



Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10

A Study of the Messiah - The King in David's Lineage -

As we have already said, the word “Messiah” means “anointed one.” Three important offices were anointed in the Old Testament: prophet, priest, and king. We’ve already seen that God’s word promised that the Messiah would be a prophet in the mold of Moses. We will see next week that the Messiah would be a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Now, let us see that the Messiah would be a king in the lineage of David.

The hint of a royal Messiah is found in several small passages in the Old Testament. For example, In Genesis 24:10, when Jacob pronounced inspired blessings over each of his sons, the future tribes of Israel, he said this of Judah:

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
Until Shiloh comes,
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

It is here we see that the Messianic promise is given not to the oldest son, Reuben, but to the fourth-

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oldest son, Judah. The promise included rulership over “the peoples.” Now, much of this has to do with the translation of the Heb. word *sylh*. Most of the best scholarship rejects the place-name Shiloh, and translates the sentence “until he comes *to whom it belongs*.” In other words, Jacob was prophesying that Judah would maintain a kingly line until a greater King, one to whom rulership truly belonged, would come and take it, and his reign would extend over all the peoples. This is still up for some debate, but there is no doubt that it fits with what we now understand, that Jesus is “the lion from the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5) who established His kingdom, the church (Col. 1:15).

Numbers 24:17 contains another intriguing hint. When the Spirit came over Balaam, he said regarding the encamped Israelite nation:

I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not near;
A star shall come forth from Jacob,
And a scepter shall rise from Israel,
And shall crush through the forehead of Moab,
And tear down all the sons of Sheth...

Again, this is a very old and often-debated verse, but in it, the hired prophet Balaam, guided by inspiration, saw a distant time when “a star from Jacob” would come forth and rule, crushing Israel’s enemies. In a sense David and other later rulers did dominate Moab, but not necessarily in the full sense that Jesus did by destroying the reign of Satan and establishing His eternal kingdom. It seems accurate to say that Balaam was looking through the centuries to Jesus, “the offspring of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16).

Zechariah 6:11–15 gives us a hint, too. Everyone knows that the Law of Moses makes it impossible for one man to be both king and priest. They came from two separate tribes, Judah and Levi respectively. In fact, rabbis in Qumran used to speculate that there might be two Messiahs on the way—one who would serve as priest, and the other who would serve as king. But God told Zechariah to place a crown on the head of the high priest Joshua, saying that a “Branch” would come:

...It is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.

This understanding is strengthened when we remember that Melchizedek (a forerunner of Christ) was both king and priest in his day (see Psalm 110:4, Heb. 7:1–2, 13–14). The meaning of Zechariah's action is hard to grasp, until we see what God accomplished in Christ!

Finally, we come to one of the most important Messianic predictions of all, in 2 Samuel 7. When King David had secured his kingdom and built his palace, he desired to build a permanent house for God to dwell in, rather than the tent in the wilderness. God was touched by David's goodwill, but uninterested. The task of building a temple would fall to a future king, Solomon.

Instead, God turned around and made a promise to David:

When your days are complete, and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.

There are many important aspects to this promise. It wouldn't be fulfilled until long after David's death. It would be fulfilled in one of David's descendants, who would build a house for God's name. God would firmly establish and strengthen his kingdom, and it would endure forever. God and this future king would enjoy a father/son relationship.

David knew that whatever God meant was something big (2 Sam. 7:19ff, 23:1–7)! From our side of the cross, we can see very clearly that

this refers to Jesus. God maintained the Davidic dynasty down through the centuries, through all the ups and downs of the kingdom (1 Kings 15:1–6 and 2 Kings 11:1–3, for examples). While the northern tribes went into rebellion and suffered the collapse of many dynasties, God did not allow David’s line to die out.

The hope of a great king in David’s line was revisited by the prophets over and over again (Ps. 89:19–37, 132:10–18, Isa. 2:1–4, 11:1–16, 55:3, Jer. 23:5–8, 33:14–22, Ezek. 37:24–28, Dan. 2:44–45, Hos. 3:1–5, Amos 9:11, etc) as a vital and central theme of Messianic prophecy. Sure enough, when the time came, Gabriel told Mary,

...you will bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David., and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end (Luke 1:32–33, *cf.* 3:31, Matt. 1:6).

Indeed, Jesus built a spiritual house for God, the church (1 Tim. 3:15, 1 Cor. 6:19, 2 Cor. 6:16, Heb. 3:6, 1 Pet. 2:5). The gates of Hades will never prevail against it (Matt. 16:16–19). Jesus is King over this heavenly kingdom. He is everything that David was—a loving shepherd, a firm and courageous leader, a steadfast savior—and more. Jesus does not reign in Jerusalem (Jer. 22:30), but in heaven itself (Eph. 1:22–23, Heb. 1:8). Jesus is our beloved and awesome King!

There is one difficulty (which really deserves an article all its own to address): the prediction says of the coming king, “when he commits iniquity...” Jesus was sinless, right (Heb. 4:15, 1 Pet. 1:19)? How does that not ruin everything? Some view it as a mixed reference to Solomon and Jesus. I view it as referring to Jesus death on *behalf* of His offspring, the members of the church (1 Pet. 2:24). —*John Guzzetta*

Quote of the Week:

“He who provides for this life, but takes no care for eternity, is wise for a moment, but foolish forever.”

—*John Tillotson*