

The Battle for the Throne

by

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Chapter 1 - The Battle for the Throne

Reading: 2 Chronicles 12:10-12; 13:1-21.

Genesis 3:15. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; He shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

(I need not remind you that that was addressed to the serpent.)

Revelation 17:14. "...and they also shall overcome that are with him..."

That which I believe the Lord has laid on my heart very definitely and strongly for this season of our gathering together is what is represented by those passages, and many others, namely:

THE BATTLE FOR THE THRONE.

In the history of this world as it is recorded in the Scriptures, the first and the final issue is that of dominion. Every other factor and element is gathered into that. The books of Genesis and Revelation bound that history, and two factors characterize those two books in a comprehensive way. All the other books of the Bible are but aspects of that whole matter. Their value is the specific aspect of the entire issue with which they respectively deal. That might be a help to you in your future readings in any one book of the Bible, that is, to note its distinctive aspect of the comprehensive truth.

The two comprehensive features of Genesis and the Revelation are *dominion* and *redemption*. In Genesis the order is dominion and - because the dominion was lost - the redemptive programme. In the Revelation the order is the redemptive programme consummated and dominion restored. Let me repeat that. Everything that lies between Genesis and the Revelation represents aspects of that comprehensive truth - dominion and redemption, redemption and dominion. But note: in both of these books comprehensively, and in all the other books specifically, redemption is always subservient to dominion. That is one of the things which we shall more fully consider as we go on.

I want to pause for a moment just to say something by way of parenthesis. It is that we are not at this time occupied with some scheme or system of truth, but rather with the ultimate issue of this universe, and this is a matter which, more than ever in the history of this world, concerns the people of God at this time. If, as we believe is the case, we are approaching the end of the dispensation, then the issue of all the dispensations is on the immediate horizon. If you were asked, what is the issue of the dispensation? You would probably answer, The coming of the Lord. I want to say that that is only introductory to the issue. The issue is the dominion of the universe. We hail the coming of the Lord because of what it means in its outworking. It is not merely an isolated event, it is something which carries with it all that has been pointed unto through the ages, and all that God eternally intended before time was. That is, God's method and means, and basis and character of the government of this universe. So that we are occupied with no small thing, and it is necessary for us to get the magnitude of the background, in order to give us an adequate

motive for facing the conflict. For the conflict in which we are today, beloved of God, is no personal thing, no small, narrow, local matter. We are in THE conflict, it is heading up - and we believe very soon - to the final settlement of the government of this universe; dominion according to God's mind. We are in that conflict today. If you are knowing anything of the history of spiritual conflict, that is the explanation.

Well, all that is parenthetical, in order that we might face this matter in a right way, not thinking that we are just to get teaching. We are to face the most practical issue that has ever been presented to man, and not only to man but to angels and demons.

Man and His Inherent Functions

Having said that, we are able to get closer and closer to this matter. And at this point we have to introduce man as being central to the conflict and to the issue. There are three inherent faculties in man's constitution according to the Divine design and purpose. Those three inherent faculties in man's constitution are prophet, priest and king. I want you to take very careful notice of the way in which that is put. It is said that those are inherent faculties in the constitution of man according to the Divine design and purpose. These are not merely temporary or periodic functions, neither are they merely offices.

(We are not dealing with the specific gift of prophets or prophecy. Such were - as we understand the Scriptures - given in a relative and not a primary way. They related to bringing the Lord's people into the fullness of His thought. The specific gift will "cease," but the spiritual reality will remain.)

We will say more about that later.

In the Scriptures these three things overlap and run together in normal times. When things are right and according to God's mind they all obtain at the same time, at least in principle. When things are either undeveloped or deranged they either disappear or are out of proportion. (Of course, you will have to be working pretty energetically with your background knowledge of the Word to be able to follow this and confirm it, for we cannot stay to fill in all detail). Let me repeat that. In the Scriptures these three things overlap and run throughout together in normal times. When things are not normal, that is, when they are undeveloped or when they are deranged, either or all of these disappear or else they are out of proportion. The book of Judges, covering some 400 years, is an abnormal and deranged state of things, and the constant repetition in the book of Judges is: "And there was no king." That explains a lot.

The Prophet and Priest Related to the Throne

Now I want you to notice another thing which is very important. The prophet and the priest are always related to the throne. The king is above them, and they are for him. In other words, all that is represented by the functions of prophet and priest is unto dominion. That is not very profound. I think that lies on the face of an ordinary reading of the Scriptures. Take the books of the Prophets. What has the prophet to do with? The throne, always! Our chapter (2 Chronicles 13) shows how the priest also relates to the throne. It was by the action of the priest that the young king, rescued from the massacre of the seed royal, came to the throne, in accordance, you notice, with the word of the Lord to David, but it was through the priest. When that priest died that throne was upset, all went wrong in the land; but while that priest remained alive, with his influence toward the throne, the government was pure and right. So that what is borne out by the Scriptures very fully and clearly is that

the functions of the prophet and the priest are unto dominion. These three, while manifested in the form of office, rather represent spiritual features than official status. (It is necessary for me to work myself through all this seeming technique in order to reach the necessary end, but I think it is all vital, all important, and it ought to be all very instructive). Let me repeat that these three things - prophet, priest, king - while manifested in the form of office, rather represent spiritual features than official status. Take that which they represent spiritually.

The Spiritual Meaning of the Prophet

PROPHET. The prophetic function is related to spiritual knowledge. Now stay with that and think! Spiritual knowledge is the nature of the prophetic function. What does that mean? It represents the expression of the mind, the thought; so that in the prophetic office you have God's thought placed in the mind of His instrument, which is in the nature of spiritual knowledge. The prophet's knowledge was not studied, was not got from manuals and commentaries. It was revelation, spiritual knowledge. It was not the fruit of the activity and energy of his own brain, it came by the Spirit of the Lord. The true prophet has always to express his ministry in some way like this: "The hand of the Lord was upon me," or, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon So-and-so and he prophesied." So that the prophetic function has to do with spiritual knowledge, deposited as God's thought in the mind of His instrument.

The Meaning of the Priest

PRIEST. The priestly function has to do with righteousness. It is a moral question when you come into the realm of the priest, and this not only in the mind but in the heart. The prophet represents the mind of God, the priest represents the heart of God on all moral matters, gathered up into all that is meant by the word "righteousness," hating iniquity. That is a matter of the heart, and that comes within the compass of the priest. That is why, in the Holy Spirit's taking up through Paul of the symbolism of the Divine provision against the enemy, the breastplate is the breastplate of righteousness. It is a matter of the heart. Righteousness here is a matter of the state of the heart, and the keeping of the heart and its affections and its desires holy, in the sense of moral integrity.

The Meaning of the King

THE KING. The king, the throne, has to do with holiness; holiness in a spiritual sense. This is a matter of the will. Holiness is the foundation of His Throne; spiritual holiness, not only moral integrity and uprightness. This relates to the will, and brings in the whole matter of authority. Authority in the last analysis is a matter of spiritual holiness. Trace that through God's Word. Track that down to its final representations in the New Testament, and you will see that it was because of His spiritual holiness that the Lord Jesus was able to utterly cast out the prince of this world. "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" "The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me." "Now is the prince of this world cast out." Authority, dominion, the throne, has to do with spiritual holiness, working through the will. How did the Lord defeat the prince of this world when He came to overthrow him and to rob him of the dominion which He knew was vested in Him? His utter devotion to holiness, and that devotion expressing itself in a will bent with every ounce of its strength upon pursuing that path of holiness.

You come up against a mighty will when you come up against the Lord Jesus in the wilderness with the devil. See the resolution; see the unwavering purpose. Follow Him right

through all His temptations: "I come to do thy will..."; "Not my will, but thine"; "He set his face as a flint..." But what was the governing factor of that will? It was holiness. It was against compromise with what was unclean. It was against compromise with an unclean world. "All these (the kingdoms of this world) will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Ah! But they are unclean, therefore unacceptable, and the strength of the will is seen in this, that He would rather go to the Cross and suffer all its agony to keep clean in God's way than He would accept the easy way out and the government of the kingdoms of this world in their unclean state. That is the King. You see, dominion is no mere despotism, it has a character. It is spiritual holiness.

Now you see what I meant when I said that, while these three things are manifested in the form of office they rather represent spiritual features, so that you have mind, heart, will. The mind with God's thoughts, the heart with God's standard of righteousness, the will with God's strength of holiness - prophet, priest and king.

I want to take you back again, and remind you that there are these three constituents in the nature of man according to God's mind. This is how man is made when God makes him. He is made with these things in his being. They are not things which developed in the course of history, that God said, Now, in organising Our system We must have prophets, and priests and kings. Those things were all the expression of an inward thing, which was constituent in the creation of man. This is the image of God in which man was made, and it expresses itself. You must remember that back of everything historical and typical in the Word of God there are spiritual realities. You have to get back of the prophet and the priest and the king and see what is the heavenly, spiritual meaning of this. The prophet is God represented in His reason and intelligence. Through the prophet the Word of the Lord is; "Come now, and let us *reason* together, saith the Lord." That is, Let us get down to Divine thoughts. "Your thoughts are not my thoughts, neither are your ways my ways...." There is the expanse of distance as between earth and heaven between your thoughts, and your ways, and Mine, and you must come back to My thoughts, My ways. That is the work of the prophet. The priest is God represented in His moral qualities. You notice what the function of the priest was. It was to examine and scrutinise the offering; to, if possible, find a fault, a flaw. We have sometimes said that the priest was the most expert fault-finder in history. It was the business of the priest, if he could, to find a blemish. If he could, then that offering could not be accepted, it was excluded. And when at length, passing his expert eye, the sacrifice was without spot and without blemish, it was offered to God. That is all a question of moral blemishes, and the priest, therefore, in his function represents God in His moral qualities. The king represents God in His government, and His government is controlled by the law of spiritual holiness.

Now all this was vested in man in creation. Man was constituted by these elements. Man was not merely appointed to these offices. If you could now just follow that ahead, you would see that every child of God who comes into line with God's design and intention and purpose is a prophet, a priest and a king, by constitution and not by appointment. The appointment was a consequent or a subsequent thing. What I mean is this: God never merely appoints to office. God makes men that *are that*. He does not appoint priests, He makes men priests. He does not appoint prophets, He makes prophets. He does not appoint kings, He makes kings. That is a law which governs everything in the Divine order. God never takes from among men someone selectively and appoints him to office, and says, Now I am going to make you a minister, that is, I appoint you a minister. God takes hold of men and women and puts them through the fire and constitutes them something, and everybody has to say, That is a prophet; that is a priest; that is a king; in a spiritual sense.

A Weakness in Organised Christianity

The phrase "organised Christianity" has been used with a good deal of, shall we say, criticism. It is a phrase which means disrepute amongst some of us. Now you understand what we mean. It simply means that organised Christianity represents a system, an appointment by man, an election by man instead of inward constitution or spiritual formation, by God. One is organised, the other is organic. A prophet is not an officer, a priest is not an officer, a king is not an officer in the first instance. These are the functions which come out of the very constitution of the person or persons in view. They represent something which God put into man when He made him as from Himself. It is very important to notice that as we go on.

Let me repeat my last statement. God never merely appoints to office. He makes men who ARE that spiritually, and then calls attention to what He has done.

The Range of Man's Dominion

I would like to take one further fragment before breaking off, with a word about the extent of man's dominion, because we are not primarily occupied with the prophet and the priest. What we have said has been said in order to give the full circuit of man's constitution, and we have emphasised that the prophet and the priest are unto the king, and our specific object is the king, or rather, dominion. We want to recognise afresh the extent of man's dominion according to God's original thought in His creation. Looking at the Scriptures, at man created by God, before anything else happens, we find, firstly, that the dominion of man is related to nature, that is, the three kingdoms, the animal kingdom, the vegetable, and the mineral. That was man's kingdom in nature, where he was given dominion. "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet." That in the first instance, related to Adam. But, secondly, his kingdom, his dominion extended beyond the sphere of nature. It was also spiritual, and embraced the sphere of angels, unfallen and fallen. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation." They are our ministers. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" "He gave them authority over unclean spirits." "Behold, I give you power (authority) over all the power of the enemy." Man's dominion reaches into the spiritual realm. I am speaking now of man according to God's mind.

Note two things, perhaps a little difficult to grasp as they are said in the first instance, but I will repeat them in order that you may be able to get them. Man's delegated dominion from God gave him dominion or government over the kosmos, that is, the world order. Man's faithful and obedient allegiance to God gave him authority over the spiritual forces beyond the kosmos. Let us work backward and prove it. When man was unfaithful and disobedient he lost his authority over the spiritual forces. They took the upper hand of man. Resultantly he lost his government over the kosmos. Man's dominion over nature and the world order was conditioned by his faithful obedience to God, but that faithful obedience to God put him in a position of government over the world, by having dominion over the spiritual forces in the world. This has a tremendous bearing upon the last chapter of the Ephesian letter and the book of the Revelation. You see the issue of the ages to be man brought back to authority over the spiritual forces in the universe and establishing the government of God in the earth. That is redemption.

If you think this is a vast, far away thing, something too much beyond your grasp, let me say to you that this applies to the weakest child of God. There is not one who is not called to this. Can you see the discrimination that is implied and involved by and in what I have

said? Kings, priests, prophets, are not in God's thought isolated individuals, forming a special class. Those things relate to the whole. It is a kingdom of priests, that is, kingship ultimately is corporate, collective, not merely individual. That is God's original thought. If the thing were individual and specific it would be autocratic and despotic. That does not mean that because it is universal it is democratic, but it does mean that it is theocratic - God over all - BUT through His new creation. God's nature expressing itself to the full in a new heaven and a new earth, through a new people. To that you and I are called, every one of us, the weakest, the simplest. We are in the battle for the Throne. We shall be touching upon problems which may arise as we go on, but I do want you to recognise this, that man was constituted for dominion, but he was conditioned as to his dominion, and the condition was faithful and obedient allegiance to God.

It is exactly where you find the Lord Jesus in the book of the Revelation; when you come to find Him Lord of lords and King of kings, you find He is "the Faithful and True Witness."

We are touching the last thing; we are touching the Throne. We are coming to, "Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne..." and when that happens Satan will be cast down from heaven, and there will be no more place found for him. That is what is in view. We are in that conflict now.