

The Age of Kings: 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles

The Age of Kings: What can history, even biblical history, possibly reveal to us about God? What was God up to in the reign of King David and his son Solomon? Why did God destroy ancient Jerusalem and send them into exile for seventy years? What relevance can the age of Old Testament kings possibly have in the life of a twenty-first century believer? Why did God speak prophetically to his people during this period of time? These questions and more will be considered in this class. We will explore together God's redemptive historical work revealed in the pages of scripture and see how the mission of the people of God both then and now has always been the same.

The objective of this class is: to gain an appreciation for the period of the northern & southern monarchies in the OT, and understand the relationship between the redemptive work of God and the events that unfolded during this specific time in history. Careful attention will be given to both the Davidic Covenant as well as the decline and exile of the people of God.

Introduction: Last week we introduced the term, *sure mercies of David*, and witnessed God's faithfulness in the life of David from the death of Saul to his ascension to the throne. This week we narrow the focus on two distinct chapters that encapsulate the purpose of the entire period. When one looks at the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles, he might wonder, "What is God up to?" The passages we will explore today answer that question in a manner that is breathtaking. Today we look at the *Promise of a King*, and give detailed attention to 2 Samuel chapter 7 and 1 Chronicles chapter 17.

Part One: Elements of the Davidic Covenant – The term covenant or *brit* in Hebrew is not a new one for the OT people of God. When we explored the Pentateuch we saw five different covenants that preceded the one we will discuss today. These are: The Covenant of Creation, the Adamic Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, and the Mosaic Covenant. Each covenant built upon the one(s) that preceded it, and progressively revealed more of God's redemptive plan through the covenant community. All covenants mentioned are sub-sets of the overarching Covenant of Redemption. The Davidic Covenant is the final covenant prior to the advent of Christ. With it, the kingdom that was intended in Adam, preserved by Noah, promised to Abraham, and described by Moses, is manifested in David and his promised seed.

We will begin our brief exploration of the Davidic Covenant by examining its content. Some background information is important. David had reached a point in his reign where things were relatively calm. He had finished building a house for himself, and was sitting in the comfort of it, when he tells Nathan, the prophet, "... I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent." (7:2). His purpose is clear to Nathan; he wishes to build a house in which the ark of God's presence might rest. This is in and of itself somewhat intriguing since Moses was commanded to build the sanctuary in a specific manner in order to confirm with its heavenly counterpart. Now, that Israel has been established and they no longer dwell in tents (the characteristic sign of a nomadic lifestyle), it was seemingly no big deal to David to make minor adjustments to the material substance of the sanctuary, by building a house or temple for the Lord instead of a tabernacle. As David slept on these things, the Lord appeared to Nathan in a dream and said, "*Would you build me a house to dwell in? 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. 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. 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. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel*

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and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall inflict them no more, as formerly, 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. 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. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 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, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:5-6; 8-16).

The same account in the book of 1 Chronicles adds nothing significantly different to this discussion, so it will not be cited separately. A brief outline of what is being promised is provided below.

- 1) God will make a name for David (7:9).
- 2) God will plant his people in their place so they will be disturbed no more. God will give his people rest from all their enemies (7:10-11)
- 3) The Lord will make David a house (*beth*) (7:11-13).
- 4) David’s son will be God’s son (7:14).
- 5) God will not remove his mercy from David’s descendants.
- 6) David’s house, kingdom, and throne will be established forever before the Lord (7:16).

The terms of this covenant are essentially unconditional. God has officially made the king of Israel the covenant mediator between God and his people. It is true that failure to obey the laws of God will bring the discipline of the Lord, but in no way will God reject David’s throne; his throne is eternally established.

Part Two: *The Davidic Covenant & The Abrahamic Covenant* – Michael Williams in his book, “Far as the Curse is Found”, states the following, “*To no small extent, the kingdom of David represents a marked fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.*”¹ When one calls to mind the content of the Abrahamic covenant, Williams’ statement makes a lot of sense. God promises Abraham three things, 1) seed, 2) land, and 3) blessing. In the Davidic covenant, God promises to plant his people in the land of Canaan (land). He promises to give them rest (blessing). He promises to establish the house, kingdom and throne of David forever (seed and blessing). All three parallel the covenantal promises made to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant.

Part Three: *The Davidic Covenant & The Mosaic Covenant* – The Mosaic covenant instead of disappearing into oblivion, continues to exercise authority over the Davidic covenant. This is made clear in the terms of the covenant, which are unconditional in their administration. God promises to, “... *discipline with the rod of men...*” David’s descendants who are unfaithful to the law of God. Dale Ralph Davis states the following, “*The Davidic covenant then is to be the mechanism or means by which Yahweh fulfills both the Abrahamic and Sinaitic (Mosaic) covenants.*” *David’s kingship is the instrument for the goal of the Exodus being reached.*²

¹ Williams, Michael. *As Far as the Curse Is Found*. Pg. 183

² Davis, Dale Ralph. *2 Samuel: Out of Every Adversity*. Pg. 103.

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Part Four: What is God Doing? – The fundamental change from the period of the Judges to the period of the Kings is the materialization of the kingdom in the life of Israel. This was predicated by the period of the Judges since the central feature of that period was that every man did what was right in his own eyes because there was no king in the land. With the coming of the king is the renewed expectation on the part of the people that leadership would set the pace for covenantal living. The king under the Davidic Covenant would be a covenant mediator representing God to the covenant community. He, therefore, had the responsibility of being intimately familiar with the terms of the covenant (the law of God) and possessing the spiritual courage to remain faithful to these terms even when doing so was unpopular or challenging. His kingly rule was to embody the rule of God. So, in the truest most fundamental sense, the Age of Kings was preparation for the Messianic Age.

O Palmer Robertson summarizes well the divine agenda for this period when he states, *“This kingdom must be placed in the category of an anticipative realization in proper keeping with the entire scope of Old Testament experience. The shadow kingdom of Israel was real. God was reigning in their midst. But it was nonetheless only a shadow of the reality to come.”* Palmer continues, *“It may be affirmed as emphatically true that David’s covenant hinged conditionally on the responsible fulfillment of covenant obligations by Jesus Christ, the seed of David. He satisfied in himself all the obligations of the covenant. Not only did he maintain perfectly every statute and ordinance of the Mosaic law as required of David. He also bore in himself the chastening judgments deserved by David’s seed through their covenant violations. Just as the Levitical priesthood anticipated the abiding priesthood of Jesus Christ; just as Moses and the school of the prophets anticipated the prophet par excellence; so David and his throne anticipated the beneficent reign of the coming Messiah.”*³

So, the most pivotal concept to understanding the value of the Age of Kings is demonstrated in the terms and conditions of the Davidic Covenant. In the promise of an eternal throne, and the equally ceaseless mercy of God we behold the kingdom in the OT and are led to pray each step of the way, as we see the seed of David fail, *“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”*

³ Robertson, Palmer O. *The Christ of the Covenants*. Pgs. 241; 248-250.