

### Key characteristics of the Davidic covenant

Within the Old Testament, we find God's covenant with David narrated in 2 Sam. 7 (and also 1 Chron. 17), with further reflection on this covenant and on its importance also found in Psalms, particularly among the so-called 'royal' psalms (e.g., Ps. 2, 45, 72, 89, 110, 132). While there is much else that could be said about this covenant, the following characteristics are especially key.

Seven primary characteristics: *God's covenant with David establishes . . .*

1. *an everlasting dynasty/'house'*: unlike with Israel's first king, Saul, David's kingship will endure forever (Ps. 45:6; 89:36-37), being passed on to his offspring (2 Sam. 7:11-16).
2. *an unconditional divine guarantee*: in contrast to the Mosaic covenant, God's covenant with David is simply granted, without any potentially nullifying obligations. Although it is anticipated that his offspring will build a house for the LORD, in fulfillment of David's own desire (2 Sam. 7:13), this is not a covenant condition; similarly, though obedience to God's commandments is assumed, the covenant does not hinge on this, and potential future disobedience is accounted for via 'filial chastening' (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 89:30-34).
3. *a father-son relationship between God and the Davidic king*: God promises to be a father to David's offspring, placing him in a filial covenant relation to God, such that the chosen 'son of David' is said to be the first-born 'son of God' (2 Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; 89:26-27).
4. *the Davidic king as the LORD's anointed one (messiah)*: God's choosing of David and his heirs involves an anointing (1 Sam. 16:13; 1 Kg. 1:38-40; 2 Kg. 11:12) that sets him apart as king over the twelve tribes of Israel (Ps. 45:7; 89:20) and as a priest 'after the order of Melchizedek' (Ps. 110:4). In Gen. 14:18, Melchizedek is identified as king of Salem (i.e., Jerusalem, see Ps. 76:2) and is also the first person in Scripture given the title 'priest.'
5. *the international scope of the Davidic kingdom*: the reign and 'royal priesthood' (cf. Ex. 19:6) of the Davidic king is to extend from Israel to the entire world (Ps. 2:8; 72:8), such that 'all nations' might be led to worship of and obedience to the LORD (Ps. 72:11, 17).
6. *the centrality of Jerusalem, and, in particular, Mount Zion*: more than just the capital city of the Davidic king, Jerusalem is home to Mount Zion, the LORD's 'holy hill' (Ps. 2:6), which is the site of the future Temple, the 'house for God's name' (2 Sam. 7:13).
7. *the Jerusalem Temple as covenant sign*: though it is not a condition of the covenant, the building of the Temple by David's offspring (with the help of foreigners, see 2 Kg. 5-6) serves as a visible sign of the covenant and of the LORD's dwelling and reign in Israel.

Three secondary characteristics: *Within the Davidic covenant and kingdom, there emerges . . .*

1. *an emphasis on wisdom as basis for moral instruction*: the international scope of the Davidic kingdom requires legislation more universal than that of Moses, that is, 'a law for man' (2 Sam. 7:19) that is present and discernable in the natural order created by God.
2. *an emphasis on the sacrifice of thanksgiving*: among legal sacrifices, the *todah* or thank-offering (Lev. 7:12-15) comes to enjoy a privileged place (Ps. 50:13-15; Ps. 116:8, 17-19).
3. *a unique role for the queen mother*: in the Davidic monarchy, queenship and being seated at the king's right hand (Ps. 45:9) were enjoyed not by the king's wife but by his mother (see Jer. 13:18; 2 Kg. 24:15), who also was an advocate before the king (see 1 Kg. 2:19).