

The Church of the Servant King

Prophecy Series **(Proph8_The Davidic Covenant)**

Introduction – The Background for the Davidic Covenant

After the Exodus from Egypt and the failure of that 1st generation of Jews to enter the land of promise, a 2nd generation of Jews led by Joshua entered the land circa 1406 B.C. The book of Joshua details the conquest of the land under Joshua's leadership as well as God's faithfulness to the land provisions of His covenant with Abraham (Ge 12:7; 13:14, 15, 17; 15:18-21; 17:8; 22:17), Isaac (Ge 26:3, 4), Jacob (Ge 28:4, 13; 35:12) and subsequent generations (Ge 48:4-22; 50:24). Even though the promise of the land is part of a unilateral covenant, the possession of the land by Israel was based upon the Jew's obedience to the Law (Jos 23:9-13, 15, 16; Deut 4:1, 25-27, 40; 6:17, 18).

Joshua 16:10 and Judges 1 suggest that Israel's victory over the Canaanites was incomplete since there were still Canaanites living in the land of promise. Nevertheless, Israel was able to experience the "rest" of God to the degree that the enemies had been conquered even though some pockets of enemy still existed (Jos 1:13, 15; 11:23; 14:15; 21:44; 22: 4; 23:1). The writer of Hebrews equates the concept of rest found here with entering into Christ's rest, that is, His kingdom (He 3; 4).

Once established in the land of promise, Israel faced her greatest challenge – faithfulness to God in everyday life especially after the excitement of winning an intense battle. In spite of God's faithfulness, Israel became apostate. Over the course of the next 300 or so years of her history after the death of Joshua in circa 1380 B.C., God raised up a series of deliverers for Israel known as judges. The book of Judges documents the fact that God did not spare Israel from the consequences of her actions, but allowed her to experience constant trouble from foreign oppressors. Israel experienced a cyclical pattern of sin, slavery or oppression, and deliverance that spiraled downward. Israel proved herself unfaithful to the conditions of the Mosaic Law in almost every way.

The period of the Judges ends with Israel's request for and God's granting her a king so that she could be like other nations (1 Sam 8:5 cf. Deut 18:14-20). The first king, Saul, had a tragic flaw. He did not esteem the Lord's rule over Israel so as to obey the Lord's commands (see 13:7-12; 15:10-26). God then raised up David who did have a heart for the Lord and God's purpose for Israel. After David had conquered Israel's enemies and David dwelt securely in the land, he desired to build a house or temple for God in Israel. God did not want David to build this temple. Rather, God indicated His specific desire to establish a "house" or royal dynasty through David. This desire is first expressed in 2 Samuel 7:11-16 and it is restated in 1 Chronicles 17:10-15.

The Importance of the Davidic Covenant¹

A dispensational understanding of God's eschatological covenant with David provides answers to many questions regarding the manner in which God will accomplish His strategic

¹ Sources consulted for this section include: J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 100-115; Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), Volume IV, 310-325; Mal Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1996), 85-87.

purpose in human history.² We know that God's strategic purpose for human history is to provide satisfactory evidence that God did not violate the integrity of His essence by condemning Lucifer to the Lake of Fire at the occasion of Lucifer's fall in eternity past. God's unilateral covenants with Israel provide us with an understanding of the tactical measures by which God is executing His strategic objectives. The Davidic covenant in particular helps us understand the answers to such questions as:

- ❑ Will there be a literal millennium?
- ❑ Is the church the kingdom?
- ❑ Has the church replaced Israel as the recipients of these promises?
- ❑ What is God's kingdom?
- ❑ What is Christ's kingdom?
- ❑ Will the nation of Israel be regathered and restored under her Messiah?
- ❑ How will the Messiah rule over His earthly kingdom?
- ❑ Is the kingdom present here and now or is the kingdom still future?

The Davidic covenant is an amplification of the seed aspect of the Abrahamic Covenant. As we have seen, the Messiah was predicted to come from the seed of Abraham (see Ge 15:4; 22:18). However, this only meant that he was to be a Jew from any of the twelve tribes. Later, in the time of Jacob, the seed aspect of the Abrahamic covenant narrowed to include only a member of the tribe of Judah (Ge 49:10). The Davidic covenant narrows the choice further – one family within the tribe of Judah, the family of David. In Jeremiah, the choice is narrowed even further – not only would the Messiah come from the seed of David, his lineage would not include Jehoiakim (Jer 36:30).³

The Provisions of the Davidic Covenant⁴

- ❑ David was promised an eternal dynasty or house (2 Sam 7:11, 16; 1 Chron 17:10)⁵

² The evidence provided by human history will vindicate God throughout eternity future in condemning Satan and all of his angelic and human followers to the Lake of Fire and eternal separation from God. At the conclusion of human history, no creature will ever be able to question the unified function of God's essence attributes, i.e. should a creature ever ask the question in eternity future – "How can a God of love cast one of His creatures into the Lake of Fire?", then human history serves as evidentiary matter. Human history also validates the God's sovereign decision at that point to insure that no creature would ever exercise his volition contrary to God's will for the rest of eternity, thus, in effect, locking in positive volition so that there will never be a decision contrary to the will of God as occurred with Lucifer in eternity past.

³ Jehoiakim was the name given by the Egyptian king, Pharaoh Neco, to Eliakim. Jehoiakim was placed on the throne in 609 B.C. by Pharaoh Neco. The Egyptians were defeated at Carchemish by the Babylonians and the prophet Jeremiah prophesied the fall of Jerusalem to the disbelief of Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim even went so far as to destroy the scroll on which Jeremiah recorded his prophecies. He then withheld tribute to Nebuchadnezzar in spite of Jeremiah's warnings (2 Ki 24:11). The result of his rebellion and rejection of God's message was his removal from the lineage of David. Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 660.

⁴ See Pentecost, *Things to Come*; Chafer, *Systematic Theology*; and Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*.

⁵ A Davidic *house* refers to a dynastic succession of rulers in which a son was promised in each generation who would be qualified to reign (Deut 17:15 announces God's plan for a monarchy while 2 Samuel 7:12, 16; 1 Chronicles 17:11; and Psalm 89:4 announce that the king will be a Davidic descendant)

- ❑ One of David's own sons, specifically Solomon, was to occupy the throne after David (2 Sam 7:12)
- ❑ This son, Solomon would build the Temple (2 Sam 7:13)
- ❑ The throne of David and Solomon's kingdom would be established forever (2 Sam 7:13, 16). (Note that it is not Solomon, but the throne which would be established forever).
- ❑ Solomon would be disciplined for disobedience, but God would not remove His lovingkindness from him (2 Sam 7:14-15).
- ❑ The Messiah would come from the seed of David (1 Chron 17:11)
- ❑ The Messiah's throne, house and kingdom will be established forever (1 Chron 17:12-14)

The Davidic Covenant and Its Future Fulfillment

God's eschatological covenants are with the nation Israel. Through these covenants, Israel will be placed in a position of prominence among the nations. The Davidic throne will be re-established. Jesus will be the king of Israel and the world and as king, He will occupy His third of three offices.

Jesus has and will hold three separate offices: prophet, priest and king. He does not function in all of these offices simultaneously, but in chronological sequence. During His First Coming and in His public ministry, He functioned in His first office – Prophet. Since His ascension into heaven, He has been functioning in His second office – Priest. In the future Messianic kingdom, He will function in His office of King.

Is The Davidic Covenant in Force During the Present Age of the Church?⁶

This question must be answered because there are some (e.g. Replacement theologians) who believe the Davidic Covenant has now been fulfilled and the promise of the throne was fulfilled when Jesus sat on His Father's throne (Re 3:21). The Davidic covenant does include a promise that David would have an eternal descendent who would occupy His throne. In Psalm 110:1, David himself prophesies that the Son of God (i.e. David's ultimate descendent – "son of David" – Matt 1:1; Lu 1:32 and the "root of David" – Re 5:5) would be seated at the right hand of God the Father. This has been fulfilled (Acts 2:33-36; 1 Co 15:20-28; Col 3:1; Heb 1:13).

There is no question that Jesus now setting on the throne of God the Father. However, the promise of Luke 1:32 is that He will someday sit upon the throne of His father, David.

Interesting Prophetic Aspects of the Davidic Covenant

There are many references to the provisions of the Davidic Covenant throughout the remainder of Scripture. Not only is it necessary to understand the Davidic Covenant in order to appreciate and understand many of the Psalms, the Davidic Covenant is the basis for later prophesies given by many of Israel's prophets subsequent to David's life. There are several instances in which David is said to have a ruling position in the coming kingdom.

Of the increase of His government and peace **there will be no end**, upon the **throne of David and over His kingdom**, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isa 9:7)

Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an **everlasting covenant** with you [Israel] – the sure mercies of David. Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, a leader and commander for the people. (Isa 55:3-4)

⁶ See Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*.

But they shall serve the Lord their God, **and** David their king, whom I will raise up for them. (Jer 30:9)

In those days and at that time I will cause to grow up to David **a branch of righteousness; he** shall execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In those days Judah will be saved [delivered], and Jerusalem will dwell safely, and this is the name by which she will be called: 'The Lord Our Righteousness.' For thus says the Lord: 'David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel; nor shall priests, the Levites, lack a man to offer burnt offerings before Me, to kindle grain offerings, and to sacrifice continually. (Jer 33:15-18)

Thus says the Lord: 'If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David My servant, so that he shall not have a son to reign on his throne, and with the Levites, the priests, My ministers. (Jer 33:20-21)

I will establish **one shepherd** over them, and he shall feed them – **My servant David**. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. (Ezek 34:23-24)

David My servant shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments and observe My statutes, and do them. Then they shall dwell in the land that I have given to Jacob My servant, where your fathers dwelt; and they shall dwell there, they, their children, and their children's children, forever; and My servant David shall be their prince forever. (Ezek 37:24-25)

Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God **and** David their king. They shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days. (Hos 3:5)

On that day, I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old. (Amos 9:11)

There are three views regarding David's future role in the Messianic kingdom in regard to these texts.⁷

- ❑ View 1 – The Messiah, as David's heir, fulfills these passages.
- ❑ View 2 – A literal son of David will arise from the line of David to fulfill these texts.
- ❑ View 3 – The resurrected David will have some role in the government of Jesus Christ in the Messianic kingdom.

View 1 – the Messiah as David's heir fulfills these passages – since Jesus is David's son, and Christ establishes David's throne, then David in that sense will reign. This view concludes that since Jesus is David's son, then Jesus reigns as David. All of the references to David are actually references to Jesus sitting on David's throne. Isaiah 9:7 (cf. Jer 33:15) refers to David's throne being established forever. According to this view, the only way this can be accomplished is if Jesus occupies this throne in David's place. In addition, Christ's name is closely associated with David in the Bible. He is called the son of David. He is referred to as the coming ruler from the line of Jesse, David's father (Isa 11:1-10 cf. Mk 11:10; Jn 7:42; Re 5:5, 22:16).

⁷ See Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*.

Objections to view 1 – there are several objections/weaknesses to the view that Christ fulfills these references to David.

- ❑ Jesus Christ is never called David in the Bible. He is called the “Branch” (Jer 23:5), “Son of David” (15 times), “Seed of David” (Jn 7:42), “Root of David” (Re 5:5), and the “offspring of David” (Re 22:16)
- ❑ The term “my servant David” is frequently used for the historical David (2 Sam 3:18; 7:5, 8; 1 Ki 11:3, 32, 34; 2 Ki 20:6).
- ❑ Yahweh (the pre-incarnate Messiah) is distinguished from David on many occasions (Hos 3:5; Ezek 34:24; 37:21-25; Jer 30:9; Isa 55:4).
- ❑ Ezekiel 45:22 is a prophecy where “the prince” – a reference to the future ruler of Israel – makes a sacrifice for his sins and the sins of the people. This cannot refer to Jesus Christ.

View 2 – a son in the line of David will sit upon the Davidic throne – is based upon the assumption that even though Christ can fulfill portions of prophecy, there are portions which He cannot. Therefore, another heir to the throne must be in view – a son of David other than Jesus (see Jer 33:15, 17, 20-21).

Objections to view 2 – there are several objections/weaknesses to this view also.

- ❑ After the destruction of Jerusalem, no Jew is able to trace his family lineage.
- ❑ If another son of David is in view besides Christ, then Christ was not the complete fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.
- ❑ A literal interpretation demands that the word David be understood in a manner consistent with its natural usage in context.

View 3 – the resurrected David will rule as Christ’s agent on earth while Christ Himself rules and reigns from the New Jerusalem which is situated above the earth during the Messianic age. There are at least three primary arguments for this view:

- ❑ This view is the most consistent view with a literal interpretation of the passages.
- ❑ David could be Christ’s agent on earth (or regent) without any violation of biblical prophecies.
- ❑ Resurrected saints of all dispensations will have various responsibilities in the Messianic (Millennial) kingdom – see Matt 19:28; Lu 19:12-27 cf. 1 Co 6:1-3). David, as Christ’s regent on earth, would lead worship, offer memorial sacrifices, administer the laws, and provide inheritance for his co-regents.

Objections to View 3 – there is only a weak objection to this view. If Christ is the greater son of David, there really is no need for the prophecies to be fulfilled in the historical king.