

The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: God's Covenant with David

1 Chronicles 17:1-27

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Doctrinally, this is the most weighty lesson of the first half of Chronicles, for here God establishes the covenant with David: an everlasting throne, an enduring house, a kingdom forever. Everything hangs on reading this promise as the New Testament reads it. The everlasting throne of David is occupied now by the risen Christ, seated at God's right hand, reigning over His church. Peter declares at Pentecost that this is precisely what David foresaw and that the resurrection and enthronement of Jesus is its fulfillment (Acts 2:29-36). The teacher must guard the class firmly against premillennial and dispensational readings that postpone this throne to a future earthly political kingdom and a rebuilt physical temple. Scripture will not allow it: the kingdom is here, the King is reigning, and the temple now is His body, the church. To hold the promise in reserve is to deny that Christ is already King.

Yet the chapter is not only a doctrinal battlefield; it is a school of worship. David, having received a promise far beyond his request, goes in and sits before the LORD and prays one of the most beautiful prayers of humility in Scripture: 'Who am I, O LORD God?' The lesson aims to form in the student that same posture, the wonder, the lowliness, the gratitude of one who has received grace he could never earn. The believer who rightly understands the reign of Christ is driven not to speculation about timelines but to worship before the throne where the Son of David now sits. Sound doctrine and humble adoration are meant to grow together.

Question 1

Student Question:

What does God's reversal of David's plan, 'you will not build me a house; I will build you a house' (17:4, 10), reveal about who initiates and sustains covenant relationship?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

David's intention is noble. Living in 'a house of cedar' while the ark sits 'under a tent' (17:1), he wants to build a house for God. The impulse honors God above self. Yet God's response reverses the entire arrangement: 'It is not you who will build me a house to dwell in' (17:4), and then the stunning turn, 'the LORD will build you a house' (17:10).

This reversal is the theological heart of the chapter. The covenant is God's initiative, not David's achievement. David cannot build God a house worthy of Him; God instead builds David a house, a dynasty, by sheer grace. The lesser cannot put the greater in his debt. God is always the giver.

The pattern runs throughout Scripture. We do not initiate relationship with God by our gifts; He initiates by His grace. As with Abraham, the covenant flows from God's free promise, and the human partner receives rather than earns. This guards us from the proud notion that we put God in our debt by our service.

For the post-exilic reader, with no Davidic king on any throne, this was a lifeline: the kingdom rests not on Israel's strength or merit but on God's covenant initiative, which He will surely keep. And for us, it anchors confidence in the reign of Christ, established by God's own promise and power.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God initiates and sustains the covenant; it is grace, not human achievement.
- The lesser cannot put the greater in his debt; God is always the giver.
- Covenant relationship is received, not earned, as with Abraham and David.
- The kingdom rests on God's promise, not on human strength or merit.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does God reverse David's plan, and what does the reversal reveal about grace?
- How does this guard us from thinking we put God in our debt?
- How does God's covenant initiative anchor our confidence in Christ's reign?

Question 2

Student Question:

David wanted to do something great for God but had to receive God's greater grace instead; where do you need to stop striving to give God a 'house of cedar' and learn to receive what He freely gives?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the reversal into self-examination. David wanted to do something great for God; God asked him instead to receive something greater. Many sincere believers are far more comfortable giving to God than receiving from Him, and so they strive to build their own 'house of cedar' for the Lord.

There is a subtle pride even in our service when it becomes a way of earning standing or controlling the relationship. The gospel humbles us by making us receivers first. We cannot out-give God; the central transaction of grace is that He gives and we receive.

Application is gentle but searching. Where are we exhausting ourselves trying to impress or repay God, when He is asking us simply to trust and receive His grace? The rest of faith begins when we stop building and start believing.

Note that David's receiving did not make him passive; it made him worshipful and, later, generous (he would prepare lavishly for the temple Solomon would build). Grace received becomes service offered, but in the right order: receive first, then give.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We are often more comfortable giving to God than receiving from Him.
- Striving to 'earn' standing with God can mask pride.
- Grace is received first; service flows from it, not the reverse.
- Rest in faith begins when we stop building and start trusting.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you striving to give God a 'house of cedar' instead of receiving His grace?
- How can service flow from grace received rather than become a way to earn?
- What would it look like to rest in what God freely gives this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Why does the Chronicler record that Nathan first told David to do as he pleased, then had to correct himself by 'the word of the LORD' (17:2-4), and what does this teach about the authority of God's word over even good human intentions?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Nathan's first reply was, 'Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you' (17:2). It was sincere and even reasonable, but it was not the word of the LORD. That same night God corrected the prophet: 'Go and tell my servant David' the truth (17:3-4). Even a good man's good counsel must yield to what God has actually said.

This is a quietly important lesson about authority. Nathan was a true prophet, David a man after God's own heart, and the plan was generous; yet none of that made the plan God's will. Only God's revealed word settles the matter. Good intentions, godly people, and noble ideas are not the same as divine authorization.

The Chronicler's willingness to record Nathan's initial misstep is itself instructive. Scripture does not hide the gap between human assumption and God's word, because closing that gap is exactly the point. We must test our plans, however good they seem, against what God has spoken.

For the church this is foundational. We do not establish doctrine or practice by what seems good to sincere and respected people, but by the revealed will of God in His word. Nathan's correction is a model of submitting even our best ideas to Scripture.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even godly counsel must yield to the revealed word of God.
- Good intentions and respected people do not equal divine authorization.
- Scripture exposes the gap between human assumption and God's word.
- Doctrine and practice rest on God's word, not on what seems good to us.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that even Nathan had to be corrected by God's word?
- How do we test our 'good ideas' against what God has actually said?
- Where might you be mistaking a sincere impulse for God's will?

Question 4

Student Question:

When have you mistaken a good idea for God's will, and how can you better test your plans against what God has actually said?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies Nathan's correction to the student. We have all, at some point, mistaken a good idea for God's will, baptizing our preference with the language of guidance. The cure is the same one God gave Nathan: a return to what God has actually said.

The danger is not usually wickedness but presumption. Like Nathan, we speak too quickly, assuming that because something seems good and we feel God is with us, it must be His will. Maturity learns to pause and ask, 'But what has God said?'

Application is practical: cultivating the habit of testing plans, decisions, and convictions against Scripture rather than against our feelings or even the encouragement of others. Feelings and counsel have their place, but they are not the final authority.

Encourage the student that this is not paralysis but freedom. When our plans are submitted to God's word, we can act with confidence where He has spoken and hold loosely where He has not.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We easily baptize our preferences with the language of guidance.
- Presumption, not wickedness, is the usual danger.
- Plans and convictions are to be tested against Scripture.
- Submitting plans to God's word brings confidence, not paralysis.

Discussion Prompts

- When have you mistaken a good idea for God's will?
- What habits help you test your plans against what God has said?
- How does submitting plans to Scripture bring freedom rather than fear?

Question 5

Student Question:

What does God's promise of an 'offspring' whose 'throne' will be established 'forever' (17:11–14) teach us about His long-range, covenant faithfulness across generations?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The promise reaches across generations: 'When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever' (17:11–14). God's covenant faithfulness is not confined to David's lifetime; it spans the generations and reaches into eternity.

This long-range faithfulness is a hallmark of God's character. He had promised Abraham what would take centuries to fulfill; He promises David what will reach its climax a thousand years later in Christ. God is not in a hurry, and He does not forget. His promises mature on His timetable.

There is a near and a far horizon here. Solomon, David's immediate son, would build the temple and reign; but 'forever' reaches past Solomon to the Son of David whose throne truly endures. The Chronicler's first readers, with no king at all, were being taught to trust a faithfulness that outlasts the failures of any generation.

For us, this is deep assurance. The God who keeps covenant across centuries can be trusted with the slow seasons of our own lives. What He promises, He performs, even when fulfillment is far off and unseen.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's covenant faithfulness spans generations and reaches into eternity.
- God's promises mature on His timetable, not ours.
- The promise has a near horizon (Solomon) and a far horizon (Christ).
- God's faithfulness outlasts the failures of any single generation.

Discussion Prompts

- How does God's multi-generational faithfulness shape how you trust Him?
- What does the 'forever' of the promise point us toward?
- How does this steady you in a slow or waiting season?

Question 6

Student Question:

How does it steady your faith in seasons of waiting to know that God keeps promises that may take generations to unfold?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses God's long-range faithfulness into the student's seasons of waiting. Much of the Christian life is lived between promise and fulfillment, and our faith is tested precisely in the gap.

David himself would not see the everlasting throne occupied; he would die long before the Son of David came. Yet he trusted the promise and worshiped. We too are called to trust promises whose full unfolding we may not witness in our lifetime.

Application is honest. Waiting can breed doubt: Has God forgotten? Is the promise really sure? The answer of this chapter is that God keeps covenant across centuries, so the slowness of fulfillment is never the failure of God.

Encourage the student to anchor present faith in God's proven track record. The promise to David, fulfilled in Christ, is itself the evidence that God keeps even His longest promises. We wait on a God who has never broken His word.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith is tested in the gap between promise and fulfillment.
- We may be called to trust promises we will not see fully unfold in our lifetime.
- The slowness of fulfillment is never the failure of God.
- God's fulfilled promise to David assures us He keeps His longest promises.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you waiting on God, and how does His faithfulness steady you?
- How does David's trust, though he never saw the eternal throne, encourage you?
- How does the fulfillment of the Davidic promise in Christ strengthen your patience?

Question 7**Student Question:**

David prayed, 'Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?' (17:16); what does genuine humility before God's grace look like, and how does it guard us from pride?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

David's response to the covenant is one of the great prayers of Scripture: 'Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?' (17:16). He goes in and 'sits before the LORD,' overwhelmed, and his first word is wonder at his own smallness against God's grace.

Genuine humility is not self-loathing; it is accurate vision. David sees God's greatness and his own unworthiness in the same glance, and the result is grateful astonishment. He does not bargain or boast; he marvels. This is the posture grace always produces in an honest heart.

Notice that humility here guards against pride precisely at the moment pride would be most tempting. David has just been promised an everlasting dynasty; a lesser man would have swelled. Instead David shrinks before the Giver and exalts God's name (17:24). Grace received rightly humbles rather than inflates.

For the believer, David's prayer is a model. When God is good to us, the question 'Who am I?' keeps us low and keeps God high. Pride forgets the Giver and admires the gift in the mirror; humility looks past the gift to the God who gave it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Genuine humility is accurate vision: God's greatness and our unworthiness together.
- Grace rightly received humbles rather than inflates.
- Humility guards against pride at the very moment pride is most tempting.
- 'Who am I?' keeps us low and keeps God high.

Discussion Prompts

- What makes David's prayer a model of true humility?
- How does grace rightly received humble rather than inflate?
- Where do you need the question 'Who am I?' to guard you from pride?

Question 8

Student Question:

Where has God's kindness been so great in your life that the only honest response is the humility of 'who am I?'

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns David's wonder into the student's testimony. Most believers can point to moments when God's kindness so outran their deserving that the only honest response was 'Who am I?' Naming these moments rekindles gratitude.

The danger of received blessing is amnesia. We grow accustomed to grace and begin to feel entitled to it. David's prayer is the antidote: a deliberate remembering of how far God has brought us and how little we deserved it.

Application invites the student to recall specific kindnesses, salvation in Christ above all, but also the daily mercies, and to let them produce the humility of wonder rather than the dullness of entitlement.

Encourage the student that this remembering is not morbid self-deprecation but joyful worship. The lower we bow before God's grace, the higher our gladness in the God who gives it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Received blessing tempts us toward amnesia and entitlement.
- Deliberate remembering of grace rekindles humble gratitude.
- Salvation in Christ is the supreme kindness to remember.
- Humble wonder is joyful worship, not morbid self-deprecation.

Discussion Prompts

- When has God's kindness been so great that 'Who am I?' was the only honest response?
- How do you guard against treating grace as something you are entitled to?
- How can remembering God's kindness deepen both humility and joy?

Question 9

Student Question:

The covenant promised David an everlasting throne and house (17:11–14); how does the New Testament teach that this promise is fulfilled NOW in the risen Christ, who reigns at God's right hand over His church (Acts 2:29–36; Luke 1:32–33), and why must we reject the idea that the throne of David is being held in reserve for a future earthly political kingdom or a rebuilt physical temple?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here is the doctrinal summit of the lesson, and it must be handled with both clarity and conviction. The covenant promised David an 'offspring' whose 'throne' God would 'establish forever' (17:11–14). The New Testament identifies that offspring unmistakably as Jesus. The angel told Mary that her son would receive 'the throne of his father David' and reign over a kingdom that 'will have no end' (Luke 1:32–33). The promise is not vague; it has a name, and the name is Jesus.

The decisive text is Acts 2:29–36. Peter, preaching at Pentecost, says David is dead and buried, but as a prophet he knew God had sworn 'that he would set one of his descendants on his throne.' David 'foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ,' and Peter concludes

that God raised Jesus, exalted Him to His own right hand, and 'made him both Lord and Christ.' The everlasting throne of David is not empty and is not future; it is occupied now by the risen, reigning Christ. To ask 'when will the throne of David be set up?' is to ask a question Pentecost has already answered: it is set up, and Jesus sits on it.

This is why we must firmly reject the premillennial and dispensational scheme. That system teaches that Christ's reign on David's throne was postponed, that the kingdom is held in reserve for a future earthly, political reign from a literal Jerusalem with a rebuilt physical temple and reinstated sacrifices. But the New Testament says the King is already reigning (Acts 2:36; Hebrews 1:8–13; Psalm 110:1), the kingdom is already here (Colossians 1:13; Mark 9:1; the church is the kingdom), and the temple now is not a building but Christ's body, the church, the people in whom God dwells by His Spirit (Ephesians 2:19–22; 1 Corinthians 3:16–17). To postpone the throne is to deny the present lordship of Christ and to turn back to shadows that Hebrews says have been fulfilled and set aside (Hebrews 8–10).

Three guardrails for the class. First, 'forever' and 'everlasting' point to an eternal, spiritual reign, not an endlessly renewed earthly politics; an everlasting throne cannot be a temporary thousand-year arrangement. Second, the 'house' God builds is fulfilled in the church, the spiritual house of living stones (1 Peter 2:4–5), not in a stone temple to be rebuilt; rebuilding the temple and its sacrifices would deny that Christ is the final sacrifice and the true temple. Third, the throne is in heaven, at God's right hand, where Christ reigns now and from which He rules until every enemy is subdued (1 Corinthians 15:24–25), not a throne awaiting a future earthly inauguration.

So the joyful, settled conviction of this lesson is that the Son of David reigns today. We are not waiting for the kingdom to begin; we have been transferred into it (Colossians 1:13). We do not look for an earthly Jewish kingdom; we look up to a reigning Lord and out to His church, the temple He is building. David's covenant has been kept, gloriously and forever, in Christ. The right response is not date-setting or temple-building but allegiance and worship to the King who reigns now.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The 'offspring' and 'everlasting throne' of the covenant are fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 1:32–33).
- Acts 2:29–36: the risen Christ is enthroned NOW on David's throne at God's right hand; the throne is occupied, not future or empty.
- Reject premillennialism and dispensationalism: the kingdom is not held in reserve for a future earthly political reign.
- The kingdom is already here and Christ is already reigning (Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 1:8–13; Psalm 110:1; 1 Corinthians 15:24–25).
- The 'house' God builds is the church, the spiritual temple of living stones (1 Peter 2:4–5; Ephesians 2:19–22), not a rebuilt physical temple with reinstated sacrifices.

- To postpone the throne or rebuild the temple is to deny Christ's present lordship and His finished, final sacrifice (Hebrews 8–10).
- The right response is allegiance and worship to the reigning King, not date-setting or temple-building.

Discussion Prompts

- How does Acts 2:29–36 show that David's everlasting throne is occupied right now?
- Why must we reject the idea that the throne of David is reserved for a future earthly kingdom and rebuilt temple?
- If Christ is already reigning, how should that change the way we live and worship today?

Question 10

Student Question:

Looking back across this chapter, name one specific way Jesus, the reigning Son of David, is forming you through both His covenant faithfulness and David's humble worship.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This capstone gathers both halves of the lesson: the covenant faithfulness of God fulfilled in the reigning Son of David, and the humble worship of David before such grace. The student names one specific way Jesus, the reigning King, is forming him.

Possible fruit to name: a settled assurance that Christ reigns now, freeing us from speculation and fear; a deeper humility before God's grace; a renewed allegiance to the King; a steadier trust in God's long faithfulness; a worship driven by wonder rather than calculation.

The aim is to bring doctrine and devotion together. Right belief about Christ's present reign is meant to produce, not dry argument, but the very posture David models: sitting before the LORD in grateful wonder, saying 'Who am I?'

Close by directing the class to the throne itself. The Son of David is not a figure of the past or merely the future; He reigns today. We live as subjects of a present King, and our lives are being conformed to His likeness by His grace and rule.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Doctrine and devotion belong together: right belief about Christ's reign produces worship.
- Assurance of Christ's present reign frees us from fear and speculation.
- Spiritual formation is named in specifics.
- We live as subjects of a present King who is conforming us to His likeness.

Discussion Prompts

- How is the reigning Son of David forming you through this chapter?
- What single, concrete change will His present reign make in your life?
- How does David's humble wonder model the response Christ's reign should produce in you?