

THE DAVIDIC COVENANT AS GOSPEL BRIDGE: PAUL'S
EVANGELISTIC SERMON IN ACTS 13:16-41

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INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of Paul’s sermon in Acts 13:16-41? What makes this unique among the sermons in Acts, and what are the unifying themes? E. Haenchen contends that Acts 13 gives a selective historical sketch of the OT that intentionally avoids redundancy with Stephen’s speech in chapter 7.¹ Conzelmann suggests that Luke has blended the content of Peter’s sermons in Acts 2 and 3, and Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7.² However, other scholars have recognized a more basic purpose, namely, a gospel presentation. Marshall summarizes, “[It] can be summed up as a historical survey designed to root the coming of Jesus in the kingly succession of Judah and to show that the career of Jesus was in fulfilment of prophecy.”³ Porter puts a finer point on it, “In Paul’s first major speech, he is seen to be creating a bridge in his person, and in his audience, between the Jewish origins and original Jewish audience of the gospel and the subsequent presentation of the gospel to Gentiles by the Apostle to the Gentiles.”⁴

This evangelistic emphasis is crucial to understanding Paul’s sermon. In Acts 13, Paul builds a bridge from the Jewish origins of the gospel to his Gentile audience, and he uses the Davidic Covenant as the bridge. The Davidic Covenant is the unifying theme of his sermon and theological framework that guides his gospel presentation. In this paper, we will see how this bridge relates to the: (1) narrative context, (2) structure and content, and (3) the direct OT quotations that Paul uses as proof-texts in his message. From all three angles, we will observe the significance of the Davidic Covenant for Paul’s gospel presentation, particularly to the Gentiles.

Before looking at Acts 13, we must first define our terms, specifically, what we mean by “gospel,” and what we mean by “Davidic Covenant.” The first definition is given by Paul. Paul

¹Cited by C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 2 ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994-98), 629.

²Hans Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. James Limburg, A. Thomas Kraabel, Donald H. Juel, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 102-3.

³I. Howard Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, TNTC 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 220-1.

⁴Stanley Porter, *The Paul of Acts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 133.

says “we bring good news/gospel” (εὐαγγελιζόμεθα) in verse 32, which includes the fulfillment of OT promises through Jesus’s resurrection (32), the message that “through [Jesus] to you forgiveness of sins is proclaimed” (38), and this means justification (δικαιοῦται) apart from the law (39).⁵

Less immediately clear is the meaning of “Davidic Covenant,” which is implied by our text, but never mentioned explicitly. The Davidic Covenant is laid out in 2 Samuel 7, with God making a series of gracious promises to David. Robertson gives a classic description:

First, the Lord sovereignly establishes David’s dynasty; then the dynasty of David shall establish the Lord’s dwelling-place (v. 13)... [2 Sam. 7] also stresses the connection between David’s son and God’s son. David and his seed are being established in their regal capacity by this covenant. God affirms that the descendants of David shall sit on Israel’s throne forever.⁶

However, the Davidic Covenant is problematic; it is unclear from the OT how these promises in 2 Samuel 7 are to be fulfilled. As one Jewish scholar writes, “It conflicts with several passages in Kings, and it conflicts with history.”⁷ In Acts 13, Paul reconciles the apparent historical conflict by showing how the promises related to the Davidic Covenant are fulfilled in gospel message of Jesus Christ: Jesus is the messianic king who comes to save his people and rule them forever.

However, Paul expands the rule of the Messiah beyond the borders of Israel. In Paul’s understanding, the Davidic Covenant forms a bridge between the OT promises of God and the Messiah’s eternal reign over all the nations of the earth.

⁵Scholars disagree as to whether this as an authentically Pauline formulation of the gospel, Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 624; Conzelmann concurs, but feels the meaning of justification has been changed (*A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 106); F.F. Bruce argues that it is compatible with the doctrine of justification found in Galatians and Romans, (*The Book of Acts*, rev., NICOT [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988], 262-263); Bruce Metzger (*A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd edition [New York: American Bible Society, 1994], 366) notes, “In order to smooth the construction by amplifying the sense the Western text makes several insertions: ‘Through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and repentance, (μετάνοια, D vg^{ms} (syr^h with * and cop^{g67} before καταγγέλλεται)) from all those things from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses; by him therefore (οὖν, D 614 syr^{hmg}) every one that believes is freed *before God*’ (παρὰ θεῷ D (syr^{hmg} ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ)).”

⁶O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Philipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1990), 233;

⁷Hayyim Angel, “The Eternal Davidic Covenant in II Samuel Chapter 7 and its Later Manifestations in the Bible,” *JBQ* 44 (2016): 84; also, Jon D. Levenson, “The Davidic Covenant and its Modern Interpreters.” *CBQ* 41 (1979): 205-19.

NARRATIVE CONTEXT OF ACTS 13

Paul's use of the Davidic Covenant as a bridge to the Gentiles in Acts 13 fits with the overall theme of gospel expansion in Acts. Acts 1:8 describes the gospel witness going to "Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth." Accordingly, the Book of Acts can be outlined following the geographical spread of the Christianity from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.⁸ Paul's sermon in Acts 13 takes place near the beginning of Paul's first missionary journey to the northeast Mediterranean. At this point, Paul becomes the central character of Acts and there is an ever-increasing emphasis on Gentile evangelism.⁹ Hengel comments, "We come up against a further development with Paul and probably also with Barnabas, who deliberately shifted the focal point of their missionary work entirely in the directions of non-Jews."¹⁰ In this vein, Acts describes the growing "the kingdom of God" (βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ), which speaks to the expanding rule and reign of Jesus Christ.¹¹

Paul's Acts 13 sermon has a distinctive emphasis on the Davidic Covenant in comparison with the other sermons recounted in Acts. This should not be overstated, particularly with regard to the emphasis on the Davidic covenant. There are significant allusions to the Davidic covenant in Peter's Acts 2 sermon,¹² as well as a passing reference in Stephen's Acts 7 sermon (7:45-46). However, where explicit covenant language is used, (3:25, 7:8), it is the Abrahamic Covenant which is in view. In both chapter 3 and chapter 7, the emphasis is on Abraham and Moses. This

⁸Robert J. Cara, "Acts," *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 147-8.

⁹We might also note the significance of the placement of the Acts 13 sermon between Peter's vision of the unclean animals in Acts 10-11, and the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. Both events speak to the ingathering of Gentiles into the church.

¹⁰Martin Hengel, *Acts and the History of Earliest Christianity*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 101. See also F. F. Bruce, "The Significance of the Speeches for Interpreting Acts," *SwJT* 33(1990):21-2.

¹¹The expression appears in 1:3, 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 28:23, 28:31. See George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, rev., ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 368-70.

¹²Robert F. O'Toole, "Acts 2:30 and the Davidic Covenant of Pentecost," *JBL* 102 (1983): 245-58; cf. F. Scott Spencer (*Acts* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997], 143), "The sermon and surrounding context echo many of the same emphases heard in earlier speeches, but more explicitly than before, the present episode underscores the conviction that Jesus' death and resurrection mark the 'necessary' (13:46) fulfilment of Israel's *entire* scriptural canon – 'the law and the prophets' (13, 15 27, 39-40) together with the psalms (13:33, 35)."

is in keeping with the focus of the early chapters on the Jews, and the gospel message being presented to Abraham's descendants and those who would keep the Mosaic Law. In chapter 13, as the focus shifts to Gentiles, Luke recounts Paul's sermon emphasizing the role of King David in salvation history. In it, Paul hones in on idea of David's eternal throne. Barrett summarizes, "Jesus is represented as David's heir, in whom David's prophecies are fulfilled, hence the Messiah."¹³ For Paul, these Davidic prophecies are much bigger than the nation of Israel, and speak to his own calling as a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). They form a bridge between the nation of Israel in the OT and the worldwide kingdom of God in the NT.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

We will examine in detail how Paul's emphasis on the Davidic Covenant is worked out in his gospel presentation, both in its structure and content, looking especially at his OT allusions. Porter points out four significant components of the sermon, "(1) Paul's direct address of his audience, (2) the use of historical narrative to speak to the actions of God, (3) emphasis upon the promise or good news of salvation, and (4) support for the argument by quotation from the Old Testament."¹⁴ Though scholars have proposed various outlines for the sermon, most agree to a basic three point structure based on Paul's direct address of his audience: (1) verse 16, ἄνδρες Ἰσραὴλ καὶ οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν ("men of Israel and God fearers"), (2) verse 27, νιοὶ γένους Ἀβραὰμ ("sons of the race of Abram"), and (3) ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί ("men and brothers") (38).¹⁵ Verses 16-26 speak of God's work in redemptive history, building up to the Davidic Covenant and its ultimate fulfillment in the person of Jesus. Verses 27-37 cover the rejection of

¹³Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 623.

¹⁴Porter, *The Paul of Acts*, 135.

¹⁵Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* 623; Porter, *The Paul of Acts* 133; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 31 (New York: Doubleday, 1998); 507; Guy Waters divides the sermon into two sections rather than three, the first half being God's RH work (13-26) and the second half being the person and work of Christ (*A Study Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, EP Study Commentary [Holywell: EP, 2015], 322).

Jesus by the Jews, followed by a series of proof-texts which demonstrate that Jesus is in fact the promised Messiah of the Davidic Covenant. Verses 38-41 are the climax of the sermon, which concludes with the free offer of the gospel and then a warning of judgment for those who refuse it. These verses, as well as the “epilogue” following the sermon in 42-52, point to an expansion of the Davidic Covenant in Paul’s understanding.

We now turn our attention to the first section, 16-26. Paul outlines redemptive history leading up to David, and then jumps to the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant in Christ. We have noted that unlike previous sermons in Acts, Paul completely ignores Abraham and Moses, making only passing reference to “our fathers,” Egypt and the Exodus (17), the wandering in the wilderness (18), and the conquest of Canaan and the period of the judges (19-20). Paul’s purpose in recounting these events is simply to build up to Israel’s request for a king.¹⁶ He mentions the anointing of Saul and his removal (21-22), and then he brings in David, his pivotal character. Verse 22 introduces David as a man after God’s own heart, and verse 23 claims that Jesus is the fulfillment of the messianic promises. Together, 22-23 form a sort of mini-climax in the first point of Paul’s sermon.¹⁷

In recent years, scholars have devoted significant study to the Acts sermons from the standpoint of rhetoric and homiletics, and this sheds some light for us on the content of Paul’s

¹⁶Fitzmyer outlines some text-critical and historical problems with the “about four hundred and fifty years,” “The position and pertinence of this phrase are problematic. Though read as the first part of the printed text of v 20 (NA²⁷, GNT), it is sometimes made the end of v 19 (RSV), to which it really belongs. When so used (as in MSS P⁷⁴, θ, A, B, C, 33, 36, and 81) it is understood to refer to 400 years in Egypt (Gen 15:13) [cf. Acts 7:6]), 40, in the desert (Num 14:33-34), and 10 in the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 14) before the rule of the judges,” *The Acts of the Apostles*, 511.

¹⁷This is followed by a brief section on John the Baptist in 24-25, which admittedly does not seem related to Paul’s thematic emphasis on the Davidic covenant. See Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 637-8; Witherington and others have suggested John the Baptist may have had followers in the area (Acts, 410-11). In contrast, Waters sees the John the Baptist section as the climax of the OT historical survey, *A Study Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 318-9.

sermon.¹⁸ Darrel Bock relays J.W. Bowker's research on synagogue homilies, suggesting that Paul's message in Acts 13 was developed from passages related to the Davidic Covenant:

According to Bowker... this is like a proem homily, with words links present, he suggests, Deut. 4:25-46 (*seder*), 2 Sam. 7:6-16 (*haftorah*), and 1 Sam. 13:14 LXX (proem text). A proem homily contains an introductory text that links the other two liturgical readings into a sermon. The homily with its application extends to verse 41.¹⁹

So then, according to Bowker the LXX of 1 Samuel 13:14, ζητήσει κύριος ἐαυτῷ ἄνθρωπον κατὰ τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ / “the Lord sought a man after his own heart,” is the “proem text.”²⁰

This text is rephrased in Acts 13:22, εὗρον Δανὶδ τὸν τοῦ Ἰεσσαὶ ἄνδρα κατὰ τὴν καρδίαν μου / “I found in David, son of Jesse, a man after my own heart.” The reference to 1 Samuel 13:14 is not as explicit as the ensuing OT quotations, so Bowker's conclusion seems a bit speculative.

Nonetheless, there is no question that 1 Samuel 13:14 is at least one of the texts to which Paul is alluding.

We would be remiss to ignore the further connections with 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89 and the idea of “finding David.” If Bowker is correct, 2 Samuel 7:6-16 is the *haftorah* of Paul's homily. Whether or not this is the case, the promises to David are mentioned explicitly in Paul's brief historical survey. Perhaps even more than 2 Samuel 7, Acts 13:22 seems to be tied to Psalm 89. Marshall notes:

The citation draws on a combination of passages (the parallel in 2 Sam. 7:8 is not especially close). In Ps. 89:20 (88:21 LXX) we read “I found David [*heuron Dauid*] my servant, with holy oil I anointed him. The psalm celebrates at length the divine covenant with David and his descendants and calls on God to honor it after his wrath has broken out against the dynasty and the land. It recounts how the dynasty was established.²¹

¹⁸John Duncan, “Peter, Paul, and the *Progymnasmata*: Traces of the Preliminary Exercises in the Mission Speeches of Acts,” *PRSS* 41 (2014): 349-65; Ben Witherington III, “‘Almost Thou Persuadest Me...’: The Importance of Greco-Roman Rhetoric for the Understanding of the Text and Content of the NT,” *JETS* 58 (2015): 63-88; Steve Mason, “Speech-Making in Ancient Rhetoric, Josephus, and Acts: Messages and Playfulness Part II,” *Early Christianity* 3 (2012): 147-71; M. L. Soards, “The Speeches in Acts in Relation to Other Pertinent Ancient Literature,” *ETL* 70 (1994): 65-90.

¹⁹Darrell Bock, *The Book of the Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 451.

²⁰Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 624.

²¹I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 583.

This connection between 13:22 and Psalm 89:20 is strong, particularly in view of Acts 13:23, τούτου ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ σπέρματος κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν ἤγαγεν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ σωτῆρα Ἰησοῦν / “God, from this man’s seed, according to the promise, brought to Israel the savior Jesus.” William Pohl notes that, “Interpreters consider Psalm 89 a lament over the failure of the Davidic Covenant and the loss of the Davidic dynasty.”²² Nonetheless, the psalm recounts the promises of God, and ends in the hope that the promise will be fulfilled. Psalm 89:4 has the Lord speaking, **עַד-עֲמָקָם גַּם** “until forever, I will establish your seed, and I will build to generation and generation your throne, selah.” So Heim says, “The psalm is open-ended, looking forward to the Lord’s action in the defiant hope that the divine promise as expressed in Nathan’s oracle is still valid.”²³ Looking at these open-ended promises in Psalm 89, Calvin thus concludes:

The sentence, *I will establish thy throne forever*, is partly to be understood of Solomon, and the rest of David’s successors; but the prophet well knew that perpetuity or everlasting duration, in the strict and proper sense, could be verified only in Christ.²⁴

Given the number of OT connections,²⁵ it seems unlikely Paul is referring to just one of these passages in 13:22-23. Rather, he is drawing on a wealth of OT references to the Davidic Covenant which serve as the foundation for his gospel presentation. Paul latches on to this open-ended hope, and shows how Jesus fulfills this for both Jews and Gentiles as the messianic king.

OT QUOTATIONS AS PROOF-TEXTS

We will next examine Paul’s four direct OT quotations and paraphrases. Paul uses these as proof-texts to demonstrate Christ’s fulfillment of the promises of the Davidic Covenant.²⁶

²²William C. Pohl, “A Messianic Reading of Psalm 89: A Canonical and Intertextual Study,” *JETS* 58 (2015): 507.

²³Quoted by Pohl, “A Messianic Reading,” 515.

²⁴John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 422.

²⁵Gleason L. Archer and Gregory Chirichigno (*Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1983], 50-1) also include Isaiah 44:28.

²⁶Porter, *The Paul of Acts*, 135.

However, we should understand an exposition of the Davidic Covenant is not an end in itself for Paul; it is merely the framework for introducing the Davidic messiah to the world. We see this in verse 32 when Paul proclaims that he is sharing the good news (εὐαγγελιζόμεθα), abruptly shifting from the aorist tense to the present tense.²⁷ The OT history that Paul is relating has taken on new significance. For Paul, the Davidic Covenant is a portal to the worldwide reign of Christ over all nations.

Acts 13:33 / Psalm 2:7

The first proof-text is from Psalm 2:7, which is found in Acts 13:33: νιός μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε / “you are my son, I today have begotten you.” The quote is taken verbatim from the LXX, which is likewise a straightforward rendering of the Hebrew: נָסָרָה אָתָּה אֶלְي בְּנִי אַתָּה אָנָּי הַיּוֹם יֹלְדָתִךְ: / “I recount the decree, YHWH said to me, ‘My son you are, I today have begotten you.’”

At this point, Paul has claimed that Jesus is in fact the offspring of David, the promised savior of Israel (Acts 13:23); he was rejected by the Jews in Jerusalem and executed (27-28); he was raised from the dead (30); Paul now proclaims the fulfillment of God’s promises in Christ as the Gospel (32). The context of Psalm 2:7 sheds light on why Paul brings it into his Acts 13 sermon as evidence of Christ’s fulfillment of Scripture.

Psalm 2 is a proclamation of God’s sovereignty over the nations and kings of the earth. By the time of Paul’s sermon in Pisidian Antioch, it was well-established as a messianic Psalm, speaking to the promises of the Davidic Covenant.²⁸ It culminates the wonderful promise in

²⁷This seems to highlight the importance of this section in Paul’s mind, see Martin M. Culy and Mikael C. Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 260.

²⁸Marshall, *Acts*, “The Psalm was recognized as applying supremely to the Messiah (*Psalms of Solomon* 17:26), and early Christians applied it to Jesus (4:25f.; Lk. 3:22; Hab. 1:5, 5:5). The divine utterance at the Baptism of Jesus probably reflects these words” (226). See also William J. Larkin Jr., *Acts* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1995), 202; for general look at messianic interpretation of the Psalms see John H. Walton, “Psalms: A Cantata about the Davidic Covenant,” *JETS* 34 (1991): 21-31.

verse 7 which Paul includes here, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” In Psalm 2, the next verse continues, “Ask from me and I will give to you the nations [for] your inheritance (κληρονομίαν / נְתָנָה), and [for] your possession the ends of the earth.” Though Paul does not include 2:8 here,²⁹ he seems to have this context in mind. We have seen “inheritance” already in Acts 13:19, where he speaks of “taking down seven nations in Canaan, he handed over as an inheritance (κατεκληρονόμησεν) their land.” Paul is thinking beyond the OT inheritance of Canaan. As the kingdom of God spreads across the nations, the Gentiles are swept into the inheritance as well. This theme will be developed in the ensuing OT quotations.

Acts 13:34 / Isaiah 55:3

The second reference that Paul brings in is a paraphrase of Isaiah 55:3. Paul makes it clear that he sees this verse as a prophecy of Jesus’s resurrection, “That he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption.” The paraphrase in Acts 13:34 is δόσω ὑμῖν τὰ ὄσια Δανιδ τὰ πιστά / “I will give to you the holy things of David, the faithful.” The LXX includes a noticeable difference: διαθήσομαι ὑμῖν διαθήκην αἰώνιον τὰ ὄσια Δανιδ τὰ πιστά / “I will grant to you *an everlasting covenant*, the holy things of David, the faithful [things].” The mention of the “everlasting covenant” matches the MT: לְכֹת בְּרִית עוֹלָם חֶסֶד דָּדוֹד הַנְּאָמָנִים / “I will make with you an everlasting covenant, the covenant faithfulness of David, the faithful [things].”

Conzelmann says the reference is paraphrased beyond recognition.³⁰ However, that is an overstatement of the matter. We can see that the key phrase Paul wishes to highlight, τὰ ὄσια Δανιδ τὰ πιστά, is identical to the LXX, which is faithfully translated from the Hebrew. Nonetheless, the changes that Paul has made in his paragraph draw immediate attention. He has

²⁹D does include Psalm 2:8, but there is no early manuscript evidence for this reading. See Josep Rius-Camps and Jenny Read-Heimerdinger, *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae: A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition : Acts 13:1-18:23*, vol. 3. (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 78.

³⁰Conzelmann, *A Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, 105. This is countered by Archer and Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*, 124-5.

omitted the word “covenant” (διαθήκην) found in the LXX, and also in the original Hebrew (ברית). This is striking, particularly given the overarching emphasis we have already seen on the Davidic Covenant. Yet, we have already noted that Paul’s point is not to give an exposition of covenantal theology for his Jewish audience. Rather, Paul is bridging the gap between the OT promises and their NT fulfillment for both Jews and Gentiles. Hence, Paul sees no need to draw attention to the technical language of the covenant.³¹

The meaning of קָדְשֵׁי דָּוִד הַנְּאָמָנִים / τὰ ὁσια Δαυιδ τὰ πιστά has been the subject of much debate.³² What is David’s relationship with the “holy things,” and how do they fit with the promises of the Davidic Covenant? Are these holy things given to David, or given by David? To answer this, we must look at the broader context of Isaiah 55. Verses 1-3 are a warm invitation to come and freely eat and drink of the promises of God. It becomes clear in verses 4-5 that the invitation goes beyond Israel to all peoples of the earth. Verse 4 speaks of the messianic figure as a “witness” (עָזֵב / μαρτύριον) to the peoples.³³ In addition to being a witness for the people, this messianic figure is also a ruler and leader for the nations. The remainder of the chapter is a call to hear God’s word and repent, ending on a reiteration of the certainty of God’s promises. It is in this context that Isaiah 55:3 speaks of “the holy things of David.”

How could David fulfill this promise? The Davidic line was unable to maintain the throne over Israel, let alone over foreign nations. Gentry suggests that the problem of the “holy things of David” is resolved if we understand David in Isaiah 55 as the messianic figure of Jesus:

³¹Bruce Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, notes, “Cop^{G67} expands ver. 34 with the following material: ‘He has raised him up from the dead in such a way as never again to return to decay, that all the people may know (it) and repent. For thus it stands written in the prophet Isaiah, ‘I will make with you an everlasting covenant, the sure mercies of David,’’” 366. While there can be no doubt this was not part of the original autograph, evidently at least one scribe felt that Luke should have made the Davidic Covenant more explicit in the text!

³²See Peter John Gentry, “Rethinking the ‘Sure Mercies of David’ in Isaiah 55:3,” *WTJ* 69 (2007):279-304 for a good summary of the debate, and strong argument for the subjective genitive; Walter C. Kaiser argues for the objective genitive, “The Unfailing Kindness Promised to David: Isaiah 55:3,” *JSOT* 14 (1989): 219-29.

³³Interestingly, this is a role which Paul has claimed for himself in verse 31, and a key concept throughout Acts, see 1:8, 22, 2:32, 3:15, 5:32, 10:39, 13:31, 22:15, 22:20.

Now if Paul meant $\tau\alpha\ \delta\sigma\iota\alpha\ \Delta\alpha\nu\delta\tau\alpha$ to be subjective genitive and understood "David" not as the historical David, but a rubric for the Messiah, his argument in context becomes plain. The explanation that David served his *own* generation is a clear statement that the historical David is not in view. Instead, Isaiah refers to the Messiah. Since the pious deeds of David in the context of Isa 55:3 are the sufferings and death of the Servant in ch. 53, the reference to resurrection becomes clear.³⁴

Paul sees the clear connection between the promises of the Davidic Covenant and Christ's fulfillment as the ruler over all nations.

Acts 13:35 / Psalm 16:10

Having made this reference to Isaiah 55, Paul makes a logical connection (διότι καὶ) to Psalm 16:10. As with the reference to Psalm 2:7, the quotation is taken directly from the LXX: οὐ³⁵ δώσεις τὸν ὄσιόν σου ἵδεῖν διαφθοράν / “I will not give your holy one to see corruption.”

This is likewise a very wooden translation of the Hebrew: **לֹא-תַתְנַחַת קְרֵסִידָךְ לְרֹאֹת שְׁחַת**. Looking at Psalm 16 Gregory Trull states, “The conceptual and verbal links between this psalm and David’s covenantal reflections in narrative portions (2 Sam. 7:22-23) provide significant support for the setting. His having received this covenant likely affected the message of the psalm.”³⁶ As Paul builds evidence from the OT, he draws on yet another passage related to the Davidic Covenant.

Commentators have long recognized there is a connection between τὰ ὅσια from Isaiah 55:3 and the quotation of Psalm 16:10, τὸν ὅσιόν σου (“your holy one”).³⁷ There, ὅσιος is used substantively to refer to the Messiah.³⁸ Notwithstanding the differences in number and gender, Paul has connected the “holy things of David” with the “holy one of David,” using Psalm 16:10 as proof-text for the necessity of Jesus’s resurrection. David did in fact see corruption; therefore,

³⁴Gentry, “Rethinking the ‘Sure Mercies of David’ in Isaiah 55:3,” 300.

³⁵LXX begins the phrase with οὐδὲ rather than οὐ.

³⁶Gregory Trull, "An Exegesis of Psalm 16:10," *BSac* 161 (2004): 305.

³⁷Marshall, *Acts*, 226. See also F.F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, “The exploitation of such a common term is a well-known feature of rabbinical interpretation: Paul practices it in his letters, even when (as here) the common term is found only in the Greek version, and not in the Hebrew text” (260).

³⁸As Barrett notes, Isaiah 55:3 uses a neuter plural noun, and the Psalm 16:10 reference is masculine singular noun, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 647.

the promise in this verse must point ahead to someone other than David himself. Paul concludes that it is none other than Jesus, the resurrected Messiah and eternal king.

Acts 13:41 / Habakkuk 1:5

Having reached his conclusion on the identity of Jesus and underscored the importance for both Jews and Gentiles, Paul moves into the final section of his outline, addressing ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί (“men and brothers”) in verse 38. It is worth noting that he has broadened the scope of his address now, from ἄνδρες Ἰσραὴλίται (“men of Israel”) in verse 16, and υἱοὶ γένους Ἀβραὰμ (“sons of the race of Abram”) in verse 27. It is not that Paul’s audience has changed in the course of his message. Rather, it is perhaps a subtle indicator of the broadening, worldwide focus in Paul’s gospel presentation and the implications of the Davidic Covenant. Paul reaches the climax of his message in 38-39, the free offer the Gospel: διὰ τούτου ὑμῖν ἀφεσις ἀμαρτιῶν καταγγέλλεται / “through him to you forgiveness of sins is proclaimed.” It is here we reach the final OT quotation of his first message, Habakkuk 1:5. He introduces this with a warning not to reject this gospel message: ἴδετε, οἱ καταφρονηταί, καὶ θαυμάσατε καὶ ἀφανίσθητε, ὅτι ἔργον ἐργάζομαι ἐγὼ ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ὑμῶν, ἔργον³⁹ ὃ οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε ἐάν τις ἐκδιηγήται ὑμῖν / “behold, the despisers, and marvel, and be ruined, for the work I am working in your day, a work which you would not believe if someone recounted it to you.” The MT is rendered: רָאֹו בְּגָזִים:

“look at the nations, and regard, be astonished, for a deed doing in your days, you will not believe to cause to be recounted.” It is immediately evident that there are differences between the LXX and MT and Paul’s quotation,

³⁹There is a text critical question with the second ἔργον. The UBS committee felt this was omitted in later manuscripts because of redundancy, or perhaps to assimilate to the LXX, Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, 367. Robert W. Wall argues that the redundancy is original and was intended for emphasis, see “The Function of LXX Habakkuk 1:5 in the Book of Acts,” *BBR* 10 (2000): 250-1.

but the substance of Paul's quotation is the same as the LXX.⁴⁰ Paul's paraphrases of Habakkuk 1:5 seem largely for the purpose of brevity, omitting unnecessary or redundant words. However, we can note there is also the addition of ὑμῖν ("to you") at the end. Like the shift to the present tense in verse 32, this personal modifier puts a sharper focus on the OT quotation; the message is for those listening to Paul right now.

The context of Habakkuk 1 is the prophet's complaint to God (1:1-4) and God's response beginning in verse 5, which tells of the judgment that will come in the form of the Chaldean army. Paul anticipates that the Jews will reject his gospel message, and points to the judgment on Israel described in Habakkuk. The Jews in Pisidian Antioch reject the Messiah just as the Jews in Jerusalem did, thereby cutting themselves off from eternal life. Upon the rejection of their message by the Jews, Paul and Barnabas state: ἐπειδὴ ἀπωθεῖσθε αὐτὸν καὶ οὐκ ἀξίους κρίνετε ἔαυτοὺς τῆς αἰωνίου ζωῆς, ιδοὺ στρεφόμεθα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη / "because you have rejected him, you have not judged yourselves worthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles" (13:46). Whereas in Habakkuk the judgment on Israel comes in the form of Gentile armies, in Acts the judgment comes when the gospel witnesses "shake the dust from their feet" (Acts 13:51), and take their message to the Gentiles.

SERMON EPILOGUE

Paul's sermon concludes here with verse 41, but Luke narrates to us the events of the following week, which serve as an epilogue to Paul's sermon. Initially there is a positive

⁴⁰The full quotation from the LXX reads: ἵδετε οἱ καταφρονηταί, καὶ ἐπιβλέψατε καὶ θαυμάσατε θαυμάσια καὶ ἀφανίσθητε, διότι ἔργον ἐγὼ ἔργόζομαι ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ὑμῶν δού μὴ πιστεύσητε ἐάν τις ἐκδιηγήται / behold, the despisers, and regard, and marvel, and be ruined, because of a work I, I am working in your day, which you would not believe if someone recounted it. Paul sides with the LXX over the MT using "scoffers" (καταφρονηταί) over "at the nations" (בְּנָאָר). There is also the question of נִתְּנָה "be astonished" and "ἀφανίσθητε, "be destroyed." Paul again sides with the LXX. However, he makes a few slight abridgements. First, he takes out the imperative ἐπιβλέψατε ("regard," "look at"). He also removes θαυμάσια, which adds emphasis to θαυμάσατε. Otherwise, it is largely congruent with the LXX. See also O. Palmer Robertson's discussion on textual issues (*The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, NICOT [Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990], 142-4); Archer and Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament*, give a sturdy defense of Paul's rendition of the text. (158-9).

response among both Jews and the Gentile “God-fearers.” A large crowd gathers the following week to hear Paul and Barnabas speak. It is then that the Jews are filled with jealousy and begin to speak out against Paul. Upon this response, Paul and Barnabas respond that since they have rejected the Gospel, they will now bring the message to the Gentiles.

It is unclear who is speaking in verse 47, but there is quotation of Isaiah 49:6. This continues the thematic emphasis on the Davidic Covenant, now drawing a connection between this OT theme and the gospel being preached to the Gentiles: τέθεικά σε εἰς φῶς ἔθνῶν τοῦ εἰναί σε εἰς σωτηρίαν ἵνα ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς / “I will put you among the Gentiles to be a light, you salvation until the ends of the earth.”⁴¹ The reference here is nearly verbatim from the LXX, but with one modification: τέθεικά σε εἰς διαθήκην γένους / “I will put you in a covenant of the people.” The MT reads: הָאָרֶץ קָצֵה עַד־עַתָּה לֹא־זָר גּוֹיִם לְהַיּוֹת יְשׁוּעָת / וּגְתָּהַרְךָ לֹא־זָר גּוֹיִם לְהַיּוֹת יְשׁוּעָת “I give you as light for the nations, my salvation may be unto the ends of the earth.” Following the MT over the LXX, the covenant language from the LXX is not added in Acts 13:37. Nonetheless, the “covenant of the people” is clearly in view both in the Isaiah 49 MT and in the Acts quotation of it.⁴² Bird argues that Isaiah 49:6 was “understood to signify that Israel was called to have a universal role in projecting the covenant God’s salvation to the nations... Christian authors believed that this vocation had subsequently been taken over by Jesus and the church.”⁴³

In Acts 13, Luke relays to us that this message rejected by the Jews out of jealousy (45), but joyfully received by the Gentiles (48). This epilogue further illustrates the importance of the Davidic Covenant in Paul’s sermon: the promises given to David are now being shared with all

⁴¹Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, notes the connection with Luke 2:29-32, (267).

⁴²It appears the LXX added διαθήκην γένους (“covenant of the people”) here to parallel the same expression in Isaiah 42:6 (διαθήκην γένους / בְּרִית־בָּרָךְ). Willem A. VanGemeren comments on Isaiah 42:6, “[The covenant of the people] assures that each member of the new community is the object of his love, is commissioned to establish God’s kingdom among the nations (vv. 3-4), and is endowed with his Spirit (v. 1) to bear the light of his kingdom to the nations (‘a light for the Gentiles,’ see Luke 2:32; Acts 13:47,” (*Interpreting the Prophetic Word* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990], 274).

⁴³Michael F. Bird, “‘A Light to the Nations’ (Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6): Inter-textuality and Mission Theology in the Early Church,” *RTR* 65 (2006): 123.

nations. Though rejected by the Jews, the Davidic Covenant is a bridge between the OT promises to Israel and the kingdom of God now among the Gentiles.

CONCLUSION

Acts 13:16-41 is an evangelistic sermon. Paul's purpose in Acts 13 is to build a bridge between the Jewish origins of the gospel and his Gentile audience, even as he presents the gospel in a Jewish synagogue. In Acts 13, we have seen that the Davidic Covenant is the unifying theme of the sermon and theological framework that guides Paul's gospel presentation. This emphasis and usage of the Davidic Covenant is significant for the narrative context of Acts 13. It is found in the thematic structure and content of the sermon, and particularly evident in Paul's use of OT references and quotations. The Davidic Covenant foretells the Messiah's eternal reign over all the nations of the earth, and this is good news for both Jews and Gentiles if they will believe in him.