THE UNDERCOVER MESSIAH AND HIS COMING KINGDOM: MESSIAH AS PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

Introduction and Synopsis of Book

Thank you, Tommy, for the invitation to make this presentation! I wouldn't dare claim Tommy saved the best for last— especially after the outstanding presentations we've already heard. But I will say this: I'm excited to be speaking to **you** rather than to Progressive Dispensationalists! Since **you** believe the kingdom is "not yet," you're already accustomed to wait until the end! And now that you've waited through all the other presentations, I want to show you how Christology affects our eschatology—specifically, how our understanding of the messianic offices of prophet, priest, and king shapes our view of His kingdom.

Tommy asked me to make a presentation based on *The Undercover Messiah and His Coming Kingdom*, published earlier this year, and to focus especially on the prophetic significance.[1] I did not set out to write a book. Instead, this study began as a personal quest for answers about the Messianic Kingdom. I wanted better answers to the "already/not yet" narrative. But what I was learning was too good to keep to myself. Several things became apparent to me: (1) the kingdom needed to be viewed in light of the kingship of Jesus, the Messiah, (2) His kingship needed to be explored in relationship to His other anointed offices of prophet and priest, and (3) this study needed to begin with the Old Testament. Since Jesus is at the center of our eschatology, what we know about Him should help us to understand more about His kingdom.

A careful study of Old Testament prophecies concerning these offices of the Messiah sheds light not only on Jesus in the New Testament but also on the Messianic Kingdom. By giving attention to these Scriptures, I became more convinced than ever that the messianic offices of prophet, priest, and king, prophesied in the Old Testament, are three distinct offices, or roles, that are taken up by Jesus successively, one after the other, yet each maintains a continuing significance. I understand that Arnold (Fruchtenbaum) takes the same position.

After my original questions about the kingdom were answered, I was intrigued by a deeper understanding of Jesus that I had missed, and I think most Christians have missed it, too. Recognizing Jesus as the Prophet like Moses in His earthly ministry opens the Gospels in a way that nothing else can. His words, His actions, His miracles all take on a new meaning when seen as manifestations of His role as the prophesied Prophet like Moses. Following His Ascension, we should see Jesus as our great High Priest. We need to understand His current role and ministry to us. Many of us speak often of the priesthood of the believer, but we seldom mention the priesthood of Jesus. Then, of course, embracing the reality of Jesus as our coming King infuses our lives with confidence, purpose, and hope. Before addressing the eschatological implications, allow me to give an overview of the book.

---

[1]Jim R. Sibley, *The Undercover Messiah and His Coming Kingdom: Messiah as Prophet, Priest, and King* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2025).

Following a brief introduction, the book is divided into four parts: (1) "The Messiah in the Pentateuch," (2) "The Messiah in the Prophets and Writings," (3) "The Messiah in the New Testament," and (4) "The Messianic Kingdom."

In Part One, "The Messiah in the Pentateuch," I contend that Deuteronomy 18:15–19 should be understood as a prophetic declaration: the long-awaited Deliverer will come as the ultimate Prophet—one who will be like Moses. In this passage, God not only promises to raise up an ultimate Prophet, who will speak only God's Word, but He also issues a strong warning against disregarding this Prophet. The last two chapters of Deuteronomy record the account of Moses's death, and many conservative scholars believe these chapters were added, probably by Ezra, at the conclusion of the Old Testament era. If so, then Deuteronomy 34:10 expresses, at the end of this period, the fact that this prophet was still anticipated.

When I turn attention to the Pentateuch's testimony of Messiah as a coming priest, I see both Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18–20) and Jethro (Exodus 18:8–12), pointing to a different, better, and alternative priestly order. Many are surprised to see Jethro foreshadow Jesus as our Great High Priest. Yet, as John Sailhamer and others have observed, just as Melchizedek ministered to Abraham after his triumph over the coalition of kings, so Jethro ministered to Moses following his victory over Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. Both appear suddenly in the text, both are non-Israelite and non-Levitical priests, yet both worship the one, true God.[2]

When the focus shifts to the Torah's testimony of a coming king, we examine three of the most significant poems in the Pentateuch: first, a poem in Genesis 49 that prophesies a king would arise from Judah; second, Balaam's oracle in Numbers 24, which speaks of this king whose birth would be heralded by a supernatural star; and third, the song of Moses in Deuteronomy 33 in which he prays for this king who is to come from Judah. All speak of Messiah as a future and ultimate King. So, in the Torah, we see Messi9ah as prophet, priest and king.

Part Two continues tracing this messianic development in the Prophets and Writings. The Prophet like Moses is seen in the Psalms of David as a servant, a shepherd, and as the ultimate sufferer. Isaiah refers to the Moses-like Messiah as the Servant of the Lord, as One who suffers and dies to provide atonement for sin. He is seen as a Second Moses, who leads a new exodus, not from Egyptian slavery, but from slavery to sin and death.

1 Samuel 2:35 prophesies that Messiah is to be a permanently faithful (נאמן) priest, and David says he will be like Melchizedek in Psalm 110. As I mentioned earlier, through textual and contextual connections, He is also likened to Jethro. His priesthood is then tracked through the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the book of Ezra.

---

[2]John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 280–81 and Joshua G. Mathews, *Melchizedek's Alternative Priestly Order: A Compositional Analysis of Genesis 14:18–20 and Its Echoes throughout the Tanak*, Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplement 8 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013).

The Old Testament material concludes with a focus on Messiah as the messianic king that God promised in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Here, He is seen to be "the Branch," "the Glory of the God of Israel," and "the Prince."

Part Three explores the roles of prophet, priest, and king as revealed in the New Testament. Here, we see Jesus in the Gospels through the lens of the Prophet like Moses, and although this is how He is presented, few actually read the text this way. For this reason, some of the most positive feedback from those who have read the book is related to this "new" perspective on Jesus.

Following an examination of Jesus as the Prophet like Moses, I sought answers to two questions related to the timing of His roles as priest and king: first, when did Jesus begin His priestly role? and second, did His priestly ministry also inaugurate His reign as king?" His present, priestly ministry is then described before launching into an examination of the New Testament evidence related to Jesus's role as King.

In Part Four, two chapters are devoted to the Messianic Kingdom. Chapter Sixteen traces the Messianic Kingdom in the Old Testament, and Chapter Seventeen unravels the interpretive conundrums encountered in the Gospels. Here, I am referring to passages which speak of the kingdom as "among you," "within you," "near," etc. This is where an inaugurated view of the kingdom is addressed. A brief epilogue considers what our response should be to the Messiah as Prophet, as Priest, and as King.

The book concludes with three Appendices. The first deals with the way the three anointed offices have been explained through the ages. Beginning with the writings of Calvin and Luther, these offices have been seen more as aspects of Messiah's ministry to us, rather than as three discrete offices or roles. They are viewed as unified and are sometimes referred to as the *Munis Triplex*, the Triple Cure.

The second appendix presents what, for many, is a fresh understanding of the "generation" that will not pass away, mentioned in Matthew 24:34. Rather than a physical generation, it has reference to the spiritual generation, or lineage, of the faithful—the remnant of Israel. In Matthew 24, Jesus is addressing His disciples. They are the leadership of the remnant of Israel. In spite of coming wars, famines, earthquakes, as well as the tribulations, hatred, and murder that await His disciples, it will not have been in vain, for God will preserve the faithful remnant of His people until the kingdom is ushered in. By the way, just a few months ago, a student of Cory Marsh, Ryan Meyer, published a book in which he also argues that this "generation" is to be seen as a spiritual lineage.

The third appendix surveys different views of the kingdom and concludes that the kingdom is neither inaugurated nor postponed. It is coming on God's timetable, even as He planned from the beginning. In the remainder of our time, I intend to flesh out the implications for our view of the kingdom.

The Three Messianic Offices Are Distinct

First, I want to demonstrate that the three messianic offices are distinct. In Deuteronomy 18:18, God promised to Moses, "I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you." In 1 Samuel 2:35, God promised, "I will raise up for Myself a faithful priest who will do according to what is in My heart and in My soul; and I will build him an enduring house, and My Anointed One [Messiah] will walk before Me always."[3] Later, in 2 Samuel 7:12, we find God promising David, "I will raise up your descendant after you… and I will establish His kingdom." These offices represent distinct roles or identities, each of which is to be assumed by the Messiah. It is interesting that on each occasion, God says He will "raise up" an individual for each of these offices.

When Gershonides, the respected Medieval rabbi, read in Deuteronomy 18:15 that the Lord would "raise up" a prophet like Moses, it led him to conclude that this Moses-like Messiah would not only work more miracles than Moses, but that His "most wondrous sign will be the resurrection from the dead"! Since Moses is called the servant of the LORD more often than anyone else in the Old Testament, Isaiah naturally refers to the coming Prophet like Moses as the Servant of the LORD [4]—a designation applied to Jesus in the Gospels.[5]

The anointing of Jesus further demonstrates these distinct offices. Israel's kings and priests were anointed with oil, but God's prophets were anointed with the Holy Spirit. Though the New Testament never mentions Jesus being anointed with olive oil, it records that following His baptism, He was anointed with the Spirit, who descended as a dove. Peter declared in Acts 10:38: "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power." The Messiah received the greatest anointing of all—that of the Spirit of God, of which oil was only the symbol. He would later serve as our great High Priest and soon-coming King, but required no further anointing.

The Three Messianic Offices Are Inaugurated Successively

Secondly, I want you to see that these three distinct offices, or roles, are taken up successively. How do we know? Couldn't He have acted at one moment as a prophet and at another as a priest or king? The Epistle to the Hebrews makes it abundantly clear that Jesus could not have served as a priest until He had died and risen from the tomb. Scripture repeatedly indicates that there is an order in which these messianic offices are to be inaugurated.

Some people make the mistake of confusing the identity of Jesus with His role. For example, shortly after Jesus' birth, the wise men came from the East looking for the one who was

---

[3]Support for this translation can be found in Michael Rydelnik, "The Davidic Covenant as Messianic Prophecy: 2 Samuel :1–17," in *Upholding god's Word, Reaching God's Chosen: A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Mitchell L. Glaser*, edited by Jim Melnick, Zahava Glaser, Gregory Hagg, et al (New York: KIFM, 2022), 175–86. See also Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "2 Samuel 7: The Davidic Covenant (I)," in *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament*, edited by Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2019), 385–97.

[4]See G. P. Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretations of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, edited by Philip E. Satterwaite, Richard S. Hess, and Gordon J. Wenham (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 105–40.

[5]He is the Prophet in Matthew 13:57 / Mark 6:4; Matthew 21:11, 46; Luke 7:16; 24:19; and John 4:19. He is the Servant in Matthew 12:18 (quoting Isa 2:1); Matthew 20:28 / Mark 10:4.

"born king of the Jews" (Matt 2:2). Were they mistaken? No, for this was His identity. The Messianic King was to be born in Bethlehem, in the City of David. But did this mean that He was reigning from the manger? No, for it was not yet time for Him to assume this role. There is a distinction between identity and function, and we must always be aware of this distinction. With this reminder as an introduction, let's examine the timing of these three messianic offices.

His Service as the Prophet/Servant Had to Come First

Before Jesus even began His public ministry, it was clear that He was to function first as the long-anticipated Prophet like Moses. The parallels with Moses are staggering: The slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem following the arrival of the wise men is reminiscent of the slaughter of the infants in Egypt. Moses found refuge in Egypt, and so did Joseph, Mary, and Jesus. Even as God brought Moses out of Egypt (Numb 23:22), so He would bring Messiah out of Egypt (Numb 24:8). Moses led the people to the plains of Moab, next to the Jordan River, but he was not allowed to enter. Jesus, the Prophet like Moses, began His ministry where Moses had ended his.

What role did Jesus assume? Was it that of a king, a priest, or a prophet? When we first went to Israel, our Hebrew teacher, who was not a believer, became very dear to our family. One day, she said, "Jim, you know I don't believe in Jesus, and I admit that a miracle is a miracle, but I don't understand something about the Gospels. If Jesus was the Messiah, you would expect is first miracle to be really dramatic, but changing water to wine seems rather mundane. What's so special about it?" At the time, I didn't have a good answer. I was familiar with the common answers that are based on Replacement Theology, but I was later able to tell her that His first miracle was turning the water to wine, even as Moses' first miracle was turning the water of Egypt to blood. The blood was a symbol of judgment and death, but the wine was a symbol of the joy of redemption.[6] With His first miracle, Jesus presented His calling card: the Prophet like Moses had arrived! With this first miracle, He began His public ministry. Even though He came with the credentials of the Davidic King, He first came to fulfil the prophecy and the role of the Prophet like Moses, the Servant of the Lord.

In Exodus 24, God revealed His glory on Mt. Sinai. After 6 days, on the 7th day, Moses ascended the mountain, accompanied by Aaron and 2 men who were brothers: Nadab and Abihu. In Matthew 16, the Father revealed the identity of Jesus through Peter, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." After 6 days, on the 7th day, Jesus ascended the mountain of Transfiguration, accompanied by Peter and 2 men who were brothers: James and John. Then there was the cloud, just as on Mt. Sinai. Moses' face shone, but Jesus radiated an unreflected glory. Then there was the voice of God, only this time, God spoke concerning Jesus, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!" This last phrase comes directly from Deuteronomy 18:15.

Following the feeding of the 5,000, the crowd responded by exclaiming, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world." Yet immediately afterward, we read, "they were intending to come and take Him by force to make Him a King," but He "withdrew again to the mountain by Himself alone" (John 6:15). They wanted Him to be their king, but He had come as

[6]Judgment and death: Exod 12:7, 13, 22–23 and joy of redemption: Isaiah 25:6–9; Amos 9:13–14.

the Prophet like Moses to gather and to lead a people out of bondage to sin and death by dying an atoning death and rising again.

Even though his identity as king has honorable mentions in the Gospels, in actual fact, when attention is given to the way Jesus presents himself, He studiously avoids presenting Himself as a king; instead, He presents Himself as the ultimate Prophet. That is to say, His role as king takes a back seat in the Gospels to His function as prophet. Andreas Stutz comments, "Thus the Synoptic Gospels mutually emphasize that Jesus did not want to be regarded as the Messiah according to the popular understanding, but that he connected his messiahship with his atoning death."

Philippians 2:7–8 says that He "emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant …becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." This verse, along with many others, does not indicate that He came initially to reign over an earthly kingdom, but that He came first to suffer and die for us and to show us that by becoming His disciples, we would become citizens of His future kingdom. The cross always had to come before the crown.

What does He do? From 1892 to 1954, over 15 million immigrants passed through Ellis Island to become U.S. citizens. The process for citizenship was carefully and thoughtfully prepared, and immigrants went through the system efficiently. Immi grants were carefully documented and registered. They were given health evaluations, and if there were medical problems, they were treated at the hospital. Those with incurable or disabling ailments were excluded and returned to their country of origin. Only 2 percent were barred entry. Next were the interviews and the legal inspections to determine their identities, places of origin, occupations, and whether the immigrants had criminal records. Criminals were not given citizenship. Those who completed this lengthy process were granted citizenship, passports were presented, and the new citizens were then able to enter the country and begin their new lives as Americans. Citizenship in the coming Messianic Kingdom involves a process as well, but it is almost the opposite of the merit-based system at Ellis Island—it is a grace-based system. Citizenship is granted on the basis of God's grace, received through faith. It is a gift. As new citizens, we are registered, sealed by and baptized in the Holy Spirit, and given spiritual gifts or abilities. Then, as we await the arrival of the future Kingdom in which we now have citizenship, we undergo a process to better prepare us for our lives in that Kingdom. We are being transformed.

His Priesthood Had to Follow His Ministry as the Prophet

Although other passages could be used,[7] for convenience, we can simply look at the evidence from Hebrews.

- Hebrews 2:17 says, "Therefore, <u>He had to be made like His brethren in all things</u>, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God." So the Incarnation was a prerequisite to His priesthood.
- Hebrews 3:1–5 says that Jesus is our High Priest because <u>He was faithful</u> as the Prophet like Moses.

[7]See also, for example, Acts 5:30–31; Eph 1:18–20; and Phil 2:7–8.

- Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin." That is, He had to overcome temptation in order to assume His role as priest.
- Hebrews 12:1 and 2 says, "…let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." So the Crucifixion was necessary before He could be our Priest.
- With the Crucifixion, the New Covenant was inaugurated, and that allowed for a change in the priesthood. Hebrews 7:12 says, "For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also."
- Hebrews 1:3 says, "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." This indicates that He could not serve as our priest until He had made purification for sin.
- Hebrews 7:16 says that He had to have an indestructible life, which would indicate that He could not have been our priest until after the Resurrection.
- Finally, Hebrews 4:14 tells us that He became our Priest when He passed through the heavens at His Ascension.

In light of these and other Scriptures, it is beyond dispute that Jesus came initially to bring salvation rather than to assume His priesthood or establish His kingdom. He came first to provide salvation, to establish the New Covenant, and to make citizens for His coming kingdom.

Objections

The "High Priestly Prayer." Some object that Jesus functioned as our High Priest when He interceded for His disciples in John 17. However, in Old Testament Scripture, priests were not the intercessors—prophets were. Priests blessed the people with the Aaronic Benediction and confessed the nation's sins on the Day of Atonement, but prophets interceded.

Isaiah interceded for the people: "But now, O Lord, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord, nor remember iniquity forever; behold, look now, all of us are Your people" (Isa 64:8–9). Jeremiah wept in prayer: "Although our iniquities testify against us, O Lord, act for Your name's sake!" (Jer 14:7). Ezekiel cried out, "Alas, Lord God! Are You destroying the whole remnant of Israel by pouring out Your wrath on Jerusalem?" (Ezek 9:8). Daniel opened his windows and prayed toward Jerusalem three times daily to intercede for his people. Joel pleaded with the priests to weep and intercede alongside the prophet (Joel 2:17). And Moses pleaded before the Lord twice on behalf of the people, even offering to exchange his place in God's book for Israel's forgiveness (Exod 32). Therefore, it was as the ultimate Prophet—the Prophet like Moses—that Jesus prayed for His disciples in John 17.

The Crucifixion as a Priestly Offering. Many understand the Crucifixion as an atoning sacrifice in which Jesus is both the sacrificial offering and the High Priest. This offering is often compared to the rituals of Yom Kippur, when the high priest offered sacrifices for the sins of the people. While the author of Hebrews draws parallels to the Day of Atonement, he also emphasizes a crucial distinction: On Yom Kippur, the sacrificial animals—a bull or a goat (Lev

16:27)—provided only temporary atonement. In contrast, Hebrews 9:11 and following affirm that Jesus' death secured a definitive and eternal redemption.

Unlike the offering made by the High Priest, our atonement was made by the Lamb of God as He offered Himself. As Peter writes, "You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:18–19). The Book of Revelation reinforces this imagery, referring to Jesus as "the Lamb" 28 times, underscoring His role in the ultimate atonement. Isaiah, too, anticipates this redemptive act, portraying the Servant of the Lord—the Prophet like Moses—as the one who would offer Himself for the sins of many, "like a lamb that is led to slaughter" (Isa 53:7). As we saw a minute ago, Hebrews 7:16 says that to be a priest, Jesus had to have the power of an indestructible life, so He could not be a priest until at least the Resurrection.

His Reign as King Had to Follow His Inauguration as Priest

Jesus came first as the Prophet or Servant of the Lord, then as Priest. But we must also see that His reign as King had to follow His inauguration as Priest. In Genesis 14:18–20, we read of Abram's encounter with Melchizedek. He is introduced as the "king of Salem" and as "a priest of God Most High." Melchizedek brought out "bread and wine," not a royal banquet. Then, Melchizedek blessed Abram in the name of "God Most High" (vv. 19–20). This is a priestly blessing to which Abram responds with a tenth of all the spoils. It seems that Melchizedek's role as king in this episode remains in the background. Instead, he relates to Abram as a priest.

Jethro was also a priest like Melchizedek, but Jethro is different in this respect: unlike Melchizedek, he is never said to be a king. This means that when Messiah is installed as a priest like Melchizedek, He will not be a king like Melchizedek. Instead, He will be a priest like Melchizedek and Jethro, then He will also be a king like David. In other words, His priesthood must be inaugurated before His reign as king. Even so, eventually he will be like Melchizedek in that He will serve as both king and priest.

Centuries later, King David picked up on this. God had promised David that the Messianic King would come from his progeny. In Psalm 110:1, David wrote, "The Lord says to my Lord: 'Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.'" This verse is quoted in all three Synoptic Gospels, Acts, and in Hebrews 1:13,[8] with allusions in at least four additional passages in Hebrews. This verse seems to be programmatic for determining the timing of the reign of Jesus and, therefore, of the Messianic Kingdom.

"Sit at My right hand." The command "Sit at My right hand until…" implies a priestly interlude before the exercise of royal dominion. Mark 16:19 describes the Ascension: "So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God." The Ascension echoes Psalm 110:1 and recurs throughout Hebrews. Hebrews 1:3 states, "When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Hebrews 8:1 affirms, "We have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Hebrews 10:12 adds, "He, having

[8]See Matt 22:44 / Mark 12:36 / Luke 20:42–43; Matt 26:64; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:34–35; and Heb1:13. Together with Psalm 110:1, this is a total of 8 repetitions of this verse.

offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God." And Hebrews 12:2 concludes, "Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

There are another nine passages I don't have time to read from Mark, Acts, Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians that also speak of Jesus currently seated at the right hand of God.[9] These nine passages, plus the eight places where Psalm 110:1 occur, comprise seventeen affirmations, consistently testifying that Jesus is now functioning as our High Priest, seated at the right hand of the Father.

"Until." The phrase "at My right hand" signals not only honor but also a transition. His position at the right hand of the Father is not permanent. He is seated at the right hand of the Father "until." The repetition of this verse with "until" highlights this divine progression: first, the Messiah ministers as priest, then, at a later time, He will also reign as king. If so, then what marks this transition from priest to king?

"Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet." Many assume that because Jesus is seated on a throne, He is reigning as King. However, Scripture distinguishes between His everlasting priestly ministry, which began at the Ascension, and His subsequent reign as King.

When Satan tempted Jesus with the prospect of ruling over all the kingdoms of the world, Satan declared in Luke 4:6, "I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." This claim underscores the present reality: the nations of the world are under Satan's dominion. Yet Scripture assures us that a day will come when they will be subject to the King of Kings. The enemies to be subdued as "a footstool for Your feet" are not merely political adversaries, but the deeper spiritual powers that hold them captive.

The dominion of Satan is characterized by sin and death. These forces still reign over the earth, which is how we know the kingdom has not yet arrived. The Messiah's reign begins only when these enemies are decisively defeated—not before. Thus, the inauguration of His kingship is inseparably tied to the destruction of sin and death.

Scripture does not present two separate thrones here, but rather a single throne shared by the Father and the Son. This throne signifies unity of rule, even as their responsibilities differ. Careful attention to the throne imagery reveals a progression in Jesus's roles: He presently shares the Father's throne, seated at His right hand, exercising priestly authority.

Jesus' words to the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3:21 confirm this dual aspect: "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on ***My*** throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on ***His*** throne." Having overcome through His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus now shares the Father's throne. Yet Revelation also anticipates a second

[9]Mark 14:62; 16:19; Acts 2:33; 5:31; 7:55, 56; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1.

throne—His own. When He returns, He will sit upon His own throne, extending its privilege to those who overcome.

This vision harmonizes with the broader scriptural witness: Jesus is presently enthroned beside the Father, serving as priest, awaiting the subjugation of His enemies. As the Great High Priest, He is establishing and preparing the citizens for His kingdom. As they follow Him, they are also His ambassadors. His priestly position is not a postponement of kingship but a divine strategy. His reign will begin—not prematurely, but precisely when the time is fulfilled, in accordance with both Melchizedek's priesthood and the royal promise to David.

Paul confirms this trajectory in **1 Corinthians 15:25–26**, where he describes the culmination of the Messianic Kingdom: "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death." Here, the apostle underscores that the Lord's reign is purposeful and progressive. It is not static, but directed toward a decisive end—the complete subjugation of Satan and every hostile power. Only when death itself, the final enemy, is destroyed will the kingdom be handed over to the Father. In this way, Paul situates the Messiah's kingship within the larger divine plan: a reign that begins in priestly intercession, advances through the defeat of sin and Satan, and concludes in the ultimate victory over death, ushering in the eternal reign of God.

The Three Messianic Offices Each Continue Cumulatively

The Prophet in the Priesthood and in the Reign of the King

In *The Undercover Messiah and His Coming Kingdom*, I have gone through many of the activities that occupy Jesus now as our High Priest. Among other things, "He entered the holy place once for all" (Heb 9:12). Because of the sinlessness of His life, His shed blood is able to "cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb 9:14). As our High Priest, He is the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb 9:15), and by sprinkling His own blood on the heavenly Temple, altar, and implements, He purifies them so that He might "appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb 9:24). 1 Peter 1:2 indicates that He sprinkles us with His blood that He might "cleanse us from all sin" (1John 1:7).

We have already seen that intercession was an activity associated in Scripture with the office of a prophet. Yet, Hebrews 7:25 says that Jesus, as our High Priest, "always lives to make intercession." As our great High Priest, one of His activities at present is the prophetic ministry of intercession. In addition to His priestly activities of sanctification, He intercedes for us as the ultimate Prophet.

The Prophet like Moses is called "the Servant of the Lord" by Isaiah, and in Isaiah 53:7, He is likened to a lamb. Male lambs were never offered as sin offerings, according to the Law of Moses, but are primarily associated with Passover. Whereas bulls and goats provided temporary atonement for sin, it was the Lamb of God who was to provide ultimate atonement. In Revelation, Jesus is referred to as the "Lamb" 24 times! Revelation 15:3 speaks of the Tribulation saints who, "sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and marvellous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and

true are Your ways, King of the nations!'" In this one verse, we have references to Moses, the servant of God, and the Lamb, even as He is "King of the nations." So, His role as the Prophet is found even as He exercises His role as our High Priest and as our King.

The Priest and King as Everlasting

It is clear from Psalm 110:1 that the Messiah would be "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." His priesthood is not *eternal*, but it is *everlasting*. It had a beginning, at His Ascension, but it is to last forever. Furthermore, in 2 Samuel 7:13 and 16, God says of Messiah's reign that the Father would "establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

To this point, I have tried to demonstrate from the Scriptures that the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King were inaugurated sequentially, yet they continue forever. In *The Undercover Messiah and His Coming Kingdom*, I have shown what it means to view Jesus as the Prophet like Moses in the Gospels. I have described His present role as our High Priest and His future role as our everlasting King.

The Remnant and a Divided Israel

Israel was not always a divided kingdom, but it has always been a divided nation. Some Bible teachers make the mistake of viewing Israel only, or primarily, as a corporate solidarity. This is to diminish, if not ignore altogether, the remnant of Israel. There is an Israel-within-Israel, and this also informs our view of prophecy and biblical interpretation. Paul referred to the remnant of Israel in Romans 9:6, when he wrote, "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." Here, a distinction is made between those who are merely physical descendants of the Patriarchs and those who have put their faith in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel, and become citizens of His coming kingdom.

Replacement Theology

The existence of the remnant of Israel stands as a profound theological rebuttal to Replacement Theology, which claims that the church has superseded Israel in God's redemptive plan. This doctrine, often rooted in a misreading of New Testament texts, suggests that Israel no longer holds a distinct role in God's covenantal purposes. However, the biblical concept of a faithful remnant stands as a witness and guarantee that at the Second Coming, "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26). I do not need to belabour this point, for I suspect you are in full agreement, but there is another form of Replacement Theology that is more subtle. Now, I want to enter into some areas where I want to challenge some of your beliefs, some of which you may have held for many years. All I ask is that you give me a hearing.

Temporary Replacement Theology[10]

If you define Replacement Theology only in terms of the future, you have perhaps unwittingly adopted a temporary form of Replacement Theology. This temporary Replacement

[10]See Jim R. Sibley, "Has the Church Put Israel on the Shelf? The Evidence from Romans 11:15," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58/3 (2015): 571–81.

Theology is a scourge on conservative evangelical theology. Some justify this based on Romans 11:15, which says, "For if their rejection be the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?" But to do so would be to misread the verse. Without getting into the weeds of Greek grammar, this verse ***could*** be understood as speaking either of God's rejection of Israel or of Israel's rejection of the salvation mentioned a few verses earlier (in v. 11). For Greek scholars, the difference is in how the genitive is to be understood. It could either be a subjective genitive or an objective genitive. However, in the first verses of the chapter Paul uses the strongest language possible to insist that "God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew" (Rom 11:2). Taking verse 15 as speaking of God's rejection of Israel (an objective genitive) creates a direct contradiction with verse 2.

Some try to resolve this tension by claiming that in verse 2, Paul is saying that Israel has not been *ultimately* rejected, for they will be saved in the future, and that verse 15 indicates that they have only been *temporarily* rejected. But this argument falters in a couple of ways. First, there is no indication in the text that Paul is speaking of two different times. Nowhere do you find words like "temporarily" or "ultimately" in the text. Secondly, Paul identifies himself as a part of the remnant as proof that Israel has not been rejected. For Paul's argument to make sense, we must understand that the remnant is still identified with Israel. In other words, the existence of the remnant demonstrates that the nation has not been rejected at present. He underscores this point in verse 5 when he insists that "in the same way then, there has also come to be *at the present time* a remnant according to God's gracious choice." How could his language be any clearer? There is never a time when Israel has been replaced.

Instead of interpreting Romans 11:15 as God rejecting Israel (an objective genitive), it is much better to understand Paul to be saying that the majority of Israel has rejected the salvation that has been offered (a subjective genitive). This is based on the grammar and the context. For Paul, Replacement Theology is not defined by Israel's future, but by its present and future. He raises the question in Romans 3:3, "What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it?" He answers, "God forbid!"

It can be argued that Israel has been temporarily blinded, and that this is what is intended. Some claim that this blindness began with Israel's rejection of Jesus or of the kingdom. However, this blindness did not begin in Jesus' day, but in the days of Isaiah, and it was pronounced in Isaiah 6:9–10. Proof that this blindness continued from Isaiah's day at least to the times of the New Testament may be found in the fact that Isaiah 6:9–10 is quoted in full or in part in each of the Gospels and in Acts. In fact, it is the only Old Testament passage to be quoted in all four Gospels and Acts. It is also quoted in Romans. The New Testament teaches that the majority of Israel rejected Jesus because they were already blinded, not that they were blinded because they had rejected either Jesus or His Kingdom. In other words, their blindness was the cause, not the consequence of their rejection of Jesus.

Furthermore, Isaiah 6:13 says that 10% of the people would be spared from this judgment of spiritual blindness. The believing remnant from this 10% is tremendously significant for Paul. But let me illustrate just how insignificant they are to most. When you enrol in seminary or Bible college and study Church History—or even when you pick up a standard book on the subject—you will almost certainly find no mention of Jewish believers in Jesus from the Apostolic era to

the present day. To most Christians, this remnant appears insignificant. Yet for Paul, it was of profound importance—not simply because he himself belonged to it, but because he recognized that its very existence testified to the unwavering faithfulness of God. This omission exposes a persistent theological blind spot: the marginalization of the Jewish remnant. For Paul, however, the remnant was never a mere footnote; it was a living witness, a vibrant signpost pointing to God's covenantal fidelity.

We all know that for the Jewish people who survive the judgments of the Tribulation, the scales will fall off, and the entire nation will turn in faith to Jesus with tears of repentance and be saved. But there always have been, and always will be, those who "have ears to hear and eyes to see." Why would Paul say that the gospel is "to the Jew first [or, especially] and also to the Greek" if the Jewish people had been temporarily rejected or "set aside," or "removed from the place of blessing"? Why would Paul make a priority of praying for the salvation of the Jewish people in Romans 10:1 if they had been temporarily replaced?

Twenty-five years ago, Dr. Craig Blaising presented a Presidential Address at the Evangelical Theological Society conference that he titled, "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question." It was outstanding! But the topic we have not handled well is the present of Israel.

When even a temporary form of Replacement Theology is adopted, the passion for Jewish evangelism evaporates. In our churches, we will quote Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God to all who believe," but the last part will be omitted—"…to the Jew first, or especially, and also to the Greek." Then, Acts 1:8 will be interpreted to say that wherever you live, even if it is in the remotest part of the earth, it is "your Jerusalem." This is a major departure from a "plain sense" hermeneutic!

In short, the remnant of Israel is not a theological footnote—it is a divine rebuke to the idea that God has replaced His people, even temporarily. The remnant is engraved in history and declares that Israel's role has not been abrogated, that God's promises are enduring, and that Gentiles are being grafted into a story far older and deeper than they may know. The remnant is a living witness to God's mercy, continuity, and covenantal faithfulness.

What can be said about Paul's discussion in Romans 11 is that there is a larger harvest among the Gentiles at present, and in the future, there will be a larger harvest from the Jewish people, but there is no replacement or substitution, and it's time we recognized it.

Throughout this discussion, it must be underscored that Israel is rarely portrayed as a single, unified entity. Rather, it is often understood as a nation composed of two distinct spiritual lineages. One lineage is marked by perversity, sin, and spiritual blindness; the other consists of those who have the potential to hear the truth of the gospel and those who have actually responded in faith and who form the faithful remnant of Israel.

The Kingdom Offer View

If Jesus came to serve initially and exclusively as the Prophet, the Servant of the Lord, He did not come initially to reign as King. Of course, this means that the Kingdom could not have

been inaugurated, but it also means that the Kingdom could not have been offered to Israel. I am familiar with all the verses we have used to support this view, but I am suggesting that there is a better way to understand them.

In fact, it is interesting that the same verse is used as a prooftext for realized eschatology, for inaugurated eschatology, and for the kingdom offer view. All three positions—those that say either that the kingdom is present now; those who say that the kingdom is already here, though not in its fullness; and those who say that the kingdom was offered to, but rejected by, Israel, all hang their hats on the same verse: Matthew 12:28. In this verse, Jesus says to the Pharisees, "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

Those who believe the kingdom has already come, in one form or another, believe that the miraculous exorcism of the demon-possessed man in Matthew 12 is an indication of "kingdom power" and that it signals the arrival of the kingdom, for Jesus said, "the kingdom of God has come upon you." But if this were to be true, why did the kingdom not come on previous occasions in which Jesus cast out demons?[11] Why not when He raised the dead? For those who take this verse as indicating that the kingdom was offered to Israel, why does the parallel passage (Mark 3:19–30) not even hint at such a momentous offer?

No, the miracles of Jesus, including exorcisms, were for the authentication of His messianic identity as the Prophet like Moses. God performed more miracles through Moses than anyone else in the Old Testament. As the Prophet *like* Moses, He would perform even more. John P. Harrigan, in his exegetical article in *BibSac*, argues on the basis of the Greek text and the context that the key phrase should be translated, "the kingdom of God *will* come upon you," that is, in judgment.[12] He says, "Jesus's defence of his own divine empowerment, and his indictment [of] the Pharisees' false accusation itself would be the basis of their condemnation on the day of judgment."[13]

Much more could be said, but I want to note that in Daniel 2, we find the vision of the statue representing the kingdoms of man. Then verse 34 says, "a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them." The stone is "a kingdom which will never be destroyed" (v. 44). It is the Messianic Kingdom. This stone does not have an inaugurated presence, but it strikes the statue suddenly and decisively. Neither does this stone ask permission to strike the statue. It operates according to God's sovereign schedule.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, we have traced the messianic offices of prophet, priest, and king from their Old Testament origins through their fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah. What began as a personal quest to understand the Messianic Kingdom has yielded insights that transform how we read Scripture and live as citizens of the coming kingdom.

---

[11]See Matt 4:24; 8:16, 28; 9:32; 12:22; 15:22.

[12]John P. Harrigan, "The Kingdom of God Will Come Upon You: Jesus's Reply to a False Accusation" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 180 (2023), 42.

[13]Ibid.

Three fundamental truths have emerged: **First**, the messianic offices are distinct, successive, and cumulative. Jesus came first as the Prophet like Moses, then was inaugurated as our great High Priest at His ascension, and He will assume His throne as Davidic King at His Second Coming. Each office, once inaugurated, continues forever.

Second, the remnant of Israel stands as God's perpetual witness against all forms of Replacement Theology—whether classic or "temporary." The faithful remnant testifies to God's unwavering covenant faithfulness and calls the church to maintain its evangelistic priority: "to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

If these two truths are established in Scripture, then the third follows necessarily: the Messianic Kingdom could neither have been inaugurated in some hidden form, nor could it have been offered to Israel in the first century. What the majority of Israel rejected was not the kingdom, but the gospel of the kingdom. Like Daniel's stone cut without hands, the kingdom will come suddenly and decisively according to God's sovereign timetable. At that time, both the Davidic Covenant and the New Covenant will reach their fulfillment. Israel's salvation will fulfill the New Covenant, and the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom will fulfill the Davidic Covenant.

Until that day, we fix our eyes on Jesus—the Prophet who spoke God's final word, the Priest who ever lives to intercede, and the King who is soon to return. The kingdom is on God's calendar. Even so come, Lord Jesus!