

ESCHATOLOGY (82)

Those who attack the unconditional nature of this covenant typically do so by referring to the adverbs “when” of Deuteronomy 30:1 and the “then” of Deuteronomy 30:3. The claim is that this implies a condition—God will do this “when” Israel does this and if Israel doesn’t do this “then” God does not have to fulfill the covenant.

What is neglected to be realized is that **the adverbs “when” and “then” both have to do with the time the covenant will be fulfilled, not the certainty of it being fulfilled.** God is going to fulfill this covenant and the time of the fulfillment will be “when” God determines to finish the program with the Gentiles and take up His program with Israel.

When it comes to prophecy, this “Palestinian covenant” is extremely important because it gives us some prophetic insight into the future:

- 1) This covenant clearly establishes that Israel, as a nation, will be converted.
- 2) This covenant clearly establishes that Israel will be regathered from various parts of the world.
- 3) This covenant clearly establishes that Israel will eventually receive her land.
- 4) This covenant clearly establishes that Israel will see God destroy her enemies.
- 5) This covenant clearly establishes that Israel will have great prosperity in her land.

QUESTION #37 – What is the Davidic covenant?

The central passage that presents the Davidic covenant is II Samuel 7:12-16 (I Chron. 17:1-15). As we have stated, all of the covenants with Israel have a connection to the Abrahamic covenant. Each one stresses or confirms or emphasizes some of the promises made to Israel in that first covenant.

For example, the Palestinian covenant primarily stresses the land promises made to Israel. What we will see about the Davidic covenant is that it stresses the seed promises made to Israel. Both of these covenants are important to the original made with Abraham.

There are several passages that clearly indicate that the Davidic covenant has a major emphasis on the seed promise: 1) II Samuel 7:12; 2) Psalm 89:3-4; 3) Jeremiah 33:22, 25-26.

What this particular covenant does is to narrow the seed promise made to Abraham (Genesis 22:17-18) in that it clearly establishes that the promise would come through the line of David and would include a King, Kingdom, house, Temple and throne.

The Davidic covenant is crucial to biblical Eschatology for this covenant answers many important futuristic questions: 1) Will there be a literal Millennium? 2) Is the Church supposed to be in the Kingdom? 3) Just exactly what is God’s Kingdom? 4) Can we actually expect Jesus Christ to literally return and restore Israel and reign over Israel? 5) Is the Kingdom presently being fulfilled or is it to be fulfilled in the future? All of these questions are important and all are answered by the Davidic covenant.

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The historical background is important to see: David was King of Israel and was in total power and authority over Israel. He lived in a beautiful home that was made from very expensive cedar wood (II Samuel 7:1-2). David could not stand to have himself living in a nice home when God's place of worship was nothing more than a tent. Therefore, David had a great desire to build a beautiful temple dedicated to the worship of God. Because David had been such a man of war, God would not permit him to build His house, but He did make some remarkable promises to David concerning his lineage (II Samuel 7:12-16):

- 1) David would produce a seed, which would succeed him and establish his Kingdom.
II Samuel 7:12
- 2) David's seed (Solomon) would be the one who would build the Temple. II Samuel 7:13
- 3) David's Throne, which would continue through his seed, would be established forever.
II Samuel 7:13b
- 4) David's Throne would never be taken from his line even if his seed sins. II Samuel 7:14-15
- 5) David's house, throne and Kingdom would be established forever. II Samuel 7:16

The noun "house" which was an actual place where David lived, is not referring primarily to a physical building, but a physical lineage. God is not promising David that the house he presently lived in would exist forever; what He is promising is that **his family line would never be eliminated**. As Dr. John Walvoord said, David's line will never be "displaced by another family ... and will always be the royal line."

The noun "throne" does not refer to an actual material throne, which David obviously sat on as King, but to the reign of a King who would be in the Davidic line. God is promising David that there will be a Davidic King who will reign forever.

The noun "kingdom" refers to a political kingdom over which someone from David's line will reign. This political kingdom is to be the major political power of the world. The remarkable promise is that someone from the family of David will eventually reign as King over Israel and Israel will be a major political power. This obviously has not happened yet.

The Davidic covenant is an unconditional covenant like the others and it will be fulfilled literally. Those who deny this end up allegorizing the promises in an attempt to make some kind of sense of it. They typically say something like this—David's throne does not refer to a literal Davidic throne on earth, but God's throne in heaven. This throne presently features Jesus Christ seated at the right hand of the Father. The house does not refer to an actual lineage, but to those who are of the household of faith and the Kingdom does not really refer to Israel, but to the Church. This is a great misinterpretation of what has been promised to David and it also fails to give an explanation for anything that has recently happened to Israel. The Davidic covenant is an unconditional covenant and we may offer three evidences of this:

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(Evidence #1) - The Davidic covenant is specifically called an eternal covenant.
II Samuel 7:13, 16; 23:5

The only way a covenant may be an “eternal” covenant is by the fact that the fulfillment of it completely rests upon the faithfulness of God, because time and time again God’s people have proved themselves to be unfaithful.

(Evidence #2) - The Davidic covenant is a further development of the Abrahamic covenant.

We have already demonstrated that the Abrahamic covenant is unconditional and any covenant that gives further development to this one must also be unconditional or the original character is tarnished.

(Evidence #3) - The Davidic covenant is given after many years of disobedience.

The Davidic covenant was given after the nation Israel had repeatedly disobeyed God. In fact, one reason why Israel was not at peace in her land and why she has not received her kingdom even to this point in time is because of her disobedience. Therefore, when God promises to do this for the nation, it is in spite of her rebellion.

Q-37a – Should we interpret the Davidic covenant literally?

There is a tremendous amount of biblical data that demands a “yes” answer to this question. There is no question that Israel as a nation and David as an individual believed that God would literally fulfill this covenant. There are at least ten proofs that demand a literal interpretation:

Proof #1 - Portions of the covenant already fulfilled were literally fulfilled.

For example, in II Samuel 7:13 it is predicted that David’s son would build a house for God and David’s son, Solomon, literally did do just that (I Kings 8:18-20).

Proof #2 - David interpreted the words of the covenant literally and literally believed God would do what He promised to do.

For example, David’s own response to this proves he believed God would literally fulfill His Word to him (II Samuel 7:18-29). Even on his own death bed, he believed this (II Samuel 23:5; Psalm 89).

Proof #3 - Solomon perceived the covenant made with his father David was literal.
II Chronicles 6:14-16

Solomon recognized these Davidic things had literally come true.

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Proof #4 - The actual language of the covenant is literal language.

When one examines II Samuel 7:12-16 or I Chronicles 17:1-15, the language is literal language. The simple language of these texts presents literal promises of God.

Proof #5 - Other writers in Scripture viewed the covenant God made with David as a literal Covenant. Psalm 89:33-37

Psalm 89 is a psalm written by Ethan, a leading musician (I Chronicles 15:17-19). He was known to be a very wise man (I Kings 4:31). It is quite clear that Ethan was a man who took the promises made to David to be literal promises. If a writer of Scripture, who is identified as skilled and wise, viewed them this way, so should we.

Proof #6 - The esteemed prophet of God, Isaiah, interpreted the Davidic promises literally. Isaiah 55:3

Proof #7 - Gabriel, a high-ranked angel of God, interpreted these words literally and he specifically made a literal connection to the birth of Jesus Christ in his revelatory message to Mary. Luke 1:31-33

Careful reading of this passage reveals three key Davidic words: 1) Throne (1:32); 2) House (1:33a) and 3) Kingdom (1:33b).

Proof #8 - The first major church council meeting in Acts interpreted this covenant literally. Acts 15:14-17

Dr. Charles Ryrie gives an excellent interpretation of this passage: “In regard to the Amos quotation in Acts 15:14-17 ... Gaebelein gives a good analysis of James’ words citing four points in progression of thought. First, God visits Gentiles, taking from them a people for His name. In other words, God has promised to bless the Gentiles as well as Israel, but each in his own order. The Gentile blessing is first. Secondly, Christ will return. This is after the outcalling of the people for His name. Thirdly, as a result of the Coming of the Lord, the tabernacle of David will be built again; that is, the kingdom will be established as promised in the Davidic covenant. Amos clearly declares that this rebuilding will be done “as in the days of old” (9:11); that is, the blessings will be earthly and national and will have nothing to do with the Church, the residue of men will seek the Lord, that is all the Gentiles will be brought to a knowledge of the Lord after the Kingdom is established” (J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things To Come*, pp. 110-111).

Proof #9 - Israel has always longed for and interpreted the Kingdom promises literally.

The national dream of Israel is that one day she would be in her land and have her King reign. We may observe that much turmoil exists in the Promised Land today for this very reason—Israel believes she is literally promised a land, a king and a kingdom.