

# Ecclesiastes 8:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.

## Analysis

---

**I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God.** The Preacher advises submitting to royal authority, grounded in sacred oath. The Hebrew *shamar* (שָׁמַר, keep) means to guard, observe, or obey carefully. The phrase 'oath of God' (*shevuat elohim*, שְׁבוּעַת אֱלֹהִים) likely refers to covenant loyalty sworn before God—either the king's coronation oath or subjects' pledge of allegiance witnessed by the divine.

This counsel addresses civic responsibility under monarchical government. Israelite kings ruled under God's authority (Deuteronomy 17:14-20), and citizens owed obedience as ultimately rendered to God Himself. This principle extends beyond monarchy to all legitimate governing authority. Paul later commanded submission to governing authorities as God's servants (Romans 13:1-7), and Peter urged honoring the king (1 Peter 2:13-17). The oath's sacredness transforms political obedience into spiritual duty—defiance becomes not merely civil disobedience but covenant violation.

## Historical Context

---

Ancient Near Eastern monarchies functioned through oaths binding subjects to rulers. Israel's covenant framework meant kings ruled under divine mandate (2 Samuel 5:3; 1 Kings 1:30), and citizens' loyalty had theological significance. Solomon himself received pledges of allegiance (1 Kings 1:47-53). The 'oath of God' elevated political loyalty beyond mere pragmatism to sacred obligation.

However, this obedience had limits—when rulers commanded what contradicted God's law, obedience to God superseded political loyalty (Acts 5:29). The Reformers developed this into resistance theory: lesser magistrates could oppose tyrants violating God's law, but private citizens should generally submit while trusting God's justice.

## Related Passages

---

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

## Study Questions

---

1. How does understanding governmental authority as established by God affect your attitude toward laws and leaders you may disagree with?
2. Where is the boundary between submitting to authority 'in regard of the oath of God' and the duty to obey God rather than humans when they conflict?

## Interlinear Text

---

אֲנִי H589	פִּי commandment H6310	מֶלֶךְ the king's H4428	שָׁמַר I counsel thee to keep H8104	וְעַל H5921	דִּבְרֵי and that in regard H1700
תְּשׁוּבָת of the oath H7621	אֱלֹהִים: of God H430				

## Additional Cross-References

---

**1 Kings 2:43** (Word): Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with?

**Proverbs 24:21** (Kingdom): My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change:

**Titus 3:1** (Parallel theme): Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work,

---

From KJV Study • [kjevstudy.org](http://kjevstudy.org)