

When God Comes Down

God's Covenant with David

2 Samuel 7:1-17

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Scripture

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Advent.

Our Scripture reading in this Advent season brings us to 2 Samuel 7:1-17. King David has conquered all his enemies, and is now living in relative tranquility toward the end of his life. He has built himself a magnificent palace. But the ark of God, which represented the presence of God, did not yet have a permanent home; the ark of God still dwelt in a tent. David desired to build a house for God. In response, however, God promised that God would build a house for David instead.

In this section of Scripture there is a play on the word "house." David wanted to build a house (meaning "temple") for God, but God said that he would instead build a house (meaning "dynasty") for David.

The events portrayed in 2 Samuel 7 may rightly be understood as the climax of David's life, and the foundation for a major theme in the writings of the Latter Prophets.

One commentator understands this section to be "the center and focus of. . . the Deuteronomic history itself."¹ Another commentator sees it as "the dramatic and theological center of the entire Samuel corpus"² and in fact "the most crucial theological statement in the Old Testament."³ And still another commentator says that "the Lord's words recorded here arguably play the single most significant role of any Scripture found in the Old Testament in shaping the Christian understanding of Jesus."⁴

Let us read 2 Samuel 7:1-17:

¹ R. F. Youngblood, "1, 2 Samuel." In EBC. Vol. 3. Edited F. E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1992), 880.

² W. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. IBC (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 253.

³ W. Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. IBC (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 258.

⁴ R. D. Bergen, *Vol. 7: 1, 2 Samuel* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 337.

¹Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies, ²the king said to Nathan the prophet, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent.” ³And Nathan said to the king, “Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.”

⁴But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, ⁵“Go and tell my servant David, ‘Thus says the Lord: Would you build me a house to dwell in? ⁶I 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. ⁷In 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?’” ⁸Now, 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. ⁹And 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. ¹⁰And 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. And violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, ¹¹from 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. ¹²When 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. ¹³He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I 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, ¹⁵but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. ¹⁶And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.’” ¹⁷In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David. (2 Samuel 7:1-17)

Introduction

Second Samuel chapter records the establishment of God's Covenant with David. It is also known as the Davidic Covenant, which is God's unconditional promise to David and his posterity.

Now, it is not called a "covenant" here in 2 Samuel 7, but it is called a "covenant" in 2 Samuel 23:5, where David says of God, in part, "For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure."

God's covenant with David is an important key to understanding God's irrevocable pledge of a king from the line of David to rule forever (v. 16). It has been estimated that over 40 individual biblical passages are directly related to these verses. Thus, this text is a major highlight in the Old Testament. The ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant with David comes at Christ's second advent when he sets up his kingdom on earth.

God's covenant with David is the fourth of five irrevocable, unconditional covenants made by God. The first 3 include:

1. the Noahic Covenant (Genesis 6:18-22; 9:8-17) made with Noah as the father of humanity;
2. the Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 15:9-21; 17:1-27) made with Abraham as the father of Israel; and
3. the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 19-24) made with Israel through Moses' mediation.

The fifth covenant is the New Covenant, which provided redemption, and was revealed through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31-34) and accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Lesson

In our text for today, 2 Samuel 7:1-17, we learn about God's covenant with David:

1. David's request: to build a house for God (7:1-7), and
2. The Lord's response: to build a house for David (7:8-17).

I. David's Request: To Build a House for God (7:1-7)

First, let us observe David's request, which was to build a house for God.

A. *The Purpose of David's Request (7:1-3)*

Let's begin by noticing the purpose of David's request.

King David was in the final years of his reign. Verse 1 says, **“Now when the king lived in his house and the Lord had given him rest from all his surrounding enemies.”**

God had blessed David. God had defeated David's enemies. Consequently, David was enjoying relative peace and tranquility. And he had built himself a magnificent palace.

While King David was contemplating the many blessings God had bestowed upon him, **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”** (7:2). David wanted to build a dwelling that was fit for the ark of God, especially since David lived in a beautiful cedar palace while the ark of God was housed in a tent.

David wanted to respond to God's blessing upon his life by building a beautiful dwelling for the ark of God, which symbolized the presence of God.

The great Puritan commentator, Matthew Henry, makes this somewhat quaint note at this point, “When God, in his providence, has remarkably done much for us, it should put us upon contriving what we may do for him and his glory.”⁵ What Matthew Henry is saying is that when God blesses us, as he blessed David, we should contemplate what we can do for God and his glory.

It may be that God has blessed you with financial resources; use them for the glory of God.

It may be that God has blessed you with time (perhaps your

⁵ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 2 Samuel 7:1.

children have grown and left the house, or you have retired); use it for the glory of God.

Or it may be that God has blessed you with skills and talents; use it for the glory of God.

Now, this is the first time in the Bible that the prophet Nathan appears. He would be prominent later in David's life, especially in regard to David's adulterous relationship with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 12:1-15).

Nathan, who was a prophet and a man of God, responded to David's comment about the ark of God not as a prophet but as a wise and good man. It seemed good and wise to him and did not contradict the revealed will of God that David should build a house for the ark of God. So **Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you"** (7:3).

B. The Prohibition of David's Request (7:4-7)

But now we see the prohibition of David's request to build a house for God.

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?'" (7:4-5). This is a rhetorical question expecting a negative answer. God was not going to let David build him a house (temple). According to 1 Chronicles 22:8, David was not chosen by God to build the temple because he was a warrior who had shed much blood: "You have shed much blood and have waged great wars. You shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood before me on the earth."

Now, let me just pause at this point and make a comment about being attentive to God's word. Earlier in the day Nathan responded to David's comment with godly wisdom. However, upon further revelation (later **that same night**) God told Nathan to revise what he had said to David. How does this apply to us?

Sometimes we are faced with situations and we wonder how

to proceed. We may act with godly wisdom believing that we are not contradicting the will of God. But we should always go to God to seek his confirmation of our actions. He may give it to us, or he may redirect us into another course of action, as he did with David.

God told Nathan to tell David, **“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?’”** (7:6-7).

This question also is rhetorical expecting a negative answer. God had never asked any other leader to build him a house, and he was not going to let David do it either.

God did not want a house at that time, and he did not want David to build it for him.

II. The Lord’s Response: To Build a House for David (7:8-17)

And second, let us observe the Lord’s response, which was to build a house for David.

God was going to do something for David first.

Isn’t this always God’s way? God’s work always precedes our work. One commentator put it this way, “The Lord’s work of grace always precedes our work; the Lord is always the one who takes the initiative.”⁶

A. The Promise to David (7:8-11)

First, let’s see the promise to David.

David was reminded of the great things that God had done for him. God reminded David that although he was not going to be

⁶ S. G. De Graaf and H. Evan Runner, *Promise and Deliverance: Vol. 2*. Vol. 2 3 vols. (St. Catherine’s, Ont: Paideia Press, 1977), 159.

the one to build a house for God, he was still nevertheless a favorite of heaven.

God wanted David to know that he had raised him to leadership from a very low position, **“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’”** (7:8).

Further, God had given David success and victory over his enemies, **“And I have been with you wherever you went and have cut off all your enemies from before you”** (7:9a).

And God also wanted David to know that he had crowned him with greatness, **“And I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth”** (7:9b).

If you have a great station in life, if you have any victory or success, if you have any greatness, remember that it is always God who has given it to you. Your response should be one of humility.

Don’t ever be like King Nebuchadnezzar, who said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?” While the words were still in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: The kingdom has departed from you, and you shall be driven from among men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. And you shall be made to eat grass like an ox, and seven periods of time shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will” (Daniel 4:28-32).

God promised David that he would grant his people a place of quiet and rest: **“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. 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”** (7:10-11a).

And then God clearly said that he would build David a house: **“Moreover, the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make**

you a house” (7:11b). But this is not a physical house, but rather a dynasty. It is like the royal family, whom we know as the House of Windsor. In a similar way, God was going to make the House of David.

B. The Promise to David's Descendant (7:12-15)

God explained to David the promise of a descendant.

The immediate fulfillment of God's promise to David related to David's son, Solomon. God said, **“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”** (7:12-13).

Solomon is the one who would build a temple for God. And he would also be the one through whom the House of David would be built.

God promised to be like a father to Solomon, **“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”** (7:14-15).

David's son would be disciplined, but he would never be disinherited.

C. The Promise to David's Descendants (7:16-17)

Finally, we see the promise to David's descendants.

God said to David, **“And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever”** (7:16). The Lord promised that David's descendants would never end.

The divine declarations proclaimed here through the prophet Nathan are foundational for seven major New Testament teachings

about Jesus. The New Testament writers want us to understand that God's covenant with David was to produce an eternal kingdom.

First, Jesus is the Son of David. The very first verse of the New Testament establishes this. Matthew 1:1 says, "The book of the genealogy of *Jesus Christ, the son of David*, the son of Abraham."

Second, Jesus is the descendant of David who would rise from the dead. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached a sermon in the temple to the Jews and said, "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 all are witnesses" (Acts 2:29-32).

Third, Jesus is the descendant of David who is the builder of the house for God. Early in his ministry Jesus said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and *in three days I will raise it up*." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body" (John 2:19-22a).

Fourth, Jesus is the descendant of David who is the possessor of a throne. Hebrews 1:8 says, "But of the Son he says, '*Your throne, O God, is forever and ever*, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.'"

Fifth, Jesus is the descendant of David who is the possessor of eternal kingdom. 2 Peter 1:10-11 says, "Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into *the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*."

Sixth, Jesus is the descendant of David who is the son of God. John 20:30-31 says, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but

these are written so that you may believe *that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

And seventh, Jesus is the descendant of David who is the product of a supernatural conception, since he had God as his father. The angel came to Mary and said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

And the angel answered her, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you*, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God” (Luke 1:30-35).

In accordance with all these words, and in accordance with all this vision, Nathan spoke to David (7:17).

Conclusion

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent we are reminded of God’s covenant with David. David wanted to build a house for God. But God said that he would give David an eternal kingdom. David’s greater son, Jesus, would rule and reign on the throne forever and forever.

Jesus did come at the first advent, of course.

But he is coming again. And we eagerly wait for the return of David’s son, King Jesus, to consummate his eternal kingdom and rule and reign visibly for ever and ever.

The question is: when God comes down again, will you be ready?

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To bring people to Jesus Christ
and **membership** in his church family,
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,
equip them for their **ministry** in the church
and life **mission** in the world,
in order to **magnify** God's name.

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When God Comes Down

PRAYER:

On this Fourth Sunday of Advent, O God, we give you thanks for your covenant with David.

David wanted to build you a house, but you built an eternal house for David.

You raised up David's greater son, Jesus, to be king on the throne for ever and ever.

I pray that each one here today will be ready for the day when you come back again to consummate your kingdom forever.

And for all of this we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

CHARGE:

Go and glorify God in all that you think, do, and say! And as you do, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.