

Lesson 9

DAVIDIC COVENANT

The amil, postmil, historic premil and dispensational premil all agree that the Davidic Covenant is fulfilled in Christ. There is a king, a throne and a kingdom. They disagree over how and when the Davidic Covenant will be fulfilled. Is it fulfilled now in the Church, or is it to be fulfilled at the second coming of Christ in the millennial kingdom?

DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIALISM

The Original Covenant

God made a covenant with King David. David desired to build a temple for the Lord to replace the temporary tabernacle. Nathan the prophet had a revelation that God had something far greater in mind for David than a mere temple. Through Nathan God would reveal to David the Davidic Covenant, in which there were certain promises to David and certain ones to his yet unborn son, Solomon.

“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: 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” (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

The provisions of the original covenant are: 1) A house, or kingdom; 2) A throne or dynasty with authority; 3) A son, Solomon, to be the immediate heir to the throne; 4) A promise that Solomon’s kingdom will be established forever; 5) A warning to Solomon that God will discipline him and his descendants for disobedience, but God’s love would never be taken away; 6) A confirmation to David that his throne will be established forever.

The essence of the Davidic Covenant is the promise by God of a throne, kingdom and an offspring (seed) over which to reign. This promise is further confirmed to David in Psalm 89:3-4: ***You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, ‘I will establish your line (seed) forever and make your throne firm through all generations.’”*** In Jeremiah 33:22, 25-26, it says, ***“I will multiply the seed of David my servant”*** and gives a promise not to cast away David’s seed.

The Covenant Unconditional and Eternal

The Scriptures in many places say that the Davidic Covenant is “forever,” which means it is eternal in nature. This statement springs forth from the holy character of God.

Amils and postmils say that the covenant was based on obedience, and therefore is conditional. Solomon and all the kings of Judah broke the covenant and this negated all the physical or earthly aspects of the covenant to them. However, there are still spiritual aspects of the covenant that are in existence today and will be in existence all through eternity. Premils answer the above statement by saying that the original Davidic Covenant stated there would be strong discipline for disobedience, but this disobedience in no way abrogated the sure covenant promises from God.

Amils and postmils also argue that the earthly promises of the Davidic Covenant were fulfilled by Solomon. He had control over the land God promised to Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 15:18 cf. 1 Kgs.

4:21). The premils answer this objection by stating that Solomon did not occupy all the land; he only collected taxes from them. Furthermore, temporary control of the land was not eternal possession.

The Covenant Upheld Throughout the History of Israel

The Davidic Covenant was confirmed to David in Psalms 45 and 72, with a special emphasis of Psalm 89:28-29: ***“I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail. I will establish his line (seed, descendants) forever, his throne as long as the heavens endure.”***

Long after the days of Solomon, the nation of Israel was living in the reality of the Davidic Covenant: Isaiah (11, 24, 25, 54, 60, 61), with special emphasis on Isaiah 9:6-7: ***“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. 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.”*** Jeremiah (23:5-6; 33:14-17, 20-21); Ezekiel (37:24-25); Daniel (7:13-14) Hosea (3:4-5); Amos (9:11) and Zechariah (14:4, 9).

The Covenant in the New Testament

Christ is the ultimate fulfiller of the Davidic Covenant (Lk. 1:32-33). Both amils and premils believe that David’s descendants had their consummation and eternal fulfillment in Christ, for only the eternal Son of God could fulfill these promises. They disagree over how and when Christ fulfills the covenant. Amils see the kingdom and throne fulfilled spiritually in Christ. premils see the final fulfillment at the second advent when Christ will have a literal, physical reign over His kingdom in the earthly millennium and continuing throughout eternity.

Most dispensationalist do not believe that Christ is now (in the present) sitting on His Davidic throne. A distinction is made between “the Davidic throne” and “the Father’s throne”).

“Not one New Testament reference can be found which teaches that the Lord Jesus Christ is not on the throne of David, and His present relation to the Church certainly has no equivalence to the throne of the house of Israel. Twenty-one times in the New Testament Christ’s present position is described by the phrase “at the right hand” of God or “of the majesty on High,” etc., and this location is expressly defined as the throne of the Father (Rev. 3:21; 12:5)” (Charles Ryrie, *The Basis of the Premillennial Faith*).

This strict dispensational position is challenged by amils, postmils, historic premils and some progressive dispensationalists. They believe that Christ is now sitting on the throne of David at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:29-34) in a spiritual fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant.

Most dispensationalists believe the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of God (earthly, Davidic kingdom) was offered to the nation of Israel, but they rejected the King and His Davidic kingdom (Messianic kingdom)(Matt. 3:1-2; 4:17 cf. Matt. 10:5-7).

“On Palm Sunday, the crowds cried, ***“Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”*** (Matt. 21:9). This was the crowd’s acknowledgement that Jesus was the one to fulfill the Davidic Covenant, and they expected Him to assume the throne immediately, (See: Luke 19:11). However, when the scribes and priests heard the crowd call Jesus the “Son of David” they were “sore displeased.” A few days later, after Jesus’ scathing denouncement of the Scribes and Pharisees, He said, ***“Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, tell ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”***(Matt. 23:38, 39). Jesus implied that taking His seat as King of Israel, in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, was suspended until Israel repents as a nation. This will occur at the second coming of Jesus, when they ***“look on Him whom they have pierced”*** (Zech. 12:10), and then ***“all Israel shall be saved,”*** (Rom. 11:26). That the Davidic Covenant will only be inaugurated when Israel is restored is clearly stated in Jeremiah 23:5-8.” (Tim Warner, “Progressive Dispensationalism 101,” *The Last Trumpet*).

There are some progressive dispensationalists that believe the Davidic Covenant is also partially fulfilled spiritually during the Church age with Christ seated on David's throne at the right hand of the Father. Yet, the final fulfillment will not be until the second coming of Christ.

AMILLENNIALISM AND POSTMILLENNIALISM

The amil believes the physical, earthly aspects of the Davidic Covenant were basically fulfilled in the reign of Solomon. Only the spiritual aspects of the covenant are fulfilled in Christ (Lk. 1:31-33 cf. Acts 2:29-34).

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” (Acts 2:29-34).

Acts 2 specifically connects Christ reigning at the right hand of the Father with David. If not directly stated, it is certainly strongly implied that Christ is now spiritually sitting at the right hand of the Father as the Davidic King. His kingdom rule is over the Church, the spiritual descendants of David. Today King Jesus offers a spiritual (soteriological) kingdom on the basis of faith-repentance. After accepting King Jesus, Christ rules in the hearts of His people, the Church.

HISTORIC PREMILLENNIALISM

Historic premils take a mediating position between the amils and dispensationalists on the Davidic Covenant.

Historic premils give a more literal interpretation to the Davidic Covenant than do amils or postmils. In this, they agree with the dispensationalists. They believe the covenant was partially fulfilled at the first coming of Christ, when Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father. Today, Christ is spiritually fulfilling the Davidic Covenant as He reigns from the right hand of His Heavenly Father (Lk. 1:31-33 cf. Acts 2:29-34). In this, the historic premils agree with the amils and postmils.

The present, partial, spiritual reign of Christ over the church (spiritual Israel) constitutes the spiritual kingdom. However, this in no way diminishes Christ's future reigning in the millennium. The ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant will come at the second advent of Christ (Jer. 23:5-6). At that momentous event, those physical Jews that are alive will ***“look on Him whom they have pierced”*** (Zech 12:10), and then ***“all Israel shall be saved”*** (Rom. 11:26). The formula “now but not yet” applies to the Davidic Covenant.

Historic premils believe that Christ, the King, and His disciples offered a spiritual kingdom, not an earthly Davidic kingdom to Israel and the Gentiles. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2), Christ (Matt. 4:17,23; Lk. 4:43), and the disciples (Matt. 10:7; Lk. 10:9) preached repentance and a spiritual kingdom, which was to be accepted by faith. Christ offered the soteriological (spiritual) blessings of the future earthly kingdom. The Church (made up of Jews and Gentiles in Christ, forming spiritual Israel) partakes now of the spiritual blessings of the Davidic Covenant, bowing to Christ as King, and the church will receive the physical blessings of the Davidic Covenant in the yet future millennial kingdom. This will happen only at the second coming of Christ.