

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Scepter Will Not Depart From Judah

by Dan Trygg

“Judah is a lion's whelp. From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He couches, he lies down as a lion, and as a lion, who dares rouse him up? ¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart (be turned aside) from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (or, ‘until the things stored up for Him might come, and He is the expectation of the nations’ – LXX)”

Genesis 49:9-10

“Then a shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit.”

Isaiah 11:1

“For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground...”

Isaiah 53:2

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity. ³ Therefore, He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. ⁴ And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. ⁵ And this One will be our peace.”

Micah 5:2-5

We have been looking at examples of prophecies made by people in the distant past, that were fulfilled centuries later in history. Yahweh indicated that this would be a clear testimony of who He is, the One who “declares the end from the beginning”, who establishes His purpose and accomplishes His good pleasure (Isa. 46:9,10). He spoke of things in the ancient past, and brought them to pass many generations later. **This was a clear distinctive that separates Yahweh from the deities that other people worshiped.** Just as the idols could not see, hear, walk or talk, in the same way they were powerless to do *anything* on behalf of those who worshiped them. **Examples of prophetic declarations are sprinkled throughout the Biblical record. They are a key part of the story of God's interaction with people.** While many of them are short-term promises, which were fulfilled within that person's lifespan, **some of them were declarations that were not fulfilled until centuries later, some over thousands of years. These extended examples can be used to support the unusual nature of the biblical writings.** We have already looked at four examples of this from the Pentateuch: (1.) the promise of the seed of the woman which would crush the head of the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15); (2.) the call and promised blessing offered to Abram (Gen. 12:1-3); (3.) the promise to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 12:7); and, (4.) the warnings of their exile and restoration to the land (Lev. 26; Deut. 27-30). We know that the Pentateuch was written by 1400 BC, so these prophecies were fulfilled over centuries.

The field of biblical archaeology continues to yield amazing confirmations. In 1905, Hilda and William Petrie discovered numerous inscriptions written on pieces of broken pottery by slaves, who worked in four separate turquoise mines in the Sinai peninsula. They are dated from the 1800's BC to the 1400's BC. They make many references that substantiate facts of biblical history. Of special interest are 16 inscriptions in ancient Proto-Hebrew script. They were initially difficult to decipher by the Petrie's, and lay in storage for over 100 years. They were recently found, and were translated in 2015 by Dr. Doug Petrovich. **They describe many of the events leading up to the Exodus, and one even mentions Moses by name (Sinai 361), and a “year of astonishment” which he “provoked”, ...a reference to the plagues.** It also mentions “Baalath”, a reference to the Egyptian goddess, Hathor, who was often depicted as a horned cow, a precursor to the golden calf incident. **This would seem to establish beyond doubt that Moses existed, and confirm the events leading up to the exodus.** For years, critics said that Moses could not have even written the Pentateuch. Now that we prove that Hebrew slaves could write in primitive consonantal Hebrew script, such claims sound ridiculous. **Certainly, a man like Moses would have been able to write the books attributed to him.**

Let's take a look at another prophetic word picture that was expressed in the ancient past, lay dormant for centuries, was fulfilled in later history in the person of Christ, and continues to reach into the future. In Genesis 49:10, **Jacob spoke a prophetic word over each of his sons, as he lay upon his deathbed.** When he came to his son, Judah, he mentioned that he was like a lion. “Who would dare to rouse him?” he asks. Then **he said, “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes (or, ‘until He comes to whom it belongs’).”** Judah was Jacob's fourth son by Leah. Initially, you would not expect a “fourth son” to become a tribal leader, much less a king. However, Reuben, Simeon and Levi had disqualified themselves by things they had done. It is clear from the story that Joseph was Jacob's favorite. He received the inheritance that belonged to the firstborn, ...a double portion. This was permanently established by the fact that Jacob adopted Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, as heirs among their uncles. Furthermore, Joseph was the Pharaoh's highest official, second only to him. You would expect that this great status would be reflected down through the generations, but it was not. **As for Judah, he seemed to be an unlikely candidate for greatness, at first.** It was his idea to sell Joseph off as a slave, to make a little money. He later married a Canaanite woman, tried to withhold security from his widowed daughter-in-

law, Tamar, by not marrying his third son to her, after the older brothers had died. And, then he himself had sex with her, thinking she was a “temple prostitute”, when she disguised herself. NOT a paragon of virtue, by any means! BUT, when it was revealed to him that Tamar was pregnant with his children, he admitted that she was more righteous than he, ...and when it was necessary that Benjamin accompany the other brothers to Egypt, he offered himself as a substitute for Benjamin. How much all of that may have played into this prophecy is unclear, but **what is clear is Jacob’s prediction: that the scepter would come to Judah and not ever depart from him “until the One shall come to whom it belongs”. To this One the nations shall show obedience. He will be king over all the nations, not just Israel.**

This was expressed by Jacob in 1644 BC. Joshua, an Ephraimite, was the leader who led the Israelites into the land of promise. The first king, Saul, was from the tribe of Benjamin. It was not until he had disqualified himself that David was anointed to be king by Samuel the prophet. He did not actually come to the throne until about 1010 BC, and reigned until 970 B.C. **David was from the tribe of Judah, an initial fulfillment of Jacob’s prophecy.** God promised David that one of his descendants would build a house for Him. **God would establish David’s lineage and throne before Him forever.** (“The scepter would never depart from him” – Gen. 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:11-16.) **When David’s son, Solomon, however, came to power, God gave him a conditional offer.** He told him that *if* he remained faithful, God would make *his* throne to be established forever, but **if he or his sons were unfaithful, God would destroy the temple he had built, the nation would be removed from the land, and his throne would come to an end** (1 Kg. 9:4-9). In his later years, Solomon turned to worship other gods. Yahweh appeared to him and declared, “Because you have done this, ...I will certainly tear the kingdom from you” (1 Kg. 11:11). Shortly after Solomon’s death, the ten northern tribes rebelled and no longer followed the Davidic king. **The remainder of the books of Kings and Chronicles trace the history of the kings descended from Solomon’s line.** Then, in Jeremiah 22, Yahweh cursed all the heirs to the throne of Josiah, the last good king of Solomon’s lineage. They were all destroyed, except Jehoiachin. And Yahweh said, “No one of *his* descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David, or ruling again in Israel” (vs. 30). It appears that **the lineage of the kings is brought to an end, cut off, and no one will ever be king again, from this line. It was 586 BC.**

BUT, this was the line of Davidic kings that came through Solomon. The house of David was **more than just this line of kings.** In Jeremiah 23:5, ...**the very next chapter** after the cursing of the line of kings that came through Solomon..., Yahweh says, “Days are coming when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (or, Sprout). And He will reign as king and act wisely, and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days, Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. He will be called, ‘Yahweh our righteousness.’” **So, even when the Solomonic line was cursed, the David Sprout or Branch was spoken of. God was not done with the lineage of David!**

We also have a prophecy from Isaiah 11:1, spoken over a hundred years *before* the demise of those kings, “Then a shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse, and a branch (*netser*) from his roots will bear fruit.” Note that the “tree of Jesse” is cut down, cut off. **But from the “stump” God will cause a sprout to come forth.** Then, in the verses that follow, Isaiah describes a Spirit-empowered king, ...a man of wisdom and righteousness, who will bring justice and fairness to the earth, and will slay the wicked. **The nations will seek Him, this root of Jesse, and He will recover the remnant of His people who have been scattered abroad.**

Isaiah 9:6,7 had spoken of a Child that would be born, who would sit on David’s throne. There would be no end to the increase of His government or of peace. He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. **He will establish the throne of David. God’s zeal would accomplish this!**

Micah 5:2-5 said that from Bethlehem, from Judah, would come One to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from eternity, and He will be great to the ends of the earth. This One will be our peace.

We find the fulfillment of this in Jesus. His genealogy in Matthew 1 is Joseph’s family background. He is descended from David through Solomon. Joseph was in the lineage of kings. **Jesus’ genealogy in Luke 3 is his physical lineage through Mary. She was descended from Nathan, a different son of David** (vs. 31). The scepter was turned aside from the lineage of Solomon, but not the house of David or the tribe of Judah. **From the “stump” of Jesse, ...the seemingly cut off house of David..., God raised up a new Sprout, using a different son of David.** In this way, **God fulfilled His promise to David, as well as the prophecy Jacob spoke over his son, Judah.** Again, note how this prophetic theme is repeated, restated and recalled over and over in scripture, by different people over thousands of years, and fulfilled in detail in the birth, life, and calling of Jesus. **Already His kingdom is reaching to the nations, but, when He returns, the prophecies and declarations will be even more completely fulfilled.** In Revelation 5:5, looking into the future, Jesus is referred to as “the Lion from the tribe of Judah”. Think of Jacob’s words, “Who would dare rouse *Him*?” He has purchased with His blood people from every tribe, tongue, people and nation, and has made them to become a kingdom and priests to God. And they will all fall down to give Him honor and worship.

Again, remember that the scriptures were written over thousands of years, by scores of authors. There is no way to pick a random statement like this, and to develop it into a major theme fulfilled in history. This is God’s hand.