

2 Samuel 7: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 00] 2 Samuel chapter 7 Now when the king lived in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, the king said to Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.

And Nathan said to the king, Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you. But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, Go and tell my servant David, Thus says the Lord, Would you build me a house to dwell in?

I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In all places where I have moved with all the people of Israel, did I speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, Why have you not built me a house of cedar?

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, that you should be prince over my people Israel.

And I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you.

And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more.

[1 : 17] And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel. And I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house.

When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men. But my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.

And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever. In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all the vision, Nathan spoke to David.

Then King David went in, and sat before the Lord, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far? And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord God.

[2 : 26] You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord God. And what more can David say to you? For you know your servant, O Lord God, because of your promise, and according to your own heart, you have brought about all this greatness, to make your servant know it.

Therefore you are great, O Lord God, for there is none like you, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name, and doing for them great and awesome things, by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods.

And you established for yourself your people Israel to be your people forever. And you, O Lord, became their God. And now, O Lord God, confirm forever the word that you have spoken concerning your servant, and concerning his house, and do as you have spoken.

And your name will be magnified forever, saying, The Lord of hosts is God over Israel, and the house of your servant David will be established before you. For you, O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have made this revelation to your servants, saying, I will build you a house.

Therefore your servant has found courage to pray this prayer to you. And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true, and you have promised this good thing to your servant.

[3 : 53] Now, therefore, may it please you to bless the house of your servant, so that it may continue forever before you. For you, O Lord God, have spoken, and with your blessing shall the house of your servant be blessed forever.

After a few chapters packed with action, in 2 Samuel chapter 7, the narrative slows down and focuses upon words and conversation. We've observed the victory house-building pattern. David has defeated the Jebusites in Jerusalem and established his household and kingdom there. He has also defeated the Philistines and brought up the Ark from Kiriath-Jerim to Jerusalem. However, the Ark is still in a tent, as it has been since Sinai, rather than in a proper house. The bringing in of the Ark to Jerusalem was a sign of the deliverance of the Exodus nearing its completion. The building of a permanent structure for the Ark and God's presence with his people, dwelling in safety and security in the land, would be the crowning of God's deliverance of his people, something anticipated in the Song of Moses at the Red Sea in Exodus chapter 15 verse 17. You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. David declares his intent to build a house to Nathan the prophet.

[5 : 08] One of the things that the building of the house would do would be to address the dysfunctional character of Israel's worship after the Battle of Aphek, after which there was no single central sanctuary, as had been mandated in Deuteronomy chapter 12 verses 5 to 14.

But you shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock.

And there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the Lord your God has blessed you. You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes.

For you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance that the Lord your God is giving you. But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land that the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies around, so that you live in safety, then to the place that the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you, your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the contribution that you present, and all your finest vow offerings that you vow to the Lord.

And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your male servants and your female servants, and the Levite that is within your towns, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.

[6 : 40] Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place that you see, but at the place that the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you.

Now that there is finally rest on all sides from enemies, David understandably thinks that the time has come to establish a fitting central sanctuary, no longer a movable tent, but an enduring house. This would end the situation of everyone worshipping in different altars in different locations, a situation that was ripe for divergence of worship from the divine pattern into localised cults.

One of the great tasks of the king was to ensure that orthodox worship was established and maintained. We should note the use of the expression that Moses uses to describe the situation of non-uniform and non-centralised worship.

You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes. A similar expression is repeated on several occasions at the end of the book of Judges, especially in the context of abuses of worship.

[7 : 46] There it is connected to the condition of having no king. In his desire to establish the true form of worship that God prescribed in Deuteronomy 12, David is taking his responsibilities very seriously.

We should remember that David was, according to Deuteronomy chapter 17, expected to write out his own copy of the book of the law and to reflect upon it. Nathan initially gives David encouragement in his desire.

However, that night the Lord spoke to Nathan, telling him that David would not be the one to build his house. In 1 Chronicles chapter 28 verse 3, David declares, But God said to me, You may not build a house for my name, for you are a man of war and have shed blood.

However, this is not the reason given in this passage. Rather, God had not called for a house to be built at this point. His presence had moved about in the tabernacle and the tent of David, but he had never rebuked his people for not building him a house, nor commanded them to do so.

He would call for a temple to be built when the time was right. While David had wanted to give to the Lord by building him a house, the Lord responds by recalling the ways in which he had blessed David to that point, in taking him from the pasture and the flock to the throne and delivering him from all of his enemies.

[9 : 01] Like God once promised Abraham, he would make David's name great. He would also secure Israel's place so that they can dwell in peace and security, protected from the violence of their neighbours and enjoying a sort of Sabbath rest in the land, the work over.

In giving these promises to David, God is more clearly specifying the shape that the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises would take. They would be realised chiefly through the house of David.

In the verses that follow, David and his house are brought into a closer relationship with the Lord.

While David wanted to build the Lord a house, the Lord is going to build David's house, establishing his dynasty and kingdom for generations to come.

The offspring of David, coming from his own body, would be raised up after his death. There is an implicit resurrection occurring here, one that helps us to understand Peter's use of the testimony of David on the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, verses 25 to 32.

For David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced.

[10 : 09] My flesh also will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life. You will make me full of gladness with your presence.

Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Behind David's words that Peter quotes here is the promise of God that the line of David would be raised up, and that the grave would not finally swallow it.

The Lord promises that the most immediate descendant of David, Solomon, would build a house for his name. He also promises to enter into a closer relationship with David's son. David's son would be adopted by the Lord as his son.

Saul had been established as king by the Lord, but he had never been the son of God in such a sense. Israel as a nation was spoken of as the firstborn son of the Lord in Exodus chapter 4 verse 22, but now the language is being used of a particular person, not just of a corporate sonship.

[11 : 31] The Lord is here making a covenant that greatly elevates David and his son in their relationship with the Lord. As the son of God, David's son would represent the Lord to the people in a stronger way.

Furthermore, David's son would also carry the destiny of the kingdom upon his shoulders to a greater degree than previously. He would sum up the people in himself. The king and his people would be blessed or judged on account of his behaviour.

However, the steadfast love of God would not depart from him as it had done from Saul in his house. The Lord would persevere with David's son. The greater degree to which the king represents the people and determines their fate by his behaviour helps us to understand the relevance of this to the ministry of Christ as the son of David.

David's response to all of this is to sit before the Lord and express his thanksgiving. It seems as though David was sitting before the Ark of the Covenant in the tent that he had established for it. Peter Lighthouse suggests that the situation here is similar to that of the Lord's meetings with Moses in the tent of meeting prior to the building of the tabernacle. Just as Moses was the prophet who established the tabernacle, David was the prophet who would instruct his son in the building of the temple.

[12 : 44] Lightheart also remarks upon David's posture here. He is seated before the Ark, which the priests never were. The priests were always on duty. However, David is a son in the house, not a servant waiting upon guests and managing the affairs of the house.

David earlier danced before the Ark like a servant. Now he sits before it like a son. However, David's humility is clear in both instances. David here is humbled by the greatness of the grace that he has received.

He extols the majesty of the Lord, repeatedly addressing him as Lord God or Master Yahweh and declaring his incomparable greatness and the way that he has set Israel apart by placing his name upon them and making a name for himself through their deliverance.

David marvels at the fact that God has revealed such incredible purposes for David's house to him and is humbled by the goodness that he has received from the Lord's hand. He asks the Lord to confirm his promise and prays that the Lord would bring about his word.

A question to consider. How can we see, beyond Solomon, Christ as the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant?

