

THE NATION

"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (14:34)

INTRODUCTION—A nation's greatness cannot accurately be measured by its wealth, commerce, or size. Its strength and might has no lasting value if it is not characterized by righteousness in its leaders and citizens (14:34). Governments are assigned to men by God and leaders are raised by Him to carry out His will among nations (24:21; 21:1; cf. Romans 13:1-7). Dishonor and disobedience rendered to the king is likewise shown to God.

I. KINGS AND RULERS

- A. Throne Must be Established on Principles of Righteousness (16:12; 20:28; 29:4). The only real security for a ruler and his nation is to build and guard it with righteousness, justice and truth. Even though the people think he speaks "as God" he is not free to pervert justice (16:10).
 - 1. Must be Just and Fair (20:8; 8:12,15). In order to do that he keeps abreast of what is going on among his people and how faithfully his ministers are fulfilling their duties (25:2).
 - a. Insures Punishment of Wrong-Doers (20:8,26).
 - b. Protects Rights of Needy and Poor (29:14; 31:1,8-9; cf. 28:15-16).
 - 2. Advisors Should be Men of Honor (25:4-5).
 - 3. Refuses Bribes (29:4; 17:23). Bribes pervert justice.
- B. Responsibilities of His Position.
 - 1. Avoid Excess and Overindulgence (31:2-6). One distracts his attention and drains his energy while the other confuses his mind and confounds proper judgment.
 - 2. Compassion for His People (28:16; 31:8-9). A throne built upon the gratitude and loyalty of the people will defy rumblings and revolutions (29:2,14).
 - 3. His Influence on His People (29:12; cf. 17:7). As goes the ruler, so goes his people.

II. SUBJECTS AND CITIZENS

- A. Keep the Law (29:18; 14:34). The attitude that if you do not like a law or think it is unjust, therefore you are justified in breaking it, is nothing less than anarchy and rebellion.
- B. Fear the King (24:21-22). Both he and God deserve our highest respect and honor. We must avoid association with revolutionaries in religion or politics—dissidents and oppositionists who fail to recognize and regard the authority of the Lord or the king.
 - 1. Support Righteous Rulers (14:28). The strength and permanence of any ruler is dependent on the loyalty of his subjects.
 - 2. Gaining the King's Favor (16:15; 14:35; 19:12). Faithfulness to the king insures his favor.
 - 3. Provoking the King's Wrath (20:2; 19:12; 14:35). With the authority a king possesses, provoking his wrath is suicidal. Wisdom advises that we appease it (16:14).
- C. The King's Attendants (14:35). Those in the king's service must be sure to win his favor and avoid arousing his anger (16:15; 19:12).

1. Must Merit the King's Approval to Receive Promotion and Praise (14:35; 22:29).
2. Counsel He Gives Must be Tactful (25:15). He is in no position to scold the king.
3. Counsel He Gives Must be Truthful Too (16:13; 22:11). The king doesn't need a 'yes' man.
4. Knows His Place (25:6-7).
5. Control His Passions and Appetites (23:1-3). A man excessive and unrestrained at the king's table, is likely to be excessive with the authority given him by the king.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS—

- 1) *Are these proverbs applicable to all nations or just those ruled as a monarchy?*
- 2) *How is a nation's greatness measured?*
- 3) *Why must a ruler's throne be established on principles of righteousness and justice (cf. Psalm 97:1-2; 89:14)?*
- 4) *Why must he avoid overindulgence (31:2-6)?*
- 5) *What will compassion on his subjects insure for the king (29:2,14)?*
- 6) *Whether or not laws make sense or seem fair to us, why should we obey the laws of the nation?*
- 7) *Why are we to avoid those who rebel against the authority of our rulers (24:21-22)? Who is really in charge anyway?*
- 8) *Is revolt and uprising the solution to getting out from under a bad ruler? What are some possible channels and lawful solutions?*
- 9) *Why is it important to remain in the king's favor?*
- 10) *List some ways to win the king's favor and offset his anger.*