

The Covenant-Making God

Series on 2 Samuel

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Bible Text: 2 Samuel 7

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Let's take our Bible, then, and turn to 2 Samuel chapter seven. It is page 259 using the church Bible.

Go back to the very beginning and you will see it was always God's intent to give the earth to a king, a human king. The first people, our first parents King Adam and Queen Eve were given dominion. We read that in the early chapters of Genesis, dominion over the earth from the great King who had created, formed and endowed it. And they had a relationship with this great King, a relationship that is both personal, relational and legal, formal, a relationship that we describe later in terms of a covenant relationship. It was the great King's prerogative to form such a relationship. And he had been generous in the terms of that relationship giving to the pair a garden paradise, giving to them a great commission to fill the earth with image bearers who would enlarge the garden until it filled and covered the whole earth.

The only obligation resting on that first family, one command to obey. And on it hung the future of humanity, a promise of life and the threat of death.

Well, the rest of their story is history. It is our story. It is the story of humanity. They lost their innocence. They exchanged their garden for wilderness. They broke their bond with the great King and eventually they lost their struggle with survival. And from the moment of that fatal act of disobedience, from that first moment of their expulsion from Eden the world had been waiting for this moment here in 2 Samuel chapter seven.

Outside the gates of the garden a promise had been given, a promise without any string attached of the seed of the woman, the offspring of the woman who would decisively strike a death blow on Satan, the serpent and all his works. And in the unfolding story from that moment in the earliest chapters of Scripture, the river of revelation has flowed throughout the mass of history with all the ups and downs, with all the turns and twists of the tale as the promise to Adam is repeated to Abraham and now comes to its culmination in the figure of David.

The promise to Abraham was that through his offspring the whole world would be blessed. A few generations later God narrows it down and says that through one of

Abraham's offspring born from the tribe of Judah the obedience of the nations would come. Now we find the fulfillment of that promise. The people of Israel have emerged from their slavery in Egypt, have become a great nation. They have entered into a covenant with God through Moses and progressively throughout their history God has been clarifying some things, particularly the offices of this holy nation. Under Moses it was the office of the priest which was introduced. Every infraction of that law, Moses had a corresponding offering or sacrifice to deal with it offered by a priest. Then in the chaos that followed the death of Joshua, in that period we know as the judges when Israel all its tribes seemed to fall apart because there is no king in Israel. In that period we find the emergence of a new office, the office of a prophet. And it is through Samuel that the office of the prophet is regularized within Israel. And the business of the prophet, the business of Samuel, for example, was to deliver the Word of God to the people of God. And over and over again they disregard the Word of God. Soon they are clamoring for a king, a king like the nations round about, a celebrity king, a king that looks like all the other great leaders of the world. And God gives them what they want in Saul. He gives them the kind of ruler everybody wants to have as the head of the army and it doesn't work out, not until this point.

But now the great King selects his own prince and he appoints David. David becomes the appointee of the great king who had made everything. And under David the third office takes precedence and becomes clear, the office of king within Israel. It is in David's reign that these three offices come to be distinguished from each other. Together they demonstrate the purpose of the great King for Israel and the world. And with the appointment of David the invisible rule of God as the great King becomes visible in the rule of David, the covenant mediator and representative of the great King.

Here in this chapter we have the most important development since Adam in the entire story of the Bible to this point. And what happens in this chapter will define what is going to happen in the unfolding story up to and including and beyond our day today. And what happens is God makes a covenant with David.

You will not find the word covenant used here any more than you will find the word covenant used of the relationship between Adam and God in the early chapters of Genesis. But the absence of the word does not mean the absence of the concept or the absence of the evidence of the concept. The word covenant describes the relationship between God and Adam and between God and David. Later on in the Bible the relationship between God and Adam is called a covenant in the minor prophets and late on in the Bible the relationship between God and David will be called a covenant also.

That is the background. The more immediate background is that some things have changed. Israel is united under its one king. Jerusalem has been captured and is now the city of David. The ark of the covenant has been taken and placed there as a sign by David that his throne both cooperates with and is under the authority of the great King, the Lord God. And as we read in the opening words in chapter seven, now peace has broken out at last for God has given his king rest from all his surrounding enemies.

Now what does the chapter tell us? The chapter tells us, first of all, that God makes his plans. That is, God makes his own plans. The story begins with David the king and Nathan the prophet much like a CEO and a CFO ending their day on the roof deck of the office building overlooking the city. There they are in their great arm chairs at the end of a busy day just recounting the events of that day, whiskey in hand, cigars between their fingers. Play with me. Use your imagination. Get off with anything when you are up her end nobody can {?}. That is why I don't like these boys behind me, because they can bring me down at this point.

There they are going over the events of the day when David casually remarks, "Here I am sitting in my beautiful royal palace and there is the throne of God in that tent down there. Nathan, what is wrong with this picture? Here I am in a palace and there is the indicator of God in a tent."

Nathan is feeling mellow. The whiskey is kicking in. Nathan does not have a care in the mind. Here they are. They are just two friends sitting on the roof deck and he says to the king, "Go for it." I am translating. "Go for it. Do what is in your heart to do." Nathan doesn't pray about it. He is not speaking as a prophet. There is a little warning here, by the way. A prophet is only a prophet when he is speaking the words that God gave him. Here he is speaking Nathan words. He actually could have found a verse of Scripture to support him, of course. He could have said to David, "Well, I remember reading somewhere in Deuteronomy chapter 12," of course, Deuteronomy didn't have chapters then, because nobody put them in there, but he goes, "I remember reading in a place in Deuteronomy where God says, 'When you get into the land I want you to worship me in the place which the Lord your God will chose as a dwelling for his name.' Well, here we are, David. We are in Jerusalem. God gave it to you. This is the place. You are the man. You are a young guy with lots of energy and you can do this. You can build a temple for the Lord. Go for it."

Well, over night God interrupts. It is always irritating, isn't it? God always interrupts human's plans and schemes. Man proposes, God disposes. And so in the middle of the night he has this vision of God. God comes to him and there is a big contrast. You have what Nathan said and now you have the Word of the Lord which came to Nathan. Now you have him acting like a prophet. God comes and says:

"Go and tell my servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build me a house to dwell in?'"¹

Whenever you see God starts his conversation with you with a question, you know it is not looking good for you down the line. That is the way it is in the Bible whenever God comes with a question.

Would you? If there is a nuance to the question here is the nuance. Would you, David, would you build me a house?

¹ 2 Samuel 7:5.

God is not saying here, “I don't want a temple.” He is saying to David, “You are not going to be the one to build me a temple.”

And no sooner does he say that in this mild rebuke, we would have to say, then God immediately then moves on to give the preamble to one of these official, personal, formal, covenant relationships. In verses five to seven he talks about himself. He talks about the relationship that he has had to Israel and to David. And he says to them, “In all this time that I have known you, have I ever lived in a nice temple? Have I ever had a house to live in? You know, me,” God says. “You know your history with me. You know the history of Israel with me. In all that time, have you ever known me to live in a temple? In fact, in all that time can you produce anybody, any of my servants the prophets, any of the judges, any of the great leaders of Israel, can you produce anybody who has ever thought for one moment that I have said to them, ‘Look. Look, I am fed up living in a tent. I want a temple instead’? You can’t find anybody, because I haven’t asked them. Nowhere have I complained about being in a tent,” says God to David through Nathan. “In fact, the reason I haven’t wanted a temple is because my people have been on the move. They have been unsettled. They have been disturbed by their enemies. They have had to move here and there to avoid their enemies. They have been wandering in the wilderness and once they have been in the Promised Land, they have never ever had rest from their enemies until this point, David. Wherever my people are, I want to be where they are. Whenever my people are on the move, I want to be able to move with my people. You need to know that I am not a God who can be tied down. I can’t be located in a piece of real estate anywhere unless I choose to do so.”

God is saying to David, “I make my decisions. You don’t make them for me, David. You want to make a house for me. You are not. I am going to do something for you.”

And so right at the very beginning of this story we read about the electing purpose of God. We read that God is a God who chooses to do things himself. He is the sovereign God. And what he chooses to do for us men and women in our salvation he chooses to do by his own deliberate decision, not our decision. It is not a response to what we want to do for him. He chooses to do something for us. God makes his decisions.

Secondly, God chooses his servants. Look at the language of verse eight.

“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.’”²

Now the key word there is the word servant, a very unusual word. We are going to find this phrase, “my servant David,” coming up over and over again as you read the Scriptures. It is a reference, it is a word, rather, that is used, if you would look backwards from this time, it is used only of people like Moses and Joshua. After this time if you look at the history of Israel you will find it used repeatedly of David. God comes to Israel and he says, “You have disobeyed me and I really should destroy you, but because of my

² 2 Samuel 7:8.

servant David I will not destroy you.” Or he comes to kings who have disobeyed him and he wants to wipe them out and he says, “I want to wipe you out and I am going to kill this king because of his disobedience, but I am not going to destroy the house of David because of my servant David.” Every good thing God does for Israel, every good promise God makes to Israel, every time he keeps his Word towards Israel he does it because of his servant David.

When you get to the later prophets, when you get to the prophet Isaiah, for example, here is what makes sense of the two great parts of Isaiah that have so perplexed the scholars, apparently. When in the beginning of the book we find the introduction to God’s purpose to bring a king from David’s line, a king who has God titles and a king who does God things who is born of a virgin, but who is mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, who will have the government on his shoulders and whose reign will never no any end. That King who will come from David’s stump and be David’s successor sitting on David’s throne who will be the servant of the Lord, who will be despised and rejected by men on route to the throne and who will be cut off from the land of the living but will be raised to see the outcome of his work and will one day sit on David’s throne forever, the suffering servant, King of Isaiah is the King that is promised here. God chooses his servants.

God says to David, “You didn't choose me. I chose you.”

And then, thirdly, in this story we have not only that God makes his plans and chooses his servants, but God establishes his covenant. I said earlier the word covenant isn't used, but all the features of one are the introduction to the great King and here unusually there are no conditions or stipulations attached to the covenant as there normally would be. Here it is what is sometimes ascribed as a royal grant kind of covenant in which the great King simply gives a gift to one of his subjects. And that is exactly what we find here. God makes a gift to David and David calls it a covenant in Psalm 89.

You have said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one;
I have sworn to David my servant:
‘I will establish your offspring forever,
and build your throne for all generations.’”³

That is covenantal language.

In John chapter one God gives grace upon grace upon grace and here in this chapter God promises David future grace.

Now the interesting thing is the way in which this structure with which God makes this great promise. You will find this structure used again and again in the prophets. This becomes the model for the way in which God gives his people confidence in his long term remote future promises towards them. What he does is this. He gives the people to whom he is speaking, he gives them a kind of teaser.

³ Psalm 89:3-4.

Those are in marketing. I don't know if you use this language. But in marketing in the UK you have a teaser campaign which kind of raises awareness of something, but doesn't give you too much information. And God uses this teaser approach to prophecy. He says to the people he is speaking to, "I am going to do this for you." In your generation I will do this.

So he promises to David, "In your generation I am going to make you a great name. I am going to make Israel secure in your day. And I will give you rest from your enemies. You will know that before you die I have kept my word to your generation."

Then, in order to encourage the faith of the next generations, he makes a medium range promise. He says, "I am going to tell you what is going to happen to the next couple of generations. After you have gone to your fathers.

"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."⁴

You wanted to build a house for me. I want to build a house for you. I want to build a dynasty for you. I got that wrong in Sunday school this morning talking to the children. I said dynasty, they laughed and I was corrected. Dynasty.

Do you know I have been calling that TV... there used to be a TV show called that. I don't know if any of you old people remember the TV show where with the ladies with really big high... like things. I am glad that style is gone. It is not a flattering style.

Anyway, a dynasty. God is saying to David, "You wanted to build me a dwelling place. I wanted to build you a dynasty, a house, a family."

"I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom."⁵

This is Solomon. And Solomon will build a house for me, verse e12. He will build a temple for me and

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."⁶

⁴ 2 Samuel 7:12.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ 2 Samuel 7:14-16.

The amazing thing was, of course, this promise was fulfilled in Solomon's day. Solomon inherits the throne. Solomon builds the temple. David's family line lasts longer than any other royal family in power ever in the history of the world. The longest serving line or dynasty was one Egyptian dynasty that lasted, I think 250 years. Most royal family lines only last about 100 years in the history of the world. David's family lasted in power for over 400 years till the exile to Babylon.

People would read these promises and they would say, "Well, God kept his word to David and God kept his word to David's descendants." They could have said that for a long time, but then God gives promises for something far more remote, far more distant. He says "You believe me when you see this come true. Believe me for this long term promise. I will give to David a house, a kingdom and a throne that will endure forever."

And what God does here, I want you to notice, is that he links two things, a series of doubles in this passage. He links David's throne with his throne, God's throne, David's dynasty with God's dwelling place and David's son with God's Son. You notice that. There is a link between David's throne and God's throne, because in David's generation the throne that was in Jerusalem, the throne of the family of David was to be the manifestation in its lifetime of the rule of God in heaven. It was absolutely clear that there was... that God was ruling the earth where there was a faithful, loyal, obedient Son of David on the throne in Jerusalem so that when Jesus turns up, when Jesus who is descended from David arrives and when he starts his public ministry, well, how does he begin it? He says, "The kingdom has come." Why has the kingdom come? Because the King has come. The King has arrived. He has arrived with all of his power. He has broken into the world. The kingdom has been reestablished. David's Son has come to take David's throne.

And do you know from this point on God likens his throne to David's throne so that when you read Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost and he is announcing what has happened to the risen and exalted Lord Jesus, he says, "God has raised him from the dead and God has put him in the place of absolute power and he is now sitting on the throne." And you would expect Peter to say, "... on the throne of God." But he says, "... on the throne of his father David."

So when it says in the Bible that Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father and that he occupies the throne of heaven, do you understand that that throne in heaven is called after this one human being David with all of his foibles and faults as we shall see? It is a human divine throne, because the divine Son of God will receive his humanity through David's line. God's throne and David's throne.

David's dynasty and God's dwelling place. Have you noticed the repetition of that Hebrew word translated house in our reading today? House sometimes refers to the temple, the dwelling place of God, sometimes the dynasty, the royal line of David. Both are brought together here and the same word is used in order to communicate something to us, that there is going to become a connection that will become permanent between David's dynasty and God's dwelling place. David's house and God's house will come to

be merged together. So that the royal line of David and the holy house of God will somehow or other in the future become one. How does this happen? Here is how it happens.

When people come to Jesus applauding the temple in Jerusalem and Jesus says to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again,” because the temple of Jesus’ day wasn’t the temple any longer. It had been destroyed by the Babylonians. Solomon’s temple had been destroyed by the Babylonians when they came back from their exile and they rebuilt another temple. They looked at it and some of them cried because they remembered the old one. They said, “This isn’t anything like the old one, because it wasn’t the temple any longer. And they would read Ezekiel’s vision and in Ezekiel’s visions he would talk about this perfectly dimensioned temple that was to come.

And when Jesus comes into the world he says, “I am God’s final temple, Emmanuel.”

Where does God meet people? He meets them in the temple. Where is God said to be present in the Bible? He is said to be present in the holy of holies in the temple. When you come to the New Testament Scriptures it says God is in Christ. He is God with us.

And what happens to believers? They are built into Christ, aren’t they? If they are united to him, they are built into him into a holy dwelling, into a temple, a living temple. We are living stones being built into this dwelling place of God. We are part of the action. We are not simply observers or worshippers in. We are part of the structure of the temple in which God meets with his people. You and I share that if we are believers.

Thirdly, David’s son, God’s Son is a connection. The designation Son of God that is adoption language, by the way. You have been adopted. That is a glorious and splendid privilege to be adopted into a family. It is an amazing thing, because all of us here have been adopted into the family of God if we are believers and that is a great privilege, a great blessing.

So what you have experienced, perhaps, in your physical family, we have experienced spiritually and here is where adoption language kicks in in the Bible. I will make them sons of God.

God made Israel his sons.

“Out of Egypt I called my son.”⁷

But now he is narrowing it down, do you see? What happens with David is that whereas all Israel was held responsible to God to answer to him, now all Israel is represented by one Israelite who is the Son of God.

⁷ Mathew 2:15.

So whereby before it was it was a responsibility of all the people to keep the law of God and to do what was right and so on, now it is the king. As the king goes, the people go. As the king goes the nation goes. Just as Adam had acted on behalf of all humanity, so no David acts on behalf of all his people. When Jesus comes as the King he comes as the Son of Adam and as the Son of David. He comes as the second and the last Adam and he comes as the new and true Israel. He comes to do what they failed to do. He comes to undo all the mess they did. And he comes to act faithfully where they act in faithlessness. He comes to act in obedience where they acted in disobedience. He comes to win the right to be the covenant mediator between God and man that he might bring us sinners to God to be the one who reconciles us.

What happens in this chapter is pivotal for the history of the world, because God is going to build his future promises to the world on this man's line, David. Later on, for example, Amos, God says to him, "In that final day I will raise up the booth of David that has fallen."

Or through Jeremiah, "I will raise up for David a righteous branch and he shall reign as king and his name will be called the Lord is our righteousness."

David writes about this one and says, "As for me," God says through David:

"As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."
I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you."⁸

This is not David he is talking about. David is talking about another. As God speaks to David, God says to David, "Death will not annul this covenant. You may lie down in death, David, but the Lord will raise up your offspring."

And Peter, Paul and others quoting from the Scriptures say that the raising up was not simply raising up someone to the throne, but raising them up from the dead. God when he raised up Jesus from the dead, raised up David's descendant to the royal throne of heaven.

Here is how Paul summarizes the gospel. The gospel:

...which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead.⁹

Here is the message of the gospel.

⁸ Psalm 2:6-7.

⁹ Romans 1:2-4.

But Paul preaching to the people in Pisidian Antioch goes straight from David to David's greater Son when he says:

“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’”¹⁰

An everlasting covenant. My steadfast, sure love for David, a witness to the people, the leader and commander for the peoples. That is the way Isaiah describes great David's greater Son.

You see, this history of redemption that finds us here worshipping Jesus Christ is not something that has happened out of the blue, but something that has been prepared for from the very foundations of the world. Here in this story of David in that royal palace as these two men sit that late evening, David coming up with his scheme and Nathan agreeing and then being corrected overnight, the Lord's revelation of his purpose, God is saying to you and me, “Look, I have my plans. Trust me. I have my people. Trust me. I have made a covenant, an unbreakable, unshakable covenant. I will put a Son of David on my throne forever.”

And at the resurrection of Jesus he points us to Jesus the living one. He points us to Jesus as he is now and he says, “Who is on David's throne today? Look. Jesus is.” Son of David, son of Adam, Son of God and he reigns until he has put all of his enemies under his feet.”

And how does that impact me? It impacts me like this. If God kept his promise to David, if God kept his promise to Solomon, if God kept his promise of sending one who would reign on David's throne forever which he has done in Jesus, God will keep every promise he has made to me. He will not break one of them. If God is for us, who can be against us?

Let's pray.

Father, we ask this morning that you would warm our hearts as well as enlighten our minds in these great truths, showing us not only how the Bible hangs together, but more than that, we pray, doing something deep within us. Thank you that death does not annul your covenant, that sin cannot destroy your covenant, that time will not exhaust your covenant, that in the language of the psalmist, your promises are fixed like natural laws, fixed as the stars in the heaven. Nothing David or his heirs could do could fail or fail to do could keep you from keeping your Word. Thank you that you have kept your Word to David and that you will keep your Word to us. We look in faith to you in Christ this morning. In Jesus' name. Amen.

¹⁰ Acts 13:34.