



God's Covenant with Israel Part Five **The Davidic Covenant** (2 Samuel 7:7-14; Psalm 89)

Dr. Deane J. Woods

Royal watchers, as well as the rest of the western world it seems, have been besotted with the anticipated arrival of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's first child – an heir and third-in-line to the throne of the United Kingdom. What a day of rejoicing took place when William and Kate and their entourage were driven to London's famous St. Mary's Hospital on 22nd July 2013, and George Alexander Louis – His Royal Highness, The Prince of Cambridge – was born! The royal line of the House of Windsor will be perpetuated for yet another generation!

In the world of the Old Testament, there was no great job security in being a king or the son of a king. Read the history of Israel's line of kings, be it in the breakaway Northern Kingdom (Israel) or the longer lasting Southern Kingdom (Judah), and one finds the biblical record is replete with assassinations, entire families being wiped out and rivals usurping the throne by betrayal, collusion or force. Sadly, bloodbaths were commonplace.



forever; your throne shall be established forever (2 Sam 7:13, 16). In Psalm 89 the record stated: "I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant ... (His) descendants shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful. (vss 3-4, 37 *emphases added*).

The Davidic covenant is, of course, an expansion of the seed aspect promised by God in the Abrahamic covenant (See accompanying Chart).

It will be remembered that God promised a son through Sarah (Gen 18:14), that "nations" and "kings" would come from him (Gen 17:16) and a great nation would emerge (Gen 15:5). Progressive revelation in God's Word recorded a narrowing down of these promises as the years passed. Isaac was born in due time, then Jacob. He had twelve sons who became the Tribes of Israel – the Hebrews – of which Judah was especially

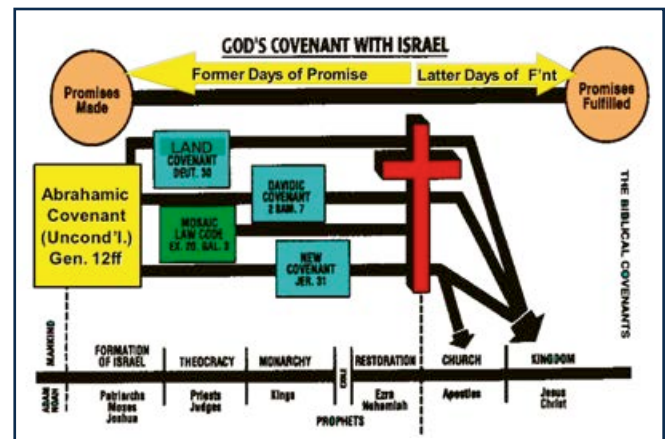
Davidic Covenant Proposed

After Israel decided they wanted to become a Monarchy (ruled by a King) like their surrounding nations (1 Sam 8-9), their untimely decision ended the Theocracy (ruled by God) as Saul was anointed (1 Sam 10). The son of Kish's disobedience eventually cost him his kingdom and after some momentous personal struggles, resentment and battles with Jesse's shepherd-boy son, David, this "man after God's own heart" (1 Sam 13:14) became Saul's God-appointed successor (2 Sam 2; 5).

Something of great significance occurred when God entered a special covenant

relationship with King David. The house of David would be perpetuated *eternally* for his physical descendants would never be cut off.

The story unfolded in 2 Samuel 7:7-14ff and was depicted in specific covenant terms in Psalm 89:3-4 and 35-37. God said: I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever ... And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me



This chart has been adapted from that of Paul N. Benware's original presentation in his book *Understanding End Times Prophecy*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1995. Page 50. The source is readily acknowledged by the writer of this present article.

selected: “ ... the sceptre shall not depart from Judah” (Gen. 49:10). Next, the Davidic covenant focused on one family within the tribe of Judah, viz., the family of David.

Davidic Covenant Provisions

In 2 Samuel 7, the following provisions were made:

- God promised David that his name would be “great” (vs 9a).
- He would have “rest from his enemies” (vs 11b).
- Significantly, the LORD would build David a house that would last “forever” (vs 11c).
- God would graciously grant a son to David who would succeed him and establish his “kingdom” (vs 12).
- That son (Solomon), rather than David, would build the Temple (vs 13a).
- The throne of Solomon’s kingdom would be perpetuated “forever” (vs 13b).
- Though David’s sins (Cf. Ps 32; 51) justified God’s chastening, yet His “covenant love (Hebrew: *chesed*) would be forever” (vss 14-15).
- David’s “house”, “kingdom” and “throne” would be established forever (vs. 16).
- God’s covenant with David was unconditional.

The covenant did not guarantee uninterrupted rule by David’s family, however. The Babylonian Exile later proved that in no uncertain terms. Yet God’s promise was assured: *the right to rule would never pass away permanently*. Furthermore, disobedience would cause the covenant blessings to be absent from Israel’s experience – a fact well attested throughout Israel’s history as recorded in God’s Word. On the other hand, throughout all His people’s waywardness and sinfulness, His promises to David and his lineage were always in the mind of the godly remnant – Isaiah being a special case in point (Is. 55:3).

Eight centuries later, when the angel Gabriel announced to the teenager virgin, Mary, that she would be the mother of Israel’s long awaited Messiah (cf. Is. 7:14; 9:6-7), there was no sense in which this stupendous news had bypassed God’s promise to Israel’s second King and his house. It had been centuries since one of his descendants had sat on the Davidic throne and now God’s

ancient promise came through loud and clear once again:

“The LORD God will give Him the throne of His father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever. And His kingdom will have no end”. (Luke 1:32-33, *emphases added*)

Davidic Covenant Perfected

When was the Davidic covenant perfected? That is, at what time was it historically fulfilled? Scripture reveals that Israel’s Messiah and (coming) King is the *ultimate* fulfilment of these divine promises. However, He is not at this time ruling from the throne of David, for He is now “at the right hand of the Majesty on High” (Heb. 12:2), “seated on (His) throne” (Cf. Rev. 3:21, *emphasis added*).

This raises two co-related questions: *when* and *how* God’s promises to David were (or will be) perfectly fulfilled. Premillennialism sees this as future when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth to set up the Millennial Kingdom for 1,000 years as He reigns over the earth from Jerusalem. After this literal, earthly rule over His kingdom (graciously granted also to those believers who will share in His kingly administration – Heb. 1:8-9; 2:9-10ff, esp. vs. 9; 3:1,14; 12:25-29), Jesus’ authoritative rulership will continue on into the Eternal State over “the new heaven and the new earth” (Rev.21:1; Cf. 2 Pet. 3:7, 10, 12; Rev. 22).

On the other hand, Amillennialism (the eschatological view of most Reformed theologians who deny any literal 1,000 year reign) and Postmillennialism (the dominant theological belief among American Protestants who promoted reform movements such as abolitionism in the 19th and 20th centuries), interpret the Davidic covenant as being fulfilled *in the present time*. This view argues that Christ is presently ruling on David’s throne in heaven over a spiritual kingdom. Hence, this spiritual kingdom is the rule of Christ from heaven in the hearts of believers.

In similar vein, Progressive Premillennialism avows that Christ is now on the throne of David in heaven and there will also be a final fulfilment. As G.E Ladd (a Historical Premillennialist) described the “already/not yet” view of the kingdom, so this novel,

evolving view based on Ladd’s analysis, has been championed by Darrell Bock and Craig Blaising and others.

What is the truth of the matter when these variant views are carefully examined? Consider the following observations from Scripture:

First, as with the other covenants, the Davidic covenant must be interpreted *literally*. The writers of the Old Testament constantly looked forward to a coming Davidic kingdom even as they also denounced the sins and failures of God’s people. At the same time,



they never once saw their spiritual and moral disobedience as cancelling out the covenant promise, for the kingdom promise to David and his house would one day be a literal reality.

Second, this covenant was *unconditional* and *eternal* and must relate to the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It cannot be transferred to another people. God (who cannot lie – Num. 23:19; Titus 1:2) has sworn an oath and His zeal would bring about His salvific purposes in the Messiah (Is. 9:6-7). Eventually, Israel must be preserved as a nation, return to the land of promise and be ruled over by “great David’s greater Son”, Jesus the Messiah! God’s “*chesed*” (covenant/steadfast love) demands it!

Third, it should be understood and unreservedly accepted that there are *two different thrones* in the discussion of the eschatological fulfilment matter of the Davidic covenant. The throne of God and the throne of David are *not* the same thing. There is telling evidence in Scripture that the Davidic throne and God’s throne are not to be identified as one because:

- David’s throne had its beginning in his lifetime (see 2 Samuel) but God’s throne in heaven was established long before Israel’s second King existed (Cf. Ps 93:2;

45:6). God’s throne is eternal, but David’s is not; it was created at a point of time in his life.

- Each throne has its peculiar boundaries. God’s ruling authority is sovereign over the entire universe (1 Chron 29:12; Ps 145:13), whereas David’s authority is said to be over a specific land area on planet earth (Ps 89:10a; cf. 44:2; 80:8).
- There are different locations for these two thrones: God’s throne is in heaven (Ps 11:4; 103:19), but David’s is on earth, in Jerusalem (2 Sam 5:5; cf. 7:11b).
- Jesus’ throne and that of His Father are said to be different (Rev. 3:21).

- Moreover, the view of Progressive Dispensationalism founders on at least two major points: (1) It employs an inconsistent hermeneutic. That is, like Amillennialism, it opts for a “dual” interpretation of Scripture. Sometimes words, phrases and passages utilize a spiritual interpretation, while in other places it insists on a literal understanding. The term “David’s throne”, “kingdom” and “Israel” are cases in point. Consider the following: (a) God said David would rule over a certain land mass and over the literal people of Israel. The view of Bock and Blaising spiritualizes the text and in so doing changes the correct, literal and grammatico-historical meaning of what God plainly said, “My covenant I will not violate, nor will I alter the utterance of My lips” (Ps 89:34). (b) Moreover, Psalms 16 and 110 may well be “linked”, but are in no way meant to be “equated” or “identified with each other”. Even in the context of their being quoted in the crucial passage concerning Pentecost and the “coronation gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:1-4, 25-36 which quotes Ps 16:8-11 and 110:1), the two thrones are not identified as being only one. (c) Neither can it be rightly interpreted as to a “unified link” between David’s throne and God’s throne. Jesus is now seated on His throne at the right hand of God. (d) Furthermore, it must be remembered that passages such as Acts 7:55-56; Rom 8:34; Col 3:1 1 Pet 3:22; Heb 1:13; 8:1; 12:2 all refer to God’s throne, not David’s.

- Finally, when the matter of the chronology of the Messiah’s rule is studied in the Old Testament Scriptures, something very significant may be discerned: **the kingdom rule of Messiah is not established until after the kingdoms of men completely come to an end** (Cf. Dan 2 and 7 and note 2:44 – *And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever*). This same truth is reflected in Dan 7:13-14; Ezekiel 37-39; Zech 9:10; 14:1-4, 9-11; In the New Testament, Mt 24:27-31; 25:31-33; Rev 11:15; 19:11-16; 20:1-6 present the same picture.

This postponement of the Kingdom is further corroborated by Jesus telling His followers that the Kingdom would not appear in their immediate future (Lk. 19:11-27). Could it have come had Israel repented and as a result receive “the times of refreshing ... from the presence of the Lord ... (when God) would send Jesus Christ whom heaven must receive *until* the times of restoration of all things ...”? (Acts 3:19-21, *emphasis added*). It appears so, as Toussaint and other premillennial scholars believe. Regrettably, Israel (as a whole) refused to comply, and as a nation, remains in that sorry spiritual condition today.

Conclusion & Application

What may we conclude on the basis of this biblical evidence and, more to the point, what practical applications are relevant to Jewish and Gentile believers today?

First, we believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the anointed King who is presently on His throne in heaven, interceding as Jewish and Gentile believers’ Great High Priest. He is there awaiting the Day of His Second Advent when He will reign and fulfil the Davidic covenant. Of the fifty-nine references to David in the New Testament, *not one* connects David’s throne to Christ’s High Priestly role in heaven. Certainly He is not ruling on David’s throne there right now!

Second, the unconditional Davidic covenant was not fulfilled in the Old Testament, nor is it being fulfilled in the present time. The Kingdom is still future. Yes, Jesus is the appointed Ruler (Ps 2:6-12; Eph 1:20-23; Col.1:15-18), but His earthly reign has not yet begun. Just as David was appointed by the LORD as King through the prophet-priest Samuel (1 Sam 16:1-13), and there were many years before he would ascend to the throne as Israel’s King, so Jesus was appointed Ruler of the universe. He was born a King, of course, but His validation as the King was seen from His baptism onwards (Mt 3:1-14ff) through His authoritative mission and ministry. His message and miracles authenticated not only His Deity but at the same time they attested to this Eternal Sovereign Ruler and His earthly Kingdom’s legitimacy. Indeed His “signs” were the attendant circumstance of His rightful claim of Himself as being God Incarnate and sovereign Lord and His right to establish “The Kingdom” as prophesied by the Old Testament sages. Thus, the biblical

record of His “Person and Work” should be understood as being indissolubly linked with His future, coming Kingdom on earth (Cf. the “signs” in John’s Gospel and Mk 2:14ff; Heb 12:25-28; Rev 19:11-16; 20).

Third, the King was rejected by “His own” people (Jn 1:11; Acts 2:36; esp. Mt 12:1-50) because they would not have “this Man rule over (them)” (Lk 19:14) and in so doing, they lost the blessing God had for them in their Messiah. The kingdom that was offered to Israel in the Person of Jesus, their Messiah, was taken away from them and given to “a nation bearing the fruits of it” (Mt 21:43). In the present Church Age, God is taking out from the “Gentiles ... a people for His name” (Acts 15:14) and building His Church (Mt 16:18). Right now, He is making individual believing Jews and Gentiles “one new man” in His Body (Jn 3:3 and 5; Eph 2:14-18ff; 3:2-13ff), the “temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Cf. 6:19). The nation of Israel is (temporarily) rejected, but not utterly cast off (Rom 9, 10, 11, especially 11:1-16, 25-26a). A future, surviving, remnant will “call on the Stone who has been rejected (The Messiah)” to save them (Ps 118:18-22ff) and their Deliverer will “come out of Zion” (Rom 11:26b-27; Is 59:20; Ps 14:7). Israel will have repented and be “grafted in” again (Rom. 11:23)!

So what? What must believers do in these Last Days? By all means continue to be a “Royal Watcher” of the House of Windsor and “honour the King” (1 Pt 2:17). But at the same time, it is incumbent on **all** believers (whether Jewish or Gentile) to recognize their allegiance to an even higher Authority – **the King of Kings and Lord of Lords** – Jesus Christ our Lord! In this context, then, let us:

- (1) **Present ourselves** wholeheartedly to God, acknowledging Jesus Christ as LORD of everything we are and do! (Rom 12:1-3.)
- (2) **Prioritize** our time and responsibilities before Him! (Mt 6:33; Eph 5:17-18).
- (3) **Preach** the Gospel by “life and lip” to Jews and Gentiles alike (Rom 1:16b) and don’t forget ... “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem”! (Ps 122:6)

Will you follow through on this? Write to us, today ... and ... May the God of the Davidic covenant bless you richly in the Messiah! ■

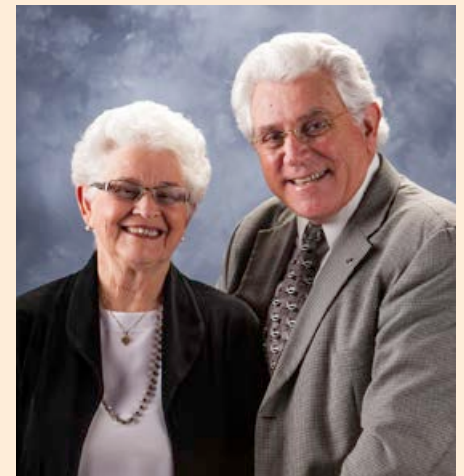
75th Anniversary Report

Thank you for praying for The Friends of Israel’s 75th Anniversary celebrations and the Staff Conference that followed. God blessed in so many ways and all considered the meetings “the BEST ever” in the history of The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry. Briefly, here’s what happened:

On Thursday, 30th May, about 500 gathered for a celebratory Thanksgiving Banquet at Mt. Laurel, NJ, USA. Joy, excitement and anticipation filled the air. Amongst the crowd



Bill Sutter, Elwood McQuaid and Jim Showers



*Deane & Margaret Woods
Ministry Representatives*

were 70 Diplomats, Departmental Heads, Rabbis, Civic Leaders and families from the Jewish communities in Washington DC, New Jersey and even Israel! Some had flown in that day from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. All consider The Friends of Israel as “genuine friends”. Several FOI speakers received standing ovations as they delivered their uncompromising messages that focused on Israel’s Messiah (Jesus) and His faithfulness over the 75 years of our history, and to the Jewish people over their history that has led to the establishment of the modern State of Israel!

As to the triennial Staff Conference, three innovative things contributed to make it such a success: (1) The venue was close to the Mission headquarters, enabling the Home Office staff to attend over the 5 days; (2) workers from all the Fields attended,

sharing their special approach to specific ministries; (3) Attendees with musical talents brought their instruments and the musical accompaniment to the worship and singing was unbelievable!

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (Australia) Inc.

P0 Box 171 Melrose Park SA
5039 Australia

Office and Books:

c/o EBC Community Centre
Suite 406 (Upstairs)
Cnr. Rothesay Ave and Dorene St
St Marys SA 5042 AUSTRALIA

Phone/Fax: (+ 618) 08 8276 1333
Email: australianoffice@foi.org