

## **“The Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants and Premillennialism”**

**Intro:** What God does in and through Israel is part of that plan to establish His rule over all creation. The biblical covenants repeatedly affirm that God will provide certain realities for the nation of Israel as well as for the entire world. God reveals what He will do for as well as through Abraham and his descendants.

The ultimate fulfillment of those provisions rests on God's character—the God who manifests His glory by bringing to pass what He promised.

\*\*\*The Biblical Covenants—Noahic, Abrahamic, Davidic, and New—provide the backbone for God's plan for His creation, which includes futuristic premillennialism. These notes focus on the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants.

### **I. God declared His intention to establish His rule over all the earth (Gen. 1:26–27).**

God created Adam as the first human being as the pinnacle of His creation of all that exists. All of humanity would stem from him.

Gen. 1:26 states: Then God said, “Let Us make mankind **as** Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”

Here are three brief observations:

1. God set mankind as totally distinct from the animal world by making Adam *in the image of God*.
2. God gave mankind their primary function by creating Adam and humanity *to serve as His image-bearers*.
3. God intended that mankind would be part of His *extending His rule over the entire world*.

In the wake of Adam and Eve's disobedience and bringing sin as part of humanity's “DNA,” the Noahic flood, and the Tower of Babel, God introduces His plan to provide redemption for sinful humanity and establish His kingdom over the world.

### **II. The Abrahamic Covenant- introduced in Gen. 12:1-3**

#### **A. The Context of the Abrahamic Covenant**

God established the Abrahamic Covenant in the wake of the divine judgment He brought upon rebellious humanity (Gen. 11:1–9), promising to bless His creation. He also narrowed His attention from the entire world to one man and his descendants, Abram. Yahweh delineates *His intentions for Abraham* and the means by which He will accomplish His purposes *for the world*.

#### **B. The Provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant**

In this call narrative, Yahweh commissions Abraham to travel to a land God would show him and makes several initial promises. Abraham quickly obeys, leaving his cherished home, following God's directive (Gen. 12:4–6). The LORD said to Abram—Yahweh is the **ONLY SPEAKER**:

Go out from your land, your relatives, and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

Then I will make you into a great nation, And bless you, and make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, But whoever curses you—or treats you with contempt—I will curse;  
and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

In the Abrahamic Covenant statement in Genesis 12, Yahweh promises five realities to Abraham and his descendants.

1. He would make them into a *great nation*—the one who had no child would father a multitude of heirs who would be God's kingdom of priests.
2. He would give them a *great name*—in contrast to those at Babel who tried in vain to make a name (i.e., reputation) for themselves, God will make Abraham famous. God will advertise His surpassing character to the world by working powerfully through Abraham and his descendants.
3. He would pour *blessings* on Abraham and his descendants—apparently looking back at the blessing of creation.<sup>1</sup>
4. Yahweh promises to *bless those who bless you*. Abraham was God's chosen representative on earth, and as such, how people responded to him reflected their attitude towards God (cf. Obad. 15–21).
5. *All peoples will be blessed through you*. God's purpose in choosing Abraham was to bless the world, and He would do that most significantly by providing the seed (Messiah), who would crush the serpent and restore fallen man to fellowship with God (Gen. 3:15).

### C. God Takes to Himself ALL the Responsibility for the Fulfillment of Covenantal Promises

15:1-19

1. 15:1-6- Key issue: Descendants/offspring

Abraham raises a complaint and *offers his solution*:

vv. 2-3- “<sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “Lord God, what can You give me, since I am childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”<sup>3</sup> Abram continued, “Look, You have given me no offspring, so a slave born in my house will be my heir.” ”

Yahweh's Plan about offspring (v. 5)- “He took him outside and said, ‘Look at the sky and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then He said to him, ‘Your offspring will be that numerous.’ ”

2. 15:7-19

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<sup>1</sup> According to the note on Genesis 12:2 in the NET Bible, “In the garden God blessed Adam and Eve; in that blessing he gave them (1) a fruitful place, (2) endowed them with fertility to multiply, and (3) made them rulers over creation. That was all ruined at the fall. Now God begins to build his covenant people; in Gen 12–22 he promises to give Abram (1) a land flowing with milk and honey, (2) a great nation without number, and (3) kingship.” *The NET Bible First Edition* (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

Key issues: Promise of Land and Innumerable Descendants

**a. Yahweh's promise-** v. 5- "Your offspring will be that numerous."

v. 7- He also said to him, "I am Yahweh who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans **to give you this land to possess.**"

**b. Abraham's complaint-** v. 8- But he said, "Lord God, **how can I know that I will possess it?**"

What is the big point here? Will Abraham and his descendants ever possess this promised land?

**c. Unique Ceremony-** vv. 9-12, 17-18

<sup>9</sup> He said to him, "Bring Me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." <sup>10</sup> So he brought all these to Him, split them down the middle, and laid the pieces opposite each other, but he did not cut up the birds. <sup>11</sup> Birds of prey came down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

<sup>12</sup> As the sun was setting, a deep sleep fell on Abram, and suddenly great terror and darkness descended on him.

*Abram does not participate in the actual ceremony—he is sleeping.*

<sup>17</sup> When the sun had set and it was dark, *a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared and passed between the divided animals.* <sup>18</sup> On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring<sup>2</sup> I give this land, from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates River."

Notice the key details:

1. In Gen. 15:7, Yahweh *restated the covenant promise* of land to Abram and his descendants.
2. God has Abraham gather five animals: cow, goat, ram, turtledove, and pigeon (15:9, all of which also served as sacrifices in the Mosaic Law).
3. Abraham divided the carcasses of the cow, goat, and ram in half and placed the halves on two sides of a path or open area, along with a bird on each side.
4. As the sun was setting, God caused Abraham to fall asleep.
5. A "smoking fire pot and a flaming torch" passed between the divided animals.
6. The Lord concluded the ceremony by restating His promise that He would give "this land" to Abraham and his descendants—from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates River (from the Wadi Besor to the Euphrates River: 15:18–19).

**What does this ceremony concern?** Yahweh's promise of land and descendants to Abram.

**What does this ceremony signify?** Two common options:

Option #1: Conditional self-cursing—If I don't keep the promise, may I die like all these animals.

**Unlikely.** No evidence for this until at least a thousand years later.

A Covenant ratification ceremony: **Yes!**

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<sup>2</sup> Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7; 26:4; Num. 34:2; Deut. 34:4; Neh. 9:8.

- “in which Yahweh binds himself in a promise to the patriarch.”<sup>3</sup>
- by passing through the pieces of the animals, Yahweh “irrevocably pledges the fulfillment of his covenant promise to the patriarch.”<sup>4</sup>

**Summary:** The context and content of Genesis 15 provides the apparent basis for understanding the primary significance of this ceremony.

- Since Abraham’s question in 15:8 concerns how he can know that he will inherit this promised land, the ceremony had to address that specific issue.
- The killing of the animals and splitting their carcasses suggest solemnity as well as sacrifice. God alone passing through those carcasses must represent His affirmation that, without question, He will alone provide the promised land and descendants to Abraham.
- This ceremony formalized and ratified the Abrahamic Covenant and assured Abraham that the promise God made was indeed *ultimately* unconditional or unilateral—a done deal in the mind of God.

#### **D. Unconditional Covenant with Conditions?**

Nondispensational scholars dismiss the future fulfillment of the land and nation promises of the Abrahamic Covenant along different lines. Here are two of the most common interpretive answers they offer.

1. Typological fulfillment of the concrete provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant in the post-Cross “people of God.”<sup>5</sup>
2. Failure by Abraham’s descendants to satisfy the conditions of the covenant.<sup>6</sup> The below section responds to the second nondispensational option.

**Key:** God *alone* passed through the sacrificed animals. Abraham was sound asleep when Yahweh ratified His covenant with him. Passing through the animal carcasses alone signifies that He was making a *unilateral* covenant.<sup>7</sup> As such, the ultimate fulfillment of the provisions of this covenant rests on God alone.

The point of the unilateral status of the Abrahamic Covenant addresses the question of “whether or not” these covenant provisions would find full and complete fulfillment. From God’s point of view, there was no debate—it *was a done deal*. The surety of the fulfillment of the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant rested exclusively on the flawless and surpassing character of God. He is a God who does what He says *in a way that matches His promise*! What about these conditional statements that appear as part of the statement or

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<sup>3</sup> Gerhard F. Hasel, “The Meaning of the Animal Rite in Genesis 15,” *JSOT* 19 (Feb 1981): 69. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 433.

<sup>4</sup> Hasel, “The Meaning of the Animal Rite,” 70.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., Thomas Schreiner, *Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World*, Short Studies in Biblical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2017), 56–58; Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *Kingdom through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 707–8.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald Youngblood, “The Abrahamic Covenant: Conditional or Unconditional?” in *The Living and Active Word of God: Studies in Honor of Samuel J. Schultz*, ed. by Morris Inch and Ronald Youngblood (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 41. Cf. Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1945), 31–36, 56–58.

<sup>7</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 437. If God meant that the Abrahamic covenant was bilateral (like the Mosaic Covenant where both Yahweh and Israel had ultimate covenant responsibilities), we would have expected something representing Abraham as well to pass through.

restatement of the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant? They have nothing to do with the “*whether or not*” issue. They deal with the question of “*when and to whom*.” Those conditions would determine the timing of God bringing to pass the complete fulfillment of these covenant provisions—the conduct and spiritual condition of God’s people.

To summarize, this Abrahamic Covenant arrangement is *ultimately unconditional* in that God’s provision of the promised benefits is assured *regardless of the recipient’s behavior*. Only the enjoyment of the covenant benefits by this or that generation of Israelites is conditioned upon the obedience of the subordinate covenant partners.<sup>8</sup>

## E. Reaffirmations of the Abrahamic Covenant

*Yahweh reaffirms the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*

### Restatements of Covenant Promises in Genesis

	Occasion	Contextual Impact	Covenantal Provision
<b>Initial Statement (Gen. 12:1-3)</b>	Abraham’s transition to Canaan	Initial statement of Abrahamic Covenant provisions	<b>vv. 1, 7- Land</b> <b>v. 2- Nation</b> vv. 2-3- be blessed and be a blessing
<b>Reaffirmation (Gen. 13:14-17)</b>	Immediately after Lot and Abraham parted ways.	God will provide what He promised	<b>vv. 14-17- land (forever)</b> <b>vv. 15-16- Nation (descendants)*</b>
<b>Reaffirmation (Gen. 15:1-21)</b>	Abraham’s intent to adopt Eliezer	God’s unilateral role to fulfill covenant and reaffirmation of promise—He passes through the animal carcasses alone	<b>vv. 1-6- Nation (descendants)*</b> <b>vv. 7, 19-21- Land</b> v. 18- covenant-making
<b>Reaffirmation (Gen. 17:1-22)</b>	Abraham’s age—Past child-bearing years	God will provide what He promised; He will give a son; circumcision—setting apart His people	v. 2a, 7-10, 13, 19, 21- covenant-making (forever) <b>v. 2b, 4-8, 16, 19-20- Nation (descendants)</b> v. 7- relationship with Yahweh <b>v. 8- Land (forever)</b>
<b>Reaffirmation (Gen. 22:16-18)</b>	Abraham trusted Yahweh in the near-sacrifice of Isaac.	God will provide what He promised, which may have seemed threatened by God’s demand that Abraham sacrifice Isaac.	v. 17a, 18b- be blessed and be a blessing <b>v. 17b- Nation (descendants)*</b> v. 17c- victory over enemies
<b>Reaffirmation (Gen. 26:2-5)</b>	Isaac faces famine in the land of Canaan	God will provide what He promised	v. 3- covenant-making <b>vv. 2-3- Land</b> <b>v. 4- Nation (descendants)*</b>
<b>Reaffirmation (Gen. 28:3-4, 13-15; 35:11-12; cf. 48:3-4)</b>	Jacob’s departure from and return to Bethel	God will provide what He promised	28:3-4, 14- be blessed and be a blessing <b>28:3-4, 13-14; 35:11- Nation (descendants)*</b> <b>28:13; 35:12-13- Land</b>

<sup>8</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, “A Theology of the Pentateuch,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 26; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 93–94.

\*In several passages, the expressions “like the sand of the sea” (Gen. 22:17; 32:12), “as numerous as the stars in the sky” (Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4; Exod. 32:13; Deut. 1:10; 10:22; 28:62), or “like the dust of the earth” (Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10) occur in the Pentateuch to emphasize the extent of God’s intended blessing of Abraham’s descendants numerically.

### Summary of Abrahamic Covenant conclusions:

What should we conclude from the above overview of repeated statements of Abrahamic Covenant provisions? Here are four observations.

- First, God promises these provisions in the context of a committed relationship, not as a grocery list of potential ideas.
- Second, these covenant provisions are not just mentioned once and forgotten but reaffirmed to each patriarch. Subsequent passages regularly look back at these provisions as concrete realities.
- Third, God presents His intentions through serious, committed language of covenant, oath, and promise.
- Fourth, the ceremony of Genesis 15 (see below as well) affirms that the hope for fulfillment does not *ultimately* rest in the conduct of the descendants of Abraham.

Fulfillment is anchored on the flawless, surpassing character of a God who is committed to bringing to pass what He promised in a way that matches the manner in which He said it would happen.

## III. The Davidic Covenant

### A. Historical Background

After defeating Israel’s external foes, David began attending to internal issues. He transported the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, making their capital the center for worship (2 Sam 6:1-23). David also expressed his desire to build a structure to house the Ark of the Covenant (2 Sam 7:2). However, Yahweh had other plans for David. As God had orchestrated David’s meteoric rise to power and prominence, Yahweh related His plan to establish David’s lineage as a royal dynasty that would rule over God’s chosen people (2 Sam 7:8-16).

### B. Two Horizons of Fulfillment

Second Samuel 7:8-16 articulates the Davidic Covenant in two parts: promises that find realization during David’s life and promises that find realization after his death. The second horizon looks forward to the near and distant future. The covenant promises first point to Solomon and then transition to a future Davidic ruler over Israel, pointing to Christ’s first and second coming. The consummation of this covenant finds realization in Christ’s millennial reign over the entire world.

#### The Two Time Frames of 2 Samuel 7:8-16: During David’s Reign and After His Death

<i>Will be fulfilled during David’s reign (7:8-11a); cf. 1 Chron 17:7-10a):</i>	<i>8a “Now this is what you are to say [future] to My servant David” (anticipating vv. 11b-16):</i> <i>“This is what the Lord of Hosts says” [present]:</i>
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1) I made David king: 7:8b	“I took you from the pasture and from following the sheep to be ruler over My people Israel.”
2) I gave David military victories: 7:9a	“I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you.”
3) I will make David famous: 9b	“I will make a name for you like that of the greatest in the land.” <i>Although David’s accomplishments as king cause his reputation to grow (2 Sam 8:13), Yahweh was the driving force in making David’s name great. He is the One who orchestrated David’s transition from being an ordinary shepherd to serving as the king over Israel (2 Sam 7:8).</i>
4) I will give the nation rest from constant attack: 10-11a	“I will establish a place for My people Israel and plant them, so that they may live there and not be disturbed again. Evildoers will not afflict them as they have done <sup>11</sup> ever since the day I ordered judges to be over My people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies.” <i>Since the time of the conquest of Canaan, Israel had only settled on and controlled a portion of the conquered land, Finally, during David’s reign the two provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant that deal with people and land find more complete preliminary fulfillment. In addition to this and more closely tied to the immediate context, the “place” that Yahweh will appoint for Israel probably highlights the idea of permanence and security. Regardless, better rest is still coming.<sup>9</sup></i>
<i>This will find fulfillment after David’s death (7:11b-16; cf. 1 Chron 17:10b-14):</i>	7:11b “ <b>‘The Lord declares to you [present]:’</b> ”
1) There will be a Davidic dynasty: 7:12b	“The Lord Himself <i>[future]</i> will make a <b>house</b> for you. <sup>12</sup> <i>When your time comes and you rest with your fathers</i> , I will raise up after you <b>your descendant</b> , who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom.” <i>“Your descendant” refers to Solomon, to all the royal descendants of David, and ultimately to the Messiah, Jesus Christ.</i>
2) He will build a Temple: 7:13b	“He will build a house for My name” (specifically Solomon but beyond him as well).
3) Yahweh will establish that dynasty forever: 7:13b	“and <b>I will establish the throne of his kingdom [not just Solomon’s, but the Davidic dynasty] forever</b> ” (cf. Luke 1:32-33). <i>Various passages in the Pentateuch anticipated that Israel would one day have a king (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11; Deut 17:14-20) and constitute a kingdom (Num 24:7, 19). However, this kingdom which God promises to establish through David does not replace the theocracy. It is regarded as God’s throne/kingdom (1 Chr 28:5; 2 Chr 9:8; 13:8). In fact, the Davidic ruler is called “the Lord’s anointed” (1 Sam 24:6; 2 Sam 19:21).</i>
4) Yahweh will pursue a special relationship with David and his descendants	“I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me (Ps 2:7; Heb 1:5; Rev 21:7).”
5) Yahweh will punish rebellious members of the dynasty: 7:14	“When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod and with blows from others.”
5) God will never take away His loyal love: 7:15	“But <b>My faithful love will never leave him</b> as I removed it from Saul (Ps 89:21, 28, 33); I removed him from your way.”
6) Davidic Rule will never be extinguished- permanence: 7:16; <i>Core of the Covenant</i>	“your house and kingdom will <b>endure before Me forever</b> (cf. Luke 1:32-33), and your throne <b>will be established forever</b> ” (cf. Ps 89:3-4, 26-37; Ezek 34:23-24; Rev 11:15).’ ”

<sup>9</sup> This statement affirms, however, “that through David (and his dynasty) Yahweh will transform that place of hazard into a place of safety, into a permanent haven of security for his people,” D. F. Murray, “MQWM and the Future of Israel in 2 Samuel VII 10,” *VT* 40 (1990): 319.

Summary comments on crucial phrases:

7:13- “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (‘ad ‘ôlām).

7:14- “I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me.”

7:15- “My faithful love (*hesed*) will never leave him” (unlike Saul).

7:16- “your house and your kingdom will endure before me forever (‘ad ‘ôlām),  
and your throne will be established forever” (‘ad ‘ôlām).

### C. The Key Significances of the Davidic Covenant

“God’s establishment of His covenant with David represents one of the theological high points of the OT Scriptures. This key event builds on the preceding covenants and looks forward to the ultimate establishment of God’s reign on the earth.”<sup>10</sup>

1. The psalmists and prophets provide additional details concerning the ideal Davidite who will lead God’s chosen nation in righteousness (see below).
2. The NT applies various OT texts about this promised Davidic ruler to Jesus Christ (cf. Matt 1:1-17; Acts 13:33-34; Heb 1:5; 5:5; et al.). In the Book of Revelation, John addresses Him as the “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev 19:16).
3. These royal psalms (Psalms 2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 144) draw heavily on the idea of a Davidic dynasty and presuppose the covenant God established with David. They focus on a Davidic figure who, as Yahweh’s son, would live in Zion, rule over God’s people, and be the heir to the divine promise. Psalms 72 and 89 provide select examples of these royal psalms.

#### *Psalm 72*

The Davidic king was to promote righteousness and justice in the land by personal example and deed (v. 1). He would do this by defending the cause of the afflicted, weak, and helpless and crushing their oppressors (vv. 2, 4, 12- 14). The ideal Davidic ruler would occasion the national experience of peace, prosperity, and international recognition (cf. vv. 3, 5-11, 15-17).<sup>11</sup> God promised to give His anointed king dominion over the entire earth (vv. 8-11). Although this psalm may have been written at the beginning of Solomon’s reign, it *envisions ideals never fully realized in Israel’s history*. Only during the millennial reign of Christ will the peace and prosperity depicted by this psalm find fulfillment.

#### *Psalm 89*<sup>12</sup>

In concert with the initial expression of the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7, the psalmist affirms that the Davidic king enjoyed the status of God’s “firstborn” (vv. 26-27). God promised His chosen king a continuing dynasty (v. 4), victory over his enemies (vv. 21-23), and dominion over the whole earth (v. 25). If a Davidic ruler failed to obey God’s Word, he would be severely disciplined and forfeit full

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<sup>10</sup> Michael A. Grisanti, “The Davidic Covenant,” *TMSJ* 10, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 233.

<sup>11</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., “A Theology of the Psalms,” in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, ed. Roy B. Zuck (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 268.

<sup>12</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. “The Blessing of David: The Charter for Humanity,” in *The Law and the Prophets: Old Testament Studies Prepared in Honor of Oswald Thompson Allis*, ed. John H. Skilton (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1974), 301-3, provides a helpful treatment of the differences between presentations of the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89.



participation in the benefits of the covenant (vv. 30-32). However, even in the wake of disobedience, the Lord would not revoke His promise to the house of David (vv. 33-34; see more on this below).

#### **D. The Connections of the Davidic Covenant and the Abrahamic and New Covenant**

For the sake of time, I will summarize a few thematic connections between the Davidic, Abrahamic, and New Covenants. Merrill points out that the Davidic Covenant is theologically rooted in the Abrahamic Covenant rather than the Mosaic Covenant.

1. One of those important connections is most apparent in the genealogy at the end of the book of Ruth (Ruth 4:18-22; cf. vv. 11-12). The biblical narrator is writing to clarify that the Davidic dynasty finds its historical and theological roots in the promises to the patriarchs—rather than the Mosaic Covenant. The genealogy of Obed starts with Perez, the son of Judah and Tamar (Gen. 46:12).
2. “Israel as the servant people of Yahweh might rise and fall, be blessed or cursed, but the Davidic dynasty would remain intact forever because God had pledged to produce through Abraham a line of kings that would find its historical locus in Israel but would have ramifications extending far beyond Israel.”<sup>13</sup> The Davidic Covenant envisions an earthly kingdom ruled over by the promised Davidic Messiah.
3. Craig Blaising also connects this covenant to the Abrahamic and writes: “A blessed king from the line of David is one way in which the promise to bless descendants of Abraham will manifest itself. On the other hand, the Davidic covenant provides the *means* by which the Abrahamic blessing will be fulfilled for all descendants. The blessings for the many will be mediated by the rulership of the one, the king.”<sup>14</sup>
4. The Abrahamic and Davidic covenants also share the motifs of international reputation, land inheritance, and descendants. A vital connection between the Davidic and New Covenants involves the fact that the perfect descendant of David also functions as the mediator of the New Covenant.

#### **E. The Unilateral Nature of the Davidic Covenant**

As seen with the Abrahamic Covenant, unilateral covenants can include conditions. However, conditionality and ultimate unconditionality are not mutually exclusive.

##### **1. The Language of Permanence in 2 Samuel 7**

Although the phrases used to describe the Davidic Covenant do not themselves connote absolute permanence or eternity, the repetition of these phrases does point to that reality.

7:13- “I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (‘*ad ‘ôlām*).

7:15- “My faithful love (*hesed*) will never leave him” (unlike Saul).

7:16- “your house and your kingdom will endure before me forever (‘*ad ‘ôlām*),  
and your throne will be established forever” (‘*ad ‘ôlām*).

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<sup>13</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, Second ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 204.

<sup>14</sup> Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 166.

## 2. Divine guarantee language of Psalm 89<sup>15</sup>

- a. Although 2 Samuel 7 never refers to “covenant, Psalm 89 refers to the Davidic Covenant as covenantal in nature (vv. 3, 28, 34, 39; cf. 2 Sam. 23:5) and refers to it as an “oath” sworn by Yahweh (vv. 3, 35, 49).
- b. In 2 Samuel 7:14, Yahweh declares that the Davidic king will enjoy a special relationship with Him— “I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me.” Chisholm points out that the royal psalms connect the king’s status as “son” with an inheritance of worldwide dominion (Pss. 2:79; 89:25-27). Psalm 2 refers to this aspect of the Lord’s promise as a formal statute or decree (v. 7).<sup>16</sup>
- c. God’s lovingkindness to David, i.e., the Davidic Covenant, will endure “forever,” always be with him, and never be removed (vv. 24, 28, 29, 33, 36, 37).<sup>17</sup> The psalmist affirms that God’s promise to David was as certain as the constantly occurring day/night cycle (v. 29; cf. Jer 33:19-21) and as reliable as the continuing existence of the sun and moon, which never fail to make their appearances in the sky (vv. 35-37). Yahweh promises not to violate the covenant He has made (v. 34).

## 3. Human failure language of Psalm 89 and concern about the future of the Davidic Covenant

The psalmist also agonizes over the reality of his day (vv. 38-51) when it seemed like Yahweh had spurned, rejected, and repudiated his appointed ruler (v. 38-39). He allowed Israel’s enemies to be victorious over the king (vv. 40-44). The psalmist cries out, “How long . . . will your anger keep burning like fire,” and “Where are the former acts of your faithful love that you swore to David?” (vv. 46, 49).<sup>18</sup>

## 4. Resolution of This Dilemma

How can we resolve the tension between the divine guarantee and human failure language? Here is an initial resolution: *the covenant promise of a Davidic ruler over God’s covenant people is **irrevocable** and certain of fulfillment. At the same time, the conditional statements refer to the possibility of experiencing the benefits of the covenant at any given point in time.*<sup>19</sup>

- a. It is vital to grasp that the ultimate realization of the Davidic promise depends on divine faithfulness rather than on the performance of David or his successors. Any failure by David’s descendants does not represent final failure but temporary abeyance. Rebellious Davidic rulers may delay the realization of the covenant promises but do not invalidate them.
- b. The arrival of Jesus, the ideal Davidic king, who is perfectly obedient, brings about a lasting realization of the initial phrase of those promises. His second coming and millennial rule over the entire world will bring the Davidic Covenant (and the Abrahamic and New Covenants) to its consummation.

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<sup>15</sup> The verse references given for Psalm 89 relate to the English text. The Hebrew versification is one digit greater.

<sup>16</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *1 & 2 Samuel*, TT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 221.

<sup>17</sup> See 2 Sam 7:15; this ensures that the covenant promise is irrevocable.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. 1 Kgs 2:1-4; 6:11-13; 8:23-26; 9:3-9; 1 Chron. 28:9; Ps. 132:11-12; Jer. 17:24-25; 22:1-9.

<sup>19</sup> Chisholm, Jr., *1 & 2 Samuel*, 224.

- c. The psalmist's frustration in Psalm 89 demonstrates at least two truths. First, at this point in Israel's history, the ideal of a just king who would bring the nation lasting peace and prosperity was still an *unfulfilled ideal*. The apparent failure of the Davidic Covenant grieves the psalmist. Secondly, the inability of Davidic rulers to live and rule according to God's demands causes the reader to look forward in anticipation of a Davidic figure who would one day perfectly satisfy those divine expectations. There is no doubt that this unilateral covenant (and the Abrahamic Covenant) will find ultimate fulfillment in Christ's first and second comings and in his millennial rule—a fulfillment that matches the wording of the covenant promises.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Biblical Covenants provide the theological backbone to Scripture.

Both the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants, the focus for this session, are unilateral covenants.

Their fulfillment totally depends on God's Himself, His unwavering intentions and not human success.

He will bring them to pass in a way that matches the wording of the covenant promises.

Jesus, the promised Messiah, will rule over the entire world during the millennium.

At the beginning of that Millennium, He will install a believing nation of Israel in the Promised Land.

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