

THE THRONE OF DAVID

Americans have no royalty like England, Denmark, and some other countries of the world, so they bestow their fixation upon celebrities and personalities. But to get a real sense of what it is like to have a king or queen just visit London's Buckingham Palace at the changing of the guard and you will feel the excitement and power that comes from having a Queen Elizabeth. Or go to Windsor Castle to the west of London and there the regal history of England comes alive.

We have been following David's footsteps in his journey to becoming king of Israel. Rome is often called the Eternal City, but this honor belongs to Jerusalem, for when this world ends there will be a New Jerusalem, a city that will exist throughout eternity. That city is our future home. It came about this way—

For more than seven years after Saul died, David was simply King of Judah. Then, his headquarters were in Hebron, but when he became king over all Israel, he realized it would be a good political move to locate his court in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was more central to all Israel and would mean that he was not partial just to Judea but favored all the twelve tribes of Israel.

Jerusalem was an ancient city that dated from at least 1,700 B. C. Melchizedek was king of Salem or Jerusalem. As priest of the Most High God he brought bread and wine to Abraham following his victory over the kings.

God had promised to give Jerusalem to his people. However, this formidable fortress, this spectacular city was inhabited by the Jebusites, who had remained there even after Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Canaan. The Israelites had never brought Jerusalem into subjection and regarded it as unconquerable. But David could not bear the thought of Jerusalem remaining in the possession of God's enemies.

David always had Jerusalem in mind because it was only eight miles from Bethlehem, where he grew up. And looking at the seemingly unassailable fortress in the distance, no doubt he often thought of capturing the city for God's nation. Now the time had come and he had sufficient troops to make an assault, for Israel finally came over to him, bringing 341,000 fighting men to join his forces.

Jerusalem seeming impregnable. Previous attempts to capture the city had failed, but they had been made from without. David knew

something of the topography of the city and remembered that the Gihon spring rose under the city and had been tapped by a tunnel driven through solid rock. The water ran through the tunnel into a large underground pool, which was connected to the surface by a vertical forty-foot shaft into which people could lower their buckets to draw up the cold, clear water. He realized that if he were to make a successful assault on Jerusalem, he would have to enter the city by this underground aqueduct and take it from within.

But whom could he send on this secret, dangerous mission? David decided to set his men a challenge. "And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief." 1 Chronicles 11:6. Joab had once commanded David's army but had fallen into disgrace for killing Abner. Joab saw this as an opportunity to redeem himself in David's eyes. Wading through waist-high water, Joab and others who followed his lead succeeded in getting into the city and captured it.

After David conquered Jerusalem, people gave it many nicknames: they called it "the City of David," "the royal city" and "Zion," but it also retained its true name, "Jerusalem."

David and the kingdom of Israel was at the height of its power. Although, in demanding a king, the children of Israel rejected God, He did not reject them. It was not God's design that Israel should ever have any other king than Himself, but they were not content to walk by faith, having a King whom they could not see. Nevertheless the kingdom still remained the Lord's, and therefore He exercised His right to appoint rulers.

Even so it is in all the world. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Psalm 24:1. "His kingdom ruleth over all." Psalm 103:19. The people of the world do not recognize Him as King, and boast in the pride of their own Governments; yet "the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." "He removeth kings, and setteth up kings." Dan. 4:32; 2:21. "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God." Rom. 13:1. This is why every soul ought to be subject unto "the *higher* powers," and is an evidence that the Lord's kingdom includes the whole earth, even though the rulers who for a season are allowed to imagine that they are holding the reins, set themselves up against Him.

STRANGERS AND SOJOURNERS IN DAVID'S TIME

So when in the providence of God David came to the throne of Israel, “and the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies” (2 Sam. 7:1), it was in his heart to build a temple to the Lord. At first the prophet Nathan, speaking his own words, said to him, “Go, do all that is in thine heart,” but afterwards he spoke the word of the Lord, and said that David should not build it. At that time the Lord said to David:—

“I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more as at the first, and as from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. Moreover the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee an house.” 2 Samuel 7:10, 11.

The people of Israel therefore had not yet obtained the rest and the inheritance. David was a powerful king, and had “a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth,” (2 Sam. 7:8) yet when he bequeathed the kingdom, with all the material for the building of the temple, to his son Solomon, he said in his prayer to God, “We are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is none abiding.” 1 Chronicles 29:15.

At the time when the kingdom of Israel was as great and powerful as it ever was on this earth, the king declared himself to be as much a stranger and sojourner in the land as was Abraham, who had “none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on.” Acts 7:5. David in his house of cedar, as well as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who dwelt in tents, “sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country.” Hebrews 11:9. Not only Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but Gideon, Samson, Jephthae, David, Samuel, and the prophets, with many others, “having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.” Hebrews 11:39. What stronger evidence could there be that the inheritance which God promised to Abraham and his seed was never a temporal possession in “this present evil world”?

How temporal this world is came home to me recently when not a mile from my home I would see a raging wildfire burning on the hilltop driven by the wind. The concern was so great that residents were outside spying its progress in the hopes that it would not progress to our neighborhood. We have seen what wildfires can do by incinerating homes in a matter of minutes. Surely our possessions on this earth are but temporal.

THE TEMPORAL JERUSALEM SIGNIFIES BONDAGE

Since the great king David, at the height of his power, had not received the promise, what utter folly it is to suppose that the promise to restore Israel to their own land can ever be fulfilled by any return of the Jews to old Jerusalem. Those who are building their hopes on "Jerusalem which now is," are losing all the blessedness of the Gospel. "We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear," therefore we will put no confidence in anything connected with old Jerusalem; for "Jerusalem which now is," "is in bondage with her children; but Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Gal. 4:25, 26. When the promise is fulfilled, and the people of Israel really possess the land, and are no more strangers and sojourners in it, their days will no more be as a shadow, but they will abide for ever.

But "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9. Even in the days of Moses, the time of the promise was at hand (Acts 7:19), but the people would not have it. They chose this present evil world, rather than the world to come. But God had sworn by Himself that the seed of faithful Abraham should enter in, and "seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief; again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Hebrews 4:6, 7.

The unbelief of man cannot make the promise of God of none effect. Romans 3:3. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself." 2 Timothy 2:13. If not a single soul of the natural descendants of Abraham and Jacob proved themselves children of Abraham, but were all children of the devil (John 8:39-44), God's promise to the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be fulfilled to the letter, for God is able even of the stones of the ground to "raise up children unto Abraham." Matthew 3:19. That would simply be a repetition of what He did in the beginning, when He made man of the dust of the ground. If Joshua had given them rest, then of course there would have been no need of any further day of salvation; but the unfaithfulness of professed followers of God delays the fulfillment, and so God in His mercy grants another day, and that is "Today." "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of

salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2. “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.”

“TODAY”

Just think of it! even when David lived, it is called “after so long a time.” It was indeed a “long time,” fully five hundred years after the promise might have been fulfilled; and yet, after so much longer a time the Lord still offers “another day.” That other day is *today*; we have not a year given us in which to accept the offer of salvation, not next month, not next week, not even tomorrow, but only *today*. That is all the time that God has given us—probation is but one day long. With how much greater force, therefore, the words come to us after so long a time, “*Today*, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts.” Hebrews 3:7, 8. What a glorious treasure God has given us in *today*,—the opportunity of entering into the gate of righteousness. Christ is the door, and by Him all may enter in “while it is called *today*.” Shall we not accept it as “the day which the Lord hath made” and “be glad and rejoice in it?”

Kimiko Terry’s disease ridden body testified that she had not long to live. When I was introduced to her in her home her words were, “I am afraid to die.” She had requested baptism, but pastors in the past had refused. She could not get out of her home, so we immediately filled her bathtub with water and proceeded to baptize her into Christ. Upon coming out of the water she raised her arms praising God saying, “Now, I am no longer afraid.” Today is the day of salvation. Shortly thereafter she passed away and now is asleep in Jesus.

This rest is announced in the Gospel, for Christ says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” Matt. 11:28-30. The people of Israel in old time failed of this rest, not because it was not offered them, but because when the Gospel was preached to them they did not believe; the Gospel that is now preached to us is the very same that was preached to them. Heb. 4:2.

The rest is all prepared, for “we which have believed do enter into rest, as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, If they shall enter into My rest.” Hebrews 4:3. God has sworn by Himself that the seed of Abraham—those who have his faith—should enter into rest; and that was equivalent to an oath that they who did not believe should not enter in, and therefore God did indeed swear that the faithless ones

should not enter in. This was not an arbitrary decree, but a statement of fact, for it is as impossible for an unbelieving person to enter into rest as it would be for a man to live and grow strong without eating, drinking, or breathing.

The fact that “they could not enter in because of unbelief” shows that they would have entered in if they had believed; and the fact that perfect rest was all ready for them, is still further shown by the statement, “the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Hebrews 4:3. When works are finished, rest must ensue; accordingly we read that “God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” Hebrews 4:4. That is what God said in one place of the seventh day; but in another place He said, “They shall not enter into My rest.” Hebrews 4:11. We see, therefore, that the rest which was ready, and which the children of Israel did not enter into because of unbelief, was the rest connected with the seventh day. For it was God’s rest that was offered them, and it was His rest that they failed to secure, and the seventh day is the Sabbath—rest—of the Lord; it is the only rest of which we read in connection with God—God rested on the seventh day from all His work—and that rest was ready as soon as the work of creation was completed.

GOD’S WORK AND GOD’S REST

The rest that is promised is God’s rest. Rest follows labor, but not until the labor is completed. A man cannot rest from a given work until that work is finished. God’s work is creation, a complete, perfect work; “God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made.” Genesis 1:31; 2:1-3.

The work was perfect,—it was as good as God Himself could make it, as perfect as He is,—and it was all done; therefore the rest was also perfect. There was no taint of the curse; it was absolute, pure, unalloyed rest. God looked upon His work, and there was nothing to cause Him regret; there was nothing to induce Him to say, “If I had it to do over again—;” there was no room for alteration or amendment; He was perfectly satisfied and delighted with what He had wrought. Ah, what tongue or pen can describe, or what mind imagine, the

sense of boundless satisfaction, the delicious peace and content that must necessarily follow work *all done* and *well done*? This earth affords no such enjoyment, for—

“Labor with what zeal we will,
Something still remains undone;
Something uncompleted still
Waits the rising of the sun;”

but all that sweet satisfaction and delicious rest God enjoyed in as much greater degree than human mind can imagine it, as God is greater than man, on that seventh day when God rested from all His work. This incomparable rest is what God gave man in the beginning. “And the Lord God took the man, and *caused him to rest in the garden of delight* to dress it and to keep it.” Genesis 2:15.

Man entered into rest, because he entered into God’s perfect, finished work. He was God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before prepared, that he should walk in them. “This is the work of God, that ye believe,” (John 6:29), and it was solely by faith that Adam could enjoy God’s work and share His rest; for as soon as he disbelieved God, taking the word of Satan instead, he lost everything. He had no power in himself, for he was but dust of the ground.

Christ has purchased the possession by bearing the curse which came upon it in consequence of Satan’s maliciousness, and which constituted the evil one’s sole claim to it. Thus He bought Satan’s technical and usurped claim, and became sole heir to the whole world.

But the promise to give the dominion to Christ did not have reference to His first advent. At the first advent of Christ the Jews rejected Jesus, they had not the power to put him to death, and He was formally condemned and executed by the Romans.

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus wept over Jerusalem, saying, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” Matthew 23:37-39.

The rejection of the Messiah filled up the cup of the iniquity of the Jewish nation. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” John 1:11. If they had accepted Him, they might, even at that

late day, and after so many apostasies, have still remained the chosen people of God, through whom the nations of the world should be enlightened, and around whose standard of the faithful would flock.

Never again would the tribes go up to Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth; no longer should the gorgeous temple be called a house of prayer for all nations. When Christ uttered that last cry upon the cross, "It is finished," the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, showing that their house was left and to them desolate. Less than forty years later (A. D. 70), the Romans besieged Jerusalem and utterly destroyed it.

Although the Jewish people as a nation were rejected, God did not forget His promise. Centuries before, He had said to David that his throne shall be established, and the people of Israel should continue forever; and this promise he could not break. Isaiah had made the prophetic statement that, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Here, as in the promise made to Abraham, we find that Christ is the seed. It is through Christ that David's kingdom is to be established forever, and when the angel Gabriel came to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus, he said of Him, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:31-33.

David understood that the promise concerning the establishment of his kingdom was to be fulfilled in this manner. On the day of Pentecost, Peter said: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell [the grave], neither His flesh did see corruption." Acts 2:29-31. It was this assurance that caused David,

like the other patriarchs, to die in full faith that the promise would be fulfilled.

Christ knew full well that the house of Jacob and the throne of David should endure forever even while he was foretelling the utter destruction of the Jewish nation. John 18:36; Acts 1:6, 7. He was now ascended to heaven, to sit down at the right hand of God.

Through the prophet John He said: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne." Revelation 3:21. So He has not yet received His kingdom, but sits upon His Father's throne, which is a throne of grace (Hebrews 4:14-16), procuring pardon and salvation for all who come unto God by Him.

Since Christ sits upon a throne of grace, the kingdom in which He now rules must be a kingdom of grace. This is an entirely different kingdom from the kingdom of glory, and is designed to fit subjects for that kingdom. Those who are in the kingdom of grace may expect to suffer tribulation, because tribulation works patience, and causes the sufferer to know more of the grace of God. But the kingdom of glory will put an end to all tribulation. So Jesus comforts the despised and sorrowing little band of disciples with the words: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32.

Thus we see that the grace of God, which is freely dispensed while Christ sits upon the throne of grace, and by means of which we are enabled to overcome (Hebrews 4:14-16), simply fits us for the kingdom of glory, into which an abundant entrance will be ministered to the faithful at the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Matthew 25:31-34.

While He sits upon His Father's throne, it is as a priest, counseling with His Father for the peace of mankind. David tells until what time He will remain there, saying, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." Acts 2:34, 35; Psalm 110:1.

When Christ was on this earth, He had not kingly power, except as He was full of grace and truth. As a representative of the kingdom of grace, He had power on earth to forgive sins. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." But the kingdom of this world was not His. If He had then possessed the kingdom, He would have destroyed His enemies, as He will do when He comes again, after He

has received it. At that time He paid tribute to earthly kings; when He comes again, it will be as King of kings and Lord of lords.

It is evident that Christ did not receive the kingdom at His first advent. Instead of having a kingdom, He had not so much as a place to lay His head. But He has ascended to the right hand of God, there to remain until the kingdom is given to Him, and His enemies are made His footstool, when He will return to rid His kingdom of His enemies, and to plant His people Israel in their own land.

The Golden Gate of Jerusalem was originally built around 640 CE by either that last of the Byzantine rulers or the earliest Arab conquerors. Of the eleven gates in the walls surrounding Jerusalem's Old City, only seven are open and this one cannot even be seen from the inside. The Golden Gate, which is unusual in that it is sealed so that no one can pass through it today. Why is the gate sealed? Jewish tradition has it that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem via this gate when he comes, so Muslims during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent (1520-1566) sealed this gate to keep him out. Jesus will one day pass through the gate into Jerusalem and we shall follow Him.