutable and eternal, and so forth. If God is all these things then man made in His image, for one thing, means that man has analogues to these attributes. The analogy in our life to God's sovereignty is human choice. When we exercise our "chooser," we are exercising a faculty that is a finite analogy to His infinite sovereignty. It's not identical to it, it's analogous to it, and it's a finite version of it. Our sense of conscience, when we judge society, that's right, that's wrong, that's the conscience and it's a finite analogue to His holiness. When we experience love in the human realm, it's only a finite replica of His love. His love differs from our love in at least one major aspect; God is totally free to give Himself to others because He's completely unthreatened. Ever think about that? God has enemies but he's not threatened. He's not vulnerable. And therefore, being invulnerable He can give Himself unconditionally to others. But in our case we're vulnerable, so when we go to love others there are some boundaries, because we can be concerned about our security. The highest form of human love is exercised by a believer who finds His security in God and not in anything in this world. But still there are limits, but God's love has no limits. Another one, God is omniscient, He knows all things and we have a finite analogue to that, we know some things, what we call human knowledge, a finite data set. So we have these analogues to Him. If we didn't we couldn't talk, we couldn't carry on a conversation, we couldn't be saved, we couldn't even Fall. All these things depend on the image of God. The gospel really doesn't concern our cats and hamsters; there is a fringe benefit for nature, but ultimately it concerns that creature which is made in God's image, man. This is the connection between God and man; this is why we can have a personal relationship with Him.

Then in Gen 1-2 He gave man three divine institutions; responsible dominion, marriage and family. And lastly creation teaches us what? We've

said it touches on God and man. A third thing is nature. So, God, man and nature all linked to Creation. You do away with biblical Creation and you do away with the biblical view of God, man and nature. That historical event establishes the basic categories right from the start of the Bible. The very categories we might add that are linked to the cross later on. Creation is a set up for the cross.

What does the **Fall** tell us about? Evil and suffering. We'll come back to that. The Flood reveals an act of God, it was a judgment but He also saved people, and it's a primary picture of what judgment and salvation look like. You'll notice that it frees you from thinking of salvation purely in psychological terms of what's going on inside. I dare say that in the judgment/salvation of the Flood a lot was going on in the physical world.

The **New World Covenant** of Noah is the basis of stability in the cosmos. Which doctrine best fits the concept of stability in the cosmos? Nature, the universe. That stability is there because of God's word, that's why engineers can go out and build bridges, that's why chemists can do their lab experiments, that's why we can classify things, that's why mathematicians can describe physical phenomena in mathematical formulas. There's stability to nature. It's not due to the intrinsic properties of the universe; that structure is there because of the word of God. By Him all things hold together. So we have stability and all civilization depends on that stability. He adds the fourth divine institution of human government in the new civilization. That civilization, though it was great, though it was exercising dominion, was exercising it to build the kingdom of man and not the kingdom of God. It apostatized very rapidly to the point that we move to the event of Gen 12. God called out Abraham.

The **Call of Abraham** shows God calling Abraham out to form a counterculture. He chose one man out of all the races, languages, and everything else to build the kingdom of God. Therefore if He chose Abraham we have what doctrine? The doctrine of election. God is choosey. People don't like this but, c'mon, who initiated the conversation? Was Abraham down there crying out to God? No, he was down worshipping at the Temple of the moon god. He was worshipping the cosmos. So election is a gracious thing. If God hadn't done that the whole human race would have declined to the point God would have just exterminated the whole thing. Adios, and that's it.

Abraham responded by what? Faith, the doctrine of faith. And that links to the doctrine of justification, God put a new price tag on Abraham, not because of who Abraham was but because of what God promised to provide in Abram's seed, perfect righteousness. So three promises, don't ever forget those. What are they? The land, a promised real estate, a seed, an eternal seed, and worldwide blessing. That's what most of the OT is dealing with, it's the story of how God pulls it off! All those stories, when you open the Bible you see so and so begat so and so, so and so begat so, oh gee, I'm so excited. Or you get into land distribution, oh wow, a deeply spiritual passage. Why are these passages like that in the Bible? They are survey logs. Why do you care who got what land? What is that fulfilling? What did He promise to do? Bring them into the land. What is He recording? They went into the land He gave them the land. In some of those passages He even measures it for you. Why does He have the stories of the birth and death of the kings, and all the adventurous stories like the wicked Queen Jezebel, who comes in and she almost eradicates the lineage of the dynasties? It builds suspense in the seed promise. At one point the entire seed depends on a six year old boy surviving, priests hide him in a back room of the temple, because the guards, the police and the soldiers are out to kill him. They want the dynasty ended. But God said the dynasty will remain forever, so the six year old boy is kept safe and he grows up and reigns on the throne of Israel, and the lineage continues.

Why are these stories here? To show behavior. Whose behavior? God's behavior. And that gives us assurance of our faith; faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. When I see my God make those footprints in the course of historical time, it becomes easier and easier for me to trust Him with the details of my life. If you go from the larger to the smaller it's better than going from the smaller to the larger. Reverse the process, get the big picture from the Scriptures, and then come down to the little deals in your life. That's the key idea of the Covenant with Abraham: it structures history and the Hebrew prophets record history because they're recording His faithfulness.

Let's go to the next event, the **Exodus**. This was another picture of God's acts of judgment and salvation in history; it comes along to amplify the judgment/salvation at the Flood. Again, far from merely psychological, salvation was geophysical. People faced horrible plagues in Egypt, but his people were being saved at the same time. And God adds a new aspect to

judgment/salvation, there's an advance in that He brings in the substitutionary blood atonement, the blood of a lamb over the door, an obvious set up for the cross, that blood must be shed, salvation isn't clean, salvation is messy. Why is it messy? Because our sin is messy and so it's a messy job cleaning up our sin. It's highly visual and you want to let these events take control of the imagination of your heart, whenever you get hung up on a doctrine, go back to the event and remember, usually the picture alone will help you work it out. 98% of it is already there in the OT.

We have **Mt. Sinai**, God speaks from Mt. Sinai, He reveals His law. Here we have probably two million or so people out in the middle of the Sinai Peninsula. In your mind's eye, when the people heard God speak it literally put the fear of God into them, you can imagine it happening, God's voice ricocheting through the valley. This is a crucial concept because liberal theology, modern theology today cannot accept a publicly revealing God. They do not believe the doctrine of revelation in the way the Bible speaks. Mt. Sinai is the protection against that temptation. They heard God speak, such that if they had a tape recorder they could have taped it in Hebrew. That's what we mean by Revelation.

What the modern theologian does and what the liberal clergy do when they talk about revelation, is that they're using the word but not the meaning. What they mean is that Moses thought these things up while he was having a drug trip and the people received it as Moses' word. That's not what the narrative says. The narrative says God publicly spoke. So Mt. Sinai is connected with Revelation; it's also connected with Inspiration of Scripture, and it's the beginning of the Canon, the set of inspired books. Scripture is rooted in that event. That event is a test case to publicly show the process God uses to reveal Himself.

Finally the **Conquest and Settlement** is the issue of sanctification. And the central idea we glean about sanctification is that it's holy war. It's a very controversial part of the Bible because in that part of the Bible you have cruelty and you have all kinds of things happening there. It's critical to get this, because people get apologetic and sometimes you get yourself a little embarrassed about the violence in these pages, you can't deny there's violence in the pages. How do we resolve this problem? We're saying it's a preview of final judgment. God is giving us a foretaste of the final separation

of good and evil. If we go back to our diagram of good and evil and you are a pagan, then you're left with this picture. There is no other alternative. There are only two options. This option says that good and evil, sorrow, sickness, death, pain, suffering, goodness and evil together exist forever, they're never separated. That's not a very good answer to the problem of evil. I'm convinced that this is where Christianity gets most of its publicity; it comes in the form of an attack, when something bad happens what is always said? "Why, if your God is so good, does He let all this go on?" Excuse me buddy, but have you looked at your answer to the problem of evil? You don't have one. Good and evil are always there. So before you laugh at the Bible, the burden is for you to come up with a better answer.

Let's look at the biblical answer. The Bible says that God created and that later on there was a Fall. That space of time is crucial because now we know that the universe and every creature in it was designed for a non-evil environment. Evil is not part and parcel of reality. On a non-Christian basis evil is part and parcel of reality. Death is the normal process. Think about the evolutionary process. Evolution believes that through death and struggle life originates. The Bible doesn't. The Bible says God speaks life into existence and there was no death, there was no pain. It was instantaneous and joyful; the angels sang at creation. That's the Biblical story. The two are worlds apart.

Then we have a period of history from the Fall where good and evil mix, but the difference is that this time period is limited. It is not limited in paganism. Only the Bible makes the separation. NO other philosophy or religion has ever put a limitation on evil. Only in the Bible do you find a point of separation. That is unique. So that structure sets up the scene for why we have cruelty and violence when God judges, because what God is going to do, He is not going to let things stay this way, He is going to intrude in history and separate good from evil. That's His surgery, and it's violent surgery.

So when we come to Conquest and Settlement and we see the violence we're getting is a foretaste of the final surgery. Israel was called to execute judgment against various subsets of the human race, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, et al. These people God had allowed for 400 years to apostatize ever more deeply. They became the incarnation of evil, they were demonically controlled. And when they reached the terminal point God

sent in His people to eliminate them; men, women, children, dogs, cats, only leave the trees and the vineyards. It's a very powerful thing in the Scriptures. It gives us the mental attitude for the conflicts we face in our own Christian life. We have enemies, they hate God and us, and we are called to go to war with them, put on the whole armor of God. What do you think that stuff is in the Bible for? Because there can be no compromise in the area of good and evil. The believer is called to be sanctified and the Conquest and Settlement is a picture of that. Sanctification isn't about a good feeling; it's not just your personal private life. There's a cosmic war going on and your life is connected and plugged into that through Jesus Christ and His work.

I want to get into the kingship issue. Turn to Gen 14. It's time to build up for understanding this whole David thing. David became the king of Israel, and 1 and 2 Samuel is a narrative of the adventures of getting there. We need to understand what the goal of David is, or God's work in his life. David is going to become the king. In particular, he is called by the Hebrew word *Mashiach*, to anoint; he is called the anointed king, from which we get "the Christ." Christ is not Jesus last name; Christ is a title for the fact that He was the anointed one. So everything in the David stories is pointing to someone greater than David, the Lord Jesus Christ. That's what the story is in the history we are about to study and we want to start with understanding what a king looks like. The first king that is *not* evil (Nimrod is said to be the first king) but the first king that we really get a glimpse of in Scripture is a king that Abraham met. We want to look at that king and dissect what are the functions of that king. Gen 14:17, Abraham has had his armies out and he chased down the kidnapers of his relatives, he chased after the kings in verse 17 and defeated them, now he's coming home and in verse 18 he's met by this strange person.

Look carefully at verse 18, "And Melchizedek, king of Salem," which we think is Jerusalem, "brought out bread and wine; now he was a priest of God Most High." The thing you want to notice is that at one time there were men who were both kings and priests, together; the same man holds those two offices, in him mixes church and state so to speak. That's an interesting feature of the post-Noahic kingship. Later those two offices get split up in the nation Israel. God separates them. We want to see why. Why, if God had them originally together, why does He want them separate later on? Part of King Saul's problem was he couldn't keep them separate and so we want to trace

these two offices through the Samuel narratives to find out why and to see what David does.

But here we have them together in Melchizedek. He was a monotheist, verse 20, he was a priest of God Most High, this is a man who is saved, he is a Gentile man who was saved before Abraham. He believed that God Most High would save him by some means; apparently he understood blood was involved because of the bread and wine, an early concept of blood atonement. Melchizedek is a type of the priest-kings that came out of the sons and daughters of Noah. Noah is the author of our civilization, no matter what race you are, no matter what language you speak, no matter what continent you live on, your genes came off the same boat. All of us came off the same boat; there was one family that led to civilization, if we believe the Scriptures. It wasn't some monkey that gave us his banana, it was a family, civilized, intelligent, God-fearing people who got off the boat and proceeded to populate the earth. Interestingly, presumably most of the racial diversity was brought in by the four women on the boat, because obviously if the boys shared the genes of daddy then the genetic variation of the human race came largely from the girls that married his boys.

So we have a genetic bottleneck from the antediluvian world; we have them in one family, the rest of the genes were lost, and that family of eight was to establish a godly civilization on this planet. We said these people were geniuses, they had the powers of longevity, they lived 500-600 years, they didn't have to write books, if you wanted to know what happened to Noah ask grandma, she was there. It was a unique period of history, never before repeated, when great, great, great, great, great grandfathers outlived their grandsons six and seven generations down the line. These people could navigate; they invented a clock so they could measure longitude and map the entire planet. They brought over advanced mathematics you can see in the architecture that spans the globe, both in Africa and Meso-America, the pyramids. They left this pyramidal design everywhere they went. In the area of language they left Semitic loan words, everywhere you go you find traces of the original language of the human race, apparently some Semitic dialect. The human race was generated out of these eight geniuses, and they were governed by these king-priests. King was an analogue to God's office as king and the priest taught the word of God and administered the sword of judgment. This is why Melchizedek is blessing Abraham; Abraham has just

executed an act of justice by his army and his sword. So these men were God's vice-regents on earth. Of course, civilization deteriorated rapidly and you get into a situation of chaos.

Then you come to Abraham, he's called out to be a counterculture and he grows in Egypt to be the nation Israel. Israel was called out to be a counter-nation to the pagan nations. She's gone in to take the land, four hundred years of trying to get control of the land and settle it, trying to get some peace and quiet. Turn to Judges, we come to the end of the conquest period and we have an interesting observation. Keep in mind Judges was written by a group of prophets after the fact, and it's a divine analysis of history. In high school in social studies class they always teach you, "The first historians are Herodotus and Thucydides," they didn't have a concept of history before that. That is the secular view but not the Biblical view. And it's not true. Who wrote the history of Judges? Not the Greeks, the Hebrews. And why did they write history, what did we say is going on in the Abrahamic Covenant? God made a covenant with the Jews. So why would Jews be more history conscious than any other people? Because they were watching God. What's He doing? Is He doing what He promised in the covenant? History is His-story. Unfortunately people's eyes glaze over when you mention anything about history, because we've lost the idea of what history is all about. This is why kids don't get motivated to study it. Why study it if it's just a pile of marbles and doesn't mean a thing? In that case I just memorize it for the test on Friday and forget it by Monday. Who cares? So if I don't have a person behind history who's got a plan then history's not worth learning, but if history is God's story all of a sudden you better know it, because it's how you get to know God.

The Judges are doing an analysis of what went wrong in the end of that Conquest and Settlement period. Going back to our time line period, a sequence of events, we are now down at the Conquest and Settlement. On a time scale what's happened is this; we've gone along for a number of centuries, here's the origin of civilization, the days of Noah, we go for 400-500 years of the most fantastic time in human history, there's never been a time like that, never will be a time again when we have people who live six or seven centuries coexisting with people who live only a century. We have the spectacle at the end of the 400 years after the Noachic flood of grandfathers

who outlived their grandsons. Never before in history have we had anything like that.

Then four or five centuries after Noah all this entire generation died off, and this period of history now appears mythical to everyone who investigates it because it's just unbelievable and incredible that this thing could happen, except for the objective fact that the continents were mapped before the ice age, except for the objective fact that somebody who was a genius in engineering and architecture built the pyramids, and except for the fact that the human race is united by this strange Semitic core to its language wherever you go. After this we have the rise of Nimrod, etc., civilization is going downhill spiritually, and we have Abraham called out in about the year 2000BC. We are studying the period from 2000BC to 1000BC, and at the time of the Exodus it's about half way through, say 1500-1400BC. So here we have the nation Israel, for three or four centuries they have the Conquest, and then it peters out in chaos. The nation falls apart, and the book of Judges is an analysis of why the nation Israel fell apart.

Judg 17:6 is a refrain on this analysis, why did society collapse in the days of the Judges? There were some godly people, but the society collapsed, it lost its structure, it went into chaos, people were taken captive by the enemy, they lost their wars, they lost in battle, and they became captives and slaves. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." Turn to Judg 21:25, the last verse of the book, this is the sobering analysis of 400 years of history. The analysis of the prophets is, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in their own eyes." Doesn't that sound like a familiar story in history? The 60's were a fine example in America of rebellion against authority, anarchy.

So we have anarchy. We said if you look at the flesh, every time when you deal with fallen flesh, whether it's your own or someone else's, or society at large, it always oscillates between two poles, what we call the licentious option, that's the chaos option, or the legalist route, that's the way that results in totalitarian regimes. Individuals and nations swing like a pendulum between these two extremes. The flesh oscillates back and forth between the two trying to get balance but can never find rest. Chaos is in our life and so we turn to rules and regulations. Those start crimping our lifestyle so we throw them off and swing back to chaos and obviously you can't tolerate

chaos, after a while that gets old, so then you have to have a solution to chaos, so I go and now I'm going to be a legalist again. If you watch it, that's exactly the story of the flesh; that's exactly the story of the nation Israel.

What had happened by 300 years after the entrance into the land, the nation had gone from a position where they were under God as king, it was a theocracy; God was the actual king, and the nation was under God. By the end of the period of the judges it's in chaos, society is lawless, there's no unity so now the pendulum is going to swing, and we've got to get unity so to solve this one we're going to bring in a new monarchy. So now we come to the debate over the rise of the monarchy, and this is quite a debate. We want to look at a few other passages. The first one is Deut 17, inside the Mosaic Law Code there was a provision for a king, even though he wasn't required, there was a provision for the king. This is a classic passage. There are so many classic passages we're going to be covering, without political implications. I don't want to get off on the politics, but I can't help the fact, like we got into geology, astronomy, physics, biology, anthropology, and other things, the Bible touches every area, and we're going to get into some political ideas. Deut 17 is one major passage for political philosophy in the Scripture, a crucial passage that applies to politics. This was the provision for a powerful leader in the nation. Watch.

Deut 17:14-20 "When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' ¹⁵you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, *one* from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman." So verse 15 answers the appeal of verse 14. The interplay for the next four weeks is going to be between verse 14 and 15. Verse 14 is the demand of the people, they are tired of chaos, they are tired of society falling apart; they want centralized leadership, powerful and strong leadership. But God says you watch it, when you swing toward totalitarianism, watch out you just don't pick any person to be that strong leader, you pick the one I choose. Notice how God interferes with the process. Verse 15 dooms the democratic theory; we'll get into democracy, monarchy and aristocracy. There are good elements to these, but democracy has limits. God did not let the democratic thrust of verse 14 override His sovereign thrust of verse 15. He stepped into the process.

Then He says I will further restrict the king, “Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, ‘You shall never again return that way.’”¹⁷ “He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself.” Who violated that? Solomon. And who had a problem? Solomon. Verse 18, “Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom,” look at this in vv 18-19, this is phenomenal political idea. “Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.”¹⁹ “It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,”²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.”

The human king, the human office that is about to be created in history, the monarchy of Israel through whom Jesus Christ will come, has limitations; from the very start there were limits placed on this, this was not to be a monarchy like the other nations. God wants to keep this kingship separate from all the other kingships.

So let’s contrast these kings. There are two quotes I want to look at. Here’s what the political thinking was at this time in the Bible. Please understand that when you read the Bible you’ve got to transport yourself as best you can into the mindset of the people that lived at the time the Scriptures were written. If you do, you will be richly rewarded. Here’s the mindset of the people in that day and age. “The ancient Near East considered kingship the very basis of civilization. Only savages could live without a king. Security, peace, justice could not prevail without a king to champion them. If ever a political institution functioned with the assent of the governed, it was the monarchy which built the pyramids with forced labor and drained the Assyrian peasantry by ceaseless wars.... Whatever was significant was imbedded in the life of the cosmos, and it was precisely the king’s function to maintain the harmony of that integration.”

I show these two archeological depictions of the king, there are three figures the Egyptian artist has drawn, Pharaoh is the middle one, on the left of Pharaoh are the gods. Who's taller? That's a political tract, see what that's saying, that may look like flaky art to us, but we have three figures, the middle one is the Pharaoh, that is a statement of Pharaoh's power, he stands up there with the gods. That's what that statement is saying. That's the view of the king, that's the kind of king they were crying for at the end of the period of the Judges; give us a king like all the other nations, one who stands with the gods, someone who will bring order out of the chaos. Of course, they'd sort of forgotten their King was up there, He is God.

So you can see this has metaphysical overtones. This is a typical column in an Egyptian temple. On that column in hieroglyphics is written a message. The message in the name of a Pharaoh, it precedes from top to bottom and on either side of the name it looks from your perspective that there's a vertical line drawn there, but if you come up closer you'll see it's not a line, it stops here and ends here, in a little shepherd's crook, same thing on the other line, it ends here with a shepherd's crook pulling in. That symbol, that line, is a picture of welfare and peace, and it's saying that Pharaoh, who holds the welfare scepter, mediates between heaven and earth, the heavens, there's the sun at the top, there's the earth down below, the mediator between heaven and earth is the Pharaoh. He is civilization. Such is the totalitarian power. And this is why Dr. Frankfort says they could get "pyramids with forced labor" and they could build armies and kill people by the hundreds of thousands and they'd have volunteers tomorrow, because the people realized that this king was the source of their salvation, security was provided by the king.

Just to give the flavor of the conflict that's going to occur in this text as we go on, "The Hebrew king normally functioned in the profane sphere, not in the sacred sphere. He was the arbiter in disputes and the leader in war. He was emphatically not the leader in the cult.... He did not, as a rule, sacrifice; that was the task of the priests. He did not interpret the divine will; that, again, was the task of the priests.... Moreover, the divine interventions were sometimes made known in a more dramatic way when the prophets...cried, 'Thus saith the Lord.' These prophets" - get a load of this, a critical sentence here, - "These prophets were often in open conflict with the king precisely because the secular character of the king entitled them to censor him.... The

transcendentalism of Hebrew religion prevented kingship from assuming the profound significance which it possessed in Egypt and Mesopotamia....”

What are we saying in a nutshell? God’s word limits political authority. God’s word stands over and against political authority. That does not set well with the world. That’s why the first Christians of the 2nd and 3rd centuries, many of our brothers and sisters, were thrown to the lions. It wasn’t because they were evil people, it wasn’t because they took up arms against Rome, and it was simpler than that. Caesar could not tolerate any citizen of the Roman Empire daring to say that he believed in *Creos Jeshu*, the Caesar in heaven whose name is Jesus. That was considered to be the highest insult to any political authoritarian in that day and age, and that’s why they threw the Christians to the lions. They couldn’t stand allegiance on the part of people to somebody higher than them, it puts steel in your backbone, and it has down through the centuries.

This is what has enabled Christians to stand up to totalitarianism everywhere it goes. This is why the church has never succumbed to totalitarian government anywhere. It’s submerged by it for a while, but it always breaks out. There is not a ruler in history that has ever broken the church. They’ve persecuted it but the persecutions led to the church growing more and more and faster and faster.

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