

Searching For Israel (Part Nine): The Migration Of A Monarchy

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Forerunner, January 2005

*"Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David:
His seed shall endure forever, and His throne as the sun before Me;
It shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky."
(Psalm 89:35-37)*

Jeremiah 52:7-11 describes the end of Judah's elite at the fall of Jerusalem:

Then the city wall was broken through, and all the men of war fled and went out of the city at night by way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden, even though the Chaldeans were near the city all around. And they went by way of the plain. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho. All his army was scattered from him. So they took the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah in the land of Hamath, and he pronounced judgment on him. Then the king of Babylon killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. And he killed all the princes of Judah in Riblah. He also put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in bronze fetters, took him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death. (see also II Kings 25:4-7)

With the death of King Zedekiah, his sons, and Judah's princes, three questions arise:

1. Had the scepter departed from Judah? Jacob prophesied in faith that it would not (see Genesis 49:10). But who now in Judah held it?
2. Had God reneged on His unconditional promise to David, that his monarchy (specifically, his house and his kingdom) would "be established forever . . ." (II Samuel 7:16)? From all indications, the "house" (dynasty) was now dead.
3. Had the house of David come to the point that it lacked "a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel" (Jeremiah 33:17)?

To each of these questions, the answer is a resounding, *No!* Centuries in advance, God had taken steps to ensure that. In doing so, He provided more search criteria for identifying the whereabouts of Israel today.

Judah's Two Crowns

The story begins some 850 years before Zedekiah's time, in the days of Jacob's son, Judah.

Genesis 38 relates the sordid affair between Judah and his daughter-in-law Tamar. She was the widow of Er, Judah's firstborn son. The illicit liaison produced twin sons—but with an interesting hitch:

Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins were in her womb. And so it was, when she was giving birth, that the one put out his hand; and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand, saying, "This one came out first." Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said, "How did you break through? This breach be upon you!" Therefore his name was called Perez. Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand. And his name was called Zerah. (Genesis 38:27-30)

Of course, the purpose of the thread was to mark the firstborn son—the one who would receive the birthright. The breach, or the potential for estrangement between the brothers, lay in the unexpected reversal of birth order: The boy ready to be born, Zerah, as marked by the thread, became the second born.¹ His older brother was named Perez. David and his dynasty were descendants of Perez. Christ also came through this line (Matthew 1:3-5, 16; Luke 3:23-33).

Whatever happened to Zerah and his descendants?

Cheated of their birthright, the descendants of Zerah separated from the children of Israel soon after the Exodus. This separation explains why so few references to Zerah appear in God's Word.² Some of the children of Zerah went north to Greece. Others went to Troy, near the Dardanelles, which, by the way, bears the name of Zerah's fifth son, Darda. After Troy's fall to the Achaeans (Greeks), a group of Zerahites under the leadership of Brutus migrated to Britain via Malta. In England, they founded "New Troy," which the Romans much later renamed Londinium, now London.

Other Zerahites settled down in Ireland, after residing for a time in Spain, where they founded the city of Saragossa, literally, the City of Zerah. By the time of David, a princely clan of Zerahites was established as Ireland's royal family, ruling a part of the tribe of Dan, the *Tautha de Danann* (that is, tribe of Dan) of Irish legend, which had also settled there.

Therefore, because of the Zerahite monarchy, the scepter did not depart from Judah (Genesis 49:10) with the dethroning of Zedekiah and the death of his sons.

However, this fact in itself does not address the question of *David's* monarchy, which God said was to be everlasting. It fails to address this issue because Zerah's monarchy was *not* David's monarchy. While related, they remained *separate* monarchies, God having established David's much later than Zerah's. The Davidic monarchy was not linked to its Zerahite counterpart. Hence, we cannot claim that God fulfilled His promise of a perpetual throne to *David* through the Zerahite monarchy.

The Healing of the Breach

To resolve this issue, God *connected* the two monarchies. To see how, we must return to the time of Jerusalem's fall.

The Babylonians appointed Gedaliah as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal to rule Judah. Jeremiah 41 relates how Ishmael, who was of the "royal family" (verse 1), assassinated Gedaliah (verse 2), probably out of jealousy over the power the Babylonians had bestowed on him. Ishmael took a number of prisoners (verse 10), probably as bargaining chips should his schemes go sour. And sour they went. Ishmael was forced to flee to Ammon (verse 15).³ His prisoners escaped. Verse 10 mentions something about those prisoners the casual reader might miss. Among them were some VIPs: "Then Ishmael carried away captive all the rest of the people who were in Mizpah, the king's daughters. . . ."

While none of his sons survived Jerusalem's fall, Zedekiah was survived by at least two daughters. One of these daughters had recently married an Irish prince of the line of Judah through Zerah. In fact, the marriage took place during (or shortly before) the siege of Jerusalem. Thus, Zedekiah's daughter, who was a descendant of Perez, married a man descended through Zerah. Both had Judah as a common ancestor.

It is not fanciful to adduce that an Irish prince was visiting Jerusalem in the sixth century BC. The ancients were more traveled than many today want to believe, and international relations, complete with ambassadors, protocols, and "diplomatic immunity," were extant as well. Nehemiah 11:24 mentions a certain Pethahiah, who was probably one such ambassador. More importantly, he was "of the children of Zerah, the son of Judah, [and] was the king's deputy in all matters concerning the people."

The word *deputy* literally means "hand." In modern idiom, Pethahiah was the Persian king's "right-hand man." As strange as it may seem, several generations after Jeremiah's day, there was a highly placed Jew (that is, someone of Judah) in the *Persian* court whose task it was to look after the Jews in Palestine.

We do not need to read too much between the lines to understand from this scripture that Ireland had diplomatic relations with the Persians, and Pethahiah, possibly of the Irish royal family, was sent to Persia to represent the interests of the Jews in Palestine. That is, the Irish king, himself a Jew in that he descended from Judah, felt responsible for the Jews in Palestine. Since he did not enjoy hegemony over that part of the world, he looked after their interests through a highly placed person—virtually an ambassador—in the Persian court. Even in today's complex world of foreign relations, this technique is a common method through which a leader can exercise a measure of control over an area outside his immediate authority.

The marriage of one of Zedekiah's daughters—of the Perez branch of Judah—to a prince of the Zerah branch healed the breach in Judah's family. Through this healing, God

» perpetuated the Davidic monarchy, as required by the unconditional promise to David in II Samuel 7:16. The offspring of the Irish prince and Zedekiah's daughter would legitimately bring the two branches together indefinitely, as one family, one monarchy.

» maintained the authority of the Davidic monarchy over the "house of Israel," as God prophesied in Jeremiah 33:17.

Jeremiah received the job of transporting the royal couple back to Ireland.

Jeremiah's Big Job

Jeremiah 1:9-10 recounts God's commission to Jeremiah, at the time a teenager: "Behold, I have put My words in your mouth. See, I have this day set you over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant."

Jeremiah's task was so important that God had prepared him for it from his conception (verse 5). He encouraged Jeremiah by telling him not to fear those to whom he would be sent, "for I am with you

to deliver you" (verse 8). He ends His commission in verse 19, assuring Jeremiah that the people to whom he would be sent will "fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you, . . . to deliver you."

Jeremiah was destined to carry on God's work over the objections of entire nations and kingdoms (note the plurals). As Solomon writes in Ecclesiastes 3:2-3, God knows full well that there is "a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; . . . a time to break down, and a time to build up." God did not only use Jeremiah in His purpose to root out, pull down, destroy, and overthrow the Perez-centered monarchy, but also to plant and build a Zerah-Perez monarchy. Let us see how God did all this.

Jeremiah 40:1-5 describes the favor God granted Jeremiah in the eyes of the Babylonians. The captain of the guard, Nebuzaradan, gave Jeremiah leave to go "wherever it seems good and convenient for you to go" (verse 4). However, Jeremiah followed the captain's urgings (verse 5), and stayed with Gedaliah, whom the Babylonians had appointed as governor of the area.

Note that Jeremiah did *not* choose to go to Babylon. Jeremiah certainly remembered what God had revealed to him, as recorded in Jeremiah 33:17, "David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel." He knew that it was not his task to "build up" the throne of David in a *Gentile* land. His was not the task of overthrowing a Gentile throne at this time. Jeremiah knew full well that he had to carry the Davidic monarchy to the people of Israel.

Jeremiah's party consisted of his secretary, Baruch, at least one of Zedekiah's daughters, and her husband, the Irish prince and heir to the throne of Zerah. Considering the rank of the people Jeremiah was escorting, the party certainly included servants of various sorts as well. As time passed, the party expanded to include the couple's son, who, tradition has it, was born in Spain. Jeremiah led these people to Ireland via Spain, where they arrived about 569 BC, some sixteen years after Jerusalem's fall.

David's throne did not become defunct with the death of Zedekiah's sons. It remains intact, awaiting Christ's return. Jeremiah did not plant it in a Gentile nation, such as Babylon, nor did he hide it in Jerusalem. Christ, during His first coming, did not "dig it up." During His human lifetime, it was a Gentile throne—that of Rome—which held sway over the Jews in Palestine. He left it that way at His ascension.

However, as Isaiah 9:7 avers, Christ will ultimately sit "upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time [the time of His return] forward, even forever." Centuries after Isaiah, the archangel Gabriel said the same thing to Mary, as recorded in Luke 1:32: Her son "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."

The key of David is vital knowledge indeed! Lacking that knowledge, it would be impossible to locate David's throne, his dynasty. We could search high and low, looking north among the American Eskimos and the Siberian Yakuts, south among the inhabitants of Easter Islands, vainly studying the legends of the North and South American aborigines, finally asking the Bedouins of the Middle East and the Ethiopians of Africa. Some have done this. Yet, they have failed to find the throne of David.

But, when we look for a perpetual dynasty, one without hiatus, one that has to this day never lacked a monarch, our field of search narrows considerably. God has been loyal to His promise to David. Our search criteria regarding the Key of David, discussed in the fourth article of this series, remain intact.

Next month, we will review all the search criteria we have gathered so far, and see to what peoples they point.

[to be continued]

Endnotes

¹ The unexpected reversal is somewhat analogous to that perpetrated by Israel when he crossed his hands at the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh, thereby giving the greater blessing to the second-born son. This too resulted in a reversal in birthright.

² Among the relatively few references to Zerah is I Chronicles 2:6, which catalogs Zerah's sons as "Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara—five of them in all." I Kings 4:31 mentions that Solomon was wiser than "Heman, Chalcol and Darda." We will discuss another important reference, Nehemiah 11:24, in the text.

³ Is there in Ammon—probably today's Jordan—a vestige of Judah's royal line, a descendent of Ishmael?

Inset: Overthrown, Overthrown, Overthrown

In all these proceedings, God typically fulfilled the prophecy recorded in Ezekiel 21:25-27. II Chronicles 36:12 relates that Zedekiah "did evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord." On the day of Jerusalem's fall, the rule of this "profane, wicked prince of Israel," ended (Ezekiel 21:25). Zedekiah was forced to "remove the turban, and take off the crown" (verse 26); with the death of his sons, "nothing shall remain the same" (verse 26). Indeed, a new world order had come. God "exalt[ed] the lowly" throne of Ireland, while he "abase[d] the exalted" one in Jerusalem. Perez was abased; Zerah exalted—to the point that the Irish king was a peer of the Persian King Xerxes. These were indeed the days of throwing down and building up.

God will bring about the final fulfillment of Ezekiel's prophecy when Zedekiah's counterpart, a profane king sitting on David's throne at the return of Christ, will be forced to "take off the crown; nothing shall remain the same" (verse 26). No, everything will change when "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). At that time, God will exalt the lowly, using the "foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise" and the "weak things . . . to put to shame the things which are mighty" (I Corinthians 1:27). So shall the "weak things" become "kings and priests . . . and . . . reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). When God brings this about, He will finally fulfill the Ezekiel 21 prophecy, having "abase[d] the exalted" (verse 26)—suddenly bringing to nothing the vast wealth of Babylon's system, as Revelation 18:19 makes clear.

Just as Ezekiel 21:27 says, God did overthrow David's throne three times. As we have seen, He overthrew it in Judah, transplanting it in Ireland. Later, He overthrew it a second time, transplanting

it from Ireland to Scotland. God overthrew the throne a third time at the death of Queen Elizabeth I of England. Dying, she willed her throne to the Stuart king, James VI of Scotland. He ascended to the English throne as James I in AD 1603. (Incidentally, this is the James of the King James Bible.)

The Davidic throne resides in England at this time. It "shall be no longer [moved] until He comes whose right it is" (Ezekiel 21:27). Remember, we saw that David's throne was in fact God's (more correctly, Christ's). That throne will remain in England until Christ comes to claim it as His rightful heritage.