

CHAPTER 12

"On the Millennium, and the Scriptural Testimonies to the Doctrine of It"

by
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Part 1 Fifth Proposition

(Condensed and Paraphrased)

Brief Preface: This Fifth Proposition is perhaps the most striking because it sets the stage for the fulfillment of prophecy in the Twentieth Century, over one hundred years since Edward Greswell wrote it. Read this essay carefully and be prepared for a spectacular ending. (KM)

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Let us now proceed to the consideration of our fifth proposition: ***the restitution of the kingdom to Israel, including the appearance and manifestation of Jesus, the Messiah of the Jews, in his earthly reign during the thousand-year millennium.***

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1:32,33)

These words were part of the message of the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary at the time of the annunciation of the birth of Jesus Christ, and from them we are justified in insisting that the Lord God would give to him the throne of David his father. It is surely inconsistent with the truth of such an assurance to suppose that anything was to be given to Christ which had not before been possessed by David, much less given to him as his son which had not before been possessed by David as his father. Some maintain that this kingdom is simply and purely a spiritual one. Now Christ may have a spiritual kingdom, to be sure, but this is not the kingdom of David his father. He may sit on a spiritual throne, but he does not sit upon it as the son of David.

We shall not do justice to the meaning of the declaration in the above verses unless we compare it with two remarkable passages in the Old Testament, both of which relate to the cutting off of that throne from the posterity of David.

Psalms 89:19-36 conveys to the posterity of the family of David, according to the flesh (*κατὰ*

σάρκα), the assurance of a secure right to the throne of David and a perpetual succession in the kingdom. Compare Psalm 132:11, 12, 17, 18; 2 Sam. 7:12; 2 Chr. 6:16; and 1 Kings 8:25. Note in particular Jeremiah 33:17, 20, and 21, which affirms the same thing in the most striking and solemn manner:

For thus says Yahweh: "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" (vs. 17); Thus says Yahweh: "If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne" (vv. 20,21). Compare verses 25, 26.

The last two princes of the house of David who ever reigned over Judah were Coniah (Jeconiah) and Zedekiah. Let us now hear what the word of prophecy said with respect to any of their successors in regards to the throne.

O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of Yahweh! Thus says Yahweh: "Write this man down as childless, a man who shall not prosper in his days; for none of his descendants shall prosper, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling anymore in Judah" (Jer. 22:29,30).

The peculiar solemnity of this prelude to the passage shows that it was intended to usher in a prediction of no ordinary magnitude and importance. It was nothing less than the cutting off of all hope of succession to the throne of David from the line of Coniah. That Coniah is the person spoken of appears from verse 28, and the curse of childlessness denounced against him solely as the present possessor of the throne of David appears both from the context and from the fact that he did indeed have children. But they were born after his deportation to Babylon, and therefore he was not, nor destined to be, absolutely childless. But he was childless in the sense of lacking an heir in the lineal succession to the throne of his ancestors. Neither he nor any of his children ever again sat on that throne after he had been dispossessed of it by his captivity and removal to Babylon.

However, there was still another lineal descendant of David who succeeded Coniah in the possession of the throne of David, namely, Zedekiah (brother to Coniah's father Jehoiachin). Let us see the prophecy pronounced against him:

Now to you, O profane, wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose iniquity shall end, thus says the Lord GOD: "Remove the turban, and take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same. Exalt the humble, and humble the exalted. Overthrown, overthrown, I will make it overthrown! It shall be no longer, until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him" (Eze. 21:25-27).

Ezekiel predicts the total separation of the diadem and crown from their present possessor

as plainly as Jeremiah predicted the cutting off the succession in the line of David after Coniah. Yet the taking away the diadem and crown in the one case, and by similarity of reasoning the cutting off of succession in the other, were to be only temporary. One would come who was still considered to be the rightful possessor of the diadem and crown, and to him they would be restored. On the same principle, the recovery of the diadem and crown could not fail to reunite the interrupted succession from David.

Ezekiel's prophecy, therefore, reconciles the fact of a suspension of kings in the line of David with the original promise of a perpetual succession. The suspension was only partial, the deprivation only temporary. The royal succession in the line of David, the inheritance of his crown and sceptre, might be withheld from a certain portion of his descendants and lost for a certain number of generations; but they were not to be withheld from his posterity absolutely, nor was their loss to be perpetual. They were laid by, kept in reserve until one should come who had the right to hold them. On his appearing to claim them, they would be restored. That this person must be some lineal descendant of David is self-evident; that he was our Savior Jesus Christ every Christian will grant.

Christ united in himself all the posterity of David both in the line of Solomon and that of Nathan, for both descended from David and Bathsheba. It was to their posterity in particular that the original grant had specially restricted the promise of a hereditary earthly kingdom. At the captivity these lines were united in the person of Zerubbabel. Through Zerubbabel's son Rhesa (Luke 3:27), it was transmitted to Christ through Eli and Mary, and through his other son, Abiud (Matt. 1:13), it was transmitted to Christ through Joseph. By this means, the right of the posterity of David to the earthly throne of Israel continued even when it seemed to have fallen into abeyance upon the death of Zedekiah at the first captivity, until it came to be finally centered in the person of Jesus Christ, both in the natural sense as the firstborn of Mary and in the civil or legal sense as the firstborn of Joseph.

These hereditary privileges are represented under the image of the diadem and crown, that is, the insignia of royalty, and such insignia as were previously supposed to have been worn by the last of the monarchs of the family of David. The restitution of such insignia to Christ, whose right they were, is clearly the restitution of the earthly kingdom to the rightful hereditary possessor. It can be no spiritual kingdom that is denoted by such insignia of royalty.

The language, then, of the angel Gabriel to Mary is perceptibly conformable to that of the prophet Ezekiel. The Lord God, Ezekiel said, would give the diadem and crown of the kings of Israel, the descendants of David, to him whose right they were. The Lord God, says Gabriel to Mary, would give to Jesus her son the throne of his father David. But the diadem and crown of the kings had long been overthrown and the hereditary throne of David had long been vacant. But though overthrown and removed from sight, the insignia of earthly royalty were still in existence. Though vacated for so many generations, the throne of

David was still to have a successor in due time.

There are passages in the New Testament that deserve our notice. The first is Acts 1:6,7:

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority."

This was the question the apostles asked our Lord on the last occasion of their meeting, before his departure into heaven. Now the import of the question was manifestly not to be informed *if* there was ever to be such a thing as the restitution of the kingdom to Israel--and a restitution effected by Christ himself--but, taking that for granted, it was to know if the time of the restitution was come, whether it would be restored by Christ *then*. The answer of our Lord is plainly directed to this point. It was not to assure them that it was a false and mistaken idea to expect the restitution of the kingdom some time or other, but to reprove them for asking to be informed about the *time*. It was inappropriate to pry into mysteries or secrets purposely concealed by the Father.

We might argue in like manner from our Savior's reply to the two disciples with whom he conversed on the way to Emmaus after his resurrection: "*O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?*" (Luke 24:26,27). This reply was addressed to the disappointment of their hopes at the unexpected event of the death of their Master: "*But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel*" (Luke 24:21). They were not mistaken in expecting the Christ to be the Redeemer of Israel, that is, an earthly deliverer in general, but in expecting him to be so *then*. The lack of understanding and slowness of heart with which they were reprov'd did not consist in their having been unable to discern the only true meaning of those parts of Scripture which held out the promise of an earthly deliverer, but simply in having overlooked the appointed order and course of succession in which those promises could be realized. The Messiah, even as an earthly king, was bound to suffer before he could enter into his glory. They should have expected from Scripture a suffering Messiah first and a triumphant one afterwards.

Other passages in the gospels speak of Christ as an earthly king, leaving it to be implied that such a description is strictly applicable to him in general. Thus in the *Magnificat* of the Virgin we read: "*He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly*" (Luke 1:51,52). Are we not reading here of earthly monarchs whom God had scattered; and must not such monarchs be understood when we read of humble men of lowly degree being lifted to eminence in their stead? Considering the present poverty of the family of David, to whom the right of the throne still belonged notwithstanding their humble circumstances, Mary may be alluding to the dispensation of Providence that will restore them to their ancient rank and dignity.

We also read of magi from the east who came to Jerusalem inquiring, "*Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?*" (Matt. 2:2). Herod the Great, the Sanhedrin, and all Jerusalem understood this to be an inquiry about the Messiah in the capacity of an earthly prince. And the prophecy of Micah 5:2, applied by the Sanhedrin to designate the birthplace of the Messiah, defines the birthplace of an earthly prince or leader, whose office should be to *feed*, or to *tend*, his people.

Again, consider Satan's temptation to Christ, offering him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory if Jesus would fall down and worship him. It becomes much more significant if these kingdoms and their glory were actually to become the exclusive right of the Messiah. The thing proposed by Satan was not an absolute nonentity, which the Messiah could at no time look forward to enjoying; but it was a reality which, even then, belonged to him as an inheritance.

Again, Nathanael, as soon as he was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, recognized him immediately by the title of the Son of God and of the King of Israel (John 1:49), which he no doubt meant in the sense of an earthly king. Does our Savior correct his mistake, if it was one? No indeed. Jesus, recognizing the truth of the titles, merely tells Nathanael that his confessed faith should have even greater proofs to rest upon than had yet been given.

At the last Passover, Jesus entered Jerusalem sitting upon a donkey. The people welcomed him with loud hosannahs fitting only for an earthly king; and Jesus condescended so far as to enter with such a degree of pomp and solemnity as to confirm them in their belief that he was one.

The Jewish Sanhedrin approached Pilate denouncing Jesus for setting himself up as an earthly king, thus charging him with rebelling against the Roman emperor. In answer to a question of Pilate as to whether he was truly such a king or not, Jesus replied in the affirmative, both in private and in public. And showing their contempt of Jesus allegedly being such a king, both Pilate and Herod engaged in the highest mockery by treating him with regal honors and clothing him in the robe peculiar to kings.

It was still in the same supposed character of an earthly king that Jesus was finally crucified. The superscription of his accusation bore no other title than *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*. In all these instances, the title "King of the Jews" as applied to our Savior, whether in earnest or in derision, undoubtedly meant such a king as the whole nation expected; that is, no spiritual monarch but an earthly prince.

The prayer of the penitent and believing robber, "*Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom*" (Luke 23:42), was given in faith not only of the futurity of some kingdom of Christ's in general, but of such a kingdom as this in particular. It would be absurd to suppose that this robber had any other notion of the kingdom in question than the rest of

his countrymen. Also, it is manifest that the words of his petition had a reference to the inscription on the cross of Jesus, which set him forth as an earthly king. And what was the answer of Jesus to his prayer? "*Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise*" (Luke 23:43). Now, how was this an answer to the penitent thief's question? In that Jesus promised the robber that he should that day be with him in paradise, Jesus gave him the most convincing assurance that he should be remembered when he, the Messiah, came into his earthly kingdom, for it is in paradise where the souls of all the good and faithful are reserved until their manifestation again in the flesh.

And lastly, consider Luke 21:24: "*And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*" (Luke 21:24). If Jerusalem is to continue to be trodden down by strangers until a certain time is accomplished, then at the end of that time it seems a necessary inference that Jerusalem is to be restored to its own people. It cannot both cease to be trodden down by strangers and not be reoccupied by its own people.

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Edward Greswell published this book in 1834. However, Luke 21:24 has now taken on immense significance. As a result of the Six Day War in 1967, Jerusalem was reunified under Israeli rule for the first time since A.D. 70. "*And Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*" Jerusalem is no longer "trodden down by the Gentiles." It is now the capital of the State of Israel, and "the times of the Gentiles" seem to have now been fulfilled. What follows the restoration of Jewish control of Jerusalem according to the Olivet discourse? The cosmic signs that portend the second advent of Jesus.

An Exposition of the Parables and of Other Parts of the Gospels, Vol. I. Oxford: J. G. & F. Rivington, 1834. Liberty taken for paraphrasing.