

Is Jesus now ruling on David's throne?: No. (1) None of the above elements are true today and there is no warrant for spiritualizing them; (2) the New Testament never says that Jesus is ruling over his kingdom today; (3) Hebrews says that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the father *until* the Father makes his enemies a footstool for his feet (Heb 1:13). Therefore, Jesus is today in heaven, serving as our priest and waiting for the Father to make the nations the Son's inheritance (Heb 5; Ps 2, 110). One day Jesus will return and establish God's kingdom on earth, ruling from Jerusalem, giving peace to his people, and blessing the nations (Zech 8, 14; Isa 2, 60, 65).

GOING FURTHER

The book of 1–2 Chronicles is largely a commentary on the Davidic covenant. Whether you read it now or later, make sure that you have the covenant in the front of your mind as you read.

Several psalms provide commentary on the Davidic covenant. What additional insights can you gain about the Davidic covenant from Psalms 2, 45, 72, 89, 110, and 132.

Look for the Davidic Covenant in the New Testament, including in Matthew 1–2, Luke 1–2, Acts 2, 13, Hebrews 1–2, Revelation 5, 19.

PREPARATION FOR THE NEXT STUDY

Next week we will consider the notion that the book of Psalms is more than a private prayer book for Christians but served a *royal* purpose. Read a variety of psalms of your choosing and think about the authorship, the subject, and their relation to God's promises in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants. How would a son of David read/sing/pray these psalms (differently than we would)?

Recommended psalms include 1, 2, 8, 16, 19–22, 45, 47–48, 60, 61, 69, 72, 89, 99, 101, 110, 118, 122, 125, 132, 144, 149.

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT (2 SAMUEL)

PREPARATION FOR THIS STUDY

Read 2 Samuel. Consider why the author describes so carefully how the nation (slowly) unites around David. Pay careful attention to chapter 7. How do David's later sins (and consequences) affect (or not affect) God's promise to David?

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

God chose Abraham for the purpose of making him into a great nation to bless the world (Gen 12, 15, 17, 22). This intention is advanced when God establishes the covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Exod 19), but the Mosaic covenant will fail because it depends upon the obedience of the people (Deut 29). The nation's failure is owing in part to the lack of a king to lead them in righteousness (Judg 21:25). The nation's need for a righteous king is answered by God who anoints David (1 Sam 16).

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

The covenant that God makes with David will bring to fruition the promises made to Abraham (2 Sam 7). Just as God promised to Abraham a great name, a land of his own, and blessing through him to the world, so God promises to bring these about through King David's family. Several elements of the Davidic covenant are significant:

Seed: God's promise to raise up a "seed" for David recalls the promise of the "seed" of Eve who would crush the serpent (Gen 3:15) and the promise of the seed that God would give Abraham (Gen 12:7). As prophesied, David is of the tribe of Judah, the one promised the scepter (Gen 49:10).

An eternal dynasty: Though monarchies are by nature hereditary, Saul lost his dynastic rule because of his disobedience. David was promised that his descendants would always rule on the throne (2 Sam 7). Disobedience would result in discipline but not in a

revocation of the covenant. The northern kingdom suffered many coups where all sons of the king were killed, but David's house always survived.

A charter for mankind: In David's prayer of response to the covenant, he recognizes the global consequences of God's promise to him. The last sentence of 2 Samuel 7:19 should be translated, "This is a charter for mankind."

A line of descendants or a single son?: God promised David that he would raise up David's seed and "establish the throne of his kingdom forever." This required that every king to rule over Israel would be from David's line, but it also hinted at a single son who would qualify to rule forever. This is so not only because of the unsatisfying notion of an eternal succession of unrighteous rulers, but also because (1) God had promised a seed that would crush the serpent (Gen 3:15); (2) God had promised to bless all nations through Abraham's seed (Gen 22:18); (3) the scepter would belong to Judah "until he comes to whom it belongs," a promise pointing to a single deserving individual (Gen 49:10); (4) the promise of a king greater than Agog (or Gog; Num 24:7). Later prophecies make it abundantly clear that a single individual would come who would rule over the house of David forever (e.g., Isa 9:6-7; Jer 23:5-6; Ezek 37:24; Hos 3:5; Hag 2:23).

God's glory: God's ultimate goal in his covenant with David was his own glory, and David recognized this when he prayed: "Do as you promised, so that your name will be great forever" (2 Sam 7:25-26).

Fulfillment: When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he described the child that would be born in language straight out of 2 Samuel 7 that left no doubt that Jesus was the long-awaited fulfillment of the Davidic covenant: "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" (Luke 1:32-33).

ISSUES RELATED TO THE DAVIDIC COVENANT

Discipline: God's covenant with David was not broken when Israel was carried off into exile and no king ruled on the throne. The Lord had already predicted that Israel would be unfaithful and be banished from the land for a time (Deut 29-30). David's descendants were guilty and would be punished (Jer 22), but from the ruins of exile God would raise up an heir, born of a virgin, to "reign on David's throne" and "of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end" (Isa 7-9).

David's sin: Proof of the unconditionality of the covenant is given in the detailed recording of David's sins of adultery and murder. Though he suffered painful consequences, his dynasty was not cut off as it was with Saul. Similarly, Solomon failed to be faithful and though he was disciplined, the dynasty persevered.

The Davidic Covenant in Chronicles: God's promises to David are recorded nearly verbatim in 1 Chronicles 17, but mention of discipline is omitted. This is best explained by the writer's knowledge (writing after the exile and the words of many prophets) that a single righteous king would be the glorious fulfillment of God's promise to David.

It's a Boy! It was a clear work of God that for a thousand years every Davidic king (or heir during the years of exile—see the list in Matt 1) had a son. Royal dynasties in England, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Japan have never had such "luck."

How did God's people respond when they were in exile and a Davidic king was not on the throne? Psalm 89 is just such a response. Here they (1) celebrate God's covenant with David; (2) acknowledge that disobedience would be punished; (3) ask God how long his wrath will last; (4) trust that God will fulfill his promises.

What does it mean to rule on David's throne?: The following elements are essential: (1) an exercise of rule over the people of Israel; (2) a rule that is centered in Jerusalem; (3) a national homeland for the people; (4) a time of peace and prosperity.