

The Davidic Covenant

The Covenant with David ¹

The Words of the Lord, conveyed through the prophet Nathan, to David as recorded in II Samuel 7:12ff., read, "When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

This is the statement of the Davidic covenant. The covenant that God made with David concerning the Kingdom of God, i.e., God's determination to establish on earth His Kingdom.

Before the Davidic covenant is discussed, it is necessary to understand the place of David in the Old Testament. For David overshadows the entire Old Testament and he penetrates into the New Testament so much so that one cannot understand the New Testament without comprehending the place of David in the unfolded purposes of God in the Old Testament.

David's place goes back to the book of Genesis, chapter 49. In chapter 49, Jacob is dying and he called a convocation of his sons. The convocation was for the purpose of blessing and passing on the promise that was made to Abraham. And Genesis 49 records the blessings of Jacob to each of his sons. And in Genesis 49:8-12, Jacob pronounces his blessing upon Judah. With his hands on Judah's head, Jacob said, "Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons will bow down to you. You are a

lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness -- who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his. He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes. His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk." And note, that the name Judah, in the Hebrew, means "to praise."

Notice first, that Judah is to receive the praises of his brothers; Jacob is looking down the corridors of time; and one shall come from Judah that will call forth the praises of the earth. And then Jacob portrays Judah as a lion, in poetic and prophetic language. And who dares to disturb the lion? This lion of the Tribe of Judah will conquer, and he will bear the scepter, the royal emblem. Thus, the kings of Israel will come from the tribe of Judah. And the "ruler's staff" refers to the king as the lawmaker of Israel. Thus, he is the purveyor of justice; and the phrase, "between his feet," refers to all the coming generations. And this will be true until the arrival of "to whom it belongs," or Shiloh. Thus, the tribe of Judah will be kings until the one "who is worthy of praise," Shiloh, comes. And he will be the final and everlasting King. And to this one, all the nations will belong. And the expression implies that this one is magnetic, this is the one that the nations desire.

And this prophecy and blessing resided in the tribe of Judah. It was passed down from generation to generation of the tribe of Judah.

Moses was not a king; Joshua was not a king; and all the "judges" were not kings, they were dictators or deliverers. And then the final judge came, Samuel, the prophet. And God ruled the Jews through Samuel. But then the people came to Samuel and told him that they were weary of him, they desired a king like other nations. And Samuel attempted to dissuade them, for he said that God ruled over them. But the people wanted to be like other nations. And it is always dangerous to want to be like

¹ This dissertation on the Davidic Covenant is dependent upon the scholarship of Bishop Smith, R. B. Thieme, Jr., and I.M. Haldeman.

everybody else. And so God allowed it: God gave them what they wanted, one of the worst judgments that God can inflict upon a people or an individual. Saul was made the king. However, Saul came from the tribe of Benjamin, not Judah. So when God said, here is a king from Benjamin, God was saying this is not my king. And Saul was popular, good-looking, tough, tall; but he had a problem with his heart: Saul was bitter, jealous, threatened.

And then, finally, God said that Saul is finished. I will provide my king. So God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to select His king. And Bethlehem was in the tribe of Judah. The house of Jesse was visited. And God rejected all Jesse's sons. Finally, Samuel said, "Are you sure you have no other sons?" And David was brought in from the fields. So Samuel poured the anointing oil over David and anointed him as the first lion of the Tribe of Judah; Saul was the abortion.

And as soon as David became king, he performed a significant act. For remember that the throne of God was atop the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle; and here resided a light uncreated and unradiated, the Shekinah Glory, the manifestation of the Glory of God. And recall that the people had become apostate under King Saul; then the Philistines came, and the Jews called for the Ark of the Covenant, but they now viewed the Ark as nothing more than a lucky charm. But God would not allow Himself to be used as a lucky charm, and the Philistines captured the Ark. And the Philistines carried the Ark to the Temple of Dagon, their god. But Dagon kept falling and breaking, bowing down before, as it were, the Ark of the Covenant. So the Philistines moved him to another of their cities, and all the people became ill. Finally, in frustration and despair, the Philistines returned the Ark to Israel. And the Ark, because of Saul's apostasy, ended up in a farmhouse.

So David's first act was to recognize God as the true King of Israel. And David returned the Ark to Jerusalem. And at this point, David wrote Psalm 24; and the choirs of Levi sang in antistrophe as the Ark came into Israel. And

the Ark was placed on Mount Zion, and there the Glory of God resided in a tent.

Then David realized that he lived in a palace and the Ark resided in a tent. Thus, he decided to build a house for the Ark; and David consulted the prophet Nathan. And Nathan said, "Do all that is in your heart." However, Nathan was wrong, for he did not consult with God. Then Nathan returned to David and spoke the words of II Samuel 7:1-11. God said, "I do not want you to build Me a house; but I will build you a house, a dynasty. There will always be a king from the line of David; and the first of your descendants will build me a house." Thus, the throne of David and the throne of God became linked. And one of David's sons would rule forever and ever. And David understood the essence of this covenant with God. The Promise that was made to Adam and Eve has now narrowed down to one family, the family of David.

David's throne on earth would be a shadow on earth of the true throne of God in heaven. And David's throne would be forever and ever; and this can only refer to God, for only God is everlasting. Thus, this covenant speaks to the immediate descendants of David, but it also speaks of "enduring forever." So the covenant speaks also of an everlasting throne. Thus, David's dynasty will go on, and on, and on; but in the end, the son of David and the Son of God will be One Person, and He will sit on the throne of David forever.

II Chron. 9:8 confirms that the descendants of David were placed upon the throne of God.

David, then, was the ruler for God on earth, as was his son, Solomon. "Praise be to the Lord your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on his throne as king to rule for the Lord your God. Because of the love of your God for Israel and his desire to uphold them forever, he has made you king over them, to maintain justice and righteousness." (II Chron. 9:8)

Recall the oil that was used to anoint David. Because of this oil David coined the phrase, Messiah, which means, "the anointed One,"

christos, in the Greek. This term had never been used before; David originated the term Messiah. And then David wrote Psalm 2. For David comprehended the extravagant and extreme graciousness of this covenant; and more, David recognized the resplendent God.

And Psalm 2 states that "the One enthroned in Heaven laughs;" and at the Cross "God laughed." And in Matthew 28, Christ said that "all authority is given to me." This covenant, then, looks forward to the Son of God on His throne. And Revelation 5 records, "that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has overcome." And then John heard a trillion voices proclaim, "Worthy is the Lamb!" This, then, is Shiloh, the "worthy one," the one "to whom praise belongs." And in Psalm 45, David again wrote of this "worthy one."

In the Old Testament, then, shadows exist. And this is why after Christ came, and the New Covenant became a reality, that there are no building/temples on earth. The 'church' in the present age is each and every individual believer; the real temple exists in each believer through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that explains why our Lord said, "The hour is coming and in fact now is that you shall worship in the Spirit." Thus, the physical throne of David was the shadow of the throne of God; for the throne of God is everlasting, while the actual physical throne of David would one day vanish. So the true everlasting throne of God will exist forever; the real throne of God is in heaven. However, the two thrones were so merged that they sometimes exchange names: the throne of David is called the throne of God, and the throne of God is called the throne of David. The two are one. And David comprehended this remarkable fact of God's covenant with him.

And subsequent to David's death, God reaffirmed the Davidic covenant with Solomon, for II Chron. 7:18 reads, "I will establish your royal throne, as I covenanted with David your father when I said, 'You shall never fail to have a man to rule over Israel.'" Now God and Solomon were linked together. Solomon's

besetting sin, however, was women; and Jerusalem soon was filled with foreign gods and their temples. And eventually, even Solomon turned from God, yet just prior to his death he returned to Yahweh, the Living God, the God of covenant. Additionally, Solomon's building program was so vast that he imposed more and more and more taxes on the Israelites. Subsequent to Solomon's death, his son, Rehoboam, was approached by the people and they asked that he reduce the taxes. But Rehoboam took the advice of his peers, who said double the taxes, show them who is the king! So Rehoboam went to the people and said, my father whipped you with whips, but I will whip you with scorpions. I will double the taxes. But the leader of the people, Jeroboam, said, NO! Enough is enough. We will secede. So ten tribes formed Israel or Samaria in the north, and two tribes, Judah and Benjamin (with a few from the tribe of Simeon), formed Judah in the south.

Jeroboam's reaction was understandable; however, Jeroboam erred. Because Rehoboam, though a fool, was in the line of David, through whom the Messiah was to come. Additionally, the Davidic covenant was vested in the Davidic line, i.e., in Rehoboam. Furthermore, the Temple and the Ark of the Covenant were in Jerusalem, and the throne of David, which was the shadow of the throne of God, was in Jerusalem. Thus, when Jeroboam seceded, he departed from the covenant, the royal family of Judah, and the hope and promise of the Messiah. And this explains Jeroboam's label from then on, "Jeroboam, who caused Israel to sin." For Jeroboam removed the people from God.

Then Jeroboam instituted his own priesthood, and his own temple, and he set up golden calves in Dan; and thus began Baalism in the northern kingdom. And Rehoboam ruled over a phantom, a tragic vestige of a kingdom that had once existed.

And then the prophets came; and the prophets spoke ubiquitously concerning that which God had promised He would do with David. For

example, Isaiah prophesied in the time of Uzziah the king. And after Uzziah died, first Jotham then Ahaz ruled over Judah. And Ahaz had no respect for God; yet he was of the tribe of Judah and the line of David. Thereupon, the king of Syria planned to attack Judah; and all Judah and the southern kingdom were terrified. And Ahaz began to plan for a siege of Jerusalem. And Isaiah told king Ahaz to relax, that the God of the Davidic covenant would not desert him, not because of Ahaz, but because of who and what God is, because of the covenant. But Ahaz paid no heed. And again Isaiah spoke to Ahaz and said, "Ask a sign from God and He will answer to demonstrate His faithfulness to the covenant." But Ahaz would not ask. Then Isaiah turned and spoke to the descendants of the house of David, 'You are wearying me and God. Therefore, God Himself will give you a sign:' "Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (God with us)." (Isa. 7:14) That son would be the son of David, "God with us." Thus, when God gave this sign, He stated that His purposes and the covenant would be fulfilled. God was so with them that, literally, "God would be with them, Immanuel." For "He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever." (Isa. 9:7)

Isaiah, then, was reiterating the Davidic covenant. And in chapter 9, Isaiah said, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." And this One, "He will raise a banner (nissi; here, then, is Yahweh Nissi) for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel."

And John the Baptist recognized our Lord as the Messiah because he had read Isaiah 11:2-3, which say, "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord -- and he will delight in the fear of the Lord." And recall, that John beheld the Spirit of the Lord descending upon our Lord.

At almost the same time, as Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem, the prophet Micah spoke to the rural areas in Judah. Micah said that the King of Kings would come from Bethlehem, a city so small that it was hardly included in the census. For Micah 5:2 reads, "But you, Bethlehem Ephratah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from old, from ancient times."

It is interesting to note, that if all one had was the Old Testament, then confusion would reign. For the only method for fully understanding the Old Testament is to comprehend the New Testament, which is the Holy Spirit's commentary on the Old Testament.

And at just about the same juncture in history, Israel, the northern kingdom, was twisting down into total apostasy and idolatry. And God sent Hosea to Israel; and Hosea was instructed by God to marry an infamous call-girl, and through this marriage and its infidelity, promiscuity and betrayal, Hosea was taught by God the meaning of agape love, forgiveness and faithfulness. And Hosea and his wife were a picture of God and His Bride, Israel, who was portrayed as a harlot. Finally, God spoke through Hosea and said, "The covenant is over; the lovingkindness is gone." Yet God remained faithful to the covenant even then; for God continued to love Israel. God said, "There will come a day that those who have left me will come again." They, the Jews, would seek David, the final David, the Anointed One, the One who is Worthy. And this David will be Christ Himself, God Himself.

And when did this happen? When did the Jews again seek for David? I Peter 1,2. For Peter spoke to the Jews and Gentiles who sought Christ, and Peter said that those of you who were not the people of God, you are now the people of God; for now you have lovingkindness again. You came seeking Christ and you found David.

Eventually, the northern kingdom was taken captive by Assyria. And again, in the south, in

Judah, spirituality worsened. And God sent Jeremiah; and Jeremiah told Judah that God still remembered His covenant to David, and that even though the southern kingdom, too, would go into captivity, that "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteousness.'" (Jer. 23:5-6) And then the southern kingdom went away into captivity in Babylon.

Recall Luke 1, when the angel spoke to Mary, "'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.'" This is a quotation of the Davidic covenant; and Mary was from the tribe of Judah, the line of David. And then Joseph and Mary traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem. For Mary was about 14 years old at this time; and if a Jewish girl was not married by the time she was 15, she was considered an old-maid. And a few weeks prior to this point in time, across the ocean on the Isle of Capri, the old Emperor Augustus had had a quarrel with Herod, the king of Judea. And because of this quarrel over tax revenues, each citizen in Judea was required to return to the town of their fathers to register for taxation. Thus, with Mary almost nine months pregnant, Joseph, a descendant of David, had to return to Bethlehem. Fantastic! For if the Emperor Augustus and Herod had quarreled one week earlier or two weeks later, then Jesus would not have been born in Bethlehem. The Hand of God is fantastic! For the quarrel took place at just the right moment.

Acts 2:29ff., read, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had

promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Thus, when our Lord arose again, He was crowned King, and he sits now upon the throne of David, the real throne, not the shadow throne. For He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. And His Kingdom is in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is in the believer; thus, believers are the Kingdom of God even now.

And this is why, with a loud voice, our Lord cried on the Cross, "It is finished!" The covenants are fulfilled, all of them. And what is left? Only the physical consummation. But the real Kingdom of God is now, for the Holy Spirit is now with us; Immanuel, "God with us," is now with us through His Spirit.