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THE CHRIST AS THE SON OF DAVID

Today's Text: Is. Chaps 11-12; Lk 1: 26-33

Extracts:

1. There shall come forth *a Rod from the stem of Jesse*, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord... And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him and His resting place shall be glorious [Is. 11: 1, 10]
2. And the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And *behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus*. 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*' [Lk 1: 30-33]

I have a good friend here in Trinidad who is now scared to travel to or through American airports since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC. Even though he carries a Trinidad and Tobago passport and bears an Indian sounding name, he looks very much like one of those terrorists on the Most Wanted List! Several times at Miami, he has been stopped, quizzed and frisked. In most cases, he has missed his connecting flights! Now, he has vowed to avoid America.

If mere resemblance in looks can attract so much attention, for good or for bad, can you imagine what name association could do? What if my friend's last name had read something like "Bin Laden"? There is no way he would not have spent sometime in Guantanamo Bay in Cuba! On the good side of it, many of us who would ordinarily be nonentities (unknown) enjoy celebrity status on account of the family names that we bear.

In today's lesson, Jesus Christ has been called the Son of David. What is the spiritual significance of this, the name that blind Bartimaeus called Him when he needed healing [Lk 18: 37-39]? Most times, Jesus referred to Himself as the "Son of man" [e.g., Matt. 25: 31; 26: 2]. Is that synonymous with Son of David, since David was a man? These and more are the issues that we want to examine in today's lesson.

1. The significance of a throne

In announcing the conception of Jesus to Mary, the angel Gabriel told her that the Son of God that she would bear would be given the *throne of His father, David* [Lk 1: 32]. What is the significance of a throne?

A throne is the *seat and symbol of regal authority*. In other words, you have to be a king (or queen) to have a throne and you must have a *kingdom*. So, the throne is a measure of the importance of a kingdom and its king. For example, King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom, and “all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart” [1 Kgs 10: 23-24]. Here is a description of his throne [vv. 18-20]:

The king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round at the back; there were armrests on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the armrests. Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the six steps; nothing like this had been made for any other kingdom.

Clearly, the throne had significance and the following should be noted:

a) *It is given by God*

The famous prayer that Jesus Christ taught His disciples begins with “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. *Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” [Matt. 6: 9-10]. When Isaiah [Is. 6: 1] and John [Rev. 4: 2] saw the vision of God, He sat on a throne. The word of God says, “let every soul be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” [Rom. 13: 1]. Therefore, the throne is a symbol of God’s kingdom on earth. That is why He is concerned about who sits on it.

For example, when a man’s hand appeared and wrote something on the wall after Belshazzar, the Babylonian king, had defiled the temple vessels (taken from Jerusalem), Daniel reminded him [Dan. 5: 19-20]:

O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honour. ... But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him.

We have seen that even in countries where monarchs no longer play an executive role in governance, they are still highly respected. For example, British tabloids are always scrutinizing the private lives of the royal family. When the heir-apparent to Queen Elizabeth II married a divorced woman, people raised eyebrows because the monarch is the “Defender of

the Faith” and Christian doctrine does not approve of such conduct. Some people fear that his accession to the throne of England may no longer be taken for granted.

b) *It is subject to succession*

Where there is a throne, there are rules of succession. In other words, when the incumbent dies, it is determined in advance how s(he) will be succeeded. The rule of primogenitor (firstborn succeeds) is most common. However, other rules may apply, such as the head of the next ruling house, or God’s choice, as in the case of Solomon.

Succession promotes continuity. For example, with the exception of France and a few other countries where the monarchy has been abolished, we can trace the lineage of current kings and queens in Europe or elsewhere several centuries back. This point was underlined in Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple when he said, “Therefore, Lord God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel’ [2 Chron. 6: 16].

2. The throne of David

The throne of David had an added significance because God had assured him that He would establish the throne of his successor’s kingdom *forever*. “I will be his Father, and he shall be My son” [2 Sam. 7: 13-14]. Was God talking here of Solomon or some one else?

We do know that after the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel broke into two. The larger northern kingdom of Israel went to Jeroboam, Solomon’s servant, while the smaller southern kingdom of Judah remained with Solomon’s son, Rehoboam [1 Kgs Ch. 12]. Clearly, the throne of David passed to the kings of Judah, made up of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin [v. 21]. You will recall that in his prophetic last blessings for his twelve sons, Israel (Jacob) told Judah, “the scepter (i.e., rod or staff of state) shall not depart from Judah” [Gen. 49: 10]. David came from the lineage of the tribe of Judah, unlike king Saul who came from the tribe of Benjamin [1 Sam. 10: 21]. Therefore, *David represents the beginning of the enthronement of God’s kingdom on earth.*

We also do know that by the time of the birth of Jesus, the throne of David had virtually disappeared, but resided in the genealogies kept by chroniclers [see, for example, Matt. 1: 1-17; Lk 3: 23-38]. However, its spiritual significance is due to its being based on the Davidic Covenant [2 Sam. 7: 12-16], which has the following key elements:

- ❑ It rests on *God's oath*. God said, "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David, 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations' [Ps. 89: 3-4];
- ❑ It applies to Jesus the Christ, "My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth" [v. 27]. This is confirmed when Angel Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would be given "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].

In the book of Revelation, John describes Christ in His kingly character in heaven as follows [Rev. 5: 5-6]:

One of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.' And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne ... stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth

The 11th chapter of Isaiah lays out in bold relief how Jesus the Christ fulfils on earth His kingly character in heaven. The seven Spirits of God on the Lamb in heaven are listed of the Rod from the stem of Jesse as follows [Is. 11: 2]:

- ❑ The Spirit of the Lord
- ❑ The Spirit of wisdom
- ❑ The Spirit of understanding
- ❑ The Spirit of counsel
- ❑ The Spirit of might
- ❑ The Spirit of knowledge
- ❑ The Spirit of the fear of the Lord

Clearly, unlike David's own throne that was plagued by sin and scandal, the Christ's reign is endowed with spiritual powers [vv. 1-3], and established in righteousness [vv. 4-5]. It will promote peace and harmony [vv. 6-7], safety and trust [vv. 8, 10], and "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God" [v. 9].

This king whose throne will last forever, will go about setting up His kingdom by:

- ❑ Gathering the remnants from all over the world [vv. 11-12]
- ❑ Promoting harmony among them [vv. 13-14]
- ❑ Building a highway over troubled or impassable waters [vv. 15-16]

In full appreciation, His subjects will thank and praise Him [Is. 12: 1-6].

3. Christ's accession to the throne of David

The Jews had expected that the Messiah (the Christ) would come in an instant and restore the throne of David from the wicked domination of foreign rulers. However, God's plan was different and it has taken the following process:

a) *God had to first come among us*

A king has to be like his subjects, otherwise, he would be an alien. In order to give the Christ *legitimacy* to the throne of David, He had to come in flesh as Immanuel, God with us [Is. 7: 14; Matt. 1: 23]. He was born "Prince of peace" [Is. 9: 6].

You will recall that in the Garden of Eden, God cursed Satan (in the form of the serpent) that the Seed of the woman shall bruise his head [Gen. 3: 15]. A woman has no seed; she only has an egg. That was why when the angel told the Virgin Mary that she was going to be the mother of Jesus, she asked, "how can this be, since I do not know a man?" The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" [Lk 1: 34-35]. Mary's husband, Joseph, like his wife, came from the royal line of David, and he became the foster father of Jesus. Joseph's genealogy is traced from David through Solomon and Jeconiah [Matt. 1: 6,11], both direct descendants of David who were kings. However, a curse had been pronounced on Jeconiah that none of his descendants would prosper sitting on the throne of David [Jer. 22: 24-30]. Mary's genealogy is traced through Nathan, a son of David who was never a king [Lk 3: 31]. That way, Jesus avoided the curse on Jeconiah and His kingdom would prosper and last forever!

b) *Jesus introduces His kingdom*

A kingdom has to have subjects. Jesus' earthly ministry emphasized the kingdom of God and He was the messianic King. The Jews could not understand the Suffering Messiah prophesied in the book of Isaiah [Is. 53]. So, they found it difficult to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah. In the process, they took part in killing the "King of the Jews" [Matt. 27: 37]. But they achieved the direct opposite. They succeeded in crowning Him King! In other words, the Son of God became the Son of man so as to make us sons of God and subjects of His coming kingdom. When we believe in and accept Him as our Lord and Saviour, we gain access to His kingdom. We become adopted sons and daughters of God. We become citizens of His kingdom.

c) *The King will soon return to establish His everlasting kingdom*

When will this kingdom of David that lasts forever be fulfilled? In the words of Jesus, Jerusalem (and in deed Judah) “will be trampled by Gentiles *until the times of the Gentiles* are fulfilled” [Lk 21: 24]. The times of the Gentiles certainly began with the Babylonian captivity of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar and will end with the destruction of the worldly “kingdom of iron” (and its weak successors) by the stone “cut out of the mountain without hands” [Dan. 2: 34-35, 45]. This kingdom of God from heaven “will never be destroyed” and “it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” [v. 44].

An important role that the throne of a king plays is to serve as the judgment seat. That is why “when the Son of man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the *throne of His glory*. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another” and pronounce judgment according to their works, the redeemed to everlasting life and the condemned to everlasting punishment [Matt. 25: 31-46]. This coming of the Lord in glory is well documented in the book of Revelation [Rev. 19: 11, 21]. That is when we all will know that the Son of David has come to take His throne!

4. Conclusion

Jesus the Christ, the Son of David, will soon return to take His throne. His kingdom will be strong, peaceful and prosperous, and last forever. Those who will inherit that kingdom are those who have overcome and God will be their Father and they will be His sons and daughters. However, “the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and ALL LIARS” will not be admitted into that kingdom [Rev. 21: 5, 7, 8].

The choice is yours!