

# 13. THE MESSIAH'S THRONES

## **The throne of David**

The angel Gabriel told Mary that God would give her child *the throne of his father David* and he would reign over the house of Jacob forever. The throne of David is an earthly throne, the throne of the king of Israel. His kingdom will never end (Lk 1:32-33). This is sufficient evidence that the Kingdom of God, the Messianic reign, will take place on Earth after Jesus returns. Even though Mary was probably still a teenager, she would have understood those words as a promise that her son Jesus would reign over Israel from a throne in Jerusalem. The most satisfactory interpretation of Gabriel's statement is that after his return, the Messiah will reign over Israel during the millennium. If not then, when will the Messiah reign over Israel? The New Testament doesn't

## **Jesus is the Jewish Messiah**

Godly Jews in the first century were expecting the Messiah to come and save Israel from their Roman masters and fulfill God's glorious promises to Israel. Much of Jesus' teaching was aimed at convincing people that he was the Messiah. The good news he preached was about the kingdom of God, which to the Jews of his day meant Messiah's kingdom. Jesus often talked about himself as the Son of Man, a Messianic title derived from Daniel 7:13-14. To test his disciples' knowledge on the matter, he asked them who people thought the Son of Man was. Peter answered correctly, saying: You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God. The traditional Messiah was a king, a descendant of king David, and Jesus' ministry as a poor itinerant preacher confused people. However, Jesus promised his

disciples that when he sits on his glorious throne in the new world, they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Mt 19:28). The new world would be a rebirth or regeneration of the world when the Messiah comes to reign. Paul said: Do you not know that the saints will rule the world? That is part of our reward. Jesus told his Jewish disciples that they would rule Israel, and perhaps other races will be responsible for ruling their own areas of past influence.

## **The Father's throne**

The NT emphasizes the fact that after his resurrection, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, where he is sharing God the Father's throne. It is significant that a man, Jesus, with a glorified human body, is now on the throne with his Father; humanity exalted to deity. In reality, God the Son never left this throne. Jesus told his disciples that he never did anything on his own initiative; he only did what he saw the Father doing. He even boldly declared that whatever the Father does, he, the Son, also does. He is God and he reigns forever. Three times in John's Gospel, Jesus uses the phrase 'where I am' to inform his disciples that even though he was with them in the world, he was still with the Father (Jn 12:26, 14:3, 17:24). Jesus was always very conscious of the fact that he was one with the Father and that he shared in his glory before the world began.

## **Two thrones**

Jesus is presently reigning on the Father's throne because he is God but there are two thrones from which Jesus will reign after his return, one in the heavenly realm and one in the physical realm. Both thrones are in Jerusalem, one in earthly Jerusalem and one in New Jerusalem. The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city (New Jerusalem) and his servants will serve him (Rev 22:3). This can be compared to the throne scene in Revelation 4–5, where God is seated on his throne and surrounded by 24 other thrones on which were seated 24 elders, 12 representing the redeemed from Israel and 12 representing the Church, just as the 12 gates of New Jerusalem were named after the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 foundations after the twelve apostles of the Lamb. When the Lamb appears, he is seen standing in the center of the throne. This is the Father's throne in New Jerusalem in the heavenly realm, and at the same time overlapping earthly Jerusalem in the physical realm. It is from there, above Mount Zion, that the

Messiah and his Church rule the world. There is no temple in New Jerusalem because God and the Lamb are there.

But there is a temple in earthly Jerusalem, as described by Ezekiel (Ezek 43:1-7) and where Israel ministers to God. They offer gifts and sacrifices according to the new covenant, and the survivors of the nations come there from all over the world to worship the Lord. Ezekiel saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the East and entering the temple through the gate facing East. Then he heard a voice speaking to him from the temple, saying: Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever.

This is the return of the Messiah to Jerusalem. Zechariah also spoke of the Lord's return. He said, his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives and he'll become king of all the Earth and be worshiped by the nations (Zech 14:4, 9, 16). The Messiah has no palace, his throne is in the temple. This is the throne of David, the throne of Israel's king. There is no indication given that the Messiah will be visible during his thousand-year reign, but his glory will be seen in the temple and his glory in New Jerusalem will be seen above Jerusalem:

The city doesn't need the sun or the moon to shine on it,  
for God's glory lights it up, and the Lamb is its lamp.  
The nations will walk by its light,  
the Earth's kings will bring their splendor to it (Rev 21:23-24).

Arise and shine (Jerusalem), for your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
Look! Darkness has covered the Earth,  
gloom is over the peoples.  
As for you, the Lord will rise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
Nations will come to your light,  
kings also, to the brightness of your dawn (Isa 60:1-3).

The heavenly city is not visible, only the light of the glory of God within it, towering above the temple on the top of Mount Zion (Ezek 40:2, Rev 21:10).

## **Jesus will reign when he returns**

Another important throne passage is Matthew 25:31 ff. When the Messiah returns in his glory and all the angels are with him, he'll sit

on his glorious throne, where he'll judge the nations. At that time, the righteous will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, while the unrighteous will be consigned to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. This separation of the sheep from the goats means that all mankind will be judged at Jesus' return. They constitute two groups, the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will inherit the kingdom and the wicked will go away to eternal punishment.

The saints' inheritance is that as children of God, they'll reign with the Messiah over the survivors of the Great Tribulation, the final seven years of this world's troubled history. The apostles will rule over a newly converted Israel, while other overcomers will rule elsewhere in the world. Jesus will give us the right to share his throne and to rule with him during the millennium, just as he shares his Father's throne and rules with him in heaven (Rev 3:21). This is not the throne of David. Christ and his Church ruling the unredeemed world from New Jerusalem is one thing, the Messiah ruling over his people Israel from Mount Zion is another.

The background to these verses is found in several Psalms which elaborate on God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:16 to establish *his throne* forever. In Psalm 2, God declares that he will set his regent on Zion, his holy hill. He will give him the nations as his inheritance and the ends of the earth as his possession. He will make him the highest of the kings of the earth and *his throne* will endure forever (Ps 89:27-29). The Lord will extend the Messiah's mighty scepter from Zion (Ps 110:2). Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, said that David was a prophet, and he knew that God had promised him on oath that he would put one of his descendants on *his throne*; Jesus, the promised Messiah. These promises are meant to be taken literally, it is twisting Scripture to interpret it otherwise. To interpret them figuratively changes the clear meaning of what the prophets declared. To interpret OT prophecies as referring to the Church is nonsensical, those Jewish prophets knew nothing about the Church. That the Gentiles would become heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, was a mystery that was not made known to people in other generations (Eph 3:4-6). What the OT prophets said about Israel is always meant to be ethnic Israel.

## Messianic prophecies are to be taken literally

Isaiah prophesied that a child would be born to us, a son given to us, and the government would be upon his shoulder. Of the increase of his government and peace there would be no end. He would reign on *David's throne and over his kingdom*, establishing it and upholding it forever (Isa 9:6-7). That is a prophecy about the Messiah's earthly throne.

John, in a vision (Rev 20:5-6), saw the martyrs who defied the Antichrist rising from the dead and reigning with the Messiah for a thousand years. They would share his throne as he promised them (Rev 3:21). They would dwell in New Jerusalem (3:12) and rule the nations with an iron scepter (2:27).

In Ezekiel's opening vision, he saw the Lord in his glory accompanied by the cherubim, the same living creatures that John describes in Revelation 4. Later, Ezekiel describes the glory of the Lord *leaving the temple* in Jerusalem because of Israel's sin. His glory left via the East Gate and the Mount of Olives (Ezek 11:23). Later again, he saw the glory of the Lord *returning from the East* (Ezek 43:1-7). The sound of his coming was like the roar of many waters, and the earth shone with the brilliance of his glory. The glory of the Lord *entered the temple* by the gate facing East and filled *the temple*. The glory of the Lord is equivalent to his presence. Ezekiel heard the Lord's voice speaking from *the temple* and telling him that this was the place of *his throne* and the place of the soles of his feet, where he would dwell among Israel forever (Ezek 43:7). Ezekiel's vision of the return of the Lord to Jerusalem is nothing else but the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Zechariah tells us that on that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies East of Jerusalem (Zech 14:4). The East Gate, which faces the Mount of Olives, allows direct access to the temple but was sealed by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman in 1541. Jewish tradition believes that when the Messiah returns, he will enter Jerusalem via this gate. Ezekiel tells us that the sound of his coming will be like the sound of many waters, and the Earth will shine with his glory coming from the East (Ezek 43:2).

The prophet Malachi confirms that the Lord will suddenly come to *his temple*. He asks, who will be able to endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? (Mal 3:1-2). These verses clarify

somewhat the events surrounding Jesus' return as the Messiah and his reign on Earth from the temple in Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Our future reign with Christ on Earth should not be confused with our spiritual exaltation. God has already raised us with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realm. Sitting with Christ spiritually on God's throne is our present status (Eph 2:6). It is in anticipation of God showing us the incomparable riches of his grace and conferring on us kingship and authority to rule the Earth with Christ (Rev 5:10).

For how long will Jesus reign? Can his kingdom go on forever and ever, for eternity? Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would reign over Israel *forever* and that his kingdom would *have no end* (Luke 1:33). Daniel mentions many times that the Messiah's kingdom is everlasting and will never be destroyed (Dan 2:44, 7:14, 27). Those who are wise will shine like the stars forever and ever. His kingship will no doubt endure forever, but what of the earthly dominion? The Son will one day hand the kingship back to the Father (1 Cor 15:24). This will happen on judgment day after the millennium when the Earth and sky flee from God's presence without leaving a trace. As this is the end of the world, the Messiah's kingship will pass from Son to Father so that the Father might have full authority over everything. However, the Son and the saints continue to rule. As God's royal family, they are guaranteed eternal rule.

Several Scriptures indicate that the earth will perish, wear out like a garment, and pass away (Ps 102:25, quoted in Heb 1:11-12). Jesus stated that heaven and earth will pass away but his words will not (Mt 24:35). The creation is not eternal. We'll receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken (Heb 12:27) but created things will be removed, and there is no promise of a new physical creation.

Paul spoke about God's wisdom which he decreed before time began for our glory (1 Cor 2:9). He said nobody has seen or heard or imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.