

Psalms 89:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

Analysis

Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. God elevates His covenant promise to the highest possible level of assurance: a divine oath sworn by His own holiness. **Once have I sworn** ('a-ḥaṭ niš-ba'-tî, אַחַת נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי) emphasizes both the singularity and sufficiency of the oath. "Once" ('aḥaṭ, אַחַת) means one time—unrepeatable, definitive, final. The verb šāḇa' (שָׁבַע) means to swear a solemn oath, the strongest possible form of commitment. God swore this oath once because it needs no repetition or reinforcement—it is eternally binding.

By my holiness (bə-qāḏ-šî, בְּשִׁיטָּתִי) God swears by His own holy character because there is nothing greater (Hebrews 6:13). "Holiness" (qōḏeš, קֹדֶשׁ) encompasses God's absolute purity, transcendence, and moral perfection—His very essence. To swear by His holiness means God stakes His own character on this promise. **That I will not lie unto David** ('im-lə-dā-wiḏ 'ākaz-zêḇ, אִם־לֹא־דָוִד אֶכְזָב) uses the strongest possible negative. The verb kāzaḇ (כָּזַב) means to lie, deal falsely, disappoint, fail. The construction "if I lie" is a Hebrew oath formula meaning "I will certainly not lie"—God cannot lie (Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18).

This verse provides the ultimate basis for confidence in God's covenant: not merely His promise, but His oath; not merely His word, but His holiness. The author of Hebrews applies this principle to believers: God confirmed His promise to Abraham with an oath, so we might have "strong consolation" (Hebrews 6:17-18). The Davidic covenant, sworn by God's holiness, stands immovably secure, fulfilled in Christ the eternal King.

Historical Context

God's oath to David was first recorded in 2 Samuel 7 and reaffirmed in Psalm 132:11-12. When the monarchy fell and Israel went into exile, the question arose: Had God lied to David? The psalmist's emphatic answer (drawing on God's oath) is No—God cannot lie. His holiness guarantees His word. The oath stood through centuries of foreign domination until its fulfillment in Jesus, of whom the angel said, 'The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David' (Luke 1:32). God's oath by His holiness could not fail.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why did God swear by His own holiness rather than by something external—what does this reveal about the certainty of His covenant promises?
2. How does the declaration 'I will not lie unto David' assure believers that every promise in Scripture is absolutely reliable?
3. In what way does Jesus Christ represent the fulfillment of God's oath to David, demonstrating that God cannot lie?

Interlinear Text

אֶחַת	נִשְׁבַּעַ עֲתִי	בְּקִדְשִׁי	אֲדָם	לְדָוִד	אֲכַזֵּב:
Once	have I sworn	by my holiness	H518	unto David	that I will not lie
H259	H7650	H6944		H1732	H3576

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 132:11 (References David): The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

Hebrews 6:13 (Parallel theme): For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,

Titus 1:2 (Parallel theme): In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

Hebrews 6:17 (Parallel theme): Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

Psalms 110:4 (Parallel theme): The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Amos 4:2 (Holy): The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that, lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fishhooks.

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