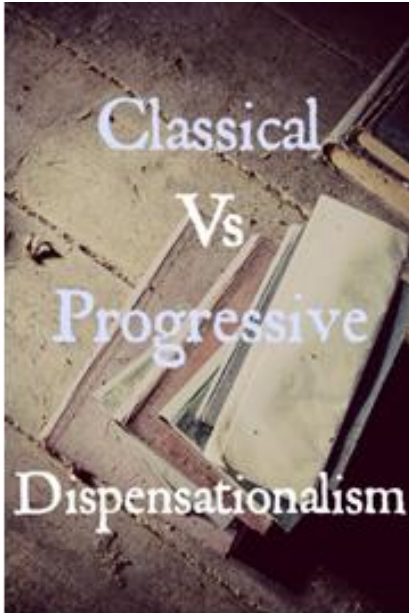


Two Thrones and Progressive Dispensationalism (Revelation 3:21)

Pastor Kelly Sensenig



Does the Davidic Covenant have any fulfillment in the Church Age? The newer dispensationalists conclude that it does while the older dispensationalists conclude that it does not. Who is right? Well, God's Word is right. It does not matter what era of dispensationalism you came out of because God's Word answers this question for us in a clear manner. Progressive dispensationalism claims that various quotes from New Testament authors of Old Testament texts means that they are partial fulfilled in the present-day Church. This is especially true regarding the Davidic Covenant and is what we are focusing on in this study.

The old claim that a consistent grammatical-historical method of interpretation will always produce traditional dispensationalists is said to be untrue. The claim is made that the New Testament doesn't follow Charles Ryrie's definition of "consistent literalism" in the way that it handles Old Testament prophecy. The New Testament often expands upon the Old Testament prophecies, without contradicting their original contexts. Implications in New Testament texts are developed from words which were not developed in the Old Testament. Progressive dispensationalists call this a "complementary hermeneutic," which means the New Testament adds onto the Old Testament prophecies in a way complementary to their original meaning and context.

According to progressive dispensationalists (PD's), this means there is an "already/not yet" aspect to the Davidic Covenant. Christ as David's ancestor is reigning over the Church from His *heavenly* throne, and in the future He will reign over Israel on His *earthly* throne. According to their flawed hermeneutics, the New Testament does not use a consistent, literal dispensational hermeneutic with Old Testament prophecies. The apostles often expanded on and re-applied the original prophecies. It is believed that David's covenant, as developed by the later

prophets also has redemptive application, since the Savior would be the Son of David. This means the Davidic King is the Savior of the Church and is now ruling the Church from His heavenly throne in fulfillment of David's covenant. Christ's Davidic reign began in part when He ascended to the right hand of the Father. Some of the Davidic promises have been fulfilled, many others must wait until Christ returns.

The PD's conclude that Jesus is already on David's throne but has not yet completely fulfilled the promise of God to David for a descendant to sit on his throne. Central Bible texts for this issue are Psalm 132:11; Psalm 110:1-4; Acts 2:30; and Acts 3:19-22. Traditional dispensationalists hold that, although Christ is sitting at the right hand of the Father and is obviously ruling, this does not mean that He is sitting on the throne of David. They conclude that progressive dispensationalism assumes too much. Jesus can sit on a throne and rule now and not be sitting on the throne of David.

Progressive dispensationalism is not a further development of dispensationalism but a departure from one of its basic tenants which is a consistent historical, literal, and grammatical approach to the Davidic Covenant in both the old and New Testaments. This revised form of dispensationalism teaches that the Abrahamic covenant, primarily through its promise of redemption ("in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" - Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18) is being *progressively fulfilled* in the successive dispensations through the continuing Mosaic, Davidic, and New Covenants. In other words, all covenants that follow the Abrahamic Covenant further expand its promises (specifically the blessing of redemption to all mankind). According to the revised dispensationalism, the Dispensation of Grace with the Church is not considered a parenthesis (an interruption) in God's dispensational program, nor a break in what they term as the progressive redemptive fulfillment seen in all the covenants. For this reason, the progressive dispensationalist views the Davidic Covenant as having spiritual fulfillment in the present Church Age through Christ's ascension.

Again, progressive dispensationalism believes that the normal hermeneutic held by traditional dispensationalists should be slightly modified. But this is a disturbing departure from a normal and literal understanding of Bible prophecy that views the Throne of David as an earthly throne Christ will sit on and reign from Jerusalem when He returns (Isa. 2:1-5; Ezek. 43:1-7). To believe the Davidic

Covenant is now being “progressively” fulfilled in a salvation context, with Christ sitting on David’s throne today in Heaven ruling the Church, blurs the distinction between Israel and the Church, minimizes the prophetic importance and position of modern-day Israel, and allegorizes the literal land promises given to Israel.

The term “progressive” was coined by two professors at Dallas Theological Seminary, Carl Blasing and Darrell Bock. In their book “Progressive Dispensationalism” they attempt to describe what they perceive as the progressive role of the dispensations in manifesting a unifying purpose of God. Of course, there is a unifying principle found in all the dispensations which is the glory of God (Eph. 3:21). However, in their attempt to unify the dispensations, they crossed over the line of a literal hermeneutic and abandoned consistent literalism, which is the hallmark of dispensational teaching and understanding the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15).

As we begin this study, let us look at the Davidic Covenant in capsule form so we can understand the significance this covenant as it relates to Christ and His rule.

2 Samuel 7:16

“And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”

There are three major promises that make up the Davidic Covenant.

- An eternal seed (“thine house ... for ever” - 2 Samuel 7:16) – a seed forever - (a physical posterity of people that will be able to produce the royal king).

There is a present promise (Israel will always exist as a people) and a prophetic promise (Israel as God’s people will rule with Him eternally or forever in a kingdom).

- An eternal kingdom (“thy kingdom ... for ever” - 2 Samuel 7:16) – a kingdom forever.

There is a present promise (the kingdom will always have the potential to be restored) and a prophetic promise (it will last forever when it is restored).

- An eternal throne (“thy throne ... forever” - 2 Samuel 7:16) – a king forever (royal descendent to reign).

In this covenant we observe a *present* promise (Israel will always have a royal descendent - 2 Chron. 6:16) and a *prophetic* promise (a royal descendent will rule eternally or forever in a kingdom).

Luke 1:33 brings this out:

“And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”

The Bible teaches that *Israel* will experience the literal fulfillment of her Davidic covenant promises as stated in the original promise. The covenant can be summed up in this way. An eternal *seed* will rule in an eternal *kingdom* over which an eternal Davidic *King* will rule on an eternal *throne*. Can we honestly conclude that this covenant has been literally fulfilled in this way today? Without doing some Scripture twisting and allegorizing of Bible texts that pertain to Israel and the future we cannot conclude that any part of this covenant is fulfilled today within the Church Age.

The question we need to answer in this study is this. Is Christ ruling today on David’s throne which is presently in Heaven in partial fulfillment to the Davidic Covenant? In other words, does this covenant have any fulfillment in the Church today? I know that this sounds like standard Reformed Theology (Christ ruling in Heaven as King over His Church), but this teaching is actually being promoted by what some have labeled progressive dispensationalism or the new revised dispensationalism. Let’s investigate the alleged claim that Christ is sitting on David’s throne today and is ruling over the Church in partial fulfillment of David’s covenant. Is there any Biblical evidence to substantiate this view?

Jesus declared in Revelation 3:21:

“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne (the earthly messianic throne – David’s earthly throne during the Millennium) even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (God’s heavenly throne).”

The distinction between Christ’s throne (“my throne”) and the Father’s throne (“his throne”) is not merely rhetorical or repetitive in nature. The distinction in

these thrones provides different aspects of God's rule, one which is on earth and another in Heaven. Christ rules in Heaven today with the Father (Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). Christ presently occupies the throne with the Father in Heaven (Rev. 4:2) but in the future He will return to planet earth and occupy the throne of David (Ps. 122:5; Ezek. 43:7; Luke 1:32-33). Christ's occupancy of the throne of David is a major emphasis of the book of Revelation from its very beginning to its end (Rev. 1:5, 7; 22:16). God has promised through the prophets that the throne or political rule of David would be restored at the Second Coming of Christ after long centuries of non-existence (Lk.1:31-33; Act.15:14-17; Amos 9:1,12).

Again, we must confirm that Christ mentions two distinct thrones in Heaven (not one throne). I'll stick with what Christ says and teaches on this subject! He referred to His coming earthly, Davidic throne and sharing the heavenly throne with the Father. Progressive dispensationalists (PD's) purposely confuse the throne of God in Heaven with the throne of David making it one and the same. They teach that God's kingdom/covenant program is "progressively" being revealed to us today, as Christ rules over the Church, while sitting on David's throne in Heaven. They come to this conclusion in order to get closer to the position of Reformed Theology which seems scholarly and accepted by so many people today. But strict Reformed Theology spiritualizes/allegorizes the kingdom and cancels out a future for the nation of Israel. Allegorization is the trademark of Reformed Theology – not dispensationalism. A Biblical and consistent dispensationalist should not promote the allegorical interpretation of eschatology.

Places like Moody Bible Institute and Dallas Seminary are teaching progressive dispensationalism today as a possible alternative to traditional dispensationalism. According to the progressive dispensationalist Jesus is now sitting on the throne of David in Heaven and we are enjoying the beginning of God's kingdom/covenant program at this present time. Although PD's do not reject a future, literal kingdom over the earth, or a future for national Israel, they take a compromised position on dispensationalism by claiming the kingdom promises have in one sense "already-but-not-yet" been fulfilled (partially but not fully inaugurated). This sounds like "eschatological doubletalk!"

The Scriptures in no way allow Christ to be seated on the throne of David today. The covenant promises are in no way being fulfilled by Christ today in Heaven. There are clearly two thrones, the throne of God Almighty in glory and a future

promised Davidic throne upon which Jesus, as the Son of Man, will occupy (Revelation 3:21). There is no teaching presented in the Bible that Christ is already occupying the throne of David today while He (as the King) reigns over the Church in a spiritual kingdom. This is false and wishful thinking on the part of progressive dispensationalists. It is a breach of Biblical and traditional dispensationalism.

It's good to revise something that needs revision but changing the foundational premise of dispensationalism by abandoning a strict, literal hermeneutic of the earthly theocracy (David's throne) is a travesty of dispensational teaching. Progressive dispensationalism, a progressive or continual fulfillment of God's covenant kingdom program for today in the context of salvation within the Church Age, is not revisionist dispensationalism, but Reformed Theology in disguise.

There is a clear distinction between the two thrones mentioned in Revelation 3:21. First, this throne in Heaven is never called David's throne. Second, the throne in Heaven is said to belong to God the Father (Lam. 5:19; Matt. 5:34; 23:22; Acts 7:49) – not Christ the Son. Christ is presently *sharing* the Father's throne but it's not His throne (Rev. 3:21; Heb. 1:3). Third, the Bible says that God the Father's throne is located in Heaven (Ps. 11:4; 103:19; Heb. 8:1) whereas David's throne is always said to be on earth (Luke 1:32-33; Isa. 9:6-7; Acts 1:6; Matt. 19:28). Fourth, God's throne was eternal (Lam. 5:19) and established long before David's throne (Ps. 93:1-2). David's throne was established at a certain point of time (2 Sam. 7:16). Fifth, the Father always called David's throne as "thy throne" (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:4; 132:12) and not His throne. God always said it was "David's throne" (Jer. 13:13) and "the throne of David" (Jer. 17:25; 22:2; 4, 30). God the Father never said that it was linked to His throne in Heaven. Instead, God distinguished between David's throne which Christ was going to one day inherit (Luke 1:32-33) and His own throne (Rev. 3:21).

For these reasons, Christ in Revelation 3:21 is drawing a distinction between the Father's throne in Heaven and His own throne ("my throne") which is going to be established on planet earth in fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. Since Christ's Davidic throne is not seen to be in Heaven with the Father it can only mean that His throne is going to be established on earth and it's on earth where the promises connected with David's throne are fulfilled (not Heaven). The Scriptures clearly teach that Christ sat down "at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb.

12:2; 1:3) – not on David’s earthly throne. Let’s study our Bibles! The heavenly throne cannot magically turn into an earthly throne.

Matthew 19:28 is an earthly scene and depicts Christ fulfilling the Davidic Covenant: “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Here Christ’s throne is identified with the earth in fulfillment of the earthly Davidic covenant. Therefore, when Christ speaks of “my throne” (Rev. 3:21) He is referencing His earthly throne in Jerusalem that He will one day sit upon when He returns to earth. It will be during the Millennium or 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3) that Christ will sit on His throne (“my throne”) in Jerusalem. The literal throne of David is going to be reestablished in Jerusalem during the earthly 1,000 year reign of Christ or millennium.

Matthew 25:31 is another earthly scene:

“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.”

The Bible says, “Then” (not now in Heaven) will the Son sit upon His throne. The fact that Christ’s throne is different than the Father’s and is in the future tense is confirmed by the words of Jesus. In this verse, Jesus speaks in the future tense regarding His coming to reign as He sits on His “glorious throne” on earth which will be established in the city of Jerusalem! The whole idea that Christ is presently sitting on the throne of David in Heaven is erroneous. There is not one shred of Biblical evidence to support this alleged theory. PD’s should stop muddying the waters of the glorious and Biblical truth of David’s earthly throne. David’s throne is NOT in Heaven but will be on earth in the future. The kingdom/covenant program is future. It is not being fulfilled spiritually or allegorically today through Christ’s presence in Heaven.

Luke 1:32

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall (future) give unto him the throne of his father David.”

David’s throne has not been given to Christ in any capacity today but will be granted to Him in the future. Progressive dispensationalism is tried and found

wanting in its attempt to mix the heavenly throne with David's earthly throne. This theory invalidates Biblical dispensationalism which makes a clear distinction between the heavenly and earthly thrones. I am aware that men of renowned scholarship promote "revised dispensationalism" but I also know that brilliant men sometimes confuse things brilliantly!

Progressive dispensationalists suggest that since the dispensations have continuity, the present Church dispensation has a relationship to the past dispensations and therefore the Davidic Covenant can be seen as being relevant and applicable to the Church today. The revisionist system assumes that the Messianic Kingdom actually starts at the Ascension of Christ and that Christ, in some sense, sits on the Davidic throne in Heaven, as a preliminary and partial fulfillment of the covenant that God gave to David. This approach allegorizes the literal land and earthly promises of the Davidic Covenant and seeks to bridge the gap between non-dispensationalism (Amillennialism, Postmillennialism, Covenant Theology) when it comes to viewing Christ's reign (the Millennium) symbolically. Although progressive dispensationalism does not abandon a future literal Millennium, at the same time this system of interpretation accommodates a non-literal hermeneutic as it relates to the Davidic Covenant.

Is Christ really reigning on David's throne in Heaven? If this is the case, the writer of Hebrews totally missed it! The book of Hebrews has more to say about Christ's present session in Heaven than any other New Testament book. He is our Great High Priest and Intercessor, yet nothing is said about Christ being presently seated on the throne of David! This is an omission that is significant and should cause anyone espousing the progressive dispensational arguments to rethink this faulty, non-dispensational line of reasoning and position. According to their findings in the New Testament, the progressive dispensationalists conclude that the Davidic Covenant has a partial fulfillment in Christ's heavenly ministry, since it is mentioned in conjunction with various texts that speak of Christ's heavenly ministry.

PD's believe that various Old Testament texts when linked with New Testament texts will confirm that Christ has in some sense inaugurated the Davidic Covenant with His present ministry in Heaven as the ascended Lord. One of the texts they use to try and prove this theory is Psalm 2:7. We will investigate this verse in the Old Testament and then move to the New Testament to discover why this verse

and other Millennial Kingdom texts were used in relation to Christ's heavenly ministry.

Psalms 2:7-9 prophetically states:

"I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee (*the Davidic Covenant and the Millennium*). Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession (*the scope of the Millennium*). Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (*the rule of Christ during the Millennium*).

Based upon the promise and adoption practice associated with Davidic Covenant, Psalm 2:7 is an enthronement psalm related to the Millennial Kingdom in which God in an official and ceremonial sense "adopts" the Davidic King as His "Son" who will rule in the Millennium. The eternal nature of the Son and Father's relationship provides the backdrop of Christ fulfilling the messianic credentials of the Davidic Covenant. In Psalm 2:7, the statement "Thou art my Son; I have begotten You" is directed from God the Father to God the Son. The decree "thou art my son" refers to the Davidic Covenant in which God declared that He would be Father to king David and how David as the king would be His son (2 Samuel 7:14 – "I will be his father, and he shall be my son"). So when David became king, God described their relationship as a Father-son relationship. Since Christ was in David's lineage, the expression "son" took on the meaning of a messianic title and pointed to the coming Messiah who was Christ (Dan. 7:13-14).

The expression "thou art my son" described the father-son relationship that David would have with God and the rest of the kings that would succeed him, including the Messiah, who would be the Son of God. This relationship communicated to David his legitimate right to rule over Israel. It's interesting that each time a legitimate son of David was crowned king as the successor to his father in the city of Jerusalem, these words could be used of him. The new king was adopted by God as his "son" and he would look to God as his "Father" (2 Sam. 7:5, 14). This formula of adoption was announced in a solemn ceremony of coronation attended by priests and prophets, with pomp and celebratory worship toward God.

This ceremonial practice and day of coronation is now applied to Christ (the Messiah and the Son of God) when the Bible declares: "Thou art my son." Again, this is a quote from the Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7:14), and it is appropriately described in this tone of adoption, since it shows Christ's legitimate right to rule as the King. This is because Christ stems from David's loins. From the original giving of the Davidic Covenant and onward, the term "son" was used for the Davidic kings and this eventually became a messianic title for Christ.

The words "this day" (today) would refer to the specific coronation day (inauguration day) when Jesus inherits the earthly Kingdom (the Millennium) and the expression "I have begotten thee" does not refer to Christ's physical creation or birth but is an expression of His supremacy, dignity, and authority as the King, who will rule planet earth as the only begotten Son, and who in every sense shares God's being and existence (Ps. 89:26-27; John 3:16; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5). Some take the word "today" (Psalm 2:7) to mean the "day" of God's eternal decree, when Christ was declared to be the Son of God and begotten (John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* [Moody Press], p. 41). The "begotten" or begetting is then viewed as an "eternal generation." But it seems much better and more understandable to view the "today" as a specific time in which Messiah is exalted, as God's Son, the Messiah, who shares in God's eternal identity and who will rule planet earth during the Millennium.

The statement "I have begotten Thee," which is a statement directed from God the Father to God the Son, cannot signify the creation of Christ as the Son (since all three persons of the Godhead are uncreated and eternal – John 1:1), but rather is the Father's DECLARATION of the Messiah's Sonship at the time or inception of the Millennial Kingdom. This declaration of Christ's Sonship was announced by Gabriel at Christ's birth (Luke 1:32), reiterated at Jesus' baptism (Luke 3:22), and confirmed by His resurrection (Acts 13:33; Romans 1:4) and ascension or enthronement in Heaven (Heb. 1:5). The same will be true at the commencement of the Millennial Kingdom (Psalm 2:7). Jesus will be declared to be God's Son and begin to reign over the millennial earth.

In Acts 13:33 Paul freely quotes and applies Psalm 2:7 (the promise of the Davidic Covenant), which centers on "the sure mercies of David" (Acts 13:33) and applies it to Christ's resurrection. In Hebrews 1:5 the author loosely quotes and applies Psalm 2:7 (the promise of the Davidic Covenant) to Christ's ascension at the

Father's right hand. In this verse "Today" evidently refers to Jesus Christ's ascension and entrance into heaven. Paul's logic in Acts 13:33-38 is this. If Jesus truly is the Messiah and the Son of David, and He died and remained in the grave, then the Davidic Covenant could never be fulfilled. But the promise of the "sure mercies of David" (Isa 55:3) means that the promises contained in the Davidic Covenant will come to pass. David died and did not rise from the dead (Acts 13:36) but Jesus Christ did rise from the dead (Acts 13:37) to be the eternal King of the Davidic Covenant and His resurrection from the dead enables Him to grant His people forgiveness and salvation (Acts 13:38).

Paul is teaching that God had kept the promise of the Davidic Covenant by sending Jesus, the son of David into the world, in fulfillment of the prophecies given hundreds of years before. Since this is true, Jesus has come to grant salvation to the Jewish people. Acts 13:23 says, "Of this man's seed (David's lineage) hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:" One cannot get to the New Covenant work of Christ without the promise of the Davidic Covenant. It follows that Jesus had to be resurrected or the Davidic Covenant would be proven to be false, which means there would be no opportunity for Israel to experience the blessings of salvation in the New Covenant.

Or course, the application of Psalm 2:7 to the events of the resurrection and ascension of Christ does not mean that a fulfillment of David's covenant and the Millennium has occurred in the throne room of Heaven. By invoking Psalm 2 in Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5, Paul does not introduce an allegorized or spiritual form of Christ's Millennial Kingdom to teach that He has in some sense presently inaugurated His Davidic rule in Heaven (progressive dispensationalism) or that Christ is presently in Heaven ruling in the Millennial (Ammillennialism). Revised dispensationalism teaches that the earthly throne of David has in some allegorical sense become a heavenly throne since the Davidic Covenant is somehow linked with Christ's resurrection and ascension. Instead of viewing these quoted Old Testament millennial texts as application, to prove the point that Jesus is the Messiah, the progressive dispensationalist sees them as partial fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. This is unsound exegesis.

We have already seen that the Bible teaches that Christ's present throne is in Heaven and is distinct from David's throne which is on earth.

Revelation 3:21

“To him that overcometh (*positionally through faith in Christ and our union with Him – 1 John 5:4-5*) will I grant to sit with me in my throne (*the millennial throne of Christ on earth in fulfillment of David’s covenant*), even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (*the heavenly throne of Christ*).

In coming to the New Testament, Acts 13:33 says:

“God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”

If Paul in Acts 13:33 is allegorizing David’s throne or the Millennium, then he is destroying the literal nature of Bible prophecy which the disciples believed. “When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). The Biblical teaching and understanding is that the Kingdom and David’s throne are both earthly and literal in nature. David’s throne in the historic context was viewed to be on earth and not in Heaven (Luke 1:32-33).

The authors are simply borrowing the Davidic/Kingdom text of Psalm 2:7 to prove the point that Jesus is the Messiah. They are making a valid application and point when linking Psalm 2 with Acts 13:33 (resurrection of Christ) and with Hebrews 5:1 (ascension of Christ), which is to confirm that Jesus is the Messiah. In Acts 13, Paul actually gives a sampling of three messianic passages contained within the Hebrew Scripture to demonstrate the point that Jesus is the resurrected Messiah (Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 55:3 and Psalm 16:10). All of these texts illustrate that Jesus is the risen and ascended Messiah that has come to save His people to the uttermost (Heb. 7:25).

By stating the messianic Scriptures which relate to the Davidic Covenant (Ps. 2:7; Acts 55:3) and Christ’s ascension (Heb. 1:5), the writers were not seeking any fulfillment of David’s covenant in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, allegorically relating David’s covenant with Christ’s ascension and His reign over Church Age saints. Instead, they were borrowing and quoting freely from these Davidic texts to prove the necessity of Christ’s resurrection and ascension, in order verify that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and Savior of His people. The texts are connected *messianically* but not *eschatologically* to David’s throne. Paul took the

liberty to borrow from certain Old Testament texts to make his points (by way of application) without destroying the original context and literal fulfillment of these texts (Acts 2:14-22).

In a similar way, Peter quotes Psalm 110:1 (“Sit thou at my right hand” – Acts 2:34), a Psalm about the ascension of Christ, and links it with the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). He presents this truth to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. The Davidic Covenant promised that God “would raise up Christ to sit on his throne” (David’s throne - Acts 2:30). Peter reminds the people that Jesus stems from David’s lineage and that He would rise from the dead and ascend to the Father to prove that He was the Messiah (Acts 2:31-35) for He was “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36).

Here is the point. Peter is not linking David’s earthly throne (Acts 2:30) with His heavenly throne through the ascension of Christ when quoting the messianic and millennial Psalm (“Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool” – Acts 2:34b-35). In other words, Peter is not trying to allegorize the earthly throne promise given to David and create an already inaugurated spiritualized Davidic throne in Heaven, or to signify the fulfillment of the Millennium in Heaven today. Peter is not turning David’s earthly throne into Christ’s heavenly throne. The fact that Christ’s sits on the throne in Heaven “Until I make thy foes thy footstool” (Acts 2:35) does not necessitate that He has presently inaugurated the Davidic kingdom in Heaven in a spiritual form (ruling over the Church) and later will rule his enemies in the Millennium, making them his footstool. This is trying to allegorize the historical/grammatical/literal interpretation and understanding of David’s covenant.

Peter is not finding fulfillment of David’s Covenant in Christ’s ministry, which is occurring in the heavenly sanctuary today, since he separates the two thrones, one that is heavenly (“Sit thou on my right hand” – Acts 2:34) and one that is earthly (“Until I make thy foes thy footstool” - Acts 2:35). It is certain that Peter was not a progressive dispensationalist abandoning the literal understanding of David’s kingdom by connecting David’s rule with Christ’s rule in Heaven. Peter was not trying to change the Biblical understanding of God’s covenant program with David. He begins in Acts 2 by confirming that Jesus was the Messiah who stems from David’s loins and is therefore heir to the earthly throne of David (Acts 2:30).

He then quotes Psalm 110 (Acts 2:32b-33) to further substantiate that Christ is the Messiah via His resurrection and ascension at the Father's right side.

The messianic truths and passages about Christ as the Davidic King and ascended Lord were used at Pentecost to simply illustrate and remind the people that Jesus Christ was the Messiah that they had crucified (Acts 2:36). In fact, Christ's resurrection and ascension is absolutely necessary and essential for Him to be the Messiah and possess the authority to send the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33), so that the Church can be formed. What was happening in Acts 2 (the formation of the Church) could not occur without Christ's resurrection and ascension as the Messiah which David spoke about in Psalm 110:1. David's prophecy about Christ's resurrection and ascension is essential to Christ being the Messiah and sending the promise of the Holy Spirit which would result in the birth of the Church (Acts 2:33).

Peter is not quoting Psalm 110:1 to confirm that the Millennium has begun in Heaven with Christ's ascension but is using the Psalm to confirm Christ's messiahship as the ascended Lord. Reading a spiritualized or allegorical fulfillment of David's Covenant, kingdom, and throne into the ascension of Christ is a clear case of voodoo exegesis. Peter's intent in quoting Psalm 110 is not to mix the millennium with Christ's ascension but to simply confirm Christ as the risen, ascended, and victorious Messiah.

In a similar way, the Davidic kingdom prophecy of Psalm 2:7 is not quoted by Paul (Acts 13:33), as a spiritual or allegorized fulfillment of "the sure mercies of David," nor is Hebrews 1:5 quoted with Psalm 2:7 (the Davidic Psalm) as an allegorical/spiritualized fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, where Christ inaugurates David's Kingdom in Heaven. In Acts 13:33, Paul was specifically reflecting on Psalm 2:7 and the Davidic Covenant in order to illustrate and convey to his Jewish audience that Christ is the Messiah/Son of this Old Testament Kingdom prophecy, and that Israel's promises of forgiveness and salvation (Acts 13:38) cannot be fulfilled without the Messiah's resurrection and ascension, which is the proof of His divine Sonship (Rom. 1:4). All of these prophecies are interconnected to prove that Jesus was the Messiah.

To state it succinctly, both Paul and Peter are simply making application of the Scriptures and promises which relate to the Davidic Covenant in order to prove

and confirm that Jesus was the Messiah. None of these prophecies which relate to the Davidic Covenant and which are connected to Christ's resurrection and ascension are a fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant in any way. They are loosely and freely quoting these passages, as Peter did in Acts 2:16, and they are using them to prove that Jesus is the Father's Messiah/Son/Christ who was sent into the world to save His people and form His Church.

Those who equate the Davidic Covenant as being partially or "already" inaugurated and fulfilled (progressive dispensationalists), while Christ sits on the throne of Heaven to reign over His Church, do a great injustice to the historical, literal, and grammatical understanding of the nature of the Davidic Covenant which was earthly. Dispensationalism should always interpret the Old Testament in such a way as to retain the original meaning and audience and not blur the distinctions when interpreting the New Testament.

Psalm 68:18 is sometime used to teach progressive dispensationalism by interjecting David's victory with Christ's ascension into Glory (Eph. 4:8). Psalm 68:18 declares this about the deliverance of Jerusalem into the hands of David, which was under the pagan Jebusite rule: "Thou hast ascended on high (*the mountain of Zion upon which Jerusalem was built*), thou hast led captivity captive (*the Jebusites*): thou hast received gifts for men (*referring the spoils of war*); yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them.

During this time, David and his men captured Jerusalem and called it the City of David (2 Sam. 5:1–9). God gave them the victory and the spoils. Paul is quoting Psalm 68:18, this victory song written by David, but he is APPLYING it to Jesus Christ and the gifting of the Church with His ascension into Heaven (Eph. 4:8). Again, writers will do this sometimes. They will use an OT quote and make application of it to a present situation, without arguing for an exact and literal fulfillment of the OT passage in relation to the NT.

Richard Taylor states this about Ephesians 4:8:

"Likewise in Ephesians 4:8 the application of Psalm 68:18 to Jesus as the bestower of gifts for ministry within the church does not eliminate or contradict the Old Testament application of the words to the victorious Israelite King ... Paul made a valid application of Christological significance to the Old Testament passage. On the one hand, according to Psalm 68:18, God ascended Zion as a victorious king

worthy of being the recipient of gifts of homage. On the other hand, according to Ephesians 4:8, Jesus also ascended to the heavenly Zion as the victorious Lord who lovingly bestowed on His church the gifts of ministry essential to her future well-being. The one passage provides the pattern for the other” (Richard A. Taylor, “The Use of Psalm 68:18 in Ephesians 4:8 in Light of the Ancient Versions,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148:591 (July-September 1991):335-36).

Ephesians 1:22

“And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church.”

Under His Feet!



Authority DELEGATED: Christ’s Present Session in Heaven results in “all things under his feet” (Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8a) = *Spiritual blessings* received by the Church (Eph. 1:3; 1:21-22) – our living connection with Christ!



Authority DELAYED: “Not yet all things put under him” (Heb. 2:8b) “Until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 1:13; 10:13)



Authority DISPLAYED: Christ’s Future Reign on Earth - “all things under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25, 27; Ps. 2:8) = *Physical reign* on earth during Millennium (the restored theocracy)

The fact that everything is placed under the feet of Christ today does not demand in any way a partial or progressive fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. Ephesians 1:22 is simply teaching that through Christ’s resurrection and ascension, He possesses total authority over every evil and sinister force in the universe and transfers this victory and authority to the Church in the

heavenly places (Eph. 1:3; 2:5), or within the very throne room of God. As pointed out already, the heavenly throne is distinct from the earthly throne (Rev. 3:21). Only in the future when Christ reigns over the earth during the Millennial Kingdom will He literally fulfill the Davidic Covenant (Luke 1:32). The chart points out the distinctions in Christ’s rule today at the Father’s right hand on the heavenly throne and in the future in fulfillment of the earthly Davidic Covenant.

Here is the obvious point. The Bible nowhere states that Old Testament texts related to the Davidic Covenant (a literal reign of Christ on earth on David’s throne) take on a new meaning in the New Testament.

The Acts commentary, written by John Whitcomb and George Zeller states:

“Please notice that this verse does not tell us when Christ would sit on David’s throne. Progressive dispensationalists wrongly assume that this took place in heaven, when Christ was exalted to the right hand of the Father. Thus, they see Christ ruling on the Davidic throne starting immediately after the ascension, ten days before Pentecost. However, the Bible is very clear that the throne of David is located in Jerusalem, and Christ will not assume that throne until His second coming when the Messianic kingdom will be established on the earth.”

There are some clear Scriptural observations about David’s throne.

- David’s throne is still empty! This means that Jesus will not reign on the Davidic throne until after the Church Age and during the Millennium.

Acts 15:15 says, “After this (the Church Age has expired) I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up ...”

- David’s throne is only viewed as earthly in nature in fulfillment of the earthly prophecies.

“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7). “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David (Luke 1:32).

- David's throne will be located in Zion (Jerusalem) - not in Heaven.

“For the LORD hath chosen Zion (Jerusalem); He hath desired it for His habitation....There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for Mine anointed (Psalm 132:13,17). "Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever" (Jeremiah 17:25).

George Zeller is correct when he sates:

“The only way to get to David's throne is by way of the gates of the city of Jerusalem.”

We might also add that one cannot get to David’s throne by passing through the gates of Heaven! "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when (so in the future during the Millennium) the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive (the ascension of Christ) until the times of restitution of all things (restoration of Israel and the entire earth during the Millennium), which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:19-21).

You will notice that Jesus must come down from Heaven to initiate the Davidic Covenant. Since Israel rejected Him (John 1:11), this will occur at the Second Coming and during the Millennium. This is the time when David’s throne will be fulfilled. There is no hint of David’s throne being fulfilled in Heaven but only on earth. This brings us to another point.

- The Davidic Covenant dealt with a land promise – not a heavenly promise.

“In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land” (Jeremiah 33:15).

There is no mention, hint, or exegetical evidence that some kind of partial and spiritual fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant is “already” occurring in Heaven. There is nothing in any Bible passage, when considered in its historical, grammatical, and literal context that would allow any interpreter to allegorize the promises given to David. Revised dispensationalists seek a complimentary hermeneutic which means the Old Testament has an added or expanded meaning alongside the original meaning. Progressive dispensationalism seeks to find both a spiritual and literal fulfillment of the David’s covenant in the New Testament Scriptures.

The progressives seek to change the original meaning of the Davidic Covenant by expanding the meaning of it. They assign an allegorical fulfillment of the covenant

(Christ's reign today in Heaven), while at the same time retaining the future aspect of it (the "already and not yet" emphasis and position of George Ladd). But in doing this they are abandoning the foundation of Dispensational Premillennialism, which is the literal, historical, and grammatical interpretation of God's covenant programs. God's covenants do not change their meaning from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Now let's return to the adoption analogy we first began talking about in Psalm 2 and finish our study. Psalm 2 is definitely messianic and millennial. It presents Jesus risen from the dead and exalted at the Father's right hand, so that He can reign in the Millennial Kingdom as the promised Messiah (God's Son). Within the Millennial context of Psalm 2, the theme of the risen and exalted Christ looks forward to the day when, as the officially recognized Messiah, and with much celebration and fanfare, Christ comes back to earth to rule and reign from David's throne in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32-33). This specific day and time of the Millennium is presented with the Davidic overtones of an adoption celebration ("Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee").

The Scriptures teach that Christ is "begotten." This is actually a title of Christ which connotes His authority, preeminence, superiority, dignity, and honor as the Messiah, and relates specifically to Christ being the Creator (Col. 1:15-16), the Victor in His resurrection (Col. 1:15, 18; Rev. 1:5) and ascension (Heb. 1:5) and Kingship during the Millennium (Psalm 2). Jesus is God's Son in the fullest sense of the word for He shares God's very nature and will one-day rule the world as David's greater Son (Jesus Christ) in the coming Kingdom day. This is because He possesses the official messianic title ("Son") and eternal relationship with God the Father, which was to be true of the individual who fulfills the eternal nature of the Davidic Covenant. Jesus is the eternal Son (John 1:1, 14; 5:18; 17:5); Heb. 12; 13:8) sharing the eternal nature of the Father and He will reign eternally in fulfillment of the David Covenant promise.

Psalm 2:8

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

As a son inherits from his father, so the King (Jesus Christ) inherits the earthly Kingdom from his "Father" and will one-day rule over planet earth which is in the

same realm that He was rejected and ridiculed (“I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance” – Ps. 2:8). Of course, this will begin to occur when the Messianic King returns to earth and overtakes the heathen on planet earth and then reigns throughout the Millennium. In other words, God the Father has promised a universal dominion to His Son. All the earth will submit to Christ’s authority and His rule will extend from shore to shore.

Zechariah 14:9

“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day (not today but during the future Millennium) shall there be one LORD, and his name one.”

Isaiah 45:22-23 prophetically declares:

“Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth (*during the Millennium*) in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

Isaiah is the millennial prophet and is prophesying of what will occur during the Millennial Kingdom. This prophecy will find its fulfillment in the Millennium. He invites the Gentiles living throughout the millennial earth to come to Him for salvation and decrees that during this time every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess that He is the Messiah and God who is ruling over the earth.

Philippians 2:9-11 envisions this same time that Isaiah prophesied about:

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him (*the ascension of Christ at the Father’s right hand which give Him the authority to rule planet earth*), and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow (*this will occur when Jesus inaugurates the earthly Millennial Kingdom and throughout the Millennium*), of things in heaven (*the saints and angels*), and things in earth (*those entering the Millennium*), and things under the earth (*bound demons, the devil himself, and the unsaved in hades*); And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Yes, the entire millennial earth will be Christ’s inheritance and all created beings, whether willingly or unwillingly, will bow to His iron rule.

Psalm 2:9

“Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.”

In a descriptive way, Christ's rule is described as the Messiah smashing (breaking to pieces) all the rebellious people as He establishes his reign and continues to rule throughout the millennial earth. The same descriptive ruling analogy (“they shall be broken to shivers”) is said to be true of His saints (Rev. 2:27). Before going to battle, ancient eastern kings participated in a ritual of breaking clay jars that symbolized the defeat of the enemy armies. Rebellion will not be tolerated by the King. His iron rule will encompass the ends of the earth. People living in the millennial nations, throughout the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-6), which include the rebellious nations, will be subjugated, or brought under control by the Lord's Anointed which is the Messiah. Jesus is God, Jesus is God's Son, Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is King, and Jesus is the great Conqueror!

In conclusion, the use of the fancy terms of “progressive dispensationalism” and using a “complimentary hermeneutic” is nothing short of abandoning a consistent historical, grammatical, and literal interpretation of the Davidic Covenant and results in allegorizing and wrongly dividing the Scriptures instead of “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). The dispensational seminaries in the 20's to the later 80's taught a consistent, literal, dispensational hermeneutic with some of the giants of dispensationalism (Chafer, Walvoord, Pentecost, Ryrie, etc.). However, what they taught was a clear distinction between Israel and the Church, the literal understanding and fulfillment of the covenants in both Old and New Testaments and repudiated the allegorizing of the covenant and prophecies related to Israel's future.

The attempt of progressive dispensationalism is to blur these distinctions and create a hybrid dispensationalism that can accommodate both Reformed and Covenant Theology with traditional and Biblical dispensational Theology. But the two cannot be mixed unless one wants to abandon a literal hermeneutic and arrive at spurious and unwarranted conclusions regarding God's programs for the Church and Israel.

One man who was a graduate of Dallas Seminary back in the 70's called me up. He wanted to talk to me about a particular study I had on the internet. We chatted for a long time. At one point he said that he met a new graduate from Dallas who

said, "We don't believe in dispensationalism in the same manner that you grey-headed men believe." The man was taken back from the arrogance of the younger man. I told him that it does not matter whether one's hair is grey or still in full color, what matters is the truth of God's Word regarding the covenant and dispensational program of God. We should not relegate truth on the basis of certain time periods but upon the unchanging standard of God's Word.

The theories behind progressive dispensationalism have been weighed and found wanting. The new dispensationalism should not be abandoned because it's new, but because it's not true. Then again, sometimes the new is not true because it overlooks the obvious truths and findings of Scripture.

As Harry Ironside used to say:

"If it's new, it's not true. And if it's true, it's not new."