

5. The Davidic Covenant

This covenant promised David an everlasting house (dynasty), throne and kingdom (2 Samuel 7.16). This was a guarantee that David would “always have a (physical) descendant to occupy his throne as king” (Jeremiah 33.21, NET). The realm of this rule would be the earthly, political kingdom of Israel. Whilst the immediate concern of the covenant is David’s primary seed, Solomon, it clearly reaches beyond him to his pre-eminent seed, a “greater than Solomon”, the Lord Jesus. He will sit on the throne of universal government for the benefit of all humanity.

Preliminaries of the Covenant

- The Davidic covenant is found in 2 Samuel 7.8-16 and 1 Chronicles 17.7-14. Whilst it is not called a “covenant” [bĕrît] in these passages, it is elsewhere. 2 Samuel 23.5: “My dynasty is approved by God, for he has made a perpetual covenant with me, arranged in all its particulars and secured.” [NET]. See also 2 Chronicles 7.18; 13.5; Psalm 89.3.
- The promises made by God were given in response to David’s desire to build a house (temple) for the LORD. At that time, David lived in a “house of cedar” and the ark of God resided in a tent (7.2). But instead of David building God a house, the opposite would be true – God would build *him* a permanent house (dynasty)!
- The covenant was secured by *divine oath* (Psalm 89.3), “sworn by my holiness” (Psalm 89.35). It was utterly *unbreakable* and therefore *unconditional* (cf. Psalm 89.28-37) and guaranteed as *permanent* (Psalm 89.28-29, 34). It is also called a covenant of “salt” (2 Chronicles 13.5). That sacrifices were involved to secure the covenant (as with Abraham) is suggested by 2 Chronicles 7.18 which uses the word meaning ‘to cut a covenant’ (cf. Genesis 15.18).
- Other references to the Davidic covenant are many. They include Isaiah 9.6-7; 11.1; Jeremiah 23.5-6; 30.8-9; 33.14-17, 19-26; Ezekiel 37.24-25; Hosea 3.4-5; Amos 9.11; Luke 1.30-35, 68-70; Acts 15.14-18.
- The Davidic covenant is an enlargement and development of the ‘seed’ promise of the Abrahamic covenant. Through the centuries the promise of the Seed narrowed from the whole *human race* (Genesis 3.15) to one *nation* (Israel, Genesis 22.18), to one *tribe* within the nation (Genesis 49.10) and, finally, one *family* in that tribe – the family of David. J Sidlow Baxter adds, “Thus are we prepared for that completing word which Isaiah adds still later, namely, that the coming Seed of the woman, Son of Abraham, Lion of Judah, and Heir of David, should be born of a virgin.”

The Programme of Kingship

- God is the supreme King (ruler) of the universe (Matthew 11.25). The divine ideal is *theocracy*, not *democracy*. God created Adam as a vice-regent over creation. He was to have dominion and subdue the earth, but instead he cast his crown at the devil’s feet. Christ will yet reclaim the dominion Adam lost. In the millennium, theocratic rule will be invested in one perfect Man, alongside his bride. The Davidic covenant is the legal guarantee of such hope.
- The administration of theocracy in Israel through the office of a king was envisaged from earliest days. Kings were promised from *Abraham’s* seed (Genesis 17.6) and further narrowed to the line of *Jacob* (Genesis 35.11) and then *Judah* (Genesis 49.10). The details of the permanent *Davidic* throne were established in this covenant.
- There were three key offices in Israel. A **priest** (performed the *work* of God) *represented* man before God. A **king** (enforced the *will* of God) *reigned* on behalf of God over men. When either of these offices failed, God raised up a **prophet** (spoke the *word* of God). His responsibility was to *reveal* God to man.

The Preview of the Everlasting Kingdom

- David was a man after God’s “own heart” in the sense that he was the king of divine choice (Acts 13.22).
- In 2 Samuel 7, David is at the peak of his power. Other nations have been subjugated and “the LORD had given him rest round about from all his enemies” (7.1). God was giving the world a preview (picture) of the future everlasting administration for David was a prototype of the King to come.
- This is indicated by an extremely difficult phrase to translate in 7.19. The AV has, “And is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?” The NET renders this, “Is this your usual way of dealing with men, O Sovereign LORD?” But a better rendering of the full verse is, “What you have done so far was a little thing to you, Lord GOD, for you have also spoken about your servant’s house in the distant future. And this is a revelation for mankind, Lord GOD.” [CSB]. In other words, the Davidic covenant was a charter for humanity, a programme for the benefit of the entire human race.
- The features of David’s life to this point **mirror** those of the Lord Jesus. He was born in obscurity in Bethlehem. He became conqueror over the giant in the valley of Elah (1 Samuel 17), before being rejected and persecuted by the established monarchy of Saul. David fled to bring blessing to the Gentiles (including Achish of Gath and Moab) before convening a little flock in a cave called Adullam (a picture of the church). After the death of Saul, David returned to *unite* Judah and Israel (2 Samuel 5), conquer Jerusalem, and bring the Ark to Zion. It is at this point he is given the covenant of the everlasting kingdom before conquering enemies to the north, south, east and west (2 Samuel 8).

The Promises of the Covenant [2 Samuel 7]

- The Davidic covenant contains promises for *Israel* (vv.10-11), *Solomon* (vv.12-15) and *David* (v.16). Whilst the immediate concern of the covenant is David's *primary* seed (Solomon) it clearly reaches beyond him to his *pre-eminent* seed, a "greater than Solomon" (Messiah).
- In fact, 2 Samuel 7 emphasises *Solomon*, hence the reference to "iniquity" (7.14). However, the parallel passage in 1 Chronicles 17 emphasises the *Messiah* so there is no reference to sin. Note. The first word in 1 Chronicles is "Adam", and the book closes with Solomon seated on "the throne of the LORD" (29.23). The book therefore shows us how God gets from Adam to a son of David sitting on the throne. This is human history in embryo!
- There are *three* basic elements to the covenant:
 - 1. **House** (dynasty). This refers to *physical* descendants. The royal family would permanently descend from David's physical seed (his own "bowels", cf. Genesis 15.4), and lead directly to the Messiah (Romans 1.3). He would not be a Pharaoh or a Caesar!
 - 2. **Throne** (dignity). David and his descendants would have permanent authority and right to rule as this throne would be established forever. Though it might not be exercised at all times, his ruling authority would never pass away. Note the promise of Gabriel in Luke 1.32-33. Even though David's throne had been unoccupied for several centuries (and still is today), it had not passed away permanently. Christ is presently sitting on his Father's throne as a prince in waiting to take the Davidic throne (Revelation 3.21).
 - 3. **Kingdom** (dominion). David's realm would be the earthly, political kingdom of Israel. Though the kingdom ceased to function under Roman rule, there was ever the hope of its restoration (cf. Mark 11.10; Acts 1.6).
- Other provisions of the covenant include one of David's own sons (Solomon) being established on the throne after him (7.12). This son would *build* the temple (7.13) and be *disciplined* for disobedience, but God would not remove his lovingkindness as he did from Saul (7.14-15). The kingdom was taken away from the house of Saul for disobedience but could never be removed from the house of David.
- The language of "father" and "son" (7.14) implies *function* – the king would exercise something of God's authority and reflect His integrity – as well as a *relationship* of love involving chastening and discipline where necessary. In contrast, Christ is *essentially* and *eternally* the Son of God (cf. Hebrews 1.5).
- All is ultimately fulfilled in Christ. He is "of the seed of David" (2 Timothy 2.8). His dominion will be universal (Psalm 72.8) and "*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, To order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever.*" (Isaiah 9.7).

The Progress of the Covenant

- **God**. There were times in history where this covenant seemed to hang by a thread! Even when David's descendants (like Jehoram) did evil, "*the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David*" (2 Chronicles 21.7). Wicked Athaliah "*arose and destroyed all the seed royal,*" (2 Kings 11.1) though Joash was hidden away and survived, eventually to take the throne at seven years of age. Again, during the reign of Ahaz, there was an Ephraimite conspiracy to take the Davidic king from the throne (Isaiah 7). In all these cases and more, God was always in control. The divine programme came dangerously close to disaster, but God is faithful.
- **Gospels**. The first and last human name mentioned in the NT is David (Matthew 1.1; Revelation 22.16). Joseph is referred to as "*thou son of David*" (Matthew 1.20). Mary is told that her son would "*be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.*" (Luke 1.32). The covenant was still in effect!
- In both Paul's first and last epistles, Christ is referred to as Jesus Christ "of the seed of David" (Romans 1.3; 2 Timothy 2.8). The Revelation opens and closes with one who is the "Root of David" (Revelation 5.5; 22.16). All this reminds us that Christ is linked with David, and every promise to David is therefore secure in Him.
- **Genealogy**. The two genealogies of Matthew and Luke are critical to establish the right of the Lord Jesus to reign on David's throne. Matthew gives the genealogy of Joseph (1.1-17) who was a direct descendant of "Jeconiah" (also called *Coniah* or *Jehoiachin*, v.11). A curse was pronounced on Jeconiah that prevented any of his descendants from reigning on the throne of David. The Lord Jesus could therefore not be king if he physically descended from Joseph. Hence, Matthew shows that the Lord Jesus was not truly Joseph's son by describing the virgin birth (1.20, 23).
- Luke gives the genealogy of Mary. The *definite article* is missing from Joseph's name suggesting the genealogy is that of his wife, Mary (women could not be mentioned in genealogical records by Jewish law). Furthermore, the Talmud refers to Mary as the daughter of "Heli" (3.23). The line of Mary shows the Lord Jesus could claim the throne of David through his son Nathan, not Solomon. This was totally apart from the curse of Jeconiah.
- **Glory**. Christ will yet fulfil all God's promises to David. He will reign *on* earth and *over* the earth in a physical, literal 1,000-year kingdom (Psalm 110.1-2; Daniel 7.13-14; Zechariah 14.4, 9). See Isaiah 9.6-7. As *Wonderful-Counsellor*, no perplexity will defy his wisdom. He has counsel for every situation. As *Mighty God*, he has the power to implement divine purpose. As *Everlasting Father*, he treats his subjects with care and tenderness. No wonder he is the *Prince of Peace*!