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The Passing of Our Queen

By Pauline Grimshaw

READINGS: **1 SAMUEL 8: 1-9** **1 SAMUEL 10: 23-27**
AC 4581

It seems like only yesterday, not seventy years ago, that we saw the black and white images of the coronation of Elizabeth, our late Queen, on the nine-inch screens of ancient televisions and not some seventy years ago. Now though, we come to the end of the Queen's life of use in this world and give thanks for the years of devoted service that she has given in this world.

On television we have seen and heard so many positive and loving comments about our Queen and how she is known, valued and respected across so many of the world's nations. It is hard to believe however that to some people today the whole concept of monarchy and coronation seems out-dated and irrelevant to modern life. In our reading from the first book of Samuel, the Israelites felt the same way about their priestly leaders all those thousands of years ago.

The Biblical Israelites in the time of Samuel were a

prime example of a discontented nation. They grumbled about being ruled over by a judge, a priest appointed by the Lord himself, and wanted to be like surrounding countries who had kings for rulers. Samuel sought the advice of the Lord, who told him to point out to the people the drawbacks of having a king but also told him to accede to the wishes of the people.

It is perhaps a fact of life that people are seldom content with the way in which they are governed. Yet all governments, good or bad, that carry out the administration of any country are unpopular for much of the time. You cannot satisfy all of the people all of the time, and sometimes unpopular choices have to be made. If there is no one to take charge and rule, then the result is not that everyone will live happily ever after, but it is more likely to be chaos and struggle as everyone tries to protect their own interests.

A democracy with governments elected and chosen by the people succeeds only if the nation being governed has a respect for civil law and order, which in itself derives from Divine order given through the Lord in His Divine Word. The basis of society in this country and in many other countries throughout the world, whether we realise it or not, is still underpinned by the teachings and codes of behaviour laid down in the Old and New Testaments. Where did these come from? They come ultimately from the Lord. In Heaven and Hell 217 we read 'all forms of government in the spiritual world agree in regarding the public good as the end and in this the good of each person.' The regard for the good of the individual and the well-being of society as a whole should be the hall mark of government rather than the seeking of worldly power and riches. We can see this in the life of our Queen who has been above party politics and has always seemed to pursue reconciliation and understanding in her relationships with others.

There is the Queen as a person with a private life but there is also a royal office adjoined to her which does make her special. In days gone by the sanctity of this office was known as the 'Divine right of Kings.' 'This has led to some monarchs in days gone-by believing that they could do what they liked because they had been specially chosen by God. In days gone by to go against the monarch was regarded as a sacrilegious act – the execution of Charles 1 was regarded by many as nothing less than the most shocking act of murder.

As a constitutional monarch the Queen does not interfere in the processes of the Government that legislates and ministers in her name. Over the years she has become a symbol of all that is good in the life of our country. She has given us a sense of stability and permanence and links both past, present and future in a way that a transitory president cannot do. She is above party politics, sides and factions. She reigns benevolently and wisely but does not rule! In years past the Queen and the Royal family were included in prayers on every Sunday morning, perhaps as a way of reminding us of the correspondence between the monarch as King and the link between church and state. So today we give thanks to the Lord for life lived by our Queen and for the safety and stability of our country. May we give thanks for the life of our Queen, and for the stability and safety of our country; and may her benign and loving influence be with us all now and in the years to come.