God’s Covenant with man

Chapter 10 – “The King is Coming”

The final administration of the Old Covenant economy is now here – David the King and the royal line. We consider this week the relevant passages that present the institution of God’s covenantal promises to David, and talk about how David’s kingship points forward to that of our King Jesus. The foundational text for our discussion will be 2 Samuel 7. We’ll also be looking at other passages (in particular, Psalm 89 and 132) along the way that help us understand the promises of David’s covenant.

This covenant presents us with a few new pictures. In his book, The Christ of the Covenants, Robertson sets the stage:

“The occasion for the formal establishment of the Davidic covenant has great significance. Already God had anointed David as king over all Israel. But the formal inauguration of the covenant of the kingdom had to await certain other developments.

First, David took Jerusalem from the Jebusites and established the permanent locality of his throne (II Sam 5). He had ruled for over seven years from Hebron, a city strategically located in the midst of territory belonging to David’s own tribe of Judah. But now he moves to capture a city not yet taken by Israel and more centralized with respect to the whole of the nation.

Secondly, David brought the ark of God to Jerusalem (II Sam 6). In so doing, he publicly displayed his desire to see his own rule in Israel related immediately to the throne of God. In this manner, the concept of the theocracy found its fullest expression.

Thirdly, God gave David rest from all his enemies (II Sam. 7:1). In other words, he secured the throne in Israel to a degree that never had been experienced previously. Instead of being threatened constantly by marauding armies, Israel became secure as a national entity. Indeed, not all of Israel’s foes had been annihilated. But God had “given rest” from their opponents.

Now the context is prepared for the formal inauguration of the Davidic covenant. The interconnection between David’s throne and God’s throne, between David’s son and God’s son finds an appropriate framework in this historical context. A situation from rest anticipates appropriately the eschatological kingdom of peace.”
1. God reveals to David the covenantal blessings by first pointing to Himself as God. (II Samuel 7:8-11) Who does all the work? Does this bring to mind institutions of previous covenants? How did Noah come into the covenant? (Gen. 6:18) Abraham? (Gen. 15:7; 17:7) Moses? (Ex. 3:1-11) This is a re-run of sorts, but always worth watching again.

2. What are the promises God makes to David, in this section (vv. 8-16)? These should bring quickly to mind the promises to Abraham (Gen. 12 & 17)

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1 Note also that David himself, at the end of his confession of response (II Sam 7:18-29) to God’s word from Nathan, acknowledges God’s hand in his responsiveness. This is a rather striking example, I think, of an acknowledgment of God’s prior movement in the hearts of his people. (Similar language to that in the case of Lydia, in Acts 16:14)
3. The king is promised specifically in II Samuel 7:12-16. (recall that this is an old promise - kings were promised to Abraham in Genesis 17)

   a. How was/is this promise be fulfilled?

   b. David desired to make a house for the worship of God, but God denied this, promising instead a house (dynasty) of David's own. In David's confession, (verses 18-29) he states his reasons for confidence; that the promise of the eternal kingly line is secure. On what does he base his confidence?
4. Let’s look at Ps. 89:26-37\(^2\) in light of what we’ve seen in II Samuel 7:11-16. What elements do we see here that are common to what we’ve spoken of before in the other covenants?
   a. specifically, in vv. 29-32?

   b. in vv. 33-37?

   c. In verse 27, David is referred to as God’s firstborn.
      i. What privileges is the firstborn entitled to?

      ii. Where do we see such language of the firstborn son echoed in the New Testament?

\(^2\) If we look a bit earlier in the Psalm, to verses 19 and 20, we see that this section of the psalm is certainly a direct reference to Nathan’s revelation to David in II Samuel 7.
d. A central point Robertson makes in Covenants is that in David, two of the offices of prophet, priest and king are united. David was an example of a mediatorial King – one who both ruled and represented his people before God. In this, David foreshadows Christ. In the Psalm 89 passages addressed above, how do we see David’s mediatorial role? How does God relate to His people through the King?

5. We’ve seen that Christ, the Messiah, is the focal point of the kingdom covenant between God and David. Isaiah prophesied in magnificent language in chapter 9:6-7 that he would sit upon the throne of David. This throne was called “the throne of the Lord” in I Chron. 29:23, and was revered in Psalm 45:6 as eternal. Ultimately the dynasty of David ended. Why? What did this say about the Davidic line of kings? How does this point forward to Christ?
6. In 1 Peter 2, Peter calls us a ‘royal priesthood’ – i.e. we share with Christ royalty and access to God through Him. What are the benefits of having, and being associated with, this King of David’s lineage?

Quotes & meditations:

*From Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary (II Sam 7:18-29):*

“David’s prayer is full of the breathings of devout affection toward God. He had low thoughts of his own merits. All we have, must be looked upon as Divine gifts. He speaks very highly and honorably of the Lord’s favors to him. Considering what the character and condition of man is, we may be amazed that God should deal with him as he does. The promise of Christ unequaled all; if the Lord God be ours, what more can we ask, or think of? Ephesians 3:20. He knows us better than we know ourselves; therefore let us be satisfied with what he has done for us. What can we say more for ourselves in our prayers, than God has said for us in his promises? David ascribes all to the free grace of God. Both the great things He had done for him, and the great things He had made known to him. All was for his word’s sake, that is, for the sake of Christ the eternal Word. Many, when they go to pray, have their hearts to seek, but David’s heart was found, that is, it was fixed; gathered in from its wanderings, entirely engaged to the duty, and employed in it. That prayer which is from the tongue only, will not please God; it must be found in the heart; that must be lifted up and poured out before God. He builds his faith, and hopes to speed, upon the sureness of God’s promise. David prays for the performance of the promise. With God, saying and doing are not two things, as they often are with men; God will do as he hath said. The promises of God are not made to us by name, as to David, but they belong to all who believe in Jesus Christ, and plead them in his name.”
From Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, Psalm 89:38-52:

“Sometimes it is not easy to reconcile God’s providences with his promises, yet we are sure that God’s works fulfill his word. When the great Anointed One, Christ himself, was upon the cross, God seemed to have cast him off, yet did not make void his covenant, for that was established for ever. The honor of the house of David was lost. Thrones and crowns are often laid in the dust; but there is a crown of glory reserved for Christ’s spiritual seed, which fadeth not away. From all this complaint learn what work sin makes with families, noble families, with families in which religion has appeared. They plead with God for mercy. God’s unchangeableness and faithfulness assure us that He will not cast off those whom he has chosen and covenanted with. They were reproached for serving him. The scoffers of the latter days, in like manner, reproach the footsteps of the Messiah when they ask, Where is the promise of his coming? 2 Peter 3:3,4. The records of the Lord’s dealings with the family of David, show us his dealings with his church, and with believers. Their afflictions and distresses may be grievous, but he will not finally cast them off. Self-deceivers abuse this doctrine, and others by a careless walk bring themselves into darkness and distress; yet let the true believer rely on it for encouragement in the path of duty, and in bearing the cross. The psalm ends with praise, even after this sad complaint. Those who give God thanks for what he has done, may give him thanks for what he will do. God will follow those with his mercies, who follow him with praises.”

From John Calvin's Commentary on the Psalms (89:34):

“My covenant will I not break. As the true knowledge of God’s mercy can only be obtained from his word, he enjoins us to keep our eyes intently fixed upon his covenant. The more excellent and invaluable a blessing it is, “Never to be rejected after having been once adopted by him,” the more difficult it is for us to believe its truth. And we know howmany thoughts from time to time present themselves to our minds, tempting us to call it in question. That the faithful, therefore, may not harass themselves beyond measure in debating in their own minds whether or no they are in favor with God, they are enjoined to look to the covenant, and to embrace the salvation which is offered to them in it. God here commends to us his own faithfulness, that we may account his promise sufficient, and that we may not seek the certainty of our salvation any where else. He had said above, If the children of David break my statutes; and now, alluding to that breach, he declares that he will not requite them as they requite him, My covenant will I not break, implying, that although his people may not altogether act in a manner corresponding to their vocation, as they ought to do, he will not suffer his covenant to be broken and disannulled on account of their fault, because he will promptly and effectually prevent this in the way of blotting out their sins by a gratuitous pardon. He is still pursuing the illustration of the preceding proposition, I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail; promising not only to be faithful on his side, as we say, but also that what he has promised shall take full effect, in despite of all the impediments which men may cast in the way; for he will strive against their sins, that by means of them the fruit of his goodness may not be prevented from reaching them. When the Jews, by their ingratitude and treachery, revolted from him, the covenant was not disannulled, because it was founded upon the perfect immutability of his nature. And still, at the present day, when our sins mount even to the heavens, the goodness of God fails not to rise above them, since it is far above the heavens.