

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel

Lesson 20: God's Covenant with David -- 2 Samuel 7:1-8:18

Imagine David at rest. The wars are quieting, the kingdom is established, the ark is home in Jerusalem, and the king is settled in a house of cedar. He looks around at his own comfort and a holy restlessness stirs in him. Here I am living in a palace, he says to Nathan the prophet, while the ark of God dwells within tent curtains. It is a beautiful impulse. David wants to build God a house, a permanent temple worthy of His glory. And at first Nathan says yes, go and do all that is in your heart, for the Lord is with you.

But that night God speaks, and the whole conversation is turned upside down. The Lord gently refuses David's offer. You will not build Me a house, He says. And then comes one of the most astonishing reversals in all of Scripture. Instead of letting David build Him a house, God promises to build David a house. Not a house of cedar and stone, but a dynasty, a lasting line, a throne that will never end. The man who wanted to give God a gift is overwhelmed by the gift God gives him instead.

This is the Davidic covenant, and it is the doctrinal mountain peak of the entire study. Listen to the heart of it. God promises that He will set up David's seed after him, that this seed will build a house for God's name, and that God will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. Thy house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee, says the Lord; thy throne shall be established for ever. A throne that lasts forever cannot be filled by any merely mortal king. This promise reaches past Solomon, past every son of David, all the way to one greater Son.

That Son is Jesus, the Son of David, born to inherit the throne of His father David, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. Do not let anyone tell you this points to some future earthly throne in Jerusalem. The New Testament tells us plainly where David's throne is now and who sits on it. Peter stood up at Pentecost and declared that God had raised Jesus to sit on David's throne, and that He is reigning at this very moment at the right hand of God. As we study this chapter, we are studying the promise that holds the whole Bible together, and we are looking straight into the face of the reigning Christ. Come and see how good God is.

Group Discussion: Why is it so significant that when David wanted to build God a house, God responded instead by promising to build David a house that would last forever?

Personal Reflection: When has God answered one of your sincere desires not with a simple yes or no, but with something far greater than you had asked or imagined?

Read 2 Samuel 7:1-8:18

Study Questions

1. What does God's gentle refusal to let David build the temple, even though David's desire was good, reveal about how God works and about His freedom to choose His own purposes?
2. When have you had a genuinely good plan for serving God, only to sense that He was redirecting you toward something different from what you intended?
3. What does God's promise to build David a house, rather than receive one from him, teach us about the nature of grace and about who initiates in our relationship with God?
4. How does it change the way you serve God when you remember that He has already done immeasurably more for you than you could ever do for Him?
5. In the covenant God speaks of David's seed building God's house and of a throne established for ever (7:12-16); what does the word for ever require us to see beyond Solomon to a greater Son?
6. How does living under a kingdom that cannot be shaken steady you in a world of changing fortunes and uncertain times?

7. Chapter 8 records David's many victories with the refrain that the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went; what does this teach about the source of every genuine victory in God's work?
8. Where are you tempted to take credit for, or to trust in, your own strength rather than acknowledging that the Lord is the one who preserves and gives the increase?
9. How does the New Testament reveal that the eternal throne and kingdom promised to David are fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of David, who reigns now at the right hand of God over His church, and why is it crucial to understand that this is His present reign and not a future earthly, political kingdom in Jerusalem?
10. Name one specific way the reigning Christ, the fulfillment of God's promise to David, is forming you to live today as a faithful subject of His everlasting kingdom.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Luke 1:32–33, the angel promises that Jesus will receive the throne of His father David and reign for ever, of His kingdom there shall be no end; Acts 2:29–36, Peter declares that God raised Jesus to sit on David's throne and made Him both Lord and Christ, reigning now; Acts 13:22–23, of David's seed God raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus; Colossians 1:13, God has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son; Hebrews 1:8 and 13, the Son's throne is for ever and ever, seated at God's right hand until His enemies are made His footstool.

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