

## ELECTING KINGS

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*“Give Diligence, Brethren, to Make Your Calling and Election Sure.”*—2 Pet. 1:10.

Throughout the length and breadth of this land of liberty, young and old understand full well the significance of election. Councilmen, aldermen, mayors of cities, county officials, State officials, United States Congressmen, Senators, the President and Vice-President are chosen or elected from amongst the people of their various official stations. They are chosen with a view to the blessing that will accrue to the electors by the exercise of their official positions. How strange, then, that we who are so familiar with these things should read into our text so very different a view of election!

The thought should naturally suggest itself to us that if God is electing or selecting a Church in the present time, it must be with a view to the use of that Church subsequently to serve in some manner the interests of the remainder of the world, from amongst whom they were elected. And this is just what the Scriptures teach; namely, that Christ Jesus himself is the Head, the Captain, the Chief Ruler, and that this “elect” company are, figuratively speaking, his “members,” his associates, his under-priesthood. The Scriptures tell us that this selection is according to Divine foreknowledge and foreordination. They tell us that God foreknew our Lord Jesus as the one who would occupy the glorious position of Prophet, Priest, Mediator and King of the world during the Millennium. They tell us also that the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ foreknew us also and “predestinated” that there should be a Church class selected from amongst the world, to be their Redeemer’s associate, his under-priesthood, his subordinate kings during the Millennium.

### **The Elect Now and Hereafter**

The Church is spoken of as God’s “elect” now, before the election has been finished; before the testing is completed; before the called have been proved faithful and worthy. These are “elect” in the sense of having been nominated—“moved and seconded.” God moved that they should be elected and “called them with a heavenly calling.” It remained for the called ones themselves to “second the motion” by presenting themselves in full consecration of heart to the Lord. But this was not sufficient; for the invited ones were recognized as imperfect and unable to come up to the requirements of the call. Hence it was necessary that the Lord Jesus Christ should become their surety and agree out of his own fulness of merit to supply all of their lack, their imperfection. And this he gladly does by applying for such the merit of his sin-atonement-sacrifice finished at Calvary.

### **Making the Election Sure**

Keeping before our minds that the heavenly Father made the motion or the call, that we seconded it by accepting the call upon its terms of faith and consecration unto death, and that our Lord Jesus is our surety who will make good our unintentional blemishes, what shall we say of the prospects of our being elected and at whose door shall we lay the responsibility if we are not elected? Surely the unchangeable God who nominated us has made every provision for our election and will cooperate. Surely our Redeemer, our Surety, our Advocate, will give us every assistance in the way and, according to his promise, cause all things to work together for our good. Just as surely, therefore the entire responsibility for failure would lie at our door. And this is what St. Peter in our text declares, “Make your calling and election sure.”

From this standpoint we have a special interest in our own election, such as we never had before when we misunderstood the entire matter. Once in our ignorance we thought that St. Peter had written foolishly about our making the election sure; for according to the erroneous theory which we had “swallowed” without proper mastication, God was doing all the electing himself, and had unalterably fixed our destiny as eternal glory or eternal suffering, long centuries before we were born.

This erroneous view blinded our mental sight from all the various incentives which now are so precious and so helpful. What had God elected us to be and to do? To sit upon a cloud and to play upon a harp and to sing to all eternity, cheerfully looking over the battlements of heaven to see our dear friends writhing in torment—and striving hard to praise God for it all and to think of his course in our election and their damnation as the exemplification of Justice and of Love?

We read indeed in the Scriptures respecting a Kingdom, for which our Lord taught us to pray, “Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done in earth as it is done in heaven,” yet the thralldom of error upon us was so dense that we recognized not the inconsistency between these promises and our false hopes. Now, thank God, “the mystery” is revealed to us in God’s Word and by his Spirit, and we perceive that the Millennial Kingdom is to be a reality and that its blessing to mankind in general, “to all the families of the earth” is to be most thorough, most systematic, most complete, and in the end entirely satisfactory.

### **Kings to Be Elected**

What an interest we properly take in this matter of our election, after learning that the office for which we are running is a combination of priesthood and kingship! The elect are to be priestly kings, or, otherwise styled “A Royal Priesthood.” Their glorious service is to be for a period of one thousand years, during which they will be kings and priests unto God and will reign on the earth. (Revelation 20:4)

They will not “reign on the earth” in the sense of being earthly beings, having earthly courts and thrones; their resurrection “change” will constitute them heavenly or spirit

beings; they will be invisible to mankind, as now the “Prince of this world” is invisible and as the holy angels are invisible. But they will possess heavenly power and authority and wisdom and grace. By these glorious attributes they will be able to serve God and humanity by a reign of righteousness, whose uplifting or restitution influences (Acts 3:21) will begin with the living generation, but eventually extend to “all the families of the earth,” who have been going down for the past six thousand years into the great prison-house of death—“prisoners of hope,” however, because of the promise of God’s Word and the redemption sacrifice of Jesus.

My beloved hearers, if your hearts are not moved by this message of God’s grace and this information respecting his Kingdom and of your prospects of becoming kings and priests in that Kingdom, it is because you do not believe the message—because your faith does not properly grasp the “exceeding great and precious promises” of God’s Word (2 Pet. 1:4). I am aware that this whole message by Jesus and his apostles has been so long covered by the rubbish of “the dark ages” that it was lost to our sight for a long while, and sadly we missed its encouragement to faithfulness. I am glad, however, that now our eyes of understanding are opening to see the length and breadth and height and depth in the great Divine Plan of the Ages.

### **The Value of Earthly Crowns**

Consider for a moment what fabulous prices have been paid for earthly crowns! Thousands of lives have been sacrificed and millions of money, to gain an earthly crown. And thousands who paid this price knew well that “uneasy rests the head which wears the crown.” They knew well, too, that its tenure would be precarious and that the attainment of it would bring them lasting hatred from others who aspired to the same position and who considered that their right to it was as good or better.

What comparison should we institute as between the value of such a crown and the “crown of glory,” honor and immortality which God has promised to his elect—to such of them as make their calling and their election sure! Has God placed too high a valuation upon the heavenly crown, in demanding that those who would share it with the Redeemer must prove their loyalty to him and to the principles of righteousness, and to the spirit of love, to the extent of laying down their lives in his service and in “doing good unto all men as they have opportunity, especially the household of faith”?

Our Lord asked wherein would be the profit to any man if he were to gain the whole world and lose his own soul—lose his future life. For the purpose of our present topic we might ask a modified question, namely: if one should gain the empire of the whole world and all of its riches, and if another should gain this heavenly election to the heavenly Kingdom of one thousand years and to subsequent eternal blessings with the Lord, which of these would choose the better part—which would show the real wisdom, and which

would be the foolish one? But the contrast increase when we note that the dominion of earth cannot be secured by our sailing through bloody seas, and that a mere competency of earthly wealth is attained by only one of a thousand who strive for it day and night. Surely from the standpoint of the Father's Word all earthly honors are vanities, in comparison with the heavenly glories and blessings which may be surely attained by the "called" of this Gospel Age—if they will but follow the Divine directions.

### **Terms and Conditions of Election**

In our context St. Peter tells us upon what terms the called and accepted may make their election sure. After calling our attention to God's exceeding great and precious promises he tells us that they were given us to the intent that they should operate in our minds so as to influence our lives in harmony with the Divine will, and that thus we may "become partakers of the divine nature, after having escaped the corruption that is in the world through desire"—selfishness, lust (V. 4). He proceeds to amplify, and urges that such as have this hope shall give all diligence to the matter of adding to their faith virtue or fortitude. That is to say, faith of itself is very good as a start, but God requires more than this. As a condition of our acceptance for election he requires that our faith shall be of a strong kind, giving us fortitude for all of life's affairs; for all of our covenants with the Lord; for a faithful endurance of opposition, contradiction, etc., that thus we might be copies of our Lord Jesus Christ, as God has ordained all of "the elect" must be (Romans 8:29).

Not only must we have a strong faith combined with fortitude, but we must also add "knowledge." We required some knowledge of God and of our Lord Jesus and of the Gospel message before we could come unto the Lord at all, but the Apostle is not referring to this, our earliest knowledge. He is addressing Christians who have already taken the first steps. He assures us that they need knowledge to enable them to go onward in Christian development—knowledge in addition to their faith and fortitude. We have nothing to say against worldly knowledge, scientific knowledge, etc., when these do not cross or interfere with the Divine Revelation, but we are confident that the Apostle did not intend to refer to worldly knowledge, but to the greatest of all scientific knowledge—the knowledge of God.

How shall we know God? By study of his character. Our Lord Jesus it was who declared "This is life eternal that they might **know** thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). This knowledge at the present time is a secret knowledge and, as the Apostle says, a "hidden mystery," which can be known only by those who put themselves into a certain attitude of heart and mind and conduct toward the Lord and his revelation. We are to study God's character—to learn respecting his Justice, his Wisdom, his Love and his Power, by studying his revelation—the Bible. In it we see his dealings past, and his promises respecting his dealings future. And a correct

appreciation of these gives us a knowledge of God's character as exemplified therein. But since this knowledge is not stated in terms for the world to understand, it follows that only those in proper condition of heart and enlightened by the holy Spirit can receive this knowledge. It is taught only to the pupils in the School of Christ. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his Covenant."

### **Other Graces to Be Added**

The Apostle continues his advice as to things necessary to be added by those who would make their calling and election sure. They must keep adding, and the adding must be little by little and day by day. The knowledge we gain of God through his Word should lead us to greater moderation (translated, **temperance**, in our common version). "Let your moderation be known unto all men" (Phil. 4:5), moderation or balance in thought, in word, in action. God's people may be called extremists by those who are not begotten of the holy Spirit and who know not "the mystery." But even they should be able to charge **immoderation** only on the one score—our immoderation, our faithfulness to the Word of the Lord and to our covenant of self sacrifice as followers in the footsteps of Jesus. Our lives should be so moderate as respects business and pleasure and food and raiment, etc., that we should be examples of wisdom and moderation to all—extremists only along the same lines that Jesus and the Apostles were counted extremists by those who knew not, neither did understand "the mystery" of their endeavor to be of "the very elect."

Patience must not be forgotten. In addition to moderation, "Let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." Next **add** godlikeness—general goodness, benevolence, benignity toward all. Add next brotherly kindness—in the natural family relationship, and also in the spiritual family, the Church. "Love as brethren" (ought to love). "We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren." Still further the Apostle urges that while all of the foregoing are elements of love we super-add **love** itself in the fullest sense toward the Lord, toward the brethren, toward humanity, toward the brute creation and toward our enemies. While all of these cannot be loved in the same degree, all should profit by the spirit of love in our hearts for all.

### **"Ye Shall Never Fail"**

Now comes the climax of the advice to those seeking to make their calling and election sure (verse 8). "If these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." And then, as our text declares, If these things abound and if we give diligence to the making sure of our calling and election and do these things we shall never fail—we shall in no case fail of securing our election. God seeketh such for joint-heirship with their Redeemer in the Kingdom. God "seeketh such to worship him as worship him in spirit and in truth."

The grand consummation of our election—our Kingdom honors and glories—is specifically referred to by St. Peter in the next verse, saying, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” If, dear Brethren, we believe these things, let us permit them to control our lives—our words, our deeds and our thoughts.