

The Kingdom Promised to David

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The Davidic covenant is a promise from God to David that his seed will continue forever and that his political kingdom will not end.

Topics: "Davidic Covenant", "Eschatology"

Description

John F. Walvoord preaches on the prophecy relating to Israel, focusing on the kingdom promised to David as a major theme. The covenant with David assures a future kingdom to Israel, with the promise of a king and a kingdom narrowed to David's seed. The Old Testament confirms this covenant through various prophecies, emphasizing a literal fulfillment of the promises to David and his descendants. New Testament passages further affirm the future reign of Christ on earth over the house of Jacob, supporting a literal interpretation of the Davidic covenant and the eschatology of Israel.

Transcript

In the study of the prophecy relating to Israel, one of the major themes is the kingdom promised to David. In this aspect of prophecy converge the other principal elements of Israel's predicted future. The promise to Abraham concerning his seed and the land, and the frequent prophecy of Israel's ultimate regathering are part of a larger pattern which promises a future kingdom to Israel.

First intimations of a future kingdom are found in the promises given to Abraham in Genesis 17:6 where it is recorded: "And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee." This is restated in verse 16 of the same chapter in relation to the promise of the son of Sarah: "And I will bless her, and moreover I will give thee a son of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her." The promise of a kingdom given to Abraham's seed is subsequently narrowed to Isaac and Jacob, and in Genesis 49:10 is further limited to the tribe of Judah. Jacob in his prophetic summary of the future of Israel prophesied concerning Judah: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be." Though the full significance of this passage has been debated by some scholars, it can hardly be disputed that it limits the throne to Judah and his descendants. It may be concluded therefore that early in Israel's history the concept of a future kingdom constituted the matrix for Israel's eschatology.

The subject of the kingdom as it relates to Israel is so large that it will be possible to survey only some of its principal characteristics. Four areas will be considered: first, the covenant with David; second, Old

Testament confirmation; third, New Testament confirmation; fourth, prophetic fulfillment.

The Covenant With David

In understanding the promises of a future kingdom given to Israel, one of the major Scriptures is that containing the Davidic covenant recorded in II Samuel 7 and I Chronicles 17. In this covenant the promise of a king and a kingdom is narrowed to David's seed.

According to the context, David had been concerned that the worship of the Lord had centered in the tabernacle, a tent-like structure, which had been originally built by Moses. David himself had built permanent houses for his family, and he felt it was unfitting for the worship of God to center in such a temporary structure. Accordingly, he called in Nathan the prophet and said to him: "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." Nathan responded as recorded in II Samuel 7:3: "Go, do all that is in thy heart, for Jehovah is with thee." That night the Lord corrected Nathan the prophet in reminding him that God had never commanded them to build Him a house of cedar. Nathan was instructed to deliver a message to David, the substance of which was that God would build a house to David in the sense of a posterity and that his son, yet to be born, would build a temple for the Lord.

The provisions of the covenant are given in II Samuel 7 beginning in verse 11: "Moreover Jehovah telleth thee that Jehovah will make thee a house. When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever."

The promise given to David includes the following provisions: (1) David is promised a child who would succeed him on the throne. (2) The temple which David desired to build would be constructed by this son. (3) The throne of his kingdom would be continued forever and would not be taken away from David's son even if he committed iniquity. (4) In summary, the prophet declared that David's house, kingdom, and throne would be established forever. Part of these promises were fulfilled in Solomon in that Solomon was later born and ultimately built the temple. The promise goes far beyond Solomon, however, in that the kingdom, throne, and David's house itself were established forever. There seems to be little disposition to question that Solomon is the son mentioned in the covenant and that he built a literal temple as a house for the Lord. The difficulties in interpretation come in examining the exact meaning of the term house as it pertains to David's posterity and the words throne and kingdom.

By way of preliminary definition, it would seem only natural to assume that by the term throne was meant the political rule of David over Israel. It was assured that a future king over Israel would come from David's line. This is the meaning of the promise that David's house would continue forever. The term kingdom is probably the most difficult term to define, but it would seem quite clear to David that God was referring to his own rule over Israel in a political sense. This is confirmed by David's own remarks in connection with the giving of the covenant. He understood the promise meant that his house would continue forever. David addresses Jehovah in II Samuel 7:18, 19: "Who am I, O Lord Jehovah, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me thus far? And this was yet a small thing in thine eyes, O Lord Jehovah; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come; and this too after the manner of men, O Lord

Jehovah!" David after recounting Israel's history adds this word in verse 25: "And now, O Jehovah God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, confirm thou it for ever, and do as thou hast spoken." In similar vein he concludes in verse 29: "Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may continue for ever before thee; for thou, O Lord Jehovah, hast spoken it: and with thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed for ever."

Old Testament Confirmation Of The Covenant

It is probable that there would be little question about the meaning of this covenant, if it did not involve eschatology as a whole. It would seem that the promises are simple and direct that David's posterity should continue forever and that his political kingdom would not end. However, even such a simple interpretation presents some immediate problems, as David himself seems to anticipate when he notes that the prophecy concerns a long time to come.

The principal difficulty, however, seems to be that the connotation of the Davidic covenant supports the premillennial interpretation of the Bible involving a future reign of Christ on earth as David's greater Son. This point of view is quite unacceptable to the amillenarian and therefore for them some interpretation of the Davidic covenant must be found other than that of a literal fulfillment. Generally speaking, amillenarians deny that this covenant has any decisive force on the millennial question and find its terms fulfilled in the present day with God's dealings with the church. Quite often the attempt is made to deny that anything in the Old Testament construes a premillennial eschatology and statements are made such as that of Louis Berkhof: "The only Scriptural basis for this theory [i.e., premillennialism] is Revelation 20:1-6, after an Old Testament content has been poured into it" (Systematic Theology, p. 715).

In brief, the amillennial point of view is that the Davidic kingdom promised to David's posterity is not a rule over the house of Israel, but a spiritual rule over the saints fulfilled in Christ's present session at the right hand of God. Such an idea of course is not contained in the Davidic covenant as it is recorded in II Samuel 7, but it is asserted that later Scriptures give this interpretation. For this reason the implications of the provisions of the Davidic covenant can be determined only after ascertaining the interpretation placed upon this covenant by other Old Testament Scriptures. Then a further step must be taken of examining the New Testament treatment of the same subject. Though this can be done only briefly within the limits of our present discussion, some important facts can be cited which decisively determine the ultimate interpretation of the Davidic covenant.

The covenant with David is not only given twice in its major content-- namely, II Samuel 7 and I Chronicles 17--but it is also confirmed in Psalm 89. In this and other Old Testament references there is no allusion anywhere to the idea that these promises are to be understood in a spiritualized sense as referring to the church or to a reign of God in heaven. Rather, it is linked to the earth and to the seed of Israel, and to the land. According to Psalm 89:3, 4 Jehovah declares: "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant: Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." This concept is declared again later in the same psalm beginning in verse 29 where it is promised that the seed will endure forever in spite of the specific problem of Israel's sins and departure from God. It is affirmed unalterably that God is going to fulfill His Word to David regardless of what his seed does: "His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in mine ordinances; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. But my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that

is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness: I will not lie unto David: his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as the faithful witness in the sky" (Psalm 89:29-37). According to this psalm the covenant concerns David, his physical seed, and the relationship of his rule to the children of Israel. There is no indication that this kingdom extended to a spiritual entity such as the church nor that the throne in view is the throne of God in heaven rather than the throne of David on earth.

In the well-known prophecy concerning the birth of Christ given in Isaiah 9:6, 7 it is stated again that the throne of David is in view: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of Jehovah of hosts will perform this." Again the throne of David is mentioned specifically and the promise indicates that the fulfillment will go on forever.

In Jeremiah 23:5, 6 the reign of the king who is the son of David is described as coming to pass in a day when Judah and Israel shall be saved and dwell safely. Jeremiah writes: "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness." In the verses immediately following, this reign is linked with the regathering of the children of Israel and their occupation of their ancient lands. Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 31:7, 8: "Therefore, behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that they shall no more say, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, As Jehovah liveth, who brought up and who led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries whither I have driven them. And they shall dwell in their own land."

It is certainly extreme spiritualization to take the regathering of Israel as an equivalent of the outcalling of the church and the execution of "justice and righteousness in the land" as being a reference to the rule of Christ in heaven, as amillenarians would need to interpret the passage. This is another strong confirmation that the literal interpretation of the Davidic covenant was intended.

In Jeremiah 30:8, 9 another reference is found to the reign of the seed of David and again it is in a context of Israel's future regathering which will be consummated following the great tribulation. According to Jeremiah 30:9, 10 it is predicted that Israel will be free from Gentile oppression and will serve the Lord and David their king. Jeremiah writes: "But they shall serve Jehovah their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith Jehovah; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid." As in other passages, the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is linked with the return of Israel to the land following their time of Jacob's trouble, as indicated in the preceding context. Here it is stated that they will serve Jehovah and David their king. There is no good reason for not taking this exactly as it is written, namely, that David will be raised from the dead and will with Christ reign over the people of Israel in the millennium. Even if David is understood to refer to Christ as David's greater Son, it is still a clear reference to a future millennium rather than to a situation that exists today.

A similar confirmation is found in Jeremiah 33:14-17 where the same particulars are spelled out in detail. Jeremiah writes: "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will perform that good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby she shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness. For thus saith Jehovah: David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel." The context concerns itself with Israel's restoration and specifically speaks of the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Mention again is made that righteousness and justice will exist in the land and that Judah will be in the land and Jerusalem will be in safety. Such a situation does not prevail in this present age and is not related here or elsewhere to the reign of Christ from the throne of His Father in heaven.

It would seem hardly necessary to cite all the additional passages that might be available, but, inasmuch as this subject has been controverted, the mass of Old Testament prophecies that deal with the subject certainly give added stature to the literal interpretation of the Davidic covenant. Ezekiel 37:22-25 indicates that Israel in that future day will have one king over them and will be a people of God. In verses 24 and 25 Ezekiel writes: "And my servant David shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in mine ordinances, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your father dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, they, and their children, and their children's children, for ever: and David my servant shall be their prince for ever." It should be obvious that in Ezekiel's days David had been dead over four hundred years and that this is a prophecy that David will be raised from the dead prior to the millennial reign of Christ and share with Christ the rule of the people of Israel. Such a situation is quite foreign to the present age.

One of the problems which is often raised concerning the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is the fact that for many years the throne was unoccupied. From the time of the Babylonian captivity on there was no literal earthly kingdom. This, however, is taken into full consideration in the Word of God. According to Hosea 3:4, 5, written long before the Babylonian captivity, it was predicted: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without pillar, and without ephod or teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days." According to this passage, therefore, it can be assumed that God, while permitting the throne to be empty, nevertheless assured it to David and his seed prophesying Israel would return to the Lord, i.e., in the future millennial kingdom and resurrected David would be their king.

It is also promised in Amos 9:11 that the tabernacle of David would be restored in the latter days, apparently another reference to the revival of the political kingdom of Israel over which David was king. Further light will be cast upon this passage in the study of the New Testament confirmation. A concluding word is found in Zechariah 14 where it is predicted that after the second coming of Christ when His feet will touch the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), and "Jehovah shall be king over all the earth" (Zechariah 14:9). This of course is not a contradiction of the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, but is a part of the same picture.

As far as the Old Testament narrative is concerned, the prophets are clear in these multiplied passages that God anticipated a literal fulfillment of His promise to David. It would seem evident, therefore, that the people of Israel were acting in good faith when they expected God to revive their kingdom, deliver them from their enemies, and restore them to their ancient land. Such as was their expectation when Christ

came the first time, and such can be their expectation at His second coming.

New Testament Confirmation

It has been demonstrated that the Old Testament clearly predicts a future kingdom in which David and his posterity would rule over the children of Israel regathered and dwelling in their ancient land. Amillenarians, however, have countered this evidence by their assertion that the New Testament interprets these predictions as being fulfilled in the present age. Before turning, therefore, to some of the theological arguments in support of an eschatology for Israel, some of the New Testament evidence should be examined.

One of the first texts dealing with this subject is found in the announcements of the angel to Mary that she is to be the mother of Christ. In this connection she is told that Christ will reign on the throne of His father David over the house of Jacob. According to Luke 1:30-33 the angel said: "Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." In the light of the prominence given this same subject in the Old Testament, the question may be fairly raised: What would such a prophecy mean to Mary? For any Jewish maiden who accepted the Old Testament prophecy concerning the future of Israel and entertained the hope of a coming Messiah, would hardly question that the prophecy given by the angel would be interpreted literally, that is, she would understand by the throne of David an earthly throne such as David enjoyed in his lifetime.

Further, it is declared that Mary's Son would reign over the house of Jacob forever. Mary certainly would not understand by the phrase "the house of Jacob" a reference to saints in general regardless of racial background. To her it could mean only one thing and that is the descendants of Jacob, namely, the twelve tribes of Israel. Inasmuch as this would be the normal and natural understanding on the part of Mary in such a prophecy, it is almost unthinkable that God would have used this terminology if as a matter of fact the hope of Israel was a mistake and the prophecies given in the Old Testament were not intended to be understood literally.

It seems quite clear that the disciples anticipated much the same kind of a literal fulfillment. According to Matthew 20:20-23, the mother of James and John came to Christ with a request concerning them: "Command that these my two sons may sit, one on thy right hand, and one on thy left, in thy kingdom." She certainly was not asking that these disciples would share the Father's throne in glory, but it is obvious that what she anticipated was that they would share the earthly rule of Christ in the kingdom promised to Israel. Though Christ refused the request on the ground that only the Father had the right to bestow such an honor, He did not deny that such an honor might be afforded someone, which would hardly have been the case if the throne of God itself had been in view. In any case, Christ did not tell her that her request was out of bounds because there was to be no earthly rule. It was rather that it was improper to obtain such an honor as a requested privilege.

It is entirely possible that the request originated in the incident recorded in Matthew 19 where Christ had promised them in verse 28: "Verily, I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Here Christ is specifically confirming the concept of a future kingdom in which

Israel would be the subjects and in which the disciples would have part in the government. If indeed the Old Testament prophecies were not intended to teach a rule of God from heaven over saints on earth, the language of this prediction would be misleading.

As late as Luke 22 on the night before His crucifixion, Christ said to His disciples in verses 29, 30: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Thus, late in His life after He had already been rejected by the people of Israel Christ repeats the same promises which had characterized the Old Testament, the announcement to Mary, and His conversation with His disciples on previous occasions. There was going to be a kingdom over Israel and the disciples would sit on thrones participating in the government.

A final confirming word is given by Christ in connection with His ascension in Acts 1. Here it is recorded that the disciples came to Christ and asked the question according to Acts 1:6: "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" From the question itself it becomes apparent that the disciples were still anticipating an earthly kingdom and hoped for its immediate realization. In reply to them, Christ did not say that their hope was vain, that there was not going to be a literal fulfillment. Rather He replied: "It is not for you to know the times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority." By so much, He was affirming that the kingdom would be fulfilled, but that the time was not for them to know. In the verses which follow He directs their attention to the task that was immediately before them, and to the power of the Spirit which would aid them in the world-wide proclamation of the gospel. He said in effect that before the kingdom could come there had to be a fulfillment of God's purpose in the church. The consummation of the prophecies regarding the kingdom therefore was postponed, but not cancelled. The kingdom on earth is consistently interpreted in a literal way and is not spiritualized in the narratives dealing with the subject in the gospels and Acts.

One of the important passages in the New Testament bearing on this subject is found in Acts 15:14-18. Here in the council in Jerusalem the question had been raised concerning the status of the Gentiles in the present age. It was difficult for the Jews to understand that for the time being the Gentiles should have a place of equality with Israel, in view of the many prophecies in the Old Testament which anticipated Israel's pre-eminence and glory. In the settlement of this problem it is recorded that James made the following address: "Brethren, hearken unto me: Symeon hath rehearsed how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After these things I will return, and I will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men may seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who maketh these things known from of old." The passage concludes with the suggestion that Gentiles be not obligated to keep Jewish customs except in cases where this might hinder fellowship with the Jews, and winning them to Christ.

Of major importance is the main thesis of his remarks which is based on a reference and partial quotation of Amos 9:11, 12. Scholars have not agreed on the precise interpretation of this passage and amillenarians in particular have labored to make this a contradiction of the premillennial point of view. However, it seems that "after these things I will return" refers to the return of Christ after the period of Gentile prominence which began in 606 B.C. and is destined to continue until the second coming. It is after these things--i.e., judgment on Israel, their scattering, and discipline--that Christ will return and build again the tabernacle or tent of David. The reference to the tent of David, of course, does not concern itself with any building as such but rather with the political power and sway which David enjoyed.

That the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David is the restoration of the kingdom to Israel and not the construction of the church in the present age is borne out by the prophecies that are related to it in Amos, which have already been noted in a previous discussion. Amos 9:14 reads as follows: "And I will bring back the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them." In other words, the kingdom concerns itself with the rule over the people of Israel in their ancient land which will be characterized by revival and restoration, exactly what we would expect by the reference to rebuilding the tent of David. This is further confirmed by the final verse of Amos 9: "And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be plucked up out of their land which I have given them, saith Jehovah thy God." In other words, the kingdom is related to the time when Israel will be regathered and be established in their ancient land. The normal and natural exegesis of these passages therefore requires a future restoration to Israel and a future fulfillment of the kingdom promises. The divine order therefore is judgment on Israel and blessing upon Gentile first, to be followed by judgment on Gentile and blessing on Israel. This is not only the order of the Old Testament, but it is the order of this portion in Acts and is further confirmed by the order indicated in Romans chapter 11 where Israel is to be grafted back into the place of blessing which Gentiles now enjoy.

The consummating Scripture of course in the New Testament which puts the capstone on all these indications is found in Revelation 20 where it is stated plainly that Christ will rule for 1000 years. His rule is marked off by certain events which occur before and certain events which follow His millennial reign. The claim of the amillenarian that Revelation 20 is the only passage in the Bible which teaches an eschatology for Israel is certainly not sustained by the abundant evidence which has been cited from both the Old and New Testaments.

Is The Covenant To Be Interpreted Literally?

With the Scripture testimony before us, it is now possible for us to consider some of the problems which exist in this interpretation. It has already been pointed out that postponement and delay of the kingdom is by no means an argument against it, for Hosea 3:4, 5 anticipates precisely such a situation. Further, the long years in which no one was on the throne of David did not hinder the angel from assuring Mary that her Son would sit on the throne. As in other promises of God, delay and postponement does not affect the certainty of the ultimate fulfillment.

Probably the leading question in the entire argument is whether a literal fulfillment of these promises is to be expected. This of course faces frontally the whole premillennial-amillennial argument which can only be resolved on the relative cogency of the results of the method. Amillenarians, generally speaking, tend to spiritualize promises which would teach a future millennium, though they interpret literally prophecies which do not interfere with their system. Premillenarians, on the other hand, believe that prophecy is not a special case requiring spiritualization any more than any other area of divine revelation and they believe also that prophecy should be interpreted normally--that is, in an ordinary, grammatical and literal sense unless the context or theology as a whole plainly indicates to the contrary. Premillenarians do not find the amillennial charge--that the premillennial position is untenable, self-contradictory, and hopelessly confused--is sustained. While obviously the premillennial system of interpretation has much more detail than the amillennial denial, and even though there are countless minor problems, the major elements of the premillennial system have seemed quite cogent to thousands of careful Bible students and scholars. The question of literal interpretation therefore cannot be brushed aside a priori as if the literal interpretation of prophecy is impossible. Rather, there are sound and good arguments to the contrary.

George N. H. Peters in his *Theocratic Kingdom* provides a masterly summary of the arguments in favor of literal interpretation. In his proposition 52, he lists 21 arguments in favor of literal interpretation and includes other collateral material. These can be summarized under ten arguments for literal interpretation: "(1) The solemn character of the covenant which was confirmed by an oath. (2) A spiritual fulfillment would not be becoming to a solemn covenant. (3) Both David and Solomon apparently understood it to be literal (II Samuel 7:18-29; II Chronicles 6:14-16). (4) The language used, which is also used by the prophets, denotes a literal throne and kingdom. (5) The Jews plainly expected a literal fulfillment. (6) The throne and kingdom as a promise and inheritance belong to the humanity of Christ as the seed of David rather than belong to His deity. (7) There is no ground for identifying David's throne and the Father's throne. (8) A symbolical interpretation of the covenant leaves its interpretation to man. (9) The literal fulfillment is requisite to the display of God's government in the earth, necessary to the restoration and exaltation of the Jewish nation and deliverance of the earth from the curse. (10) Literal fulfillment is necessary to preserve the Divine unity of purpose" (cf., *Millennial Kingdom*, by the writer, p. 199). These arguments, usually ignored by amillenarians, have great weight and seem to provide a reasonable approach to the Davidic covenant and the promise of the kingdom.

The matter of literal fulfillment of the promises is confirmed also by the fact that certain portions of it have been literally fulfilled. One of these is in the birth of Christ Himself who literally fulfilled many promises pertaining to David's seed. Here the meticulous accuracy of the promises given to David and Solomon is illustrated. In the covenant as originally given there is a careful distinction between the seed of David, the seed of Solomon, and their respective thrones. In the covenant David is assured that his seed will reign forever, while Solomon is only promised that his throne will continue forever. In this fine point is an illustration not only of the literalness of the prophecy, but of God's intention to cut off Solomon's line at the time of the captivity of Judah embodied in the declarations in Jeremiah 22:20 and 36:30. In the New Testament in the lineage of Christ as recorded in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, it seems to be made evident that Joseph descended from Solomon, which line was cut off, while Mary descended from Nathan, another son of David, rather than from Solomon. This point of view not only confirms the necessity of the virgin birth, that is, that Joseph could not be the father of Christ, but also supports the idea that God intended the prophecy embodied in the covenant with David to be taken literally even to such a fine distinction.

This literal interpretation and expected fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is of course in keeping with the other covenants previously studied. Certainly it fits in beautifully with the idea that the Abrahamic covenant anticipates Israel continuing eternally as a nation and possessing the land forever. The possession of the land is limited by the continuance of the earth itself and terminates with the destruction of the heavens and the earth at the end of the millennium. The force of the Hebrew, however, is that Israel will continue to possess the land perpetually, that is, until eternity begins.

The assertion of amillenarians that the Davidic throne is simply a reference to God's throne in heaven is not supported by either the Old or the New Testament prophecies relating to the future of Israel. Of the 59 references to David in the New Testament, there is not one connecting the Davidic throne with the present session of Christ. Such an inference could be established only by spiritualizing many prophecies both in the Old and New Testaments.

Samuel H. Wilkinson, in his book, *The Israel Promises and Their Fulfillment*, pp. 56, 57, has given a forceful summary of this point. "Nevertheless, facts are stubborn things. It is a fact that God has declared that Israel is not to cease from being a nation before Him for ever. It is a fact that the Jewish nation, still in unbelief, survivor of all others, alone retains its national identity...It is a fact that the promise of a land (the

territorial limits of which were defined) to the posterity of Abraham, as also the promise of a son of David's own line to occupy David's throne for ever, were unconditional promises, ratified by covenant and oath. It is a fact that the posterity of Abraham has never yet fully possessed and enjoyed the whole of the land so granted and that no son of David occupies David's throne...The O. T. promises are all as certain of fulfillment in their O. T. sense and meaning and purpose to Israel, as are the N. T. promises certain of fulfillment to the Church." A study of the Old and New Testament therefore seems to confirm a genuine eschatology for Israel involving their continuity as a nation, their regathering and restoration to their ancient land, and their enjoyment of a kingdom in which Christ will reign over them. David resurrected from the dead will share this position of authority as a prince under Christ. Such an interpretation not only provides a literal fulfillment of many prophecies pertaining to it, but is fully honoring to the Word of God as that which is inspired infallibly by the Holy Spirit.

The Future Program Of Israel In Relation To The Kingdom

On the basis of prophecy which has already been fulfilled and prophecies which can be expected to be fulfilled in the future, a broad future program for Israel can be established in the Bible. This anticipates that the regathering of Israel, begun in the twentieth century, will be continued. If the rapture of the church may be assumed to be pretribulational, Israel's program will unfold immediately after the church is translated. With the realignment of nations, Israel will enter into a covenant with the Gentile rulers of the Middle East, as anticipated in Daniel 9:26, 27. A covenant will be signed for a period of seven years, which will be the last seven years of Daniel's 490 years allotted to Israel. During the first half of this seven years Israel will enjoy prosperity. Orthodox Jews will apparently revive their ancient sacrifices and a temple will be provided. After three and one-half years of the covenant have run their course, it will be abruptly broken, in keeping with the predictions of both the Old and New Testaments and especially the words of Christ in Matthew 24:15-22. A period of great trouble which Jeremiah refers to as "the time of Jacob's trouble" will follow. Israel will be persecuted, and their only hope will be to escape their enemies by hiding. The period of great tribulation will feature not only a time of trouble for Israel, but will be a period in which divine wrath is expressed on the earth. Great judgments will take place including warfare, earthquakes, famines, and stars falling from heaven. According to the book of Revelation, the majority of the earth's population will be destroyed in these catastrophes. A major world war brings the period to a close. As Christ returns from heaven, He descends to the Mount of Olives and delivers His persecuted people. The precise situation is described in Zechariah 14 and Revelation 19 and is confirmed in Romans 11:26, 27.

With the destruction of the enemies of Christ and the establishment of the millennial kingdom, the process of Israel's regathering and restoration will be completed. According to Ezekiel 20:34-38, regathered Israel will be judged and rebels or unbelievers will be purged out. Only those who pass the searching judgment of Christ are allowed to enter into the millennial period. These are brought back to their ancient land and possess the area from the River of Egypt to the river Euphrates. Over this land Christ will rule as He rules over the entire world. David who is raised from the dead along with Old Testament saints has a part in the government of the people of Israel. This will also be shared by the twelve apostles, whom Christ assured participation in His government of Israel in the millennial state.

During the thousand-year reign of Christ, the remnant nation Israel, surviving the great tribulation, will greatly increase as will the Gentile nations, and repopulate the earth and rebuild their cities. At the end of the millennial reign of Christ, Satan is loosed and divine judgment overtakes any born in the millennium who rebels against Christ, who are Jewish and Gentile unbelievers. Though all the details are not supplied, it seems clear that the saints living on earth at the end of the millennium will be translated into

their eternal state. The new heaven and the new earth will be created. The heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, will descend and rest upon the new earth. The description of the new earth given in Revelation 21:22 seems clearly to include Israel as well as Gentile saints of all ages. It is interesting to note, however, that the people of Israel retain their identity as Israelites even as the Gentiles retain their identity as Gentiles in the eternal state. Though there are distinctions depending on their backgrounds, all alike enjoy the presence of the King of kings and the countless blessings that belong to the eternal state.

The future of Israel is the fulfillment of a divine purpose sovereignly conceived in which the children of Israel constitute one of the major vehicles of divine revelation. Through them God gave the Scriptures and through them God has illustrated many of His attributes, especially those of His faithfulness, love, and righteousness. Inasmuch as Israel has not only a prominent place in the plan of God for the past, but also in the future, a proper understanding of the eschatology of Israel does much to open up a proper understanding of God's purpose as a whole and is seemingly indispensable to any detailed exegesis of the eschatology unfolded in the Old and New Testaments.

Summary

The provisions of the covenant of David therefore form a broad platform for the eschatology of Israel embodied in the Davidic kingdom. It would seem that this covenant assured to David that his political rule as well as his physical posterity would continue forever even though it might be interrupted, just as the possession of the land was temporarily interrupted. The covenant with David is confirmed not only by its dual revelation in II Samuel 7 and I Chronicles 17, but by the major confirmation of Psalm 89 and by many additional prophecies in the Old Testament such as Isaiah 9:6, 7; Jeremiah 23:5-8; 30:8-10; 33:14-17; Ezekiel 37:22-25; Hosea 3:4, 5, Amos 9:11, 15, and similar Old Testament passages. New Testament confirmation was found in such major passages as Luke 1:30-33; Matthew 19:28; 20:20-23; Luke 22:29, 30; Acts 1:6; 15:14-18; and the climactic prophecy of Revelation 20. The massive arguments for literal interpretation of these promises were presented as a proper basis for the fulfillment of this covenant in the future. On the expectation involved in the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant, a future program of Israel can be outlined, including God's dealing with Israel in the time of tribulation, to be followed by their blessing in the millennial reign of Christ and ultimate enjoyment of the eternal state in the New Jerusalem. The eschatology of Israel in a word depends on the authority and accuracy of Biblical prophecy and the legitimacy of its normal and literal interpretation.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/john-f-walvoord/the-kingdom-promised-to-david/>

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