

## Lesson # 65 Revelation 20:1-10 The Four Unconditional Covenants

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**Revelation 20: 1-10**

Why all the fuss over Revelation 20:1-10? Why are we taking such a protracted view of these 10 verses instead of getting right into them and simply studying the text? Those are legitimate questions so let me explain briefly what is so important about this section of Scripture. As we have already seen in our last lesson, there are many views of what the Millennial time ( 1,000 years ) is all about in this section of Revelation. Is it a long period of time that began thousands of years ago; are we in it now; is it just symbolism for heaven? What is the relationship of Christ's return to this time period? Can it rightly be called a time period? Who dwells in the Millennium – Jews, Gentiles, only believers or some believers and some unbelievers? Are the people therein glorified or still in physical bodies?

I have answered with more questions than answers, but my point is that this time period is pivotal in how we interpret Revelation, the Tribulation, the end of history & the return of Jesus Christ to earth. It is my intention to show you that a Premillennial interpretation of the literal 1,000 year period in Rev. 20 best fits the Biblical & theological evidence. I began by giving you an overview of the various ( 3 major + 2 minor ) systems of eschatology, and now we will move back into the OT to further support the contention that we should interpret the millennium as Premillennialists – from the viewpoint of the 4 major unconditional covenants between God and Israel. In these we will find the key to interpreting Rev. 20:1-10, especially highlighting Israel's role in it. Some have called the church age a parenthetical period of time in God's redemptive plans. It is better said that it is a parenthetical time in God's dealing with Israel. ①

## I. The Covenants – Introduction

If you have seriously studied the Bible for any length of time, you should have some idea that the OT contains a number of covenants or contracts which form the basis of God's interaction with His people. There are; The Edenic Covenant; Noahic Covenant; Abrahamic; Palestinian; Mosaic; Davidic; and the New Covenant. Some are conditional and are based on man's response to God's commands, and are structured like: "if you obey Me, I will pour out My blessings on you, but if you forsake Me, I will curse you." Unconditional covenants are those wherein God promises to do such and such, regardless of the other party's obedience or disobedience, so that whether or not the other party commits sinful acts, God will remain faithful to His promise within that covenant. In a covenant, parties are bound to fulfill their end of the agreement – in unconditional covenants, only God is bound to fulfill His end of the agreement.

Unconditional covenants are extremely important in looking at eschatological issues that involve Israel because if God's promises of the Land and other future blessings made specifically to the nation of Israel unconditionally are not fulfilled in a plain, literal way, then God is revealed to be a liar, untrustworthy & unfaithful. Obviously that places an immense burden on proving that the covenants are unconditional and that, if not already fulfilled in the NT or the latter parts of the OT, then they must be fulfilled in the future.

I think it is important to mention at the outset that I am not here referring to "Covenant Theology", a term I've mentioned before and which has little to do with these particular Biblical covenants. According to Renald Showers, Covenant Theology is defined this way; "it is a system of theology that attempts to develop the Bible's philosophy of history on the basis of 2 or 3 covenants. It represents the whole of Scripture and history as being covered by these 2 or 3 covenants". The covenants used are not the ones we'll look at, they are:

- The Covenant of Redemption
- The Covenant of Works
- The Covenant of Grace<sup>i</sup>

Some believe only 2 covenants exist and they combine #'s 1 & 3 & call it The Covenant of Redemption & Grace. We will examine Covenant Theology in a bit more detail later on.

Covenant Theology's counterpart is called Dispensational Theology, which we have already looked at in a bit of detail. However, Dispensational Theology is defined this way; "It is a system of theology which attempts to develop the Bible's philosophy of history on the basis of the sovereign rule of God. It represents the whole of history as being covered by several ( usually 7 ) dispensations or time periods of God's rule.<sup>ii</sup> He adds, "a dispensation is a stage in a progressive revelation, expressly adapted to the needs of a particular nation or period of time<sup>iii</sup>...and a particular way of God's administering His rule over the world as He progressively works out His purpose for world history<sup>iv</sup>." ②

Most dispensationalists recognize 7 dispensations or 'economics'; Dispensation of:

- Innocence – from creation to the fall
- Conscience – from the fall to Noah's flood
- Human Government – from the flood to the call of Abraham
- Promise – from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law
- Mosaic Law – from the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai to Calvary
- Grace – from the death of Christ to His 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent or the start of the Tribulation Period
- Millennium – begins with the coming of Christ and ends immediately prior to the release of Satan at the end of the 1,000 years
- Some see an 8<sup>th</sup> dispensation – that of The Eternal State, but since ( as we'll see later ), there is no test in heaven for man to pass so this should not be considered as a separate dispensation.

Here is a brief picture of what Dispensational Theology is all about, showing the essential 3 characteristics of "a dispensation."

1. It must have a way of God administering His rule. Each dispensation has a unique factor or combination of ruling factors.
2. It must involve a particular responsibility for man. Each dispensation makes man responsible to obey God in accordance with its' unique ruling factor(s).
3. It must be characterized by divine revelation which had not been given before. In order for man to know God's new way of ruling and his new responsibility, he must have these things revealed to him. ie. ) Paul says this present dispensation is related to new revelation which God gave to the apostles and NT prophets ( Eph. 3:2-10 ).

There are also 3 secondary characteristics:

1. Each dispensation applies a test to man. Will men perfectly obey God's rule by fulfilling the responsibility unique to that dispensation?
2. Each dispensation demonstrates the failure of man to obey the particular rule of God in that dispensation.
3. Each dispensation involves divine judgment because of man's failure.

Here are 5 points of clarification:

1. Different dispensations are different ways of God administering His rule over the world. They are not different ways of salvation – there is only ever one way.
2. A dispensation is not an age of history, although a dispensation may cover the same period of time as an age.
3. A dispensation may involve only one segment of mankind – ie. ) The Dispensation of Mosaic Law was over the nation of Israel. ③
4. A new dispensation may continue or discontinue some ruling factor(s) from previous dispensations, but will have at least one ruling factor never before introduced. The dispensations are usually named after the new ruling factor.
5. Each new dispensation demands new revelation. God must reveal His new way of ruling and man's responsibility near the beginning of the dispensation. There is therefore progressive revelation.

*“Numerous things in the Bible indicate that God has employed different dispensations of ways of administering His rule throughout history. For example, before the Noahic flood, God did not institute capital punishment for murderers ( Gen. 4:9-15 ), but He did institute it after the flood ( Gen. 9:5-6 ). Between the giving of the Mosaic Law and the death of Christ, God commanded that adulterers in Israel be put to death ( Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22; JN 8:5 ), but since the death of Christ God does not so command ( I Cor. 6:9-11 )...”v*

## II. The Abrahamic Covenant

We will begin by looking at a huge covenant, that even on its' own merits supplies us with ample evidence for a future for Israel specifically in the Land promised to Abraham, and from which some of the other covenants are derived.

I'm going to begin this section with a lengthy quote which defines the Abrahamic Covenant very well. ( Hereafter AC = Abrahamic Covenant )

*"...the Abrahamic Covenant is the single most important event in the OT. It governs God's entire program for Israel and the nations, and is thus determinative of God's program in history. The AC is foundational to all of Scripture. It is the key to both the OT and NTs and is foundational to the whole program of redemption. All subsequent revelation is the outworking of this covenant. This covenant, and the subsequent covenant framework, is the key to understanding Scripture.*

*The essence of God's covenant with Abraham consists of three basic aspects: land, seed and blessing. Each of the divine covenants that follow are the outworking of the AC. The Palestinian Covenant ( Deut. 28-30 ) amplifies the land aspect of the AC. The Davidic Covenant ( 2 Sam. 7:8-17 ) amplifies the seed aspect, and the New Covenant ( Jer. 31:27-37; Ezek. 36:22-32 ) amplifies the blessings aspect. Thus, the AC is the fountainhead from which the others flow. The AC then, is determinative for the entire outworking of God's program for both Israel and the nations and is the key to biblical eschatology."*<sup>vi</sup>

The position one takes with regard to Israel and the Millennial Kingdom is greatly determined by their understanding of the AC. Abraham is one of the most referred to characters in both the NT and OT – for good reason. It is through Abraham, a descendant of Noah's son, Shem, that God has chosen to thread a family line which results in God's chosen nation, Israel, out of one tribe of 12, Judah's line, through certain ancestral individuals until the fullness of time arrives, and then God sends forth His Son, born of the virgin Mary, a direct descendant of David the King. Mary's husband, not Jesus' biological father, but his legal father, also descended from David's line. This Jesus lived, died, rose from the grave, ascended to heaven and will return from there to set up His Kingdom here on earth, ruling from David's throne in Jerusalem.

As we will see, the key to whether or not this covenant God made with Abraham guarantees a future for Israel in the Land God promised hinges on whether or not the covenant was unconditional. Since all the provisions of the AC were not fulfilled by the end of the OT, and for God to be faithful, they must be fulfilled, then the question arises – are these promises going to be fulfilled literally or figuratively?

Notice this quote by Loraine Boettner ( a Post-Millennarian ) who sees the AC as conditional;

*"The mass of those who then called themselves Israelites ceased to be such for prophetic and covenant purposes, having forfeited their citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel by refusing to accept the Messiah, and that after this event all the privileges of the AC and all the promises of God belonged to the believing remnant, and to them only; which remnant was therefore and*

*thereafter the true Israel & Judah, the seed of Abraham, the Christian Church...It may seem harsh to say that, "God is through with the Jews." But the fact of the matter is that he is through with them as a unified national group.*"<sup>vii</sup>

Both A-Mils and Post-Mils rely on statements like, Gen. 22:18, "because you have obeyed My voice"; and Gen. 26:4-5, to Isaac, "because Abraham obeyed Me..."; and Gen. 17:1-2, "...be blameless.", to prove that the AC is conditional, not unconditional. But do such verses prove that the AC is conditional? If so, it is possible that Israel's rejection of Christ did nullify the AC and God could legally rescind His promises and / or give them to another group.

Here in Gen. 12:1-3, we find the first statement of the AC --- <sup>1</sup>Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

There is possibly one condition found here, which is the initial promise made to Abraham, which will be ratified in Gen. 15. The condition was for Abraham to go out from his country, leave his father's house and go to the land that God would show him. That is the only condition in these verses and it was fulfilled by Abraham. Some see it as an invitation rather than a command to be obeyed, but regardless, it was met by Abraham.

John Walvoort, quoted in Benware's book, comments, ⑤  
*"Except for the original condition of leaving his homeland and going to the promised land, the covenant is made with no conditions whatever. It is rather a prophetic declaration of God of what will certainly come to pass, and is no more conditional than any other announced plan of God which depends upon God's sovereignty for its' fulfillment."*<sup>viii</sup>

Gen. 12:4-7 – in v. 7, God promises to give this land ( where the Canaanites were living at the time ) to Abraham's descendants, and again, no further condition is mentioned. And in Gen. 13:14-18, Abraham is at the place ( v. 14 ) he had built an altar ( 12:8 ) between Ai and Bethel when this promise of God is made again, and note the addition in Gen. 13:15, of "forever".

Gen. 15:4-21. Something extremely critical is taking place in Genesis 15. The promises God has made to Abraham ( never requested by Abraham, but offered by God's grace ) thus far are being ratified, and it is here we find our most solid proof of the unconditional nature of the AC.

In vv. 1-6, God again promises that Abraham's offspring would be virtually uncountable, and in v. 7, God again promises him the land. In response to Abraham's question in v. 8, God 'cuts' a covenant with Abraham in the ancient tradition of passing through rows of slaughtered animals, the point of which is that any party of the covenant that breaks the covenant deserves to be slaughtered like the animals. It was a covenant of blood.

Now take very careful notice of vv. 9-18. After cutting up the animals and laying them out, the chasing away birds of prey, Abraham falls into a deep sleep and God alone passes through the cut up animals! He reiterates His promises to Abraham in a sort of dream-vision. Typically, all parties to a covenant like this one would pass through the animals, but only God does so here. Charles Ryrie says here,

*“The significance of that is striking; it means that God swore fidelity to His promises and placed the obligation of their fulfillment on Himself alone. Abraham made no such oath; he was in a deep sleep, yet aware of what God promised. Clearly the AC was not conditioned on anything Abraham would or would not do; its fulfillment in all its parts depends only on God’s doings.”<sup>x</sup>*

God alone was obligated to fulfill His promises here. Abraham is given no command, is not asked to respond in faithfulness or to obey any particular aspect of what is promised in order for the promises to take place. It was all up to God. The covenant is also repeated in Gen. 17:4-8.

Some objectors to this position point out these verses to say that conditions were later attached to the covenant: **Gen. 17:1-2, 9-14; 22:16-18; 26:3-5**. Renald Showers makes an important observation about these verses;

*“These statements were made years after God formally established the covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15. When the covenant was formally established, God stated no conditions. According to Galatians 3:15, once a covenant has been established no conditions are added to it. Thus to say that the statements of Gen. 17:1-2; 22:16-18; 26:3-5 indicate that the AC is conditional, is to say that God added conditions after the covenant was established and that God thereby violated the principle of Gal. 3:15.”<sup>x</sup>*

Others say that Gen. 17:9-14, the command to circumcise, amounts to a condition as well. However, circumcision was not given as a condition to the covenant ( which had been in existence for years by then ), but as sign of the covenant. Those who refused to be circumcised would lose out on the blessings of the covenant but they would not terminate their relationship with God.<sup>xi</sup> Sin and disobedience would result in a loss of blessings for the disobedient person(s), but could never cancel the covenant itself.

An example of this is given to us when Israel is barred from entering the land in Numbers 14 due to the mistrust of God’s promises by most of the people when 10 of the 12 spies gave a bad report. They wandered for 40 years in the wilderness, but note that they eventually did enter the land in partial fulfillment of Gen. 15:16. However, only the younger generation along with Joshua and Caleb entered, and the rest died off on the way. God’s purpose was not set aside or set back by their rebellion, it was merely delayed, and the delay actually worked out to fulfill the timing for the entry to the land based on the promise to Abraham in **Gen. 15:16**. The iniquity of the Amorites was not complete until Israel entered the land and their judgment at the hands of Israel was right on God’s timing. This also parallels what Paul tells us in **Romans 11:2,11,25-29**.

There is proof that the covenant remained in effect despite Israel's sinfulness; cf. Gen. 50:24; Ex. 2:24; Deut. 9:5-6; 4:31; 2 Kings 13:23; Micah 7:18,20; LK 1:67-75; Acts 3:25-26; Heb. 6:13-20 – Renald Showers says of Heb. 6:13-20, “...the AC was still to be a course of encouragement to the Jews who were still living when Hebrews was written (AD 60's), in spite of the fact that Israel had rejected Christ several decades earlier.”<sup>xii</sup>

As we go through the rest of the OT and NT, reference is often made to the AC, which solidifies the promises, even during times of Israel's rebellion and judgment from God. cf. **Jer. 31:35-37**. Although this passage is part of the New Covenant, it certifies what was promised to Abraham. The AC is said to be everlasting on several occasions – cf. Gen. 13:15; 17:7,13,19; I Chron. 16:16-17; Ps. 105:9-10.

Charles Ryrie comments, “*The Scriptures clearly teach that this is an eternal covenant based on the gracious promises of God. There may be delays, postponements, and chastisements, but an eternal covenant cannot, if God cannot deny Himself, be abrogated.*”<sup>xiii</sup>

## Fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant

The AC was made between God and Abraham & extended to Abraham's descendants. Thus, the fulfillment is to be expected to be fulfilled to Abraham's descendants. So we need to identify who they are.

It is crucial to understand who the recipients of the AC promises are. This is the crux of the argument between the Pre, A, and Post-Mil positions. Are the descendants national Israel only or a combination of Israel and the Church, or just the church into which the true Israel has been assimilated? A-Mils say that the seed of Abraham is the spiritual seed – believers from all ages from any nation since Gal. 3:6-9 says that believers are “sons of Abraham”<sup>xiv</sup>.

This is clarified by the 3 ways “seed of Abraham” is used in Scripture.

1. It refers to physical descendants of Abraham, especially those who descended from Abraham & Isaac
2. It is used in relation to Israelites who were genuine believers – in both the OT & NT – S. Lewis Johnson says here regarding Romans 9, “*Paul writes, “For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel”. It is sometimes thought that Paul in this statement says that believing Gentiles are to be found in the expression, “all Israel”. Thus, their salvation would justify his statement that the Word of God has not failed, “Israel being broad enough to include both believing Jews and Gentiles. That cannot be true. The idea is foreign to the text ( cf. vv. 1-5 ). Rather, the apostle is making the same point he has made previously in the letter ( cf. 2:28-29; 4:12 ). The division he speaks of is within the seed, the natural, ethnic descendants of the patriarchs ( from Jacob, or Israel ). In the second occurrence of the word in v. 6, Paul refers to the elect within*

*the nation, the Isaacs and Jacobs. To the total body of ethnic Israel the apostle denies the term "Israel" in its most meaningful sense of the believing ethnic seed. Gentiles are not in view at all. As a matter of fact, the sense of the term "Israelites" in verse 4, and there it can only refer to the ethnic nation's members.*"<sup>xv</sup>

3. It is applied to Gentiles who are in Christ as a result of their personal faith in Him. They are the spiritual seed of Gal. 3:6-9; they are heirs of the promise given to "all families of the earth" ( Gen. 12:3 ). However, Gentiles are not said to fulfill the promise given to physical descendants of Abraham. John Walvoort comments, *"The passage itself...makes very clear that Gentiles who are recognized as the children of Abraham come under the promise given to the Gentiles and not under promises given to the physical seed of Abraham. The portion of the AC which is quoted by Paul refers to the Gentiles in the words, "In thee shall all the nations be blessed." Paul's conclusion therefore is: "So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham." This means that they come under the blessing promised to the nations, but it does not mean that they come under the all the promises given to Abraham personally or to his seed in the physical sense. A Gentile in the present age is Abraham's seed because he is "in Christ Jesus" ( Gal. 3:28 ).*"<sup>xvi</sup>

Can this covenant be transferred to another party in order to be fulfilled? For example, here is what A-Mils & Post-Mils argue – from passages like Rom. 9:6; 2:28-29; I Pet. 2:9-10; Gal. 3:7,29; 6:16 & Matt. 21:43 – that Israel's status as a nation has been cancelled and the NT now identifies Jews as those who were circumcised inwardly & are not necessarily Jewish by birth, and further that the NT identifies God's new people as the church, and the church is now "the Israel of God". This is formed from both Jews and Gentiles, because national Israel is now defunct – permanently.

However, we have already seen in Gal. 3:15-19 that once a covenant has been ratified or confirmed, it cannot be changed. This would obviously include both the terms of the covenant and the parties involved. Abraham would have understood the promises of the covenant to be fulfilled in his natural descendants. Since the promises were also extended to spiritual descendants ( all nations ), this does not have to mean that the original intended recipients of the promises have been set aside. In an unconditional covenant, such a setting aside would be evidence of the unfaithfulness of the One who took full responsibility for fulfilling His covenant – in this case, God.

Have all the promises of the AC been fulfilled yet? Some have been. The personal blessings promised to Abraham took place literally – God blessed him, his name is great ( even among the 3 major religions in the world today – Christianity, Judaism & Islam ), he had an heir from Sarah and through him many nations have already been blessed. His descendants did enter the promised Land in the time frame based on the fullness of the iniquity of the Amorites in the 4<sup>th</sup> generation. However, some key aspects of they AC have not yet been fulfilled, and must be. For one thing, Israel has never fully controlled the extent of land

that God gave to Abraham. It will become apparent as we look at the other 3 unconditional covenants – the Palestinian, the Davidic & the New Covenants what remains to be fulfilled. All 3 of these are really expansions or sub-covenants of the AC and are also unconditional.

### III. The Palestinian Covenant      Deut. 30:1-10

As even modern history tells us, this smallish piece of land, not full of beauty & grandeur, majestic mountain peaks or 10 storey waterfalls is at the center of world history from almost the beginning until the end and right on into the Millennium, and even then the New Heaven & New earth have their capital as the New Jerusalem! There is no more eschatologically strategic land on earth than Israel. The Palestinian Covenant ( hereafter PC ) is an enlargement or detailed breakdown of the land promise in the AC. It provides detail and adds important truths for our understanding of the land promised to Abraham.

The information for this covenant is found in Deut. 30:1-10 & Num. 34:1-12. While Numbers 14 lays out the extent of the land, Deuteronomy 28-29 admittedly presents what do appear to be conditions. However, like the unconditional nature of the AC, disobedience could bring about a loss of blessing ( and even temporary transference off the land ), but cannot annul the promise entirely. It is clear that Israel's sinfulness did cause God to move them off the land for a time, but we must be clear that Deut. 30:3ff tells us only the timing has a condition. Once their hearts are right ( ie. they are saved – Rom. 11:26; Jer<sup>9</sup> 31; Ezek. 36 ), God's promises will be fulfilled at that time – the Millennial Kingdom. The next 2 covenants will also show this clearly.

The land was given to Abraham's descendants 'forever' ( Gen. 13:15; 17:8; Ezek. 16:60-63, and note v. 63, "when I atone for you." ). Since the covenant promise is forever, only temporary loss of the land would be a correct interpretation and this fits well into Paul's important arguments in Romans 9-11.

It is possible for Israel to own the land ( we've seen it in the OT and today ) and yet not live on it and enjoy it. Based on the AC, they own the land, regardless of who is occupying it or in control of it for now. Because the AC is unconditional, they will possess it and enjoy it at some point in the future. We believe that time will be when the Messiah returns and calls them all back to Himself – cf. **Isa. 11:10-12; 60:15-21; Joel 3:17-20; Amos 9:14-15; Obadiah 19-21; Zech. 8:8; 14:11, etc.**

Although Israel did possess the promised land for a time, they did not possess it forever or even completely, so OT times of them being on the land do not fully satisfy the terms of the covenant, and therefore, God being faithful, a future time of permanent and full possession of the full extent of the land is yet future.

Today's Israel may or may not be the start or root of that fulfillment, but the Israel now in the land has not been converted by God and is mostly a secular

version of Israel – in name only – with no real heart for God, and for the most part, anti-Christian. As believers we want to be careful not to go against God’s people, but there is also a need for real discernment so while we cautiously expect that this is the revived Israel, before God changes their hearts, we do not support every evil action of Israel that goes against righteousness. For example, we sympathize with the precarious and dangerous political position they are in amongst their enemies, we must also protest against unwarranted attacks against some Arab people in the land, especially since many of them are Christians, not Muslims.

Many A-Mils agree that the OT possession of the land is not a complete fulfillment of the PC, but they say that the final fulfillment is not on earth, but in heaven, the idea being that God will fulfill it in an unexpected way. Joel Green comments; *“The promise to Abraham of a land...provides an eye opening biblical example of this idea ( unexpected fulfillment ). In the OT, the land was considered God’s to give as he willed...The promised land was the “inheritance”...in the NT Abraham’s inheritance, the promised land, took the form of a better country – a heavenly one”( Heb. 11:8-16 ). Indeed, the OT concept of the inheritance was recast in the NT to designate the all-embracing concept of the Kingdom of God...The promise of the land awaits complete fulfillment in a new form, that of the believer’s heavenly dwelling with God.”<sup>xvii</sup>*

Of course, God can do anything He desires to do. The question is what did He say He would do, because that is precisely what He will do. Even Loraine Boettner ( Post-Mil ) has to agree with the Pre-Mil position here, *“The united testimony of the prophets is all to the same point, that Israel will yet be regathered from the nations of the world and reassembled in their land...The promises of regathering linked as they are in Scripture to the original promise of the land as an everlasting possession of Israel, coupled with the fact that no possession of the land in history has approached a complete fulfillment of these Scriptural promises, make it clear that Israel as a future, and in that future will actually possess all the land promised Abraham’s seed as long as this present earth continues.”<sup>xviii</sup>*

The PC foretells dispersion from the land of an unfaithful and sinful Israel, and it also foretells that this same national Israel ( obviously generations later ) will be called back by God to inherit the land with changed hearts and sins forgiven. Once back in the land, they will never be uprooted.

#### IV. The Davidic Covenant 2 Sam. 7:9-17; I Chron. 17:10-15

In 2 Samuel 7 we come across the 1<sup>st</sup> mention of what we call the Davidic Covenant ( hereafter DC ). It too is an expansion of the AC as it develops the “seed” portion of the AC and further narrows down the line from which this ‘seed’, Christ, would come. It also lays out a promise that this seed would rule over the earth forever from David’s throne. In Gen. 17:7, Abraham is told that “kings shall come from you.”

**Gen. 49:10** is part of a prophecy by Jacob, limiting the promise of a kingdom and throne to the tribe of Judah, “the scepter shall not depart from Judah”, and now the DC narrows down the kingdom and throne to David’s direct descendant.

This covenant, like the AC, is eternal and unconditional. The eternal nature of the DC is given in II Sam. 7:13 & 16 – “forever”, and in Ps. 89:3-4 – “forever” & “for all generations”, and in vv. 28-29 & 35-37 – “forever”, “as the days of the heavens”, “as the sun before Me”, “like the moon...forever.”

In other passages, such as Isa. 9:6-7, this eternal aspect of the DC is stressed and clues begin to attach to it that indicate who this descendant will be – especially v. 6 – “Mighty God, Everlasting Father”. Micah 5:2 is less detailed and doesn’t pick up on the eternal idea of the throne but gives the birthplace of this One to come & His pedigree – “whose coming forth is from old, from ancient days.” Likewise, in Luke 1:32, the angel Gabriel tells Mary that her child will have the throne of David and will reign over Israel forever, and His kingdom will never end.

There is an overlap within the DC in **2 Sam. 7:14**. This verse cannot be talking about Jesus, but actually refers to Solomon, David’s immediate heir to the throne. It is predicting that this immediate heir would sin and God would punish him for it. We see that punishment described in **I Kings 11:9-14**, and note how v. 13 goes along with **2 Sam. 7:15-16**. This certifies that the DC was unconditional, because the blessing could be removed for disobedience in an earlier episode like Solomon’s case, but when the One came whom God had in mind as the final king on David’s throne, it would be forever. That king is of course, Christ. Even given the abject failure of Solomon and later failures by king after king after the kingdom was divided, God could have rescinded the promise ( the DC ) but He did not – it is still being promised to Mary in Luke 1 when a Roman appointed Idumean is on the ( by this time ) merely symbolic throne of Israel. ⑪

## Provisions of the Davidic Covenant

- 2 Sam. 7:9 – “I will make for you a great name”. Obviously, this has already been fulfilled.
- 2 Sam. 7:10-11 – “Rest from his enemies” – in the land God gave to Israel, a repeat of the Palestinian Covenant, took place in David’s reign and overflowed into Solomon’s & now describes the Millennial Kingdom to come.
- 2 Sam. 7:11b – “a house” – this is referring to David’s physical descendants, and means his line would never be cut off, and again, although there was no descendant on his throne for 600 years, the genealogies of both Matthew 1:6 and Luke 3:32-33 trace Jesus’ ancestry back to David.
- 2 Sam. 7:12-13 – David’s throne would be established forever. This means that the authority to rule from David’s throne would never pass away permanently, even though it has been many 100’s of years since a

descendant of David's has sat on that throne ( 2,600 years and counting ), but the promise to Mary in Luke 1 is proof positive that Jesus will reign, and during His first advent, it never happened.

- 2 Sam. 7:14-17 – David's kingdom would last forever. Even though there are times when then kingdom would not exist as a definable kingdom ( it has been notoriously interrupted as in AD 70 to 1948 ), there will be a future kingdom restored that will never be interrupted again.<sup>xix</sup>

Pre-Mils see the DC as yet to be literally fulfilled. As Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation, He will set up His 1,000 year kingdom, will rule over it from David's throne from Jerusalem, thus fulfilling the covenant and then on into forever, the eternal state. This kingdom has geographic, political, physical and spiritual natures.

A-Mils and Post-Mils see the fulfillment as current – Christ is reigning on the Davidic throne in heaven over a spiritual kingdom, ruling in the hearts of believers, thus no physical, literal future fulfillment is ever going to be necessary. There are some variations within those 2 eschatological camps, but this is the general belief.

As we've seen in the AC & PC, literal fulfillment of God's promises and prophecies is expected. Parts of the DC have already been fulfilled – his name is great, he had rest from his enemies for a time in his lifetime. The throne, house and forever kingdom parts have yet to be fulfilled. Again, the DC is unconditional. It was made with David who descended from Abraham, Jacob, Isaac & Judah and it will be fulfilled in that specific line, of which is Christ.

12

The throne that Christ now rules from, and there is no question about His rule, is in heaven ( Ps. 11:4; 103:19 ), but it is not David's throne and it is not in Jerusalem. He is on God's throne according to **Rev. 3:21**, a throne established long before David's – cf. **Ps. 93:1-2**. David's throne was established in 2 Sam 2. It would not be necessary for God to promise to establish David's throne if God's throne & David's throne are one and the same, because God's throne was already eternal.<sup>xx</sup> In fact, Rev. 3:21 makes a distinction between God's heavenly throne & Jesus' throne, which must be David's throne from which He will rule when He returns to earth.

Quite a few passages in the NT depict Jesus sitting at God's right hand<sup>xxi</sup>, but it is God's, not Jesus' and not David's throne. In heaven Jesus functions as our High Priest. When He returns to earth, in Rev. 19:16, it is as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. In heaven, as High Priest and Mediator, He bestows salvation, forgiveness, the Spirit and He intercedes for us. That is not an aspect depicted in the DC.

In **Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13-14,27**, the final kingdom is shown to be established after history as we know it has been completed. This cannot be describing what is going on today or immediately after Jesus ascended to heaven. The language of

these passages in Daniel clearly picture the timing of the Millennium as the end, after Antichrist and the Tribulation.

There is a parallel between the rule of David and of Christ, David was declared to be king of Israel and anointed in I Sam. 16:1-13, however, he did not receive the kingdom in authority until 2 Sam. 2:4-11. In a similar way, Jesus, when He came the first time was king, no question, although He did not take that role on and even refused it in John 6, and there is no question that He also sovereignly rules from heaven now, but it is not until Rev. 11:15 that it is declared that “the Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ and He will reign forever and ever.” This is a reasonably clear allusion to the fulfillment of the DC, and it is yet future.

The DC was never fully completed in the NT era, and is not yet fulfilled in this church age. It will be fulfilled when David’s promised Son, Jesus Christ returns to earth and reigns from David’s throne from Jerusalem after man’s kingdoms have been eliminated in judgment. – take note of: Dan. 2:35,44; 7:13-14; Zech. 9:10; 14:1-4, 9-11; Matt. 24:27-31; 25:31-33; Rev. 11:15; 19:11-16; 20:1-6.

## V. The New Covenant<sup>xxii</sup> Jer. 31:31-40

It would be sad indeed if Jesus returned to reign from David’s throne in Jerusalem over restored land of Israel and yet those He governed over were unsaved and rebellious. The New Covenant<sup>xxiii</sup> ( hereafter NC ) is about the aspect of the blessings promised to Abraham, but those blessings depend heavily on the salvation of the nation of Israel. ⑬

The New Covenant is also eternal and unconditional, which is readily seen in Jer. 31 and Ezek. 34, 36 & 37, where time after time the promise is based on God’s “I will” repeatedly stated. There is no “if you, then I will”, just, “I will”. All salvation is dependant solely on God’s work and in the NC it is unmistakable that he intends to fulfill this covenant which focuses on salvation.

### Recipients of the Covenant

Jer. 31:31 is very clear, “I will make a NC with the House of Israel and the House of Judah”, and this will be the same people He made the old covenant with, which they broke. The covenant they broke is not The AC, PC or DC because there were no conditions for them to break in those covenants, as we have already seen. This can only be the Mosaic Covenant, which was given to Israel, not the gentiles ( who were not delivered out of Egypt ). See Ex. 19:1-8; 24:1-8. Notice the covenant language here and the response of then people – “all that the Lord has spoken, we will do”. That is the people’s side of this covenant and makes it conditional. So the NC is first between Israel and God, however, in light of many NT passages, does the church become a partaker of the NC as well? We will look at that shortly when we look at the fulfillment of the NC below.

## Provisions of the New Covenant

There are 7 main provisions made by God in the NC, as stated in Jer. 31:31-40:

1. God's law will be within them, written on their hearts – v. 33 – cf. **Ezek. 36:27-28** as well
2. God will be their God and they will be His people – v. 33
3. They will all know the Lord – no need to be taught – v. 34
4. God will forgive their iniquity – v. 34
5. God will remember their sin no more ( eternal ) – v. 34. 37
6. Jerusalem will be rebuilt and will be sacred to God – vv. 38-40
7. Jerusalem will not be uprooted or overthrown anymore forever – v. 40

This is described as a time of abundance, prosperity, peace, safety, rebuilding and many other blessings, something the prophets & all of Israel have looked forward to with great passion and anticipation.

## The Fulfillment of the New Covenant

Every time OT prophets mentioned the NC, they saw it as a future event, even when those prophets were right at the time of the exilic return. Part of the reason is that the NC is tied up with the PC and restoration of the land; so if the land is not yet restored, neither is the spiritual restoration referred to in the NC. The Israel of 1948 may or may not be the start of the fulfillment of the land, but to date, it is certainly not the spiritual fulfillment of the NC as of this time. The land possessed today is much smaller than the prophecy, Israel is not yet dwelling in safety or great blessing, there is no Temple ( or even access to the location of the Temple ) and Christ is not yet ruling from David's throne in Jerusalem. ⑭

The basis of the NC is the saving work of Christ on the Cross. Even some 35 years after that event, Paul still anticipated a future fulfillment of the NC, it being obvious that the kingdom had not arrived yet for Israel at Christ's first advent – cf. **Rom. 11:25-28**.

The Millennial Kingdom will be the era when the NC is fulfilled for national Israel and the Millennium will follow a 7 year Tribulation which is the 70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel. During the 7 year Tribulation, Israel will begin to see that Jesus is their Messiah – they will look on Him whom they pierced and will mourn ( cf. Zech. 12:10; 14:4 & JN 19:37 ). At the end of the Tribulation, a standing, living group of survivors, mostly Jewish-Christians will enter the Millennial Kingdom in physical bodies along with some saved gentiles. That is not the church. The body of believers in the Millennium is made up of saints but with a distinctly Jewish flavor – another point we'll assess when we look at Romans 11. But then what about passages in the NT which tell us that the church has a relationship with the NC?<sup>xxiv</sup> Here are 6 main points to show the limitations of this relationship<sup>xxv</sup>:

1. The promise of the NC is to Israel, as given through Jeremiah, Ezekiel and other prophets.
2. The silence of OT prophecy regarding the church does not rule out the church entirely from having a relationship with God in the NC
3. Provision was made within the AC for the blessing of the gentile nations – cf. Gen. 12:3, and that blessing is coming through the church
4. The church does partake of some NC blessings – they are regenerated, forgiven and indwelt
5. The church is related to the NC in the Lord's Table – cf. **Luke 22:20**
6. Paul sees himself and others as ministers of the NC – 2 Cor. 3 – he was chiefly an apostle to the gentiles.

## Summary of the 4 Covenants

We have now examined the 4 main covenants which deal with the blessings promised to Abraham's descendants – the nation of Israel, his seed. Obviously, we could spend much more time on all 4, but we do not want to lose sight of the fact that it is background to support the biblical view of the Millennial Kingdom in Rev. 20:1-10. Here are some key summary factors to keep in mind:

- These covenants were made with Israel, not the church, which did not exist until Acts 2. Once a covenant has been ratified, it cannot be altered or changed, including who the recipients of the blessings are. Since gentiles are included, especially in the AC and NC, they do receive blessings, but these blessings cannot dislodge the original beneficiary of the covenant blessings, Israel. ⑮
- These covenants are unconditional and eternal. None of them has yet been completely fulfilled so they must still be awaiting completion in the future or there is a risk that God will be seen as unfaithful or untruthful. Neither alternative is acceptable. Since they are unconditional, with God the only party with a responsibility to carry out His end of the contracts, there is no way they can ever be rescinded even if Israel commits heinous sin, which they did when they rejected Christ.
- Sin & disobedience can cause the loss of blessings to individuals and even generations, but cannot finally annul an unconditional covenant. The concept of the remnant also kicks in here as we realize that not every single individual within a group have to be included in all the blessings.
- It should be expected that the covenants will be fulfilled literally. Interpreting the covenants literally allows for the existence of figures of speech and variant types of literature, yet still follows a natural view of what the language, no matter what genre, is saying.

Next lesson, we will look at the very important question. “Has the Church Replaced Israel?”

Next lesson – Lesson # 66 – Romans 11 – Has The Church Replaced Israel?

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<sup>i</sup> Renald E. Showers; There Really is a Difference; FOI; 1990; p. 7

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- ii IBID; p. 27  
iii IBID; p. 29  
iv IBID; p. 29  
v IBID: pp/ 28-32 ( all of the points above + this paragraph. )  
vi Mal Couch; general editor, Dictionary of Premillennial Theology; Kregel Books; 1996; p. 27  
vii Loraine Boettner, quoted in Paul Benware, Understanding End Times Prophecy; Moody Press; p. 35  
viii Benware, pp. 36-37  
ix IBID, p. 40  
x Showers, p. 62  
xi Benware, p. 38  
xii Showers, p. 46  
xiii Benware, quoting Charles Ryrie, p. 46.  
xiv IBID, p. 46  
xv IBID, p. 47 – quoting S. Lewis Johnson  
xvi IBID, pp. 47-48  
xvii Joel B. Green, How to Read Prophecy, IVP, 1984; pp. 104-105  
xviii Loraine Boettner, The Millennium, P & R, 1957 – reprint 1991; p. 119  
xix Benware, p. 59  
xx Benware, pp. 61-62  
xxi Acts 2:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; I Pet. 3:22; Heb. 1:13; 8:1; 12:2  
xxii I counted heavily on Benware for this section – pp. 68-74  
xxiii Jer. 31:31-40; 32:40; Ezek. 16:60-62; 34:25-31; 37:26-28; Rom. 11:25-27; Heb. 8:6-13  
xxiv Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; Rom. 11:27; I Cor. 11:25; II Cor. 3:6; Heb. 8:8-13; 9:15; 12:24  
xxv Benware, pp. 71-73