



The New Kingdom

"The kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another. Jesus sums up the whole Law, focusing it on the commandment of love."

John Paul II

Chapter 27

The New Kingdom



Read

Psalm 2

Matthew

15:23 - 28

22:41 - 46

When Jacob was dying, he called all his sons together and gave them a prophetic blessing (see Gn 49). When he came to Judah, he made this prophecy:

**The scepter shall not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,
until he comes to whom it belongs;
and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Gn 49:10)**

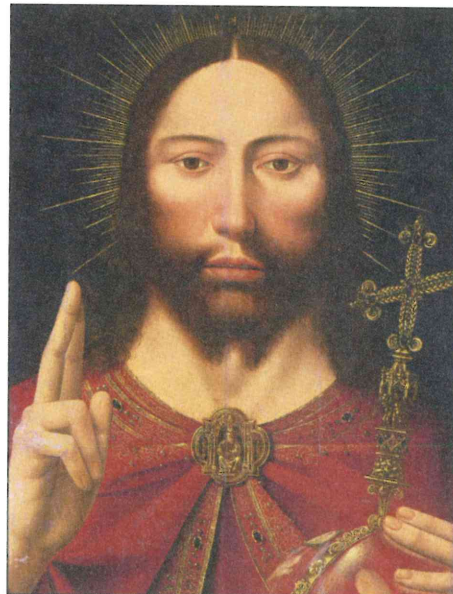
Jacob was promising Judah something more than rule over the rest of Jacob's sons. The "scepter"—the symbol of royal power—would belong to Judah until some descendant of Judah came to whom the scepter "belonged." Then not just Israel, but "the peoples"—all the nations—would obey him. King David came from the tribe of Judah. Jesus Christ's human ancestors came from the line of David, and Jesus inherited David's throne. David ruled over just a small empire in the Middle East, but Christ's reign is unlimited. "The obedience of the peoples" belongs to him.

When the angel Gabriel came to tell Mary that she would bear a child, he told her exactly who this child would be:

**He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High;
and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,
and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever;
and of his kingdom there will be no end.
(Lk 1:32-33)**

The words Gabriel used are a summary of the Davidic covenant. Remember the promises God made to David (see 2 Sm 7): "I will raise up your offspring after you...I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever...your throne shall be established forever." These were the same promises God made to Mary.

The meaning would be clear to any faithful Jew. Mary's son will be the Son of David, the Anointed One (that is, the Messiah or Christ), heir to the throne of David and to all the promises that went with it. But Jesus would turn out to be a different sort of king. Through Jesus would be fulfilled not only the promises to David, but also—finally—the promise to Abraham that all the people of the world would be blessed through him.



The Son Of David

- As “Son of David,” Jesus inherits all the promises of the Davidic covenant.
- Matthew shows that the new Israel includes Gentile believers.

As you remember, the whole New Testament begins with the genealogy of Jesus Christ, “the son of David, the son of Abraham.”

For Matthew, the most important thing to know about Jesus was that he was the climax of God's plan of salvation. Jesus Christ fulfilled all the promises God had made to Abraham and to David. As we saw earlier, Matthew uses his literary art to show that Jesus is the ideal successor of David. Jesus is the Anointed One, the Son of David, who inherits all the promises in the Davidic covenant. In fact, Jesus is called “Son of David” at least eight times in Matthew's Gospel.

Why is that title “Son of David” so important to Matthew? The reason is that the Kingdom of Heaven has replaced the Kingdom of Israel. Matthew needs to show his Jewish audience that the prophecies in the Scriptures all point to Jesus. For Jews of that time, the prophecies in the Scriptures all pointed to the Son of David, the Anointed One (Messiah or Christ) who would restore the kingdom of Israel. Matthew's readers need to understand that the prophecies promised something much greater than a new king at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. The Son of David is Lord of all the nations, and all his followers the whole world over make up the new Kingdom of Israel.

Matthew illustrates that new understanding of the kingdom with a story—one that must immediately have struck his Jewish audience:

And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and cried, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely possessed by a demon.” (Mt 15: 22)

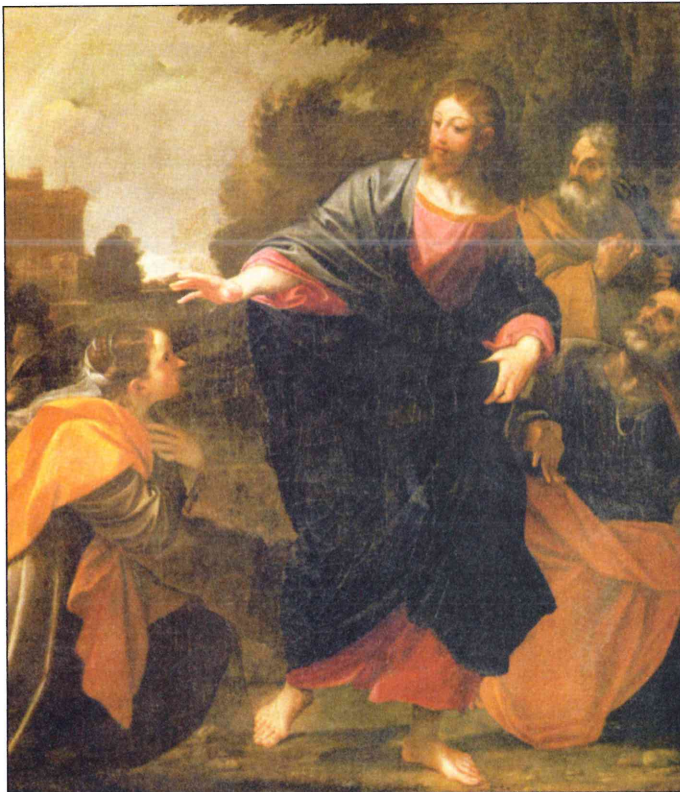
This woman was a Syro-Phoenician (according to the same story in Mark), a descendant of the Canaanites who lived in the Promised Land before the conquest. The Canaanites were supposed to have been exterminated during the conquest of the Promised Land, but the Israelites failed to displace them. Instead, the Israelites were often seduced into worshipping the horrible Canaanite idols, which demanded human sacrifice and ritual prostitution. Canaanites were the most hated enemies of Israel, and the very symbols of why it was important for Jews to separate themselves from the Gentiles. But this Canaanite calls Jesus “Lord, Son of David”!

Jesus tests her faith by adopting the traditional Jewish attitude toward Canaanites:

But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying after us.” He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” And he answered, “It is not fair to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was cured instantly. (Mt 15: 23-28)

An ordinary Jewish reader would have seen the shocking message of this story at once: the blessings of the new Kingdom are for the Gentiles, too—even for the Canaanites! And the Canaanite woman recognizes Jesus as “Son of David,” and recognizes the Son of David as her “Lord.” None of Jesus’ own disciples had yet recognized him as the Anointed One. A little while later, Peter was the first to make the connection:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples. “Who do men say that the Son of man is?” And they said, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mt 16: 13-16)



When Peter calls Jesus “the Christ, the Son of the living God,” he acknowledges that Jesus is heir to the titles that belong to the throne of David:

- **Anointed One (Christ or Messiah)**
- **Son of God (see 2 Sm 7: 14)**

In other words, Jesus is legitimate king, heir to David’s throne and the Davidic covenant.

“...‘Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.’ Then Jesus answered her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’” (Mt 15: 27-28)



“He said to them, ‘How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord...’” (Mt 22: 43)

The Riddle: How Can David’s Son Be David’s Lord?

- Jesus asked the Pharisees a question they couldn’t answer: How can David’s son be David’s Lord?
- Peter’s first sermon shows how Jesus fulfills the promises God made to David.
- Jesus, Peter says, is the Anointed One, heir to David’s throne.
- Finally, Peter answers the riddle that stumped the Pharisees.

After the Pharisees had tried for a while to trap Jesus with questions, Jesus himself turned around and asked them a question they couldn’t answer:

Now when the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question, saying, “What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David, inspired by the Spirit, calls him Lord, saying,

‘The Lord said to my Lord,
Sit at my right hand,
till I put thy enemies under thy feet’?

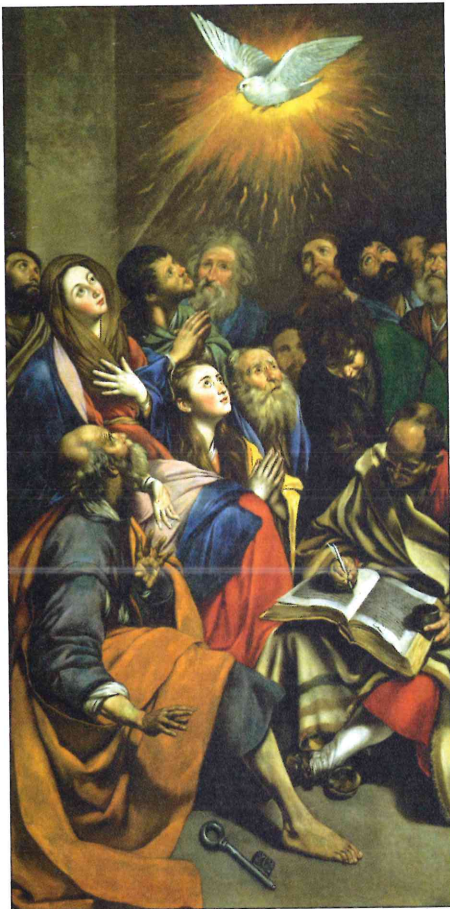
If David thus calls him Lord, how is he his son?” And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did any one dare to ask him any more questions. (Mt 22: 41-46)

The Pharisees obviously recognized this psalm as referring to the Christ, the Anointed One—in other words, the Son of David. Otherwise, they could have just refused to admit that the psalm had anything to do with the Christ, and they would not have been unable to answer Jesus.

This same saying of Jesus shows up in all three synoptic Gospels: Matthew 22: 41-46, Mark 12: 35-37, Luke 20: 41-44. Since the saying appears in two different settings, Jesus probably said it more than once. He obviously thought it was an important question for the people to think about.

But no one ever answers it in any of the Gospels. Even the Twelve could not answer it until after Jesus' death and resurrection. Then, on the day of Pentecost, Peter was inspired by the Holy Spirit, and he gave a sermon that answered Jesus' riddle.

Peter's sermon is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Luke's sequel to his Gospel. His audience were Jews "from every nation under heaven" in Jerusalem. When they heard the Apostles speaking in every language, some of them thought the men were simply drunk. Peter had to speak to an audience that included some of the very same people who had shouted "Crucify him!" when Pilate wanted to let Jesus go. They were also people who expected very little from Galileans. The only way Peter could overcome the crowd's hostility was by showing them that everything they already knew about the Scriptures pointed to Jesus.



1. Peter's sermon begins by explaining what the people are seeing right now—the coming of the Holy Spirit. This very event, he says, was foretold by the prophet Joel.

Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; yea, and on my menservants and my maidservants in those days

I will pour out my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth beneath, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and manifest day.

And it shall be that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

(Acts 2: 14-21)

By quoting Joel, Peter tells the Jews where they are in history: the last days, the days when the Christ, the Anointed One, has already come.

2. Next, Peter reminds his listeners of the miracles worked by Jesus. Many in his audience must have seen some of those miracles themselves. These miracles, Peter tells them, were signs from God that should have told them who Jesus was:

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. (Acts 2: 22)

3. Then Peter tells them something amazing: Jesus' crucifixion, which must have seemed like the end of his movement, was actually part of God's plan:

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. But God raised him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. (Acts 2: 23-24)

4. Who was this miraculous man, then? Peter reminds them of what David said in Psalm 16:

For David says concerning him,

"I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will dwell in hope.

For thou wilt not abandon my soul to Hades,
nor let thy Holy One see corruption.

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life;
thou wilt make me full of gladness with thy presence."

Brethren, I may say to you confidently of the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. (Acts 2: 25-29)

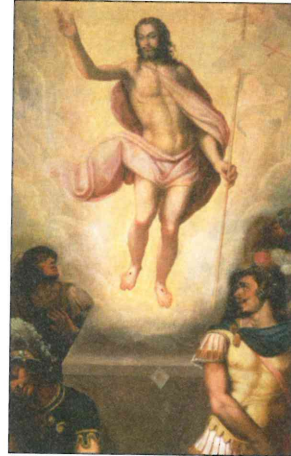
David died, and his body saw corruption. Therefore, he cannot be talking about himself in this psalm.

5. Instead, David was an inspired prophet who was speaking of the Christ, the Anointed One, his descendant who one day would succeed to his throne, and in whom God's promise to David would be fulfilled.

Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. (Acts 2: 30-31)

6. So Jesus was the Christ, the Anointed One prophesied by David, who would inherit the throne of David and the kingdom of Israel. As David prophesied, Jesus was not abandoned to Hades:

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.
(Acts 2: 32)



7. Now at last Peter can reveal the answer to Jesus' riddle—the riddle that puzzled and silenced even the Pharisees. David calls his son "my Lord" because the Son of David is also the Son of God, who lives and reigns at the right hand of God the Father.

Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens; but he himself says,

"The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand,
Till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet."

Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified. (Acts 2: 33-36)

The Church Perfectly Fulfills The Davidic Covenant

- **The new Israel is the community of all believers – the Church.**
- **We can see all the features of the Davidic covenant in the new Israel.**

If Jesus is the Son of David, that means he is king of Israel. But not Israel the small state at the eastern end of the Mediterranean: Jesus is king of a new Israel. The ascending spiral of fulfillment has made all the nations God's own people. Therefore, the new Israel is the community of all the people of God—in other words, the Church.

You may remember that we pointed out seven primary features and three secondary features of the Davidic covenant (see chapter 10). All those features take on new meaning in the Church, the new Kingdom.

The Davidic Covenant: Seven Primary Features

1. David's line would have a great **kingdom**, and David's son would be "the highest of the kings of the earth" (Ps 89:27).

As **King** of the new Israel, Jesus, the Son of David, is Lord of all the nations.

2. The covenant was made with David's whole **dynasty**. God promised David that his descendants' throne would be established forever (2 Sm 7:13).

As the last and perfect **Son of David**, Jesus rules over the new Israel forever.

3. When the son of David was anointed, he was adopted as **God's own son**. Anointing with oil made the Son of David "messiah" in Hebrew or "Christ" in Greek—that is, the Anointed One. Psalm 110 calls him a priest as well as king: "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."¹

Jesus, the only-begotten **Son of God**, was anointed at his baptism and in his sacrifice became our High Priest:

...where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. (Heb 6:20)

4. The covenant was **unlimited** in time and space. David's throne would be everlasting, and "the ends of the earth" (Ps 2:8; Ps 72:8) his kingdom's boundaries.

Jesus' kingdom is **forever** and **for all people**. As we pointed out before, when Jesus tells his disciples to be his witnesses "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth,"² he's drawing a kind of concentric map of David's kingdom, showing that Jesus is the new heir of the Davidic covenant.

5. Jerusalem became the spiritual center of the world. Zion, the central mountain of Jerusalem, eclipsed Sinai and became the holy mountain of God.

The **heavenly Jerusalem** replaces the earthly Jerusalem as the spiritual center of the Kingdom. The prophets foretold a time when all nations would flock to Zion (see Is 2). In the new Kingdom, that promise is fulfilled.



Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men.” (Rv 21: 1-3)

Remember that Zion is where the Upper Room was—the room where Christ’s Church was born.

6. The Temple was the architectural sign of the Davidic covenant, a building where all people of the earth were invited to worship the God of Israel.

God himself is the temple in the new Kingdom, and all nations will worship his glory.

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb...and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day—and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. (Rv 21: 22, 24-25)

7. Wisdom was the new law of the Davidic covenant—a law for all mankind.

The New Law makes no distinction between Jews and non-Jews. It is truly and perfectly a Law for all mankind.

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3: 28)

The epistles of Paul and the other Apostles are the wisdom literature of the new Israel. As with the wisdom literature of the Old Testament, they tell us how to live godly lives in an ungodly world.

Above: *King David Standing Between Wisdom and Prophecy*

The Davidic Covenant: Three Secondary Features

The three secondary features of the Davidic covenant take on a new importance in the life of the Christian Church.

1. The **Queen Mother** became an important part of the royal government.

Mary, Mother of God, takes the role of the Queen Mother in the new Kingdom. As with the Queen Mothers in Judah, she has a position of great influence and power in the royal government.

2. The **“prime minister”** or chief steward became a distinct office in the royal government. The sign of the prime minister’s office was the keys of the kingdom. “And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”³

In Revelation 3:7, Christ calls himself “the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.” Jesus entrusted the keys of the kingdom to

Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”⁴ Peter became Jesus’ prime minister; and as with the old Davidic kingdom, the office continues under his successors, the popes.



3. The **thank offering** or “sacrifice of thanksgiving” became the primary liturgy celebrated at Temple, rather than the sin offering. The thank offering was unleavened bread and wine freely offered to God in gratitude for deliverance. Ancient Jewish teachers predicted that, when the Messiah came, no other sacrifice would be offered: the thank offering alone would continue. The word for “thank offering” in Hebrew, *todah*, was often translated by ancient Jewish scholars (like Philo) with the Greek word, “eucharistia,” which resonates with the language of Jesus and the early Church.

The Eucharist is the sacrament of the Church in which the bread and wine become the true Body and blood of Christ, who delivers us from sin and death.

The Eucharist is the heart and summit of the Church’s life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once and for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his body which is the Church. (CCC 1407)



Ancient Jewish teachers predicted that, when the Messiah came, no other sacrifice would be offered: the thank offering alone would continue.

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

John Paul II: *Redemptoris missio*

The kingdom of God is meant for all mankind, and all people are called to become members of it. To emphasize this fact, Jesus drew especially near to those on the margins of society, and showed them special favor in announcing the Good News. At the beginning of his ministry he proclaimed that he was “anointed... to preach good news to the poor” (Lk 4:18). To all who are victims of rejection and contempt Jesus declares: “Blessed are you poor” (Lk 6:20). What is more, he enables such individuals to experience liberation even now, by being close to them, going to eat in their homes (cf. Lk 5:30; 15:2), treating them as equals and friends (cf. Lk 7:34), and making them feel loved by God, thus revealing his tender care for the needy and for sinners (cf. Lk 15:1-32).

The liberation and salvation brought by the kingdom of God come to the human person both in his physical and spiritual dimensions. Two gestures are characteristic of Jesus’ mission: healing and forgiving. Jesus’ many healings clearly show his great compassion in the face of human distress, but they also signify that in the kingdom there will no longer be sickness or suffering, and that his mission, from the very beginning, is meant to free people from these evils. In Jesus’ eyes, healings are also a sign of spiritual salvation, namely liberation from sin. By performing acts of healing, he invites people to faith, conversion and the desire for forgiveness (cf. Lk 5:24). Once there is faith, healing is an encouragement to go further: it leads to salvation (cf. Lk 18:42-43). The acts of liberation from demonic possession—the supreme evil and symbol of sin and rebellion against God—are signs that indeed “the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Mt 12:28).

15. The kingdom aims at transforming human relationships; it grows gradually as people slowly learn to love, forgive and serve one another. Jesus sums up the whole Law, focusing it on the commandment of love (cf. Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28). Before leaving his disciples, he gives them a “new commandment”: “Love one another; even as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34; cf. 15:12). Jesus’ love for the world finds its highest expression in the gift of his life for mankind (cf. Jn 15:13), which manifests the love which the Father has for the world (cf. Jn 3:16). The kingdom’s nature, therefore, is one of communion among all human beings—with one another and with God.

The kingdom is the concern of everyone: individuals, society, and the world. Working for the kingdom means acknowledging and promoting God’s activity, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for liberation from evil in all its forms.



Christ Pantocrator and King David, an illuminated initial from the Bible of Charles V of France

VOCABULARY

JOEL

A prophet. He predicted a time when God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh. St. Peter told the crowds at Pentecost that what was predicted had come to pass.

KEYS OF THE KINGDOM

The power to bind and loose given by Christ to St. Peter and his successors. The badge of office of the prime ministers of the Davidic kingdom.

NEW ISRAEL

The Church, made up of all the faithful people of God. All the promises the prophets made for Israel are fulfilled in the Church.

POPE

The bishop of Rome. The direct successor of St. Peter. The vicar of Christ on earth and visible head of the Church.

SCEPTER

A staff symbolizing royal power.

SYRO-PHOENICIAN

A resident of the area north of Israel; a descendant of the ancient Canaanites.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What did Jacob mean when he told his sons the scepter would not depart from Judah?
2. What did Gabriel's words to Mary summarize?
3. What was the most important point Matthew intended to prove?
4. What title is given to Jesus Christ at least eight times in Matthew's Gospel?
5. Why does Matthew stress the importance of this title so much?
6. What point does the story of the Canaanite woman help get across?
7. Who was the first apostle to recognize Jesus as the Messiah?
8. How did Jesus stump the Pharisees regarding the Christ as the Son of David?
9. Where do we find the answer to the question Jesus asked the Pharisees?
10. What is indicated by St. Peter's quotation from Joel?
11. What is the answer to this question?
12. What is the new Israel?
13. List the new meanings to the Davidic covenant.
14. List three other ways the secondary features of the Davidic covenant take on new meaning in the Church.
15. What takes the place of the "sacrifice of thanksgiving" in the new kingdom?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3: 28). What is the meaning of this quote? Though the Church teaches that all people "enjoy an equal dignity" (CCC 1934) because of Christ's sacrifice, it also tells us that between men "differences appear tied to age, physical abilities, intellectual or moral aptitudes, the benefits derived from social commerce, and the distribution of wealth (cf. GS 29 § 2). The 'talents' are not distributed equally" (cf. Mt 25: 14-30; Lk 19: 11-27) (CCC 1936). How are these two teachings not contradictory?
2. In spite of our failures God keeps his covenant with us. Are there any permanent covenants today? Give an example. Do you think God forgives those who break permanent covenants?
3. America is a country without a king. The founders believed that submitting to the king's authority infringed on their freedom to rule themselves. Do you think that submitting to the absolute authority of Jesus Christ as King makes it difficult for some Americans to accept Christianity?

FROM THE CATECHISM

439 Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic "Son of David," promised by God to Israel (cf. Mt 2: 2; 9: 27; 12: 23; 15: 22; 20: 30; 21: 9, 15). Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political (cf. Jn 4: 25-26; 6: 15; 11: 27; Mt 22: 41-46; Lk 24: 21).

592 Jesus did not abolish the Law of Sinai, but rather fulfilled it (cf. Mt 5: 17-19) with such perfection (cf. Jn 8: 46) that he revealed its ultimate meaning (cf. Mt 5: 33) and redeemed the transgressions against it (cf. Heb 9: 15).

668 "Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom 14: 9). Christ's Ascension into heaven signifies his participation, in his humanity, in God's power and authority. Jesus Christ is Lord: he possesses all power in heaven and on earth. He is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion," for the Father "has put all things under his feet" (Eph 1: 20-22). Christ is Lord of the cosmos and of history. In him human history and indeed all creation are "set forth" and transcendently fulfilled (Eph 1: 10; cf. Eph 4: 10; 1 Cor 15: 24, 27-28).

Endnotes

1. Ps 110: 4.
2. Acts 1: 8.
3. Is 22: 22.
4. Mt 16: 19.