

Two Kingdoms

As we have seen in *2 Gospels?* James the Lord's brother, was the leader of the first Church based in Jerusalem.

In the New Testament, in Acts, James the Lord's brother suddenly appears as the 'Bishop of Bishops' without an introduction, and without the slightest hint of how he came to be in the picture in the first place. The book of Acts is more concerned at introducing us to the never to mentioned again Matthias who took over Judas' job in chapter 1. But it is James who is clearly the central character of the Jerusalem church by chapter 12

Act 12:17 But, waving to them with his hand to be quiet, he (Peter) declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go tell these things to James and to the brothers. And he departed and went into another place.

In chapter 15 it is James not Peter who makes the 'proclamation' at the Jerusalem Council.

Act 15:19 Therefore my judgement is that we do not trouble those who have turned to God from among the nations, 20 but that we write to them that they should abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and from blood.

So what happened?

The gospels certainly insinuate that Peter was Jesus choice to shepherd¹ the church. And if not Peter, then a collective of Peter, James and John. That James being James the son of Zebedee.

But Peter is very clearly in subjection to James 'the Lord's brother' by both Paul's account and the record in Acts.

The Kingdom

With James and Paul, we are looking at not only two different gospels, but also 2 different understandings of the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew, we see Jesus giving Peter the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mat 16:18 And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and *the* gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven to you. And whatever you may bind on earth shall occur, having been bound in Heaven, and whatever you may loose on earth shall occur, having been loosed in Heaven.

This is a very interesting variation on a theme in the Old Testament.

Isa 22:22 And the key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

In context, Isaiah is speaking of the keys of the temporal house of David, and Matthew, the keys of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven.

¹ Mat 20:26 However, it shall not be so among you. But whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant.

Whilst a temporal king wields power from the top, it is worth noting that the keys of the Kingdom of heaven are not about one person (eg Peter or James) having authority at the top.² They are given freely to those with 'ears to hear'.

Mat 18:18 Truly I say to you, Whatever you shall bind on earth shall occur, having been bound in Heaven; and whatever you shall loose on earth shall occur, having been loosed in Heaven. 19 Again I say to you that if two of you shall agree on earth as regarding anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by My Father in Heaven.

I submit that for James, the church is more about the restoration of the temporal kingdom of David than the eternal kingdom of Heaven.

We have our first clue in the Acts account of James speech before his proclamation at the Jerusalem Council. Quoting Amos 9 11, James comes out with

Act 15:16 "After this I will return and will build again the **tabernacle of David** *which* has fallen down; and I will build again its ruins, and I will set it up, 17 so those men who are left might seek after the Lord, and all the nations on whom My name has been called, says the Lord, who does all these things."

Matthew Henry states:

It was the general expectation of the pious Jews that the Messiah should be *a light to enlighten the Gentiles* (Luke_2:32): but James waives the more illustrious prophecies of this, and pitches upon one that seemed more obscure

More obscure indeed if its a reference to the Messiah, but it is not obscure at all if it is meant to be referring to the restoration of the **House of David**, the Jewish royal line that James is 'heir' to.

And there is more in the verse. In our version of Acts the passage is from the LXX, the Greek translation of the Old Testament used by Jews in the Greek speaking world. The original Hebrew speaks of the House of David 'possessing' or 'inheriting' the nations (Heb - goyim).³

Amos 9:11 In that day I will raise up the **booth of David** that has fallen, and close up its breaks; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old; 12 so that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the nations *on* whom My name is called, says Jehovah who is doing this.

This is a totally different paradigm to Paul's gospel. When Paul speaks of the Kingdom he often speaks of it together with the Greek word κληρονομέω (klēronomeō) 'to be an heir, to obtain by inheritance'.⁴ indicating that the Kingdom is the inheritance of all believers, no matter what their race.

Paul is very clear in speaking against a fleshly or dynastic inheritance of the Kingdom.

1Co 15:50 And I say this, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit *the* kingdom of God,

There is another clue to James in Acts 15.

Act 15:19 Therefore my judgement is ...

Judgement is certainly a lot stronger than suggestion or opinion. The Greek word used for 'judgement here is *kreeno*. Its is also the same word used in Acts 25:10 where Paul appeals to Caesar for 'judgement'.

² This can also be seen in 2 Peter 1

³ (Interestingly the Damascas Document of the Dead Sea Scrolls also quotes Amos 9:11 – their spin is on 'the house' is 'the Law' and 'of David' is 'of the congregation'.)

⁴ 1 Cor 6:9-10, 15:50, Galatians 5:21,

More hints of what is going on are found in Matthews Gospel. This is generally regarded as the gospel to the Jews.

In Matthew 1 we read

Mat 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, *the* son of David, *the* son of Abraham. 15
And Eliud fathered Eleazar, and Eleazar fathered Matthan, and Matthan fathered Jacob 16 And
Jacob fathered Joseph, the husband *to be* of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ.

Why does Matthew have a genealogy of Joseph? Unless Joseph was Jesus physical father, this genealogy simply shows that his step-father Joseph was of the house of David⁵ and specifically the a 'Son of David'.⁶

Matthew uses the title 'son of David' when speaking of Jesus 8 times, more than Mark and Luke combined. John does not use the term at all.

The term Son of David, is a term of Kingship

Jer 33:20 So says Jehovah: If you can break My covenant of the day and My covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, 21 *then* also may My covenant with David My servant be broken, that he should not have a son to reign on his throne, and *My covenant* with the Levites the priests, My ministers.

So then, for James, Jesus is his physical brother, or at least half brother, and the interest is in Jesus as son of David, and his legacy. Jesus was known among the people as Son of David, and the passion narratives of all 4 New Testament gospels record Jesus as being crucified as 'King of the Jews'. James is also a 'son of David', and from a hereditary point of view, as Jesus died without an heir, James would have a claim to be Jesus successor as a Messianic (anointed) 'King'.

Sources outside the New Testament scriptures, including early versions of Josephus⁷, indicate that until his death at AD 65, James was a very eminent and highly respected figure in Jerusalem.

More information supporting evidence for a Jamesian dynastic Kingdom lies outside the New Testament in the records of Eusebius Ecclesiastical History.

- James successor as 'Bishop of Jerusalem' in AD 65 is recorded by Epiphanius as Simeon bar Cleopas another close relative.⁸
- After the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 Vespasian is recorded as specifically looking to root out and purge of all descendants of the Davidic dynasty.⁹

5 Luk 1:27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of *the* house of David.

6 Mat 1:20 ...the angel of *the* Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David...

7 Jerome- And to so great a reputation among the people for righteousness did this James rise, that Flavius Josephus, who wrote the "Antiquities of the Jews" in twenty books, when wishing to exhibit the cause why the people suffered so great misfortunes that even the temple was razed to the ground, said, that these things happened to them in accordance with the wrath of God in consequence of the things which they had dared to do against James the brother of Jesus who is called Christ - and Origen - the siege began in the reign of Nero, and lasted till the government of Vespasian, whose son Titus destroyed Jerusalem, on account, as Josephus says, of James the Just, the brother of Jesus who was called Christ, but in reality, as the truth makes clear, on account of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

8 After the martyrdom of James...there is a firm tradition that those of the apostles and disciples of the Lord that were still alive, assembled from every place, together with those who were of the family of the Lord by the flesh.... to discuss whom they should choose as worthy to be a successor to James and voted unanimously for Simeon bar Cleopas- EH - 3.11.1

9 Vespasian, after the capture of Jerusalem, issued an order to ensure that no one who was royal stock should be left among the Jews, that all descendants of David should be ferreted out - EH 3.12

- Eusebius quoting Heggesippus states that in about AD 90 Domitian after the Jewish uprising did a similar purge.¹⁰

James group is focussed on the Law of Moses.

James letter contains mainly good positive instructions, but take out the two references to the name Jesus in 1 v1 and 2 v 1, and the neither the content nor arguments of James letter would need to be amended at all if there had never been a Jesus. There is no claim of ongoing input from Jesus, there is no mention of anything Jesus said or did, nor of his death, resurrection and ascension. There is no mention of the Holy Spirit.

Just like the the Jerusalem conference, James is focused on Law.

Paul on the other hand is focussed on Jesus as Son of God crucified resurrected, and continuing to live within us and speak to us as the resurrected Christ.

Interestingly, never having seen Jesus before his crucifixion, Paul takes great pains to state that he did not get his gospel from man but from a direct revelation of the risen Christ. In his letters, Paul never actually quotes anything from Jesus earthly ministry, other than the instigation of the Lords Supper.

2Co 5:16 So as we now know no one according to flesh, but even if we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we no longer know *Him so*.

Nevertheless, Paul's letters and the rest of the New Testament scriptures are in agreement on the nature of the mystery of the Kingdom of heaven.

Paul states this incredibly clearly for those with ears to hear in Colossians 1:25 to Col 2:3.

Col 1:25 of which I became a minister, according to the administration of God given to me for you, to fulfill the Word of God; 26 the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. 27 *For to them* God would make known what *are* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**, 28 whom we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, so that we may present **every man perfect in Christ Jesus**. 29 For which I also labor, striving according to the working of Him who works in me in power.

Col 2:1 For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in *the* flesh, 2 **that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love**, and to all riches of the full assurance of the understanding, to *the* **full knowledge of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**.

This is the mystery of the Kingdom that Jesus came preaching. Its a lot more than the self evident, poverty stricken definitions such as “ the Kingdom of God is where ever God is King”. Which is a ll our syncretistic Christianity seems to know about!

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¹⁰ The descendants of Judas, as the brother of the Saviour according to the flesh, because they were of the family of David, were brought to Domitian...Domitian despising them...as simpletons, commanded them to be dismissed – EH 3.20.5