

God's House, David's House 2 Samuel 7

Today we are going to consider one of the most theologically-significant passages in the Old Testament. Although the word covenant isn't found in this chapter, God enters into a covenant with David. The flow of this chapter is pretty simple: David declares his intention to build a house for God, but God says, "No, David, you aren't going to build a house for Me. I am going to build a house for you." One scholar (Kruse) has identified over forty separate Old Testament texts that make allusion to this passage; the New Testament both quotes this passage directly (2 Corinthians 6:18, Hebrews 1:5) and makes many allusions to this passage (see Matthew 1:1, Mark 5:7, Luke 1:32-33, Acts 7:46ff, etc.). We'll first look at the first 17 verses of this chapter, and then we'll draw out a couple of implications for our lives.

David's intention to build a house for God. (2 Samuel 7:1-3) We learn in verse 1 that God blessed David by giving him rest from his enemies. This security allowed David to turn his attention to internal matters – such as the nation's corporate worship.

1 Now it came about when the king lived in his house, and the LORD had given him rest on every side from all his enemies, 2 that the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within tent curtains."

David's logic is sound. He had built himself a nice, big, sturdy house with cedar paneling (imported from Lebanon?). But the ark of the covenant was still housed in a tent. David understood that God wasn't really living in a tent while he lived in a nice house. But since the ark was the focal point of their worship of God it just didn't seem right for the ark to be housed in something temporary like a tent. [Haggai will employ this logic *after* the temple is built to argue that it should be well-maintained.] The implication in verse 2 is that David intended to build a house for the ark. A permanent, stable house for the ark would be good for many reasons (e.g., protection from weather, protection from vandalism, a designated place for corporate worship, etc.).

This is the first time we're introduced to Nathan the prophet. Nathan was a sounding board for David's ideas and would become a pastor to David. When Nathan heard David's plan, it initially sounded reasonable and good.

3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your mind, for the LORD is with you."

Nathan didn't have any red flags. He had the sense that God had inspired David's desires to build a house for the ark.

God's intention to establish a house for David. (2 Samuel 7:4-17) Beginning in verse 4 we read how God speaks to Nathan and redirects David's thinking. God does this initially by asking David two probing questions. The first question was whether David was the right person to build God a house. Let's read verses 4 and 5:

4 But in the same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, 5 "Go and say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD, "Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?"

The question wasn't whether or not it was appropriate for someone to build a house for God. The question was whether or not David was the one who should build such a house. The implication here is "No, David, you aren't the right person." The reason given elsewhere (1 Chronicles 22:8 and 28:3) was that David had shed too much blood to build the temple. Since the temple would be a place to which the nations streamed to worship YHWH, David's history as a conquering military commander could be a stumbling block for surrounding peoples. The reason God gives here, however, is simply an observation:

6 "For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I brought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a tabernacle.

The point seems to be that "living in a tent" has never been a liability for God. It's as if God is saying to David, "Building Me a house is a decent idea, but since day one I've done just fine moving about in a tabernacle." The second question God asks challenges David to consider who should be generating such an idea in the first place:

7 "Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"

The implication is that if God had wanted someone to build Him a permanent house, **He** would have made it clear. But He had never asked anybody who had been a shepherd to Israel, "Why haven't you built me a house of cedar?" God would soon authorize the building of His house, but He didn't want David to take the lead; He/YHWH would lead. As a matter of fact, God tells David in verses 8 through 11, "Instead of you building a house for Me, I'm going to build a house for you." Notice what God instructs Nathan the prophet to tell David. He rehearses past blessings and promises future blessings.

8 "Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel.

Remember that God hand-picked David from among the sons of Jesse when he was following sheep around the pasture. That very day God appointed David to be a shepherd over His people.

9 "I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth.

God promised to make David's "name great." In contrast to the people at the tower of Babel tried to "make a name for themselves" (Genesis 11:4), **God** would make David's name great; God would give David a reputation that rivaled anybody on earth. Verse 10 tells us that God

also promised a “place” for His people Israel and “rest” from their enemies. These promises mirror those made to Abraham a thousand years earlier.

10 "I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, 11 even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.

David wouldn't make a house for God; God would make a house for David. This “house” would be a dynasty/kingdom. This becomes clear in verses 12ff.

12 "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.

After David's death, God would raise up a descendent, someone from his own body, and establish his kingdom. This was a constant concern for any king – having a direct descendant who would sit on the throne. This promise of a descendent from David's own body again reminds us of the promises made to Abraham (see Genesis 15:4, 17:7-10). Furthermore, this descendant – not David – would build a house for God.

13 "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

The term “house” is obviously used two different ways in this chapter. Here the “house” that David's descendant would build was the temple. Before his death David would collect materials and funds to build this temple, but his son Solomon would be the one to build it. Verse 14 speaks specifically of God's relationship with Solomon:

14 "I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, 15 but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

This is the language of adoption. God Himself would be a father to Solomon. And like a good father, God would discipline him when he “commits iniquity.” But in contrast to Saul (who was removed as king), God's lovingkindness would never depart from him. This was a powerful encouragement to David; all kings wondered if their descendants would continue to experience God's blessing and continue to rule.

The NT looked back and recognized that this promise to David was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus was the descendant of David who was uniquely the “son of God.” Hebrews 1:5 even quotes this verse saying, “To which of the angels did [God] ever say. . . ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten you’? And again, ‘I will be a Father to Him, And He shall be a Son to Me’?” The second half of verse 14 didn't apply to Jesus because He never sinned and never

needed the corrective discipline of God. Verse 16 looks far beyond Solomon when God promises:

16 "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." 17 In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

The New Testament identified Jesus as this descendant of David who would sit on the throne forever. In Luke 1:32-33 the angel is speaking to Mary about her son Jesus when he says:

32 "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; 33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end."

Read David's response (the rest of chapter 7) when you have the chance. He is overwhelmed that God would make such sweeping promises that far outstripped anything He could have imagined.

I'd like us to consider two implications of this account in 2 Samuel 7. The first is a caution that comes from the simple observation that God didn't want David to build Him a house. The second is a strong encouragement that comes from God's promise to establish an eternal kingdom through Jesus.

A Caution: We shouldn't assume that everything we want to do "for God" is His will.

Different commentators ascribe different motives to David for wanting to build a house for God. Some see him as becoming overly ambitious and even trying to control God. Others see him as having honorable motives. In either case, 2 Samuel 7 makes the point that David wanted to do something for God that God didn't want him to do. God wanted his son Solomon to build the temple. This simple observation should be a caution to us, a caution against assuming that everything we want to do "for God" is His will.

There will, of course, be times when the desires we have to serve God are obviously His will. One of the main reasons that we study the Scriptures is so that we think like God thinks and so that we want what God wants. For example, James 3 says that if you see a brother/sister in need and you have what they need, you shouldn't close your heart against them; you should meet the need because the love of God is within you. If you're able to meet tangible, physical needs of another person, you probably don't have to agonize long and hard over whether you should do this "for God." Sometimes there are extenuating circumstances and sometimes situations are complicated, but generally speaking we should be eager to give and share.

But there will be other times when we need to stop and ask God whether our plans are God's plans. God speaks through the Word, as we pray and think about things, through circumstances, and through the counsel of others. Discerning whether our plans are God's will isn't always easy; and sometimes we just don't know until we've attempted something for God. But God loves to lead His people. And so we should be eager to ask whether or not our plans are the will of God. We shouldn't be paralyzed by the prospect that God doesn't want us to do something

we want to do for Him; but there's a caution here. Building a temple was a good thing David wanted to do, but the timing wasn't right.

Although a church building in our day really isn't analogous to the temple in David's day, it's hard not to think about the parallels. We're actually in the process of exploring the possibility of expanding this facility – a larger space for worship, a dedicated prayer room, storage, etc. We started thinking about such an expansion about seven years ago. We drew up preliminary plans and had lots of discussions, but it became clear that the timing wasn't right. In our current discussions, we shouldn't start out assuming that an expansion is what God wants. There are lots of reasons why it makes great sense to move this direction. And so we're committed to praying and seeking God. We're committed to having honest discussions within the church. We really trust that God will make clear whether or not to move forward.

A Strong Encouragement: God is committed to establishing the kingdom He promised through David's "descendant." He is just as committed to establishing David's kingdom in our day as He ever was. God promised Abraham that through his descendent/seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. We saw in 2 Samuel 7 that God indicated that His covenant with Abraham would be fulfilled through David's son who would sit on the throne forever.

The very first verse of the New Testament identifies Jesus as this "son of David." When Jesus was 30 years old He began His public ministry with the announcement, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Jesus announced that the time had come for God to establish His long-awaited kingdom on this earth. As the NT unfolds, it becomes clear that this kingdom will include people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. And this kingdom is available to everybody who wants in. If you accept Jesus' sacrifice for your sin, you will enter this kingdom that is ruled by the Good Shepherd, Jesus. And you immediately become part of plan to extend that kingdom – the same kingdom that God promised to David.

After His resurrection, Jesus told His followers, "Go and make disciples of all the nations. . ." Before He returned to the Father, Jesus told them, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses. . ." In other words, all of Jesus' followers are intimately involved in the expansion of the kingdom of heaven. And when it comes to establishing the kingdom, "the church is Plan A and there is no Plan B."

This means that we can enter into the adventure of extending God's kingdom with great courage and energy. The kingdom of God with David's descendant on the throne isn't our bright idea that we're hoping God blesses. God is fully committed to establishing His kingdom with Jesus on the throne. This conviction should be a strong encouragement– it should give us courage.

When we pray for matters of the kingdom, we should pray with great confidence because we are praying according to the will of God. We know that He wants to extend His kingdom through us. We can't predict how or when, but we know that He wants to establish His kingdom through us. And so we pray with confidence. And when we enter into friendships with those far from God, we should do so with anticipation about what God *might* do and *can* do. Again, we don't know exactly what God might do, but we know He wants our light to shine brightly before others.