

Jeremiah 33:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

Analysis

Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers. This verse completes the conditional argument begun in verse 20, drawing an explicit parallel between creation's stability and covenant permanence. The phrase "my covenant with David" references 2 Samuel 7:12-16, where God promised David an eternal dynasty: "thy throne shall be established for ever."

The inclusion of "the Levites the priests" alongside the Davidic covenant is significant. It binds together the royal and priestly offices in God's purposes, both essential to Israel's covenant life. This dual emphasis finds ultimate fulfillment in Christ, who serves as both King (from Judah) and Priest (after the order of Melchizedek, which supersedes the Levitical priesthood—Hebrews 7:11-17). The priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9) and Christ's eternal high priesthood both flow from this covenant stability.

The phrase "David my servant" (David avdi) emphasizes the covenant relationship's personal nature. David is not merely a king but God's chosen servant, bound to God by grace and calling. Similarly, the Levites are "my ministers" (mesharetai), belonging to God through divine appointment. The permanence of these offices rests not on human faithfulness but divine sovereignty and grace—a key Reformed emphasis.

Historical Context

The Levitical priesthood faced crisis alongside the monarchy. The temple was about to be destroyed (586 BCE), ending the regular sacrificial system. The priests would go into Babylonian exile, unable to fulfill their ordained duties. Yet God declares this priestly ministry as permanent as the Davidic throne.

The post-exilic restoration saw both offices renewed: Zerubbabel (Davidic descendant) governed alongside Joshua the high priest (Zechariah 3-4). However, the ultimate fulfillment required Christ, who combines both offices perfectly. The author of Hebrews extensively develops how Christ's priesthood fulfills and surpasses the Levitical system (Hebrews 7-10). The early church recognized that in Christ, believers participate in both kingly rule (Revelation 1:6) and priestly service (Romans 12:1).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's combination of kingly and priestly roles address the full scope of human need?
2. In what ways does your identity as part of a 'royal priesthood' shape your daily life and service?
3. How does understanding your calling as a 'servant' and 'minister' of God transform your perspective on work and vocation?

Interlinear Text

גַּם	בְּרִיתִי	תִּפְּרֹץ	אֶת	דָּוִד	עַבְדִּי	מִהֵיוֹת
H1571	Then may also my covenant	be broken	H854	with David	my servant	H1961
	H1285	H6565		H1732	H5650	
לֹא	יִבֶּן	מֶלֶךְ	עַל	כִּסֵּא וְ	וְאֶת	
H0	that he should not have a son	to reign	H5921	upon his throne	H854	
	H1121	H4427		H3678		
וְהַלְוִיִּם	הַכֹּהֲנִים	מִשְׁרָתִי:				
and with the Levites	the priests	my ministers				
H3881	H3548	H8334				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 89:34 (Covenant): My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

2 Chronicles 7:18 (Covenant): Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel.

2 Chronicles 21:7 (Covenant): Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.

2 Samuel 23:5 (Covenant): Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

Revelation 5:10 (Kingdom): And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Matthew 24:35 (Parallel theme): Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.