

Lesson 53: Chapter 7: Overview of the Covenants: Part Five: The Davidic Covenant

Genesis 3:15 is the backbone of the Bible, the promise of a Saviour makes intelligible all the other events that the bible records, those events are the ribs added to that backbone. God made Adam to be a representative head of the human race, he failed and plunged the world into sin, his disobedience brought us death and Adam and all under his jurisdiction was put under the curse. God could have come and wiped it all out, but instead He made a promise to save, to undo the effects of sin, He promised another Adam, another human being who would go to war against the devil for us and overcome. We are taking our lead from the 1689 and doing a little biblical theology as we map out the progress of God fulfilling that promise. This promise is called the CoG, and this is how our confession puts it, 'This covenant is revealed in the gospel; first of all to Adam in the promise of salvation by the seed of the woman, and afterwards by farther steps, until the full discovery thereof was completed in the New Testament.' We have seen how the Noahic Covenant establishes the stage upon which the play of redemption works itself out. We saw in the Abrahamic covenant a man and his family being set apart through whom the Savior would come. Last week we looked at the Mosaic Covenant as God added the law to the promise given to Abraham as a tutor to direct us to Christ, it was given to increase the knowledge of our sinfulness and lostness and our need for someone to obey God's law on our behalf because we are sinful and cannot. Today we continue moving forward with more light being given to illuminate how God will fulfill His promise in Genesis 3:15. Today we come to consider the next major covenant, the Davidic Covenant.

The reason the DC is so important is because Jesus is the promised son of David. The NT opens by identifying Jesus as the one who fulfills the promises made to Abraham and to David, Matt. 1:1, 'The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.' The promises to Abraham and to David build upon one another. We have said that the specificity of who the Saviour will be in fulfillment of Gen. 3:15 gets progressively clearer as we go through the OT. Not only is the person of the promise to be made clear, but also his identity as a King. You will remember that Adam was a king in the garden meant to rule God's creation on His behalf, he lost that role when sin came in. Gen. 3:15 identifies a human male, a warrior king who will do holy combat for us; the AC identifies that He will be a descendent of Abraham who will bring worldwide blessing where sin had brought worldwide destruction. Abraham has Isaac; Isaac has Esau and Jacob; God's promises will come through Jacob and not Esau, part of the promise God makes with Jacob includes this little detail of kings and royalty, Gen. 35:11, 'And God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.'" But Jacob has 4 wives and 12 sons, who will the promise be fulfilled through? Gen 49:10 when Jacob is about to die and prophetically blesses his sons reveals that the line of Judah is the line through whom the king who will bless and will rule over all nations will come, 'The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.' Under the MC this promise was developed further, we see as Israel is wandering around in the wilderness God speaks through Balaam, Numbers 24:17, 'I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.' God even made provision in the law for a king to

arise who would be a type of the king who is Christ. Various laws were given indicating that this role was always intended by God, Deut. 17:14-20, “When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, ‘I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,’ ¹⁵ you may indeed set a king over you whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brothers you shall set as king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. ¹⁶ Only he must not acquire many horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to acquire many horses, since the Lord has said to you, ‘You shall never return that way again.’ ¹⁷ And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold. “And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law, approved by the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ And it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes, and doing them, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.’ After Israel entered the promised land they experienced the long time of the judges, that was a terrible time in Israel’s history, but the book also highlights the need for a godly king, 17:6, ‘In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.’ As we come to the time of the last judge—Samuel, we have Israel demanding a king of their choosing and not God’s choosing, they want Saul, but God chose David. David was to be king in accordance with the law, he was from the line of Judah, Jacob and Abraham, David was like Noah, and Abraham and Moses and Joshua, to serve as a type of the Savior who was to come. What is important to note about the DC is how the idea of the king, as God’s son, as the representative Israelite, through his obedience or disobedience could bring blessing or cursing upon God’s people. The king of Israel reminds us of Adam made to rule in the garden on God’s behalf, the legal power, the military power, the power to enforce God’s laws and punishments were all within his hands. Adam like David had priestly functions, though David’s were limited in that he only led the procession, or built an altar, etc. This adamic typology is of course intended to point forward to the son of David who as the true priest king would obey where Adam and David and every other king disobeyed.

We turn now to the instituting of the covenant with David in 2 Sam. 7. Now what you must notice is that though all recognize that this is God’s covenant with David the word covenant is not used. I raise this because some who object to covenant theology want to deny the covenant of works of the covenant of grace simply because the word is not used. Later parts of the bible reflect back on this moment as a covenant, 2 Sam. 23:5; Ps. 89:3; 132:12. The chapter opens with David at home and at rest. He has entered into rest after doing the Lord’s will having fought the Lord’s battles. David has a house in his new capital but wants to honour God who has given all this to Him. David speaks to the prophet Nathan about building God a cedar temple in the place of the what must now be a tatty tabernacle. Nathan says you are God’s man, go for it, v1-3.

However, Nathan is given a word for David, v5-16, “Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? ⁶ I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. ⁷ In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, “Why

have you not built me a house of cedar?" ' ⁸ Now, therefore, thus you shall say to my servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel. ⁹ And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you. And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ¹⁰ And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. ¹² When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, ¹⁵ but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶ And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.'

God essentially says to David, you are not going to build Me a house, I am going to build you a house. God rehearses His grace to David, we see that God gives certain promises to David to be fulfilled in his lifetime, that he would be given a name, v9, we see a fulfillment of this in 2 Sam. 8:13. That He would bring Israel into a place where they can dwell without enemies, v10, we see this fulfilled in the victories over their enemies in 2 Sam. 8. And that he would give them rest, v11, and this we see fulfilled in 1 Kings 5:4, where Solomon proclaims that he has that rest as he is praying to dedicate the temple. God's promise is not only to David but to his offspring after him, because it is from his offspring that the Saviour will come. He is promised offspring from his own body, an eternal throne and kingdom, and that this son will fulfill the father's desires in building a house. Gentry and Wellum in their book, *God's Kingdom Through God's Covenants* write: 'There are two ways in which God could give David an eternal house. It could be that every descendant would be successful in producing a male heir—something that has always created problems for every human royal house. Or it could be that someday, a descendant would be born who would never die. According to the New Testament, this is what happened: the promise of an eternal house/seed is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, descendant of David, who because of his resurrection is an eternal person. And through the coming, person, and work of Jesus Christ, an eternal kingdom has already begun (2 Pet. 1:11). The authors of the New Testament make plain that, having risen from the dead and having ascended to the right hand of the Father, Jesus is ruling from an eternal heavenly throne (Acts 2:29-36; Heb. 12:22-24).'¹ The New Covenant is a fulfillment of these promises to David.

One of the areas of concern as we come to the Davidic Covenant are these questions: is the DC a works covenant or a gracious covenant; is it unilateral or bilateral/conditional or unconditional; and of course the answer is, Yes! Because the Davidic Covenant establishes the King of Israel in an Adamic like role, there is a way in which the DC echoes the CoW. Because the DC is a continuation of the MC the strong legal character that typifies the MC will be present. And because the DC is an outworking of the AC it will have strong characteristics of

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the grace of the AC. Firstly, the establishing of the DC, is it by grace or works? We give a qualified yes. The CoG is the overarching administration that ensures that we are saved by grace through faith. However, the right of ruling over Israel is given in a nuanced way. David's obedience is said to feature in the DC, we see this in Solomon's prayer in 1 Kings 3:6, 'And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day.'" This may be confusing but it is not concerning. We have seen that Abraham had his covenant confirmed because of his obedience, Gen. 22:18; Noah was chosen to build an Ark because of his righteousness. And now here David's righteousness is said to feature in God establishing the DC. We have been trying to show that any time a legal aspect presents itself it is a typological element pointing back to the CoW in Adam and his failure, and forward to the last Adam whose obedience would secure our salvation. If we see these references to God rewarding obedience in His servants as types and pointing to Christ's obedience for our salvation we will not see them as normative and pointing to our obedience for salvation. Perhaps this point is too subtle for you but I do not want to burden you with the wrong interpretations which take this obedience in administrations of the CoG and make them normative and introduce works into our salvation.

We also conditional and unconditional language side by side. God makes a promise to David and it will come to pass no matter what, but David's son better be obedient or else. We see in this tension a representation of the CoG, but with a legal element added. This makes intelligible the exile and God's restoring of Israel. God's kings lead God's people into sin and God must judge them so He exiles them, but because of the promises to David, because of the promises to Abraham, God will restore them because from them He will fulfill the promise of Gen. 3:15. This legal reality hanging over the keys cuts both ways. On the one hand it increases the knowledge of sin as we see failure after failure and the axe of God's judgement falling upon God's people because their representative has brought God's justice upon them. A great sense of despair and desperation increases as you track through the story line of Bible. By the time you get to the end of the OT where the people of Abraham are dwelling the land but it is occupied by oppressors; the throne of David is filled by an Edomite in Herod; the blessing that God promised the world seems far away as Rome oppresses the people supposed to be a blessing. But then a Son of David is born, and He is righteous and He is sinless, and He obeys God's law and earns the title to rule over all and own all. As a result of His victory He wins rest for God's people, He judges all their enemies, He builds God a temple; He brings blessing to every nation of the earth. He is presently seated on His throne in patience sending us out as envoys to announce His victory and reign, His offer of life if we lay down our arms, and with a warning that He is coming again to put a final end to all rebellion. Christ like David against Goliath was the unlikely instrument of God who crushed the serpents head.

How does the DC apply? There are so many ways and I would love to open up psalm after psalm to show you how to read them in light of David as a type, but I think Rev. 3:7-13 is a great way to bring some application home. The church in Philadelphia is one of the churches that is not rebuked but is commended, they are being persecuted and their main protagonist is the Jews. Jesus is the Son of David, the promised King of the Jews and for the blessing of all nations. Jesus is the one who holds the throne of God, who has all power and authority, who is the

victor over all the enemies stronger than us, who is the ruler of God's people. The Philadelphians needed to hear these truths as they faced death, persecution, rejection by the Jews and an uncertain future. The truth of Jesus as the son of David informs this whole passage: "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: 'The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens. 'I know your works. Behold, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut. I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. ⁹ Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you. ¹⁰ Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. ¹¹ I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. ¹² The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. ¹³ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'