

THE THRONE OF HIS FATHER DAVID

In the Year of Our Lord Seventeen-hundred Eighty-seven, Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison, expressing his concern that civil authorities would severely punish rebellion. He wrote:

They may conclude too hastily that nature has formed man insusceptible of any other government but that of force, a conclusion not founded in truth, nor experience. Societies exist under three forms sufficiently distinguishable. 1. Without government, as among our Indians. 2. Under governments wherein the will of every one has a just influence, as is the case in England in a slight degree, and in our states in a great one. 3. Under governments of force: as is the case in all other monarchies and in most of the other republics. To have an idea of the curse of existence under these last, they must be seen. It is a government of wolves over sheep. It is a problem, not clear in my mind, that the 1st. condition is not the best. But I believe it to be inconsistent with any great degree of population. The second state has a great deal of good in it. The mass of mankind under that enjoys a precious degree of liberty and happiness. It has it's [sic] evils too: the principal of which is the turbulence to which it is subject. But weigh this against the oppressions of monarchy, and it becomes nothing.

Jefferson then wrote a line in Latin, which in the English language means, "I prefer dangerous liberty to quiet servitude." Not everyone agrees with Jefferson's classical liberalism, however. Some prefer quiet servitude to dangerous liberty. Some embrace monarchy, and reject democracy. Ten years ago, author John Zimrak, a Roman Catholic, expressed his concern that some Catholics were illiberal in their political philosophy. For example, the dean of a Catholic college told Zimrak that "moral reform would only come in the form of a forcible coup d'état, by which 'men of virtue' would impose their will 'on the people, who will fall in line when they see that they have no choice.' The dean represents those who are known as 'Neoreactionaries,' because they, like those who reacted against the French Revolution, favor the conditions that preceded that rebellion. Their reaction is known as 'the Dark Enlightenment,' because they desire a return to the culture of the ages before the Enlightenment, the so-called 'the Dark Ages. Ten years ago, Klint Finley wrote an essay with the title, 'Geeks for Monarchy: The Rise of the Neoreactionaries,' in which he explained the contemporary sympathy for monarchy. He wrote:

Many of us yearn for a return to one golden age or another. But there's a community of bloggers taking the idea to an extreme: they want to turn the dial way back to the days before the French Revolution. Neoreactionaries believe that while technology and capitalism have advanced humanity over the past couple centuries, democracy has actually done more harm than good. They propose a return to old-fashioned gender roles, social order and monarchy.

The truth is that the problems of any given society is not with its form of government, but with its people. Moreover, if the people are corrupt, those who govern will be corrupt. Lord Acton, an English Catholic historian and politician, and many are familiar with his dictum: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Jesus Christ is the only man with absolute power who is righteous, and not corrupt, and He came into the world to save it by establishing His righteous kingdom, and making people fit for it.

In the days of the judges of Israel, when Samuel the judge was old, he appointed his sons, Joel and Abijah, to succeed him. The Scriptures say, “And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.” Samuel was a good judge, one who administered justice, giving to men what they deserved. His sons, however, were evil, and did not administer justice. They loved money, and so took bribes to pervert the course of justice. They were given what they did not deserve, and then did not give to men what they deserved. Naturally, the people were discontented, and so they demanded a different form of government. They demanded a king. They said, “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.” (1 Samuel 8:5) When Samuel prayed to God about their demand, God told Samuel to meet it. He told Samuel to give them a king. The people demanded a king, and Samuel felt slighted, but God explained to him that the people rejected, not Samuel, but God. The judges did not legislate, they judged, but the people demanded a king, like the heathen nations had, one who would be legislator, executive, and judge. The people did not desire to be distinct from the nations, but to be like them. From the time God delivered the Israelites from Egypt to the time of Samuel, the people rejected God, and they did the same to Samuel. God told Samuel to give to the people what desired, but to warn them of what they would receive. So, Samuel told the people how a king would rule over them. He said:

This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day. (1 Samuel 8:11–18)

A king would not serve the people, but rather compel the people to serve him. He would not think of the kingdom as for the people, but for himself. He would enslave the people, and take their possessions. The people would cry out to God for justice, but God would not help them. The people did not heed Samuel’s warning, and would not relent. They said, “Nay; but we will have a king over us; That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.” (1 Samuel 8:19 20)

The first king God gave the people was Saul. Saul was reluctant, and when the time came for his coronation, he hid himself. Yet, the people proclaimed him king. Saul was at first humble, but he became arrogant. In the beginning, he saw himself as the servant of God, and of the people, but he later disregarded God, and saw the people as his servants.

Saul did not have in mind God’s interests, but his own, so God would replace him with David, a man after God’s own heart. (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22) David was not arrogant, like Saul, but humble. He did not have in mind his own interests, but God’s. David was faithful to God in everything, save only the matter of Uriah the Hittite. (1 Kings 15:5; Acts 13:36) After David conquered Jerusalem, taking it from the Jebusites, and after he conquered the Philistines, and brought he ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, and when was no longer at war, he told Nathan the prophet of his ambition to build a temple dedicated to the God who had given him favor.

Nathan told David that he should do as he pleased, and that the Lord was with him. (2 Samuel 7:1–3) Yet, the prophet spoke too soon. That night, the Lord said to Nathan:

Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the LORD, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar? (2 Samuel 7:5–7)

From the time God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt, to the time of King David, God had been satisfied with a tent, or a tabernacle. He had never commanded any man to build him a temple, and he did not command David to do so.

Then the Lord said to Nathan:

Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the shepcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel: And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth. Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. (2 Samuel 7:8–11a)

The Lord would remind David that, when He chose David to be king, David was but a humble shepherd. Yet, God brought David from that low position to be king over Israel, and victor over his enemies. God made David's name great, great as the name of any of the great men of the world. Although David's realm was at that time peaceable, it was not settled. Yet, God would settle it, and would give Israel relief from war with the heathen nations.

The Lord told the prophet to say:

Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever. (2 Samuel 7:11–16)

David desired to build God a house, but God would build David a house. After David's time, one of his sons would be heir to his throne. He would build a house for the Lord, and the Lord would establish his kingdom forever. This one would be the son of David, and he would be the Son of God. If he would do wrong, then the

Lord would punish him. The Lord took the kingdom away from Saul because of his sins, but from David's son the Lord would never take away the kingdom. In this way, the Lord would establish David's dynasty forever.

When David's son, Solomon was a child, David charged him with building the temple. He said to him:

Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God: But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight. Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days. He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever. Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee. Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel. (1 Chronicles 22:7–13. Compare 1 Chronicles 28:2–10)

David had desired to build a temple for the Lord, a house for Him and the ark of the covenant. Yet, because David was a man of war, the Lord would not allow him to do it. David fought for the Lord, yet the Lord would have his own house built by a man of peace, and not of war. (1 Chronicles 22:1–3; 1 Chronicles 28:3) Solomon was that man. His reign would be one of peace, and he would build the temple. Yet, the perpetuity of his kingdom was conditioned upon his keeping God's commandments. Should he fail in that, his kingdom would come to an end. (1 Kings 2:1–4; 9:4, 5; 1 Chronicles 28:7; Psalm 132:11, 12)

When Solomon finished building the temple, the Lord made a covenant with him. He said to him:

I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house? And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil. (1 Kings 9:3–9)

Sadly, most of David's heirs were not faithful. They rebelled against the Lord, and led the people to do the same. So, the Lord caused heathen nations to destroy the kingdom of Israel, and the kingdom of Judah, and to carry the people away into exile.

The Lord's covenant with David related to every one of his royal line, but it found its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, he said to her:

Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. 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 1:30–33)

When Mary saw the angel, she was naturally afraid, but he assured her that she had no reason to fear. She was favored by God, and greatly blessed. She would conceive a child, and bear a son, whom she should call, Jesus. He would be the Son of God, and the Son of David. He would be the heir to David's throne, and He, being perfect, would rule forever. Mary asked how this could be possible, as she had never been with a man. The angel told her that the Holy Spirit would cause her to conceive without a man, and so her child would be the Son of God. The angel told her that her cousin, Elizabeth, who in all her many years had been unable to conceive, was with child. With God, the angel said, nothing is impossible. Mary, whom God had chosen for her faith and virtue, gladly submitted herself for the Lord's purposes, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

Saint Paul opened his epistle to the Romans by declaring that Jesus is the Son of David, and the Son of God, ruler of the world. It is this message that Saint Paul and the other apostles preached so that all nations would believe in Jesus, and obey Him. After developing this theme in the epistle, he ended with this doxology:

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. (Romans 15:25–27)

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news that the Son of God became incarnate, died for sinners, and rose from the dead, and that everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who believes in Him is joined to Him and so has forgiveness of sins and new life. God has the power to confirm all those that believe in Jesus. This gospel was from the beginning of time hidden, but in Christ revealed, and by His apostles proclaimed, so that all nations will believe and obey. For God's great wisdom, Christians should give Him praise.

Jesus, unlike all of His predecessors, never sins, and always does right, and so His kingdom will be forever. He is righteous, and He makes righteous the subjects of His kingdom, not only by atoning for their sins, but by conforming them to His own image. In this way, Jesus is the Lord and Savior of the world.

Let us understand the covenant that God made with David. Let us believe that Jesus is the heir to David's throne. Let proclaim the gospel, so that all will believe in Jesus, and obey Him.

Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.