

David's Son and David's Lord

Sunday, December 20, 2009

Text: 2 Samuel 7:1-16; Luke 1:26-38

Introduction

At many times, over the course of many centuries, God spoke to his people by the prophets, giving hints here and there of his redemptive purpose in the Lord Jesus Christ. We might think of each prophetic utterance as a brush stroke on a canvas as God painted a portrait of the coming Redeemer. At first the image was very indistinct. It lacked sufficient detail to be clearly understood, and the people had only very vague notions about: (1) who the Redeemer was, (2) where he would come from, (3) when he would make his appearance, and (4) what he would do when he arrived. But with each stroke of the brush a clearer, more distinct image began to emerge.

The Messiah's Descent

One of the things which God saw fit to reveal ahead of time was the Messiah's descent, that is, his ancestry, his lineage. And as the generations passed, this too came into sharper focus.

The Seed of the Woman

The very first prophecy of the coming Redeemer is found in Genesis 3, immediately after the fall. In pronouncing a curse upon the serpent, the Lord God said,

I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,

and you shall bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15)

Here we have a prophecy of a certain offspring (or more literally, a certain *seed*) of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head. The prophecy is given in very vague and cryptic terms. One of the few things that might have been gleaned from it with any degree of certainty was that there was to be a man – some descendant of Eve – who would crush Satan's power. When we consider the prophecy now (*after the fact*) we can understand more of its implications. But when it was first given it was a far more difficult and obscure prophecy. All that could be known for certain was that a descendant of Eve would bruise the serpent's head. Man's Redeemer would himself be a man, not an angel of God, nor the Lord God himself acting from heaven, but a man born to a woman. Now we know from later revelation that this man was *more* than a man – he was God come in the flesh. But the burden of this prophecy was to show that the Redeemer of man would himself be a man.

Descended from Shem

Later, however, the Lord was pleased to narrow the focus a bit, to give greater specificity to the promise. Not only would the Redeemer be a descendant of Eve – which could have been any man – but he would be a descendant of Shem, one of the three sons of Noah. All the nations of the world are descended from Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Generally speaking, the peoples of Europe are descended from Japheth, the peoples of Africa from Ham, and the peoples of Asia, including the Middle East, from Shem.

After the flood, the Spirit of prophecy came upon Noah and he said,

“Cursed be Canaan [one of the descendants of Ham];

a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.”

He also said,

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem;
and let Canaan be his servant.

May God enlarge Japheth,
and let him dwell in the tents of Shem,
and let Canaan be his servant” (Gen. 9:25-27)

The more immediate purpose of this prophecy was to show how the Canaanites were destined to be destroyed by the hands of Israel. But there are other things to be learned here as well. Notice how the Lord is specifically said to be the God of Shem, who was the great ancestor of Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people. Notice also what it says concerning Japheth. “May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem.” In all this the preeminence is clearly given to Shem.

We learn from the word of the Lord given in the garden that the Redeemer would be a man. We learn from the prophecy of Noah that he would come from the line of Shem.

The Seed of Abraham

God narrowed the field even further with the calling of Abraham, eighth in the line of Shem. He made it clear that it would be through Abraham that he would bring the Redeemer into the world. (Gen. 12:1-3)

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.

² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and *in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”

Through Isaac

Abraham had two sons: Ishmael, the firstborn, whom he had by his handmaid Hagar; and Isaac whom he had by his wife Sarah. But God told him, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named" (Gen. 21:12).

Through Jacob

Isaac, in turn, had two sons by the same wife, in fact twins: Jacob and Esau. Esau was the elder of the two. He was delivered first. But God said, "The older shall serve the younger" (Gen. 25:23). And so God chose Jacob over Esau.

Through Judah

Jacob, in turn, had 12 sons who formed the 12 tribes of Israel. Of these, God passed over Rueben, Simeon, and Levi, and chose Judah, the fourth-born, through whom he would bring the Messiah, as we read in Genesis 49:10.

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until tribute comes to him;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

The scepter is a symbol of royal authority. And here it is prophesied that the scepter would be given to Judah, indicating the tribe from which the kings of Israel (including the Messiah) would come.

Through David

But God narrowed the field still further, not only indicating the tribe, but also the family within the tribe, for God chose the house and

family of David. This is what we read about in 2 Samuel a few moments ago.

David wished to build a house for God. That is, he wished to build a temple, a permanent structure, to replace the tabernacle (tent). David was comfortably settled in a house in Jerusalem. He had spent a number years in the wilderness, hiding from Saul before he became king. He spent a number of more years after he became king securing his kingdom against threats both foreign and domestic, during which time he was wandering about in his campaigns living in tents. But now he was settled comfortably in a house in Jerusalem, and his thoughts turned to something that began to trouble him.

The king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent" (2 Sam. 7:2).

David thought it inappropriate that it should be so; that he should have finer accommodations than the ark of God, and he wished to remedy the situation by building a house for God (i.e., a temple). And Nathan said,

"Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you" (2 Sam. 7:3).

Now Nathan apparently said this on his own initiative. He seemed to be applying a general principle to a particular situation. He had seen how God had blessed everything David had set his hand to do and he concluded that God would bless this also. And so he said, "Go do it David, for the Lord is with you." However, that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying that David would not build a house for the Lord, *but that the Lord would build a house for David.*

The LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house (2 Sam. 7:11b).

Do you get it? David says, "I will build a house (temple) for the Lord." And the Lord says, "No, David, I will build you a house." By this he means a *dynasty*. This becomes clear in what follows:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house [temple] for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever (vv. 12-13).

When David's eyes should close in death God would seat one of his sons upon his throne after him; and it would be he who should build a temple for God. This, of course, refers to Solomon, David's son and successor. And God said, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever." God promised to establish a dynasty for David that would never end, an enduring kingdom.

This did not mean, however, that there might not be an interruption in the line of kings, due to their unfaithfulness, for look at what the Lord says in the next verses:

I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men (v. 14).

In other words, God would chasten and correct David's royal sons if they should be unfaithful to the charge which he had committed to them. He would discipline them with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, meaning that he would raise up Israel's enemies to punish them, as happened at various points in subsequent history, to

such an extent that God even deposed them and sent the people away into exile in Babylon.

Look at the promise in verse 15, however:

but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you (v. 15)

Even though he might find it necessary to chasten and afflict David's sons (and sometimes very severely) for their unfaithfulness, nevertheless, he would not remove his steadfast love from them. This means that he would not permanently remove royal authority from David's family and give it to someone else, as he had done in the case of Saul. He took the throne from Saul and his family, who were from the tribe of Benjamin, and gave it instead to David and his descendants after him.

The promise is repeated in a summary fashion in verse 16.

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.

Psalm 89 was written by Ethan in praise of this covenant which God made with David.

I will sing of the steadfast love of the LORD, forever;
with my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations.

For I said, "Steadfast love will be built up forever;
in the heavens you will establish your faithfulness."

You have said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:

'I will establish your offspring forever,
and build your throne for all generations'..."

Once for all I have sworn by my holiness;
I will not lie to David.
His offspring shall endure forever,
his throne as long as the sun before me.
Like the moon it shall be established forever,
a faithful witness in the skies" (Ps. 89:1-4, 35-37)

David's dynasty lasted more than four hundred years until it was interrupted by the exile. The exile itself was a fulfillment of what God had said in his original promise, that if David's sons should commit iniquity he would discipline them with the rod of men (2 Sam. 7:14). After the exile, no son of David ever returned to the throne in Jerusalem. "But throughout this interruption of the Davidic line, the prophets assured Israel that God was righteous and would not allow His promise to David to fail."¹ Take Isaiah's words for instance in chapter eleven:

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit (Isa. 11:1)

Though with the exile the family of Jesse (David's father) was like a tree cut down to a stump, yet God would cause a shoot to come forth; he would cause a branch from his roots to bear fruit.

After this prophecy of Isaiah this imagery of the Messianic "Branch" becomes rather prominent in the prophets.

Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land (Jer. 23:5; see also 33:15; Zech. 3:8; 6:12)

¹ Peter Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), p. 197

God would not break his covenant with David. He would not take away his steadfast love. What he had promised he would most certainly fulfill. One would be born in David's line who would arise and take his father's throne.

But nothing looked more unlikely in the first century than a revival of the throne of David. The once great family of David was reduced to nothing. The heir to the throne was a poor carpenter, barely eking out an existence for himself in the little town of Nazareth. The king of the Jews was a man by the name of Herod. He was not even a Jew. He was an Idumean, a descendant, not of Jacob, but of Esau. He was a vassal of the Roman Empire, which ruled the Mediterranean world with an iron fist. What could be more unlikely than a revival of the throne of David?

And yet the angel Gabriel appeared to a poor peasant girl in the little town of Nazareth and announced that she, although a virgin, would conceive in her womb and bear a son, whom she was to name Jesus. Moreover, he said,

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to 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 (Lk. 1:32-33).

What God had promised to David so long ago he was about to fulfill in the virgin's son.

Here, however, we encounter what some people have regarded as a very difficult problem, namely, that Jesus never exercised any political authority on earth. He never sat upon the throne in Jerusalem.

In the NT we read of Tiberius, the Roman emperor, exercising his power over the Mediterranean world. We read of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea, the official representative of the emperor. We read of Herod Antipas the puppet king, the vassal of Rome. But we never read of *Jesus* holding any political office. How then can this prophecy have been fulfilled in him? And how can Gabriel's word be counted true, that he would be given the throne of his father David?

What we must understand is that this promise, this prophecy, like all the promises and prophecies of God, was fulfilled in a manner far greater than what had ever been dreamed possible.

Let me explain by giving you an analogy, another prophecy that was fulfilled in a way far exceeding anyone's expectations. God had promised Abraham that he and his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:5; 13:14-15; 17:8). But when St. Paul speaks of this in Romans chapter four, he says that God made Abraham the heir of the world (Rom. 4:13), not merely an heir of the land of Canaan, but heir of the world. The promise of the land of Canaan was only a type, a representative portion of the world.

In the same way, the royal authority of David over Israel was only a type of Christ's rule over all the nations of the earth. God's promise to David was fulfilled when Jesus was taken up into heaven and seated at the right hand of God the Father. This is what Peter tells us in his Pentecost sermon.

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the

resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool.”

Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified (Acts 2:29-36)

When he says that God has made him both Lord and Christ, he means that he has made him to be a king. In fact, in the book of Revelation he is presented to us as the King of kings and the Lord of Lords (19:6), and the ruler of kings on earth (1:5).

The prophet Daniel saw this before hand. In the seventh chapter of his book he tells us of a vision that was given to him. He said,

I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.
And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14)

Jesus Christ is even now enthroned in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. But make no mistake, this does not mean that his authority and rule are only meaningful in some invisible spiritual realm which has nothing to do with life in this world. No, far from it! He even now presides over all men and all nations of the earth. He rules all men as individuals and all men organized into civil bodies politic. He rules matters of family, church, and state. He has been given a universal dominion that will never end.

Finis

