

# The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future - Part 1

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## The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future

The greatest and most enduring dynasty in world history is showing signs of passing. But will it? To understand the future of the British royal family, we must examine how the monarchy began—and why.

by Tom Robinson

<http://www.ucg.org/brp/materials/throne/intro.html>

### Introduction

The year 2002 marks the 50th year in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II—her Golden Jubilee—a milestone reached by only five previous British monarchs. Sadly, a pall was cast over the festivities by the death of the Queen’s sister, Princess Margaret, followed shortly afterward by the death of the Queen’s mother, who was also named Elizabeth.

The royal family has certainly experienced its share of tragedy over the past several years. Adultery, divorce, scandal, serious health problems. And, of course, who can forget the farewell to “England’s rose,” Princess Diana? Besides these, the House of Windsor has also had to face questions regarding the role and legitimacy of the monarchy itself.

As the United Kingdom wrestles with issues of national sovereignty and the preservation of its culture and national traditions in the face of calls for greater participation in the European Union, the throne of Britain has been the subject of ongoing debate.

One of country’s premier magazines, *The Economist*, has even called for abolishing the monarchy, calling it an institution of “baseless deference” (Oct. 22, 1994, p. 15; see **Appendix 1: “Scrapping the Monarchy?”**) Yet is it truly baseless? We will learn the answer to that question as we examine the matter—and from a rather surprising source.

### ~part 1 of 23~

**“This sceptered isle”** The *Economist* did concede that “if the British people want a monarchy, they should have a monarchy” (p. 15). And despite its problems, most in the United Kingdom do still want their monarchy. Many reflect with pride and nostalgia on “this throne of kings, this sceptered isle, this earth of majesty” (Shakespeare, *Richard II*, Act 2, Scene 1)—recalling names like Queen Victoria, King James, Henry VIII, Robert the Bruce, Richard the Lionhearted, William the Conqueror and King Arthur. For some, this reflection on the monarchy stretches even farther back into the mists of time, all the way to its traditional founder Brutus, reputedly of the royal house of Troy—the famed city of Homer’s classical epic, *The Iliad*. Around A.D. 1139, English chronicler Geoffrey of Monmouth fancifully recounted the story of Brutus (Celtic Brwt) from earlier sources in his *History of the Kings of Britain*. Though discounted as myth by most historians today, notice the incredible future that was foretold for the descendants of this ancient Trojan in a dream: “Brutus, beyond the setting of the sun, past the realms of Gaul [now France], there lies an island in the sea, once occupied by giants. Now

it is empty and ready for your folk. Down the years this will prove an abode suited to you and to your people; and for your descendants it will be a second Troy. A race of kings will be born there from your stock and the round circle of the whole earth will be subject to them” (translated by Lewis Thorpe, 1966).

Remarkably, Geoffrey set down these words before Britain was even remotely a world power. Perhaps it was just a case of wishful thinking on his part—yet the words do seem rather prophetic. For in the 1800s, Queen Victoria, called the Empress of India, came to reign over the largest empire in the history of the world, encompassing “a quarter of the land mass of the earth, and a third of its population” (James Morris, *Heaven’s Command: An Imperial Progress*, 1973, p. 539).

Today, though, it seems that despite multiple nations still looking to Queen Elizabeth as their head of state, the British throne’s glory days are over, particularly with more and more calls heard for its abolishment. But what really lies ahead for the monarchy? For the answer we must look back nearly 4,000 years—to a past even more amazing than the account of Brutus, and filled with far more certain prophecies. For as astounding as it may seem, the past and future of the British monarchy are found within the pages of the Holy Bible.

### **~part 2 of 23~ The scepter promise**

Our story begins with the righteous patriarch Abraham, who, around 1900 B.C., trekked from Mesopotamia all the way to Canaan, which is now the land of Israel. In reward for his faithful obedience to God, the Almighty promised fantastic national blessings for his posterity and that through a particular descendant of his, the entire world would be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; 22:16-18). God further promised that kings would come from him and his wife Sarah (17:6, 16). This is widely understood to mean that a line of kings would spring from them, culminating in the Messiah—Jesus Christ—who would bring salvation for the whole world. These promises, both of ethnic lineage and of grace, were confirmed to Abraham’s son Isaac (Genesis 26:3-5). Later, around 1750 B.C., God promised essentially the same thing to Isaac’s son Jacob (Genesis 28:10-19). A few decades afterward, God informed him, “A nation and a company of nations shall proceed from you, and kings shall come from your body” (35:11). By this time, Jacob, renamed Israel, had fathered 12 sons—each to be the progenitor of one of the 12 tribes of Israel. Through his son Joseph—and Joseph’s two sons Ephraim and Manasseh— would continue the birthright promise of national greatness (Genesis 48; 49:22-26). We also see this in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2 in the New Revised Standard Version: “The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. (He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father’s bed his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he [Reuben] is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright; though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler [“the chief ruler,” King James Version] came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph).” Thus, while Joseph received the birthright, to Jacob’s son Judah, father of the Jews, went the promise of a kingly line leading to the Messiah. Just before Jacob died around 1670 B.C., he prophesied: “Judah is a lion’s whelp . . . The scepter [ruler’s staff] shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes [Shiloh meaning “Peaceable One,” “Peacemaker” or “To Whom It (the Scepter) Belongs”—thus a reference to the Messiah]; and to Him shall be the obedience of the people” (Genesis 49:9-10). It is probably because of this

prophecy that the lion, the “king of beasts,” became the heraldic emblem of Judah. Some 30 years before this prophecy was given, around 1700 B.C., a strange event had occurred in the family of Judah, when Tamar bore him twin sons. During the delivery, a hand of one of the twins came out first, around which the midwife tied a scarlet thread to identify the firstborn—who was customarily preeminent when it came to inheritance rights (Genesis 38:27-28). But the baby pulled his hand back in and his brother came out first.

The midwife exclaimed: “How did you break through? This breach [or breaking out] be upon you!” (verse 29). In other words, “You are to be identified with this from now on.” And to ensure it the child was named Perez (or Pharez), meaning “Breach.” Then the baby with the scarlet thread on his hand was born—and he was named Zerah (or Zarah), meaning “Rising” or “Appearing,” perhaps because his hand had appeared first (verse 30).

This surely seems a rather odd occurrence to record in the Bible if it were to have no further significance. The implication is perhaps that Perez, who forced himself into the firstborn position, would need to eventually be reconciled with Zerah. And we will later see that this appears to have actually happened.

In any event, since Perez was the firstborn, the right of inheritance went to him—although Zerah, with the scarlet thread, would seem to have some claim in this. So which one received the scepter? Neither did—personally that is. Indeed, Judah himself had not received it either. For it wasn’t until much later in the time of Moses and the Exodus—around 1445 B.C.—that Israel became a true nation with a ruling king. But even then that king wasn’t of the tribe of Judah.

### **~part 3 of 23~ The throne of the Lord**

The king at the time of the Exodus and for the next nearly 400 years was the Rock of Israel, the Eternal God Himself—in fact, the preincarnate Word, Jesus Christ (compare Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Corinthians 10:4; John 1:1-3, 14; 17:5; and to learn more, [request](#) our free booklet **Who Is God?**).

Though ruling through His chosen “judges”—from Moses and Joshua all the way to Samuel—God in the person of Christ sat on the throne of Israel (compare Judges 8:22-23). Samuel described this period as the time “when the LORD your God was your king” (1 Samuel 12:12). That’s why, when the Israelites told Samuel around 1050 B.C. that they wanted a human king like the nations around them, the Lord told him, “They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them” (8:7).

So God then gave them a physical monarch—though surprisingly not of the tribe of Judah. Rather, King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin.

It is interesting to note that unlike other ancient rulers, the king of Israel was not an absolute despot. God had Samuel anoint Saul “commander” (9:16; 10:1) or “captain” (KJV) over His people. This Hebrew term *nagiyd* used here could be rendered in English as viceroy or governor-general—the stand-in for the real monarch. In fact, the very act of anointing a ruler in the ancient world implied a vassal relationship. It is later explained that Israel’s king “sat on the throne of the LORD,” essentially reigning as king for Him (1 Chronicles 29:23; 2 Chronicles 9:6-8).

Also quite different than in other realms was the fact that in other countries, kings made law and were thus above it. But in Israel, God's prophet explained "the rights and duties of the kingship" (1 Samuel 10:22, NRSV). The ruler was subject to the law (compare Deuteronomy 17:14-20). Essentially, the Almighty set up a constitutional limited monarchy—in which He would send prophets as His representatives to the king to give him his "report card." Tragically, Saul failed and God removed him from office by bringing about his death.

Then, around 1010 B.C., more than 650 years after the scepter prophecy had been given to Judah, God at last did raise up a man from that tribe, of the preeminent branch of Perez, to be king: "I have found David . . . a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" (Acts 13:22).

#### **~part 4 of 23~ The Davidic covenant**

David, though he made mistakes, was a deeply converted man who followed God with his whole heart. So God told him he would make him a "house" (2 Samuel 7:11)—that is, a royal dynasty. It was to be an enduring dynasty through his son Solomon: "And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (verse 13). If Solomon disobeyed God, he would be punished (verse 14). "But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (verse 15-16; compare 23:1, 5; 1 Chronicles 22:9-10; 28:4-5).

Yet this requires some clarification, particularly the statement about Solomon's dynasty enduring forever. The Hebrew word translated "forever" here, *olam*, does not always carry this meaning. Occasionally it means unending as long as certain conditions apply (compare Exodus 21:6; Jonah 2:6). Recorded elsewhere, there were definite conditions attached to the endurance of Solomon's throne. Notice 1 Chronicles 28: "Moreover, I will establish his kingdom forever, if he is steadfast to observe My commandments and judgments" (verse 7). God later reiterated this condition to Solomon himself (2 Chronicles 7:17-18; compare verses 19-22). So if he lived in disobedience to God, the promise of an unending Solomonic dynasty would be rendered null and void. Sadly, this would come to pass, as Solomon's heart was eventually turned to following other gods (see 1 Kings 11:4).

What, then, of 2 Samuel 7:14-15, where God said he wouldn't remove His mercy from Solomon as He did with Saul? It must simply have meant that, in the event of Solomon's disobedience, God would not bring about his death to end his reign, as happened with Saul. Instead, Solomon would be allowed to live out his days with his kingdom intact for the sake of David—and indeed this is what happened (compare 1 Kings 11:12). Nevertheless, Solomon violated the conditions that would have guaranteed him a perpetual dynasty. So while nothing forbade his descendants from reigning until well into the future, God was not obligated to ensure their continuance upon the throne.

On the other hand, God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:15-16—that David's own kingdom and throne would be established forever—still stands. For God did obligate Himself to this course no matter what Solomon did. Notice His confirmation of this tremendous pledge in the book of Psalms: "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David: 'Your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations'" (89:3-4). So

from then on, David would have a descendant sitting on a continuing throne in every generation!

God further proclaimed: “Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him. His seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven . . . My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. 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” (verses 27-29, 3437).

And in Jeremiah 33:19: “Thus says the LORD: ‘If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son [that is, a descendant] to reign on his throne.’”

Here, then, was an unbreakable promise of an unbreakable dynasty—a dynasty preeminent above all others! But what happened to that dynasty? And where is it today?

### **~part 5 of 23~ Fall of Israel and Judah**

Because of Solomon’s disobedience, God split the nation into two kingdoms following his death in about 930 B.C. (1 Kings 11-12). The tribes of Judah and Benjamin in the south (with many from Levi)—as the kingdom of Judah—continued under the throne of David, beginning with Solomon’s son Rehoboam.

The northern 10 tribes, however—as the kingdom of Israel—went through a number of different dynasties. And because of the northern kingdom’s continual idolatry, God finally had its people taken into captivity around 733 and 722 B.C. by the Assyrians, who resettled the 10 tribes in what is now northern Iraq and Iran (2 Kings 15, 17). Subsequently, as centuries passed, the 10 tribes were seemingly lost.

Around 20 years after Israel’s final fall, the nation of Judah, following repeated cycles of idolatry and reformation, was invaded by Assyria as well, reducing Judah “to a shadow of its former self, at least two thirds of the population perishing or being carried away captive” (“Judah,” *The Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 825). Thus, a great number of Jews, Benjamites and Levites were also taken away to join the Israelite captivity.

God gave the remnant of Judah another century to prove its loyalty and devotion to Him. Yet sadly, despite witnessing Israel’s captivity and experiencing its own bitter taste of it, Judah lapsed into idolatrous rebellion again (see Jeremiah 3:10-11). So God sent the rest of the nation of Judah into captivity as well—this time by the hands of the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar II (ca. 604 to 586 B.C.).

The Davidic line had continued all the way to this point, with Zedekiah now reigning over Judah. But according to Jeremiah, the Babylonian forces took the Jewish king to Nebuchadnezzar, who—after killing Zedekiah’s sons in front of his face and slaying “all the nobles of Judah” to ensure that no heir to the throne remained—put out Zedekiah’s eyes and threw him in a dungeon in Babylon, where he eventually died (39:1-7; 52:1-11).

There was, it should be noted, a former king of the Solomonic line still alive in the dungeons of

Babylon. In fact this man, Jeconiah—also called Coniah or Jehoiachin—was restored to honor 37 years into the Jewish captivity (2 Kings 25:27-30). He was even given the title “king” along with numerous other captive, vassal rulers. When the Persian conquerors of Babylon later permitted a contingent of Jews to return to their homeland, Jeconiah’s grandson Zerubbabel was made governor—but not king—of Judea.

To dispel any notion that this line could have been the means whereby God preserved the Davidic dynasty, it must be pointed out that God had earlier decreed that no descendant of Jeconiah would ever sit on the throne of David, ruling over Judah (Jeremiah 22:24, 30). And none ever did. In fact, while a minority of the Jewish captives did return to the Holy Land following the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish throne was never reestablished there at all. What, then, of God’s promises that David’s dynasty would never end?

### **~part 6 of 23~ The coming of the Messiah**

Beyond the messianic reference in the scepter prophecy (Genesis 49:10), God gave many other prophecies about the Messiah in Scripture. He was to be of the line of David, ruling on David’s throne (see Isaiah 9:6-9). And Jesus Christ, as the Messiah, was to fulfill these prophecies, as God was to “give Him the throne of His father David” (Luke 1:31-33). Indeed, Jesus was physically descended—through His mother Mary—from David’s son Nathan (Romans 1:3; Luke 3:23, 30-33, Heli of that lineage being the father of Mary and father-in-law of her husband Joseph).

Mary’s husband Joseph was himself of the Solomonic line of Jeconiah, and Jesus was reckoned as his son, signifying Jesus’ adoption by him (Matthew 1:1-16; compare Luke 2:48). This adoption could perhaps have given Jesus a legal claim to the throne. Yet remarkably, if He had been the actual son of Joseph, descent from Jeconiah would have barred Him from inheriting David’s throne. But Jesus was not Joseph’s son—He was the Son of God the Father through miraculous conception in the womb of Mary when she was yet a betrothed virgin. And through Mary, Jesus was descended from David by a different family line, as mentioned. Furthermore, Christ, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Revelation 5:5), is both “the Root and the Offspring of David” (3:16). That is, beyond being David’s descendant, Jesus was also the ancestor of David, as the Eternal God who created Adam—the father of all mankind (Luke 3:38; compare Ephesians 3:9). Moreover, the preincarnate Jesus was Israel’s first King. The Davidic throne was actually, as we’ve seen, the throne of the Lord. And since Jesus is the Lord, the throne ultimately remained His to take back.

Many will hail these facts as proof that God’s promises to David have been fulfilled in Christ’s coming as David’s descendant. Yet if so, it still doesn’t explain why there wasn’t a reigning king of David’s line for more than 500 years between Zedekiah and Jesus. David’s throne was supposed to be occupied in “all generations.” And yet it would appear that there wasn’t even a Davidic throne or kingship in existence for all that time. How did Christ inherit a throne that didn’t exist?

The truth of the matter is that Jesus did not sit on David’s throne when He came in the flesh—nor has He at anytime since. In a parable, Christ portrays Himself as a nobleman who “went to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return” (Luke 19:12)—that is, He went to heaven to receive the Kingdom of God and has not yet returned to rule over it. Jesus is presently

sitting with the Father on His throne in heaven (Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 12:2). But since Christ's rule over all nations from Jerusalem (see Jeremiah 3:17) has not yet begun, does that mean more than 2,500 years have gone by without a descendant of David reigning as king? Has God broken His word after all?

One important factor often overlooked about the scepter prophecy in Genesis 49:10 is that it shows Judah still having a ruling monarch, waiting for the Messiah to take over, "in the last days" (verse 1). Therefore, since Jesus has not yet returned in power and glory, there must be a monarch of Jewish descent reigning somewhere on the earth during this generation. In fact, that monarch must be of the line of David, occupying a throne that has continued through all generations since David. Otherwise, the Bible is unreliable.

### **~part 7 of 23~ To build and to plant**

The obvious question now is: Did the Davidic dynasty come to an end with the death of Zedekiah and his sons—or did it somehow survive? In searching for an answer, we begin with the prophet Jeremiah, to whom God had given a mysterious commission: "See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10, NRSV). Oddly enough, even though Judah was the only nation or kingdom in the Promised Land at this time, notice that Jeremiah was set over "nations" and "kingdoms"—plural.

Setting that fact aside for now, based on Jeremiah's life after the prophecy was given it is easy to ascertain what God meant by plucking up, pulling down, destroying and overthrowing. This great prophet repeatedly warned the Jews to repent of their disobedience—but they scorned him. So God used him to pronounce judgment on the nation: the people and the kings of David's line would be overthrown in the Babylonian conquest and uprooted—to Babylon. But did all of them go there?

The latter part of the prophet's commission yet remained: "to build and to plant." But what did this involve? From Jeremiah 45:4 we can see that building and planting in this context originally entailed God's planting His people in the land and building a kingdom of them there—now to be pulled up and destroyed. So the commission would seem to involve planting people in another place in order to establish a kingdom elsewhere. But did this have anything to do with the house of David?

Intriguingly, Jeremiah did prophesy regarding David's dynasty, as we have already seen and will soon see more of. And a prophecy from Ezekiel will answer the question of who was to be planted—and where. Yet first note this amazing fact: Following the carrying away of Judah's people, a remnant left in the land included the "king's daughters" (41:10)—who were evidently young girls since their father Zedekiah was only 32 when he died (compare 2 Chronicles 36:11).

But could the royal line continue through a daughter? According to Israel's law of inheritance, the answer would certainly appear to be yes (compare Numbers 27:1-11)—though Nebuchadnezzar may not have realized this initially. (In fact, if kingship could not pass through a woman then it could not have passed through Mary to Jesus Christ.)

What, then, happened to the remnant? Against God's commands (Jeremiah 42:1-19), they fled from the Babylonian invaders to Egypt to seek the protection of Pharaoh Hophra. The

Encyclopaedia Britannica explains: “Apries . . . Hebrew Hophra (d. 567 B.C.), fourth king (reigned 589-570 B.C.) of the 26th dynasty of Egypt; he succeeded his father Psamtik II. Apries failed to help his ally King Zedekiah of Judah against Babylon, but after the fall of Jerusalem he received many Jewish refugees into Egypt” (“Apries,” Micropaedia, 1985, Vol. 1., p. 496).

According to the Bible, the Jewish remnant took with them “men, women, children, the king’s daughters and . . . Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch”—the last name referring to Jeremiah’s secretary or scribe (Jeremiah 43:6). The majority of these, according to God, would die by sword or famine (42:15-16). But a few would escape and some would return (44:12-14, 28). We know that Baruch and Jeremiah, who did not go to Egypt by choice, survived (compare 45:2-5). And, as we will see, so did at least one of the king’s daughters.

### **To Continue #2 The Throne of Britain: Its Biblical Origin and Future**