

Covenant with David

Let us begin now by reading from the prayer of David in 2 Samuel 7. Notice how David picks up phrases that you will find in Scripture that was written prior to this time. Beginning at verse 22:

“How great you are, O Sovereign LORD! There is no one like you, [*Moses had sung that way.*] And there is no God but you, as we have heard with our own ears. And who is like your people Israel—the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for himself, and to make a name for himself, and to perform great and awesome wonders [*There he refers to the Exodus in the Sinaitic covenant.*] by driving out nations and their gods from before your people, whom you redeemed from Egypt? [*There he refers to Joshua and the taking of the land and Joshua’s covenant renewals.*] You have established your people Israel as your very own forever, and you, O LORD, have become their God.”

“And you have become their God”—the promise that was so explicitly stated to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Remember the Sinaitic covenant—“And I have brought you to myself, so that you are my precious possession.” David realized what God was doing when God spoke through Nathan. David realized that God was repeating, expanding, applying and personally involving David in that one covenant that God had made, and that He was confirming, expanding, applying, establishing more firmly, making more meaningful the covenant that was to come, as the time came for the true and complete mediator, the Christ.

Let us pray.

*Lord, as we turn to Your revelation concerning the role of David, the great prince of the Old Testament, we pray that we may look to You and see what You can do and what You did do through one person, a sinner, a conscience-stricken man at times, but a submissive man and a man after Your own heart. Lord, instead of concentrating on the man, may we see You and what You have done through him to bring Your Son as a reigning Lord through the nativity. God bless us here together. Keep sin from us. Give us joy in our work for Jesus’ sake. Amen.*

As I mentioned already in my introductory comment as I reflected on that passage in 2 Samuel 7, this covenant that God made with David was by no means a covenant that was something new and different, nor should it be seen as something completely on its own. During the Mosaic epoch, there had been renewals—the Deuteronomic renewal of the Sinaitic covenant, for example. The Sinaitic covenant itself was, in a sense, a renewal of the patriarchal covenant and these renewals in the Sinaitic or the Mosaic epoch basically were precursors to what God does now with the Davidic covenant.

I want you to know that there is a great deal of discussion about the different types of covenants, and distinctions between covenants. John Bright and a few others have made a large distinction between a covenant of promise and a covenant that is more legal, a treaty bound by laws, or a grant. The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, then, are considered grants, promises without necessary condition. In this view, there are other covenants that are far more conditional. This discussion goes on and on. Recently, in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, John D. Levinson wrote an article, “The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters.” He rejects what he calls the integrationists, those who see a continuity and believe that the covenants are integrated. Then he rejects the segregationists (and John Bright is put in that category, as is Mendenhall). He claims that we must look at it neither as segregated or as integrated, but as specifically one-time historical. To me, that sounds fairly segregationist, but Levinson believes that does the most justice to the Davidic covenant. You can read this article in the *Catholic Biblical*

*Quarterly*, volume 41, number 2. It is a good review of what people have been trying to do with the text, and it represents another failure by scholars who are trying to deal with the text in a way other than the way the text presents itself to us.

Look at this prayer of David that I just read. Scholars may say, “Someone just added that later to make it look like it is integrated.” But you have to look at the real historical situation and then the evolving of the situation. If you pay good attention to history, you will find out that this is a very private and a very family-oriented situation. The discussion continues not only between people of different eschatological viewpoints within the evangelical world, but also, especially between the evangelicals and the non-evangelical world. We have something here that is the high point of Old Testament revelation. And I am telling you that if anyone wants to deal seriously with the text, you have to deal with some basic fundamental factors that are related here.

I call this revelation in the time of David an Old Testament high point. There is an expansion of revelation, but, at the same time, I firmly believe that here in 2 Samuel, we have the high point of Old Testament revelation. There is no further new revelation given concerning kingdom, covenant, and the mediator. It is expanded, explicated, and applied. But with David, we have the king. And when Christ is born, He is said to be this Son of David of the Davidic house. This is a fulfillment of what was revealed in 2 Samuel 7. I am not surprised that people have a lot of difficulty understanding 2 Samuel 7, if they do not see the importance of the revelation given in David’s time.

Under the idea of this as a high point of revelation, there are a few points I want to make. First, there is prophetic involvement. Nathan is directly involved with the royal house. Samuel had been there before, but now Nathan is involved. The only thing we read about Nathan is his involvement with the royal house. He is there as a guardian. He is there as a guide. He is there as a spokesman on behalf of God. In addition, David exercised certain prophetic gifts, later on and maybe even before this. David is the recipient of the revelation. By being a recipient of revelation, he too is placed in the stage where he can become a prophet, and where he can go on and speak authoritatively. “The Lord has spoken to me,” as he says in 2 Samuel 23. We see David’s prophetic responses in the prayer that we read. He not only picks up the past, but he also speaks to the present and he picks up God’s future eschatological program. In a few words, he sketches out the whole panorama of God’s program from creation to the great consummation. And then if you turn to the Psalms, it’s amazing how he specifically responds to the revelation that is given to him. And so I repeat, there is no new revelation after David concerning the covenant and the kingdom. The high point has been reached, but it is not yet filled out; it is not yet fully explicated.

Let us turn now to David the king. Many critics believe that the text is hopelessly mixed up because David is anointed three times, according to the text. This is correct. When Samuel was told to go to Jesse’s house there in Bethlehem, David was personally anointed. Not the older brothers, but David himself is given the assurance that he is to be king. And as a fugitive, he was always aware of the fact that he was the anointed, but there was one still living who had been anointed before him. David understood the importance of being anointed, of being elected and designated to a position and given authority. He understood that the anointed had a special relationship with God, the king. David was aware of what “anointed” meant. Therefore, he would not touch Saul even though he himself was an anointed one. If he had touched Saul, the anointed, he would have, in a way, corrupted his own anointing. But he understood what had happened when he was first anointed. He had to bide his time, and the Lord would remove Saul so that he would be able to come into his place. Then in 2 Samuel 2:4, Saul and Jonathan were killed in battle. There were only a few members of Saul’s house left. At that time the people of Judah anointed David as king and he became king over the southern kingdom of

Judah and Simeon. Benjamin was not yet included, as I read the text. Warfare continued between some of the descendants of Saul and Saul's general Abner, who eventually turned to support David. Then David became king over all Israel and he was anointed again.

The real anointing was that personal anointing. The other two were confirmations for public purposes. The people were involved. It was the people who were given the privilege of seeing it so that they could say, "We have accepted him. We have anointed him." But that personal anointing is the basic and fundamental one. The other two are basically confirmations with the people's involvement. Notice how God involved His people in the anointing of the king. This was not something that was completely imposed upon the people. The people accepted David as king, but the northern tribes of Israel did not accept him until they were led to and were ready to do so.

It is interesting how God takes time to work out His purposes. David could have gotten awfully impatient when he was sitting in a cave hiding. But God is a God who takes His time. From the time that Jesus died on the cross in 33 A.D., there is another 37 years before the temple is removed. He lets that entire generation, the group at the temple of Jesus' day, adjust to that great transition. God never seems to be as much in a hurry as I used to be. Once you get a little older, you start realizing that sometimes you have been wasting unnecessary energy in trying to push God's calendar and God's schedule. God has His time and God has His way. And God took care of David, but David was in there working too. Notice that as soon as he is king over all Israel, he establishes a royal city. Jerusalem becomes the capital. And again, David shows wisdom, because Jerusalem is located right on the boundary between the south and the north, between the territories of the tribe of Benjamin and the tribe of Judah. Jerusalem had not yet been claimed by any tribe yet. Although once it seems to have been overcome in the time of the judges, yet it was immediately retaken by the Jebusites. Jerusalem is somewhat strategically located. If any of you ever have a chance to visit there, you will see that Jerusalem is at a high point. Go across the river Jordan. On top of Mount Nebo, on a clear day, you will see Jerusalem, and beyond Jerusalem you can see the Mediterranean. To the left, you see all the way over to Beersheba. To the right you can see the Sea of Galilee, and beyond, the hills and mountains of Lebanon. Jerusalem is right in the center of that area. Jerusalem is highly prominent.

The Psalmists sang about Jerusalem, the royal city. Jerusalem actually was a royal city, but, as such, it could be a symbolic city. It symbolized the center of God's throne, and it was a type. That is how we have to understand all references to Jerusalem, especially in the New Testament. It is typical—typical of the throne room of God, the throne house of God, the palace of God. Jerusalem represents the kingdom of God, just like Jerusalem represented the whole empire of David and Solomon and of the Davidic house later on. So Jerusalem has to be seen as a type pointing to Christ and Christ's people and Christ's kingdom.

Dr. Martin Wyngaarden has written a book called *The Future of the Kingdom*. That book has been of such help to me. Professor Wyngaarden was one of my professors at Calvin Seminary, but he draws clear lines between a literal and a "spiritualized" exegesis (many use this term derogatorily). We cannot take everything in the Bible literally. No one does. The question is how much of it is to be taken literally, word-for-word and how much is to be seen as symbolical, typical, and basically having a spiritual intent. Dr. Wyngaarden's book, *The Future of the Kingdom* is an excellent piece of work, although it has not received much attention outside of the circles where I was educated. I recommend it to anyone.

Jerusalem also becomes the city of the ark. The ark continued to play a very important function. The ark—the great Emmanuel, the symbol of "God with us"—was brought into Jerusalem. The great

Emmanuel, symbol of God with us, the ark connects Sinai, where the ark was made, with David, the king. The ark brings the two together. David acknowledges that what was done at Sinai is still applicable and real for him. God is the king. The ark was the throne of God. Between the cherubim was the mercy seat, God's seat. David brought God's seat into Jerusalem and he acknowledged God as the king. David was not the true king; God was the king. God was reigning over Jerusalem. God was reigning from Jerusalem over Israel, Judah, and the nations that he conquered. In other words, that monarchy was to remain, in a true sense, a theocracy, with God exercising His sovereign power, but doing it through David, the monarch. That is the importance of the ark being brought in. Not only that God was with him, but God was there, the great King. Also, by bringing in the ark, David brings in the Ten Commandments, the law of the covenant. And by this action he makes himself totally submissive (although he did not always obey the whole law). By bringing the ark into Jerusalem, David says that the Ten Commandments, which were in the ark, are his great guidelines for his life and for his kingdom and for his reign.

We will move on. David, the king, anointed over all Israel, established Jerusalem, brought in the ark, but he went beyond Jerusalem also. The Bible tells us that he was victorious over five nations, and they were all immediate neighboring nations. The Philistines and the Syrians were not directly related to the Israelites. The Philistines were in the land. You can read about these victories of David over the Philistines, the Moabites, the Syrians, the Edomites and the Ammonites. David went out to conquer them; he was the great lord. A corollary to that is these nations were very resistant, but you can also look at it this way: that in spite of how these nations wandered—and they were kind of a rambunctious bunch of people—under David they came under the reign of the mediatorial king. David ruled over them by being victorious over them. In almost every instance we read that these people attacked David. David conquered them and then he extended his mediatorial reign over them. Thus, these nations were all under David by God's providential reign and rule; they were brought in under the sway of the kingdom of God. They were made part of the empire. Have you ever thought of it that way? God is here fulfilling covenant promises. True, the people of these nations fight, but God overwhelms them through His servant, David and incorporates them under his reign. Thus David is indeed victorious and David reigns.

In 2 Samuel 8:14, we read that there was peace and there was rest. This is before God made His covenant with David—before David was actually made the covenant king. God had prepared him for that by giving him rest and peace. The fact that we read of this in chapter 8 does not necessarily mean that this follows the events of chapter 7 because there are indications of some battles that David had fought before. The book of 2 Samuel in some sections is not strictly chronological. It is not organized sequentially according to time. At this point, I think it is somewhat topical, so when it speaks of peace and rest in 8:14, you need to think of that as what God is referring to in 2 Samuel 1, when it says that David had rest. That means that what is recorded in chapter 8, these victories over these nations, was accomplished before God came to David through Nathan. The text goes on to say that David was a just and righteous ruler, in 8:15. That is a phrase that we so often do not pay any attention to. We like to stress what a good personal relationship David had with God. But more than that, he knew how to be just and he knew how to be righteous. He knew how to maintain that relationship with God under the Ten Commandments. Remember to be in a right relationship with God. As you obey His will and carry out His will, then you are just. David ruled according to God's covenant law, which he knew. He was just and he was righteous.

How far did David's kingdom extend? In Psalm 72, we have a description of the Solomonic kingdom that David had basically conquered. Solomon never had to fight a battle until after he became apostate. Solomon inherited a kingdom. The kingdom extended all the way from the river of Egypt to the great



river up in the north, the Euphrates River, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the desert. David conquered the entire area that God had promised to Abraham in Genesis 15.

Turn to Nehemiah 9 for just a moment. Nehemiah makes quite a statement there. Nehemiah in his prayer, says, beginning in verse 7,

“You are the LORD God, who chose Abram,” *[Notice how Nehemiah ties this all together]* “and brought him out of the Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Gergashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous. You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea.”

Nehemiah is fully aware that God kept His promise to Abraham. God gave the land that was promised, including the land that could not be taken from the Moabites, but over which the reign of God could extend—the land of the Moabites, Edomites, and Ammonites. God has kept His promise. I, therefore, have difficulty with people who speak of a Palestinian covenant. God kept His promise. He has given the whole land to them. They did not keep it because of their disobedience. But the reign of David and Solomon extended as far as God promised that it would. That promise has been kept. Do the prophets say that he will regain it? We will look at the prophets in the next few lectures.

Moving on to the covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, we know that it is in the context of his building plans. David was uneasy. He was living in a beautiful palace, and God was still in a tent. The tabernacle had been brought in. The ark was in a transitory place and David was in a permanent place, and the theocratic king that he is, he realizes that things were turned around. David is uneasy, and so he says to the prophet, “I want to build the Lord a house.” Notice that just as Samuel had made a mistake by saying, “You should have no king,” Nathan also makes a mistake when he speaks from his own heart. Nathan had to go to David a second time and correct his message. God said to Nathan, “Go to him a second time and say, ‘You are not to be the builder of the temple, because I am not finished yet with you.’” Again, David was rushing ahead of God’s schedule, God’s plan, and God’s program. God had said He would establish the seed. He would establish the seed line firmly before He Himself would take up His permanent abode in the temple. The promise of the seed had to be finalized, and David’s dynasty had to be clearly set out, developed, moving. Then God would say, “Now that the house, the family, the dynasty is finally established, now is the time that I take up My permanent abode.” This does not mean that God came to live with them for the first time. Rather, it simply states God’s order.

I want to point this out again: notice that the prophetic role is about service. The prophet has to serve the royal house and he has to be corrected and has to admit that he has not done quite the right thing. By the way, some commentaries and some biblical theologies and some studies on the Davidic house, will say that Nathan had told David to go ahead and build the temple without remembering that there was a big clash between the priestly clans and the royal clans, and that when word got out that David had gotten permission from Nathan to go ahead and build, the priests were angry that he had not consulted them. Don’t pay too much attention to that. This is all read into the story. It is an attempt to work out how historically this could happen. The critical scholars are saying, “How could Nathan overnight change his mind? The only possibility is that the priests became angry and that he had to keep peace between the royal house and the priestly house.” If you are an historicist and you want a positivistic historic approach and you want to be scientific and try to explain everything from strictly a human point of view, you have to make some radical adjustments to the text. That is what these people are doing, sad to say.

In reality, God spoke to David. I ask you to pay attention to what Vos writes about how God's word came to the prophets. God spoke to Nathan directly, correcting Nathan so that Nathan could give God's word to David and not Nathan's opinion.

Then there is the covenant that is made. Now the word *berith*, "covenant," does not appear in this passage. But towards the end of David's life, in 2 Samuel 23, he says he is "the anointed of the God of Jacob," the *meshiach Elohe Ya'akov*. David saw his own place and role. He goes on to say, "And the Spirit of God spoke by me." And there he claims a prophetic anointing. "The Spirit of God used my mouth, and I was given the prophetic power and the prophetic word and the prophetic message." So what David is saying here is, "Look, I am not expressing personal opinions when I am saying I am the *meshiach*, the Messiah of the God of Jacob." He concludes that in verse 5, "Not so is my house with God." That is, passing or transitory, "for the covenant that God has set with me is *olam*, is eternal." Here he has referred to that which was spoken in 2 Samuel 7, and he says this is a *berith olam*, an "eternal covenant." Psalm 89 repeats this as well.

Do you remember the argument about the creation covenant because the term *berith* does not appear in Genesis 1 and 2? It does not appear in 2 Samuel either. But David, inspired by the Spirit, anointed of God says, "God covenanted with me back there, and He made the covenant with my house," and a covenant is exactly what we find in this text. Notice the constituent elements. First of all there is Yahweh's role. There is a short historical résumé of what God has done in the past. In 2 Samuel 7:8, we read, "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you.'" The great sovereign establishes Himself as the Lord. He is in charge; as He was in the past, so He is now. And there we have again a beautiful statement of the sovereignty of God, who is indeed the king of creation, the lord of the nations, and the God of the monarchy. If you do not want to accept that God established His kingdom when He created and that He confirmed it when He spoke to Noah saying, "Seedtime and harvest will always remain," then I don't know in what setting then you can place this statement of Nathan speaking on behalf of God. "I gave you victory over the nations. I took you from the sheepfolds." That is all placed within that greater kingdom setting. God, the king, was not struggling. He was simply carrying out His royal prerogatives.

What follows are six promises. First, the great name just like with Abraham. As Rahab said, "We have heard of the fame of Israel." In 2 Samuel 7:10, God says, "And I have a place, and I will provide a place for my people, Israel, and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own, so that they will no longer be disturbed and so that they may have victory and rest." And then in the second part of verse 11, he states it very specifically: "The LORD declares to you, 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." God promises David a dynasty—a house from father to son like Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and Judah. Then Moses had come to the fore and then Samuel, but from now on, there will be the Davidic house, and everything will be in terms of the Davidic house.

And then in 2 Samuel 7:12-13, there is that promise of the kingdom: "...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." Finally, in verse 14, God promises, "And I will be his father, and he will be my son." In this context, pay careful attention to what Mr. Robertson has written in *The Christ of the Covenants* on "David's Son, God's Son,"—this is on page 233 and following. David's son is called God's son, and God's son has to be seen as indeed a human person through God's specific appointment and divine activity.

What about the curse and blessing dimension of the covenant? In verse 14, we read, “When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.” This is a very mild way of saying, “But I am not going to forget that there is the curse dimension to My covenant. And I am not in any way saying, ‘David, the floggings and judgment will not come upon you or your house.’” But notice that it is floggings, chastisement, and punishment, because the house is not to be cut off, but it is to be punished. And then there is definitely the great promise and the great blessing: “I will love you, but my love will never be taken away from him as I took it away from Saul.” In a way, God says, “By loving you, I have related Myself to you. I have placed Myself at your disposal. From now on, you and I will be inseparable.” A marriage was formed here between God and the Davidic house and through David and the Davidic house with all of Israel. Thus we see that the blessing is summed up briefly as well as the curse.

Another thing to note is the fact that the continuity of the covenant is so firmly and strongly stressed. In verse 16, we read, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me. Your throne will be established forever.” If we take “house and kingdom” literally as some critics want to do, then indeed we have a severe contradiction in the Scripture, because at the time of the exile, the Davidic house was removed from Jerusalem and Jerusalem was destroyed. Remember, however, what we read in Luke, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a descendant of David.” There he is. That is the royal house. That is David’s son, God’s son. The Davidic house disappears from that actual reigning position in Jerusalem over Israel. But the eternal nature of God’s covenant continues in the Gospels. It is picked up by Paul and by John in Revelation. That kingdom is a never-ending kingdom because the Son of David, the Christ, is indeed the reigning one.

It was Christ who was reigning. Even when the Davidic house became unfaithful, Isaiah spoke of Christ’s reign; I hope to discuss soon how Isaiah sees Christ reigning in spite of the Davidic house being untrue and unfaithful.

Was David responsive? Yes. We have looked at his prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18. Did he reply with an oath? We can read that prayer in whatever way we feel we should, but in a way, David puts himself on the line, and in a way, he confirms this in his prayer by saying, “God, this is the way it is.” It is not an oath in the normal sense of swearing an oath, but in prayer, he fully accepted God’s will. He fully committed himself to God’s program. He made himself absolutely submissive and that has all the binding power of an oath. The covenant was sealed.

Let us turn very briefly to David as king. He was not a perfect man. He was a man after God’s own heart, but he was a sinner. The story with Bathsheba, the killing of Uriah, his attempt to cover it up—all this tells us that, indeed, he was a sinner. As a father, he was a troubled man. One of the problems was that he had too many wives. 1 Samuel 25:42-44 tells us that he took additional women. 2 Samuel 3:2-5 and 5:13, tell us of the different women he had as wives. He had children with each of these, which means that each one of these children listed in 2 Samuel 3:2-5 were half-brothers. Did you know that Amnon, the man who caused so much difficulty in David’s house, was David’s firstborn son? Amnon had a right to the throne. We do not read anything about the second son, but after Amnon was gone, Absalom was the next one in line. So from one point of view, one could surely say, “Well, in the custom of the nations and according to the promise God had given to David, Absalom had a right to claim the throne, and to try to take over the throng, when he saw that David was not going to make him his co-regent.” I have read justifications for Absalom’s activity. He was the living firstborn.

David also became a very conscience-stricken man. He knew how to admit he was wrong. That is the story in connection with the census. He admitted that he did things that were not right. I have already

referred to him also as the singing prophet. We read his songs in 2 Samuel 23 and the Psalms. David was the great songwriter of Israel, and in his songs the heart of David is opened up to us. We read of him as a repentant man in Psalms 51 and 32, as a struggling man in Psalm 22, as a man fleeing in Psalm 55. When David sings and prophesies through the Psalms, God is speaking. David's responses to God, in a way, are God's revelation to us as to how we also must face the struggles and trials of being a servant of God. The Psalms are personal, but they are revelatory of how God leads His people through the struggles of life.

In conclusion, David is the great royal mediator. We read of David sacrificing in a few instances, but his priestly work comes through especially in the way he prays for his people. We see that in the Psalms. We see him also pleading on behalf of his people when God says He is going to punish them in 2 Samuel 24. We have spoken of his prophetic role, and that comes through strongly. But above all, he is the ancestor and in his royal position, the type of Jesus Christ. Moses is the redeemer of the Old Testament, and David is the king of the Old Testament with the prophetic and priestly offices supporting him. Let us take nothing away from Moses or from Samuel, but looming high and large over it all is David. No other person has the name David in the Old Testament. There is one David—David, the king, representing the King of creation, the Lord of the nations, the sovereign over all, David, the royal one. He is the pre-Christ, the ancestor and type of the Christ to come.