

# Saint: One Appointed to Rule

by Anthony Buzzard

Christians sometimes spend so much time bemoaning their inadequacy and lack of spirituality that they forget why they are Christians in the first place. Followers of Jesus Christ are called “saints.” The title “saint” in the New Testament applies to every true believer. True believers are those who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36; 12:44ff; Luke 8:12; Acts 8:12). It is not reserved for a special class of Christians who demonstrate a holiness superior to the run-of-the-mill disciple.

In fact, there cannot really be any run-of-the-mill believers, because a saint is one appointed to the royal family of Israel. A saint is one selected by God to rule with Jesus. A saint is one invited to kingship. Christianity is the call to kingship in the Kingdom of God. The saints are to be God’s choice people. They are in training to manage the world (1 Cor. 6:2)

Most of the great truths of the Christian faith are rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures. The notion of the saint and his role in God’s plan is found there too — and in a chapter of Daniel which all Christians should practically have memorized. This critically important section of the Old Testament contains a veritable blueprint for the Abrahamic/Davidic faith revealed in Christ (cp. Gen. 12, 13, 15, 17; 2 Sam. 7; Gal. 3:29).

Daniel 7:13-14 describes an investiture with royal office. The recipient of this authority to rule is the “Son of Man,” a figure who, in the interpretation given by the angel (7:18, 22, 27), signifies the saints of the Most High. Son of Man is the favorite self-designation of Jesus. He is THE Human Person, and he has others with him. Naturally so, for he reckoned himself, as Messiah the King, to be the chief of the body of saints. The saints are the ones appointed to rule in the future Kingdom. This is made clear throughout the seventh chapter of Daniel. Jesus is the new Adam reversing the failure of the first Adam to rule for God.

The point to be noted is this: The saints receive the Kingdom, possess the Kingdom, and all nations serve and obey them. Some translations are shy of the shocking (as they think) notion that human beings, Christians, should be destined to rule as kings. To some that sounds regrettably “political,” and so the whole promise to the saints that they are to rule the world with Jesus is often toned down, sentimentalized and obscured. It is much more palatable to think that “souls go to heaven” where they cannot make much of an impact on the earth!

Daniel knew of no such evasions of plain truth. The saints are to possess the Kingdom “under the whole heaven” and to rule in it forever. All nations are to be subject to them as immortal kings (Dan. 7:14, 18, 22, **27**; see also Rev. 1:6; 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20: 1-6; Isa. 32:1).

What a world it will be! (Isa. 7:14).

“But the court will sit for judgment and his [the Antichrist’s] dominion will be taken away forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the Kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the Saints of the Most High. Their Kingdom shall be an everlasting Kingdom and all dominions shall serve and obey them” (Dan. 7:27, RSV, NEB, GNB, and Jewish Publication Society Translation).

Paul used the prospect of royal office as a spur to his converts to conduct themselves worthy of royalty. 1 Thessalonians 2:12 is a miniature statement (just like Ps. 110:1) of the whole NT: “You should walk worthy of the God who is calling you into his own Kingdom and glory.” In other words, act now as befits a king in training. Reflect daily on the amazing honor that God desires to bestow on you by inviting you to share royalty with Jesus. Could any destiny be calculated to stir within us the determination to do our best for the Messiah and for his Kingdom?

If the prospect of royal office seems to be remote from reality, then study and meditate on the books of Samuel and Kings, and observe the reverence which is due to the king. He is God's agent in the theocratic Kingdom. 1 Samuel 16 has to do with the choosing of an ideal king. God looks on the heart, the personality (1 Sam. 16:7), as he selects the one who will rule for Him. Watch the trials and tests of David, as God prepares him to shepherd his people Israel. This is the model and pattern of NT Christianity.

Note that the book of Proverbs really consists of ruling principles, a manual of wisdom to those who desire to be found fit to be king. Solomon's failure to measure up to the divine standard, his missing the mark in regard to God's appointment of him to be king, is recorded as a warning for us. In the NT Jesus sows the seed of the Kingdom Gospel message (Matt. 13:19) and invites candidates for royal office to leave their previous wicked lifestyle and come forward for training. Jesus promises that the New Covenant ratified and sealed in his blood is the promise of future rulership in the Kingdom: "You are the ones who have stood by me in my trials, and just as my Father has granted me [actually 'covenanted with me'] a Kingdom, I now covenant with you that you may eat and drink in my Kingdom. You will sit on twelve thrones to administer the twelve [regathered] tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30).

The reward offered and promised to the Church by Paul is patterned after Jesus' promise to all his followers: "Don't you understand that the saints are going to manage the world?" (1 Cor. 6:2, Moffatt). "If we suffer with him we will also rule as kings with him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

This primary theme is developed further in Revelation 2:26-27; 3:21; 5:10 (not KJV); 20:1-6. In each of these verses, and many more, we see God's plan to establish justice on earth, through an inspired government — the first ever — led by Messiah and his companions. God has "subjected the inhabited earth of the future" to Christ and his faithful saints (Heb. 2:5). To inherit or possess the Kingdom (see Ps. 37) means much more than simply being *in* the Kingdom. The word "Kingdom" has a dynamic sense. It means the reign of God through Jesus, or God ruling. That rule will be conducted by the saints, of whom Jesus is the pioneer and example. Jesus has already passed through death and been exalted to glory (Ps. 110:1). The Christians are on the same path and will be resurrected to immortality in the Kingdom when Jesus comes back, at his Parousia, Second Coming (1 Cor. 15:23; Luke 14:14; Rev. 11:15-18, etc).

I wish that believers everywhere could come to see that the whole genius of the Christian faith is concentrated in the word "Kingdom." "Kingdom," however, does not mean a vague sense of the lordship of Jesus in the heart. It means the challenge and invitation to sainthood, the call to kingship, to function as a royal executive with Messiah. We are to enter the service of the Christ now. He is the King of Israel and of the whole world. We are also to share now in the colossal task of making known his intention to return to the earth to inaugurate his Kingdom worldwide.

At the same time we are now to conduct ourselves as the royal family of spiritual, international Israel (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3), the spiritual children of Abraham, to whom rulership of the world has been promised (Rom. 4:13). "If you belong to Christ, then you count as Abraham's descendants and are heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Daniel 7 is key to all good preaching of the Gospel. It deserves the widest press as compulsory background reading to the Christianity of the New Testament. In that chapter, however, you will find that the saints will have to suffer in order to gain their crowns. The future antichrist, the "little horn," struggles to wear down the saints of the Most High (v. 25). He actually appears to defeat them, because as Satan's tool he is determined to put an end to their Gospel Message (cp. Luke 8:12). But that is not the end of the drama. The saints (the holy ones) reappear as inheritors and possessors of the coming Kingdom. "The Ancient of Days came and

judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the Kingdom” (Dan. 7:22).

All this is the substance of the New Testament faith in the Gospel as Jesus preached it (Mark 1:14-15). “Through much tribulation we must enter the Kingdom of God,” Paul says to his flock (Acts 14:22). Daniel had said the same thing earlier. Jesus spoke constantly about giving up life now, in order to gain the life of kingship in the Kingdom. It is called “the life of the age to come,” poorly and vaguely translated as “eternal life” (Dan. 12:2: “the Life of the Age” to come).

How could the loss of life now be compared with the possible loss of the saint’s destiny? That future life is worth sacrifice now. “What does a man gain if he loses out on that future life?” Jesus said. Gaining the whole world now would be pointless if one loses out on immortality. A saint is one appointed to rule in the Kingdom when Jesus comes back. He or she is now an heir. Then he or she will be an inheritor and possessor (cp. Matt. 5:5; Jer. 27:5). “Flesh and blood [human beings as presently constituted] cannot inherit the Kingdom” (1 Cor. 15:50). However, equipped with a new “spiritual body,” a body driven by spirit, a body suitable for Life in the Age to Come of the Kingdom, the saints will be competent to reign and rule with Messiah on the renewed earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:1-6). The millennium, when Satan will have been arrested, imprisoned and thrown into the abyss (Rev. 20:1-6), will be the first stage of the Kingdom of God of the future. Some mortals will survive to form the new society of many nations (Isa. 19). There will be a great depopulation of the world at the Second Coming, as at the flood (see Isa. 24:6). People dying at 100 years old in that future time will be considered as a short life span (Isa. 65:20).

One caution: Don’t try to implement your kingship over the world in advance of the coming of Jesus. That was the great mistake of some of the over-enthusiastic 16<sup>th</sup>-century Anabaptists, who thought that the Kingdom could be established with the sword, prior to the arrival of Jesus. The same error has led some to believe that the theocratic Kingdom, the government of God, can be achieved through the American political system. This will not happen. The governments of the present nation-states will be replaced by the Kingdom of God and of His Messiah only at the future 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, which marks the resurrection of all the faithful dead (Rev. 11:15-18). Until then “walk worthy of the God who is inviting you into His Kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12). Whenever you read about the saints (holy ones) in the New Testament, remember that the saints are those appointed to rule and reign according to Daniel 7:14, 18, 22, 27 — all nations will serve and obey them (see RSV, etc).