

The Davidic Covenant

1 Chronicles 17

1 Chronicles 17:1-15 - *"Now it came to pass, when David was dwelling in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord is under tent curtains.'*² *Then Nathan said to David, 'Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you.'*

³*But it happened that night that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, ⁴'Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord: "You shall not build Me a house to dwell in. ⁵For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought up Israel, even to this day, but have gone from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another. ⁶Wherever I have moved about with all Israel, have I ever spoken a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"*

⁷*Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: "I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. ⁸And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a name like the name of the great men who are on the earth. ⁹Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously, ¹⁰since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel. Also I will subdue all your enemies.*

Furthermore I tell you that the Lord will build you a house. ¹¹And it shall be, when your days are fulfilled, when you must go to be with your fathers, that I will set up your seed after you, who will be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. ¹²He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³I will be his Father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My mercy away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. ¹⁴And I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever.'

¹⁵*According to all these words and to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David."*

Background Notes

1 Chronicles 15-16 is the record of the Ark of Covenant being brought up to Jerusalem, using the correct method that God commanded. As the Ark was installed in its special tent, a great time of celebration and worship took place in Jerusalem.

In chapter 17 we read of David's desire to build a House for the Lord and for the Ark of the Covenant. David reasoned, "Why should I dwell in a palace, while the Ark is only in a simple tent?" When David shared his desire with Nathan, the prophet thought that this was a great idea, and he told David to go for it! We probably would have done the same thing. But God had other ideas. David's desire was good and honorable, and his heart was right, but God did not choose David to build the Temple. He chose David's son Solomon. 1 Chronicles 22 tells us that David was a warrior, and he had shed much blood. So the Lord chose Solomon to build the Temple during a time of peace and quiet in Israel.

Notice in verses 5-6: God wanted David to know that **His presence in the midst of His people was far more important than a Temple** for the Ark! After all, for more than 400 years, the Ark and the presence of the Lord traveled with the people during the wilderness wanderings. In the wilderness and during all the times of the Judges the Ark was in the tent-like Tabernacle - but **the Lord was present** there among His people!

This is a great lesson for God's people today. The Lord is more interested in being in close fellowship with His people than in great and glorious church buildings.

However, the Lord wanted David to know that his desire for a Temple was honorable and commendable. And it was at this point that the Lord revealed to David that his dynasty would never end. In ancient times, an unending dynasty was unheard of! The unconditional covenant that God made with David is known as **the Davidic Covenant**.

Doctrinal Points

1. The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant.

1 Chronicles 17:16-27 - *"Then King David went in and sat before the Lord; and he said: "Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? ¹⁷ And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O God; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come, and have regarded me according to the rank of a man of high degree, O Lord God. ¹⁸ What more can David say to You for the honor of Your servant? For You know Your servant. ¹⁹ O Lord, for Your servant's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all this greatness, in making known all these great things. ²⁰ O Lord, there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears. ²¹ And who is like Your people Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people - to make for Yourself a name by great and awesome deeds, by driving out nations from before Your people whom You redeemed from Egypt? ²² For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, Lord, have become their God.*

²³ And now, O Lord, the word that You have spoken about Your servant and about his house, let it be established forever, and do as You have said. ²⁴ So let it be established, that Your name may be magnified forever, saying, 'The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God.' And let the house of Your servant David be established before You, ²⁵ for You, O my God, have revealed to Your servant that You will build him a house. Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray before You. ²⁶ And now, Lord, You are God, and have promised this goodness to Your servant. ²⁷ Now You have been pleased to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You have blessed it, O Lord, and it shall be blessed forever."

Notice the emphasis on the word "**forever**" in this covenant that God made with David. It's mentioned **five times** (v11, 12, 14, 23, & 27). **The Davidic Covenant is both an eternal and an unconditional covenant.** "Unconditional" means

that there were no rules or conditions that David's descendants must obey for the covenant to continue. So no matter what his descendants did (or did not do), **the Davidic dynasty would continue forever.**

"But wait a minute," you may say. "What about that word '**forever**'? There's no king in Israel today - Israel has a president and a prime minister. And God's covenant with Israel depended on Israel's obedience to the covenant's regulations. Blessings for Israel would continue only if the people followed the Lord. If they turned away from the Lord (which they did), didn't that make the promises void?" Yes, that's true. So how do we put all of this together?

Answer: they are **two different covenants**. God's covenant with Israel - the Mosaic Covenant - **was a conditional** covenant – and Israel did not follow the terms and conditions of the covenant. They forsook the Lord, so the nation forfeited the blessings of His Law and reaped the curses of His Law. In fact, Israel experienced defeat and captivity. And in 70AD the nation was removed. Israel was temporarily set aside from God's special favor.

But the Mosaic Covenant also stipulated that if Israel would return to the Lord, He would graciously forgive them - release them from their exile, and restore them to the Land! *"Now... when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse that I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land that your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers" (Deuteronomy 30:1-5).*

Romans 11 assures us that the time will come when Israel as a nation will return to the Lord. The Lord will not only restore them to their ancient homeland as a secular nation (and this has already happened), but He will change their hearts of unbelief and restore them to Himself.

The Davidic Covenant, of course, is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The unconditional terms of the Davidic Covenant said that the dynasty of David and Solomon would never come to an end. The Lord Jesus, as Israel's Messiah, was born in the family line of David and Solomon. In the last chapter of the Bible, the Lord Himself says that He is the Root and Offspring of David (Revelation 22:16). So the Davidic dynasty has not ended - and it never will! The Davidic Covenant is an unconditional covenant.

2. The Davidic throne is an earthly throne.

Notice once again God's promise to David about his descendants, beginning with Solomon. *"He shall build Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever" (v12).* And, *"I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever" (v14).*

The unending Davidic throne that is promised here – is it a literal throne here on earth? Or is it a kind of “spiritual throne” in Heaven, or in the Church? We believe it is a **literal earthly throne**. That’s certainly the way David would have understood God’s promise and covenant! It’s true that God has His throne in Heaven, and the Lord Jesus is our King, and He reigns in our hearts. But the promise God made here to David and his **literal** descendants is a promise of a **literal kingdom** and a **literal throne**.

In the apostle John’s vision in Revelation 19, John saw the Lord returning to earth as King. *“He has on His robe and on His thigh written ‘King of Kings and Lord of Lords’” (Revelation 19:6)*. In Revelation 20 speaks of our Lord’s millennial kingdom here on earth. He will reign from His literal throne in the beloved city of Jerusalem. Believers will reign with Christ in His 1000-year earthly kingdom that will merge the New Jerusalem with the Eternal State. The Davidic throne is a literal earthly throne.

Practical Application

Let’s have the same attitude as David!

David had a wonderful attitude, both before and after God made the Davidic Covenant with him. Before the covenant, David was convicted about the need of a house for the Lord. David had a palace, but the Lord had no special House. Like David, by the way, we should be more concerned for the house of the Lord than for our own houses!

After the covenant was announced, David was very appreciative of the grace that had been shown him, a man from a humble background. *“Who am I, O Lord God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far? What more can David say to You for the honor of Your servant? For You know Your servant...” (v16)*.

It is said that 1 Chronicles 17:16-20 inspired the former slave trader, John Newton, to write the hymn “Amazing Grace.” God showed His amazing grace to David - and to us, when we were sinners! He loves us with His covenanted love, and has given us a hope and a future! Let’s have the same humble and thankful attitude that David had!