

Prayers

To God

You have stored up for us great and wonderful things, Lord Jesus. Bring us into Your presence and show us the wonders of Your creative power, the glory of Your eternal plan and the abundance of Your love and compassion for all. May we always rejoice in the greatness of Your provision and remain confident in Your salvation, because You are our Saviour and our Friend. AMEN

For myself

Weekly theme: social media

Frankly, I am useless at social media, and I get entirely frustrated at Facebook because it never seems to do what I expect or want it to do. Itself, it is a language you must learn if you want to take part in what the fuss is about! You, however, will either use it or not. Pray today about Facebook and its enormous influence in the word of many people.

For others

Pray for those who find themselves caught up in other people's problems, especially those in the news. For example, pray for the family of Oscar Pistorius and for the family of his girlfriend who was killed, Reeva Steenkamp. Let this lead you to pray for victims of crime everywhere, who face the demands of judicial procedure whilst being uncertain about what happened.

Meditation

Almighty Lord and God who speaks to all
through the wonder and majesty of creation;
Speak to me in the soft whisper of a country breeze,
and the beauty of everything You have made.

Almighty Lord and God who speaks to all
through history, and the lives of great people;
Speak to me in the events of my ordinary life,
Whether they seem important, or very small.

Almighty Lord and God who speaks to all
through the power of music to touch the soul;
Speak to me in the psalms, hymns and worship songs
that linger in my mind and teach me truth.

Almighty Lord and God who speaks to all
through epic events unfolding all around us;
Speak to me in the trials and joys of everyone I know
so Your care for all be done, if necessary, by me.

Bible Passage

2 Samuel 7:8-17

⁸ Now then, tell my servant David,

"This is what the Lord of hosts says to you: I took you from looking after sheep in the pasture lands, to be a ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you went, and have destroyed all your enemies in front of you, and I will make you famous, like the great people of the world. ¹⁰ And I will prepare a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may have their own home and no longer be disturbed. They will not be oppressed by evildoers as before, ¹¹ when I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies.

The Lord now reveals to you that He will make you into a dynasty. ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your children after you, your own offspring, and I will set up his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a house for my name, and I will set up the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he shall be my son. So if he does wrong, I will correct him with a stick as a parent does, with blows inflicted by people. ¹⁵ However, I will not take my promised, steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed before you. ¹⁶ Your dynasty and kingdom will continue forever before me, and your throne will be secure forever."

¹⁷ Nathan reported all these words and the whole vision to David.

Review

This is a key Biblical text, and the first prophecy to describe God's Covenant with Israel in terms of David's ancestral line. It says of one of David's descendants, '*He will build a house for my Name and I will set up the throne of His Kingdom forever!*' Does this just mean that David's son Solomon will build a Temple and Israel will last '*forever*'? Or does this suggest a greater plan of God, fulfilled by the Messiah, the Christ, the 'Son of David'!

2 Samuel describes key events in Israel's history, and it is becoming clear that God's plan for Israel is focussed on David. As king, he embodied Israel's hopes for a peaceful future. More than that, God had chosen this man, just as He had chosen Abraham to 'father' His nation or chosen Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt.

Our passage is in two halves. In the first half (7:8-11), David is reminded that he has only survived as king through God's hand on his life (7:8,9). Then God reaffirms His historic covenant promise to bring Israel into her 'Promised Land'. The point is this; the days of the

Judges had not been glorious (7:11), but with David as king, God will finally fulfil His promises *'I will plant them so they may have their own homes and no longer be disturbed'* (7:10)!

But now, God wants to reveal yet more of His plan (7:11-16). He reveals that David's descendants will form a ruling *'dynasty'* through which He will *'set up the throne of His kingdom for ever'* (7:13)! This either means that David's son (Solomon) will build a Temple and set up Israel as an everlasting nation, or something yet more profound will happen. The language is subtle, but generations of Jewish and Christians believe this is a prophecy of God's intent to send His Messiah, a descendant of David, *'your own offspring'* (7:12), who will establish His Kingdom (7:13), and for whom *'I will be His father and He will be my Son'* (7:14). For Christians today, this is the Bible's first prophecy of the coming of Christ!

Going Deeper

What God has done for David (7:8-9)

It may have been that David was focussed on what he had just achieved, and how he wanted to get on and do what he thought was next in God's will; to build a temple for the Ark in Jerusalem. We can understand David wanting to proceed with this work, because God had anointed him to serve. But as so often, God had other plans and human wisdom could not come close to divine wisdom. Nathan's vision begins by recapping what God has done for David (7:8-9).

To begin with, David is reminded of his origins (7:8). He had been a shepherd, the youngest son of a farmer and the lowest of the low, in a nation going nowhere which was frequently overrun by foreigners and ruled by tyrants (see the book of Judges). God reminds David that everything done to change Israel's prospects was like His choosing of David in the first place; it all came as a result of His own initiative and divine intervention in human history. He says, *'I have been with you wherever you went, and destroyed all your enemies in front of you.'* (7:9). David was now as famous a man in Israel as perhaps even Moses. Israel would just not exist or function without God working through these great men, but it was God at work, not these great men. God says, *'I will make you famous, like the great people of the world ...'* (7:9).

The message from God tells David not to wander off with his own visions of things. He is anointed for God's tasks not his own and must not forget this. He must keep close to the One who anointed him in the first place if he is to continue to be one of the greats of Israel. The building of a Temple as David suggested (7:1-7), was indeed important, but David was to be the builder of a different kind of 'House'!

God's promises for His people Israel (7:10-11)

Before coming to the heart of the prophecy, we find in verses 10 and 11 that God refers to His covenant promise to give Israel a place to live, and the Hebrew word for 'place' used here is the interesting word 'beth'. This word 'beth' is used a great deal in Scripture, and it means 'a place where someone or something lives'. In this way it can mean, 'house', 'home', 'palace', and sometimes 'temple'. As an example of its use, we find the word in many well known Hebrew names; for example, the famous town of 'Bethlehem', which means 'house of bread' ('beth-lechem', where 'lechem' means bread).

With this in mind we can now get a feel of what God is beginning to say here. His vision is for His people to have a place to live on earth and for Himself to be with living or dwelling with them. God's people must have their own 'beth', that is, their own secure 'dwelling place' on earth, and God will have His 'beth' with them, and he does not want a temple built by David. God has already worked through David to establish this 'beth' for Israel, because with the

capture of Jerusalem, the famous 'Promised Land' is now complete. But there is more for David to do, and he must secure the borders and make the land safe; God promises David, '*I will give you rest from all your enemies*' (7:11). This is a wonderful promise, but it leaves the term 'beth' hanging in the air; this is the issue. God has a different type of 'beth' in mind for David to build for Himself.

The revelation of a dynasty (7:11-13)

At the very point where we might expect God to announce the building of a Temple, His 'beth' or His dwelling place on earth, He says instead, '*the Lord now reveals to you that He will make you into a dynasty ...!*' Moreover the word used for 'dynasty' is the same word we have been talking about just now, which is 'beth'. Putting all this together, it is God's intention to be with His people within the ancestors of David, his son and those who come after him! This is completely new ground for Scripture.

God has reached an important point in the unfolding of His plan for salvation, which has been evident since the early days of Genesis, especially the time of the Flood (Genesis 9:1-17). It was also evident in His choice of Abraham to establish a nation to be His 'people' (Genesis 15:5,6) and then the choice of Moses to reveal the Law (Exodus 3-20). In terms of the magnitude of the Old Testament characters, David comes next after these two. Another way of explaining God's purpose is like this; the Covenant was founded through Abraham, revealed in Law through Moses, and established as an earthly Kingdom through David.

Nathan's prophetic revelation is huge; David's ancestors will '*set up his kingdom*' (7:12)! Now it is possible that you could read verse 12 and conclude that it means that David's son Solomon will build a Temple for the Ark of God. But if you have followed the word-play, you will conclude that there is something special about the 'dynasty' God intends to create that will represent God's presence with His people. So although David's son Solomon did indeed build a Temple, Nathan's prophecy says far more.

Some important additional promises (7:14-16)

As we read on in verse 14 following, God begins to speak next about a son of David who will be special, and generations of Jews and Christians believe that God is speaking now through Nathan about the coming Messiah. Moreover, we will not reach this point unless we have spotted the meaning of the word 'beth' in this text, which reveals to us that God is speaking here about a descendant of David who will represent God on earth, that is, He will be God's own 'beth', that is, His 'dwelling place' on earth! Yes, God is speaking about being with His people on earth through a descendant of David!

All that comes next is astounding; God says '*I will be his father, and he shall be my son. So if he does wrong, I will correct him with a stick as a parent does, with blows inflicted by people.*'¹⁵ *However, I will not take my promised, steadfast love from him ...'* (7:14,15) Yes, this prophecy of Nathan seems to anticipate the divine punishment of Christ for the sins of the world, by which people are redeemed and ultimately saved!

Some object, and say that this passage is only about David and Solomon, but many souls have seen more here than this, for the reasons I have explained. So when Nathan says these conclusive words; '*Your dynasty and kingdom will continue forever before me, and your throne will be secure forever.*' (7:16), for Christians today, this reads like a prophecy of the eternal rule of God through His people, a Kingdom of justice and peace, prophesied by the prophets and established through Jesus Christ!

Discipleship

Application

A prophecy of immense proportions

Every so often in scripture, the Spirit of God breaks through to bring us God's mysteries with power and grace. The words of our text today are some of those. If you read books which attempt to examine this text in detail (the job of any standard commentary), you will read forthright and conflicting views as to whether verses 12-14 refer to Solomon, the Babylonian Exile, the rebuilding of the second Temple under Nehemiah, or even the Great Temple under Herod the Great. These ideas simply reflect this passage of scripture in different human time scales.

The real time scale for this prophecy is eternity. Since the fall of humanity, God had worked through individual people to bring His plan of salvation to bear in the real world. He worked through Noah, Abraham and his offspring, through Moses and now David and his offspring, and at each stage a little more of the future of God's plan was revealed. The conclusion of our study today is that in the vision of Nathan, God revealed His plan to send Jesus into the World to establish His Kingdom for ever, and that Kingdom would be based upon the dynasty of David, whatever happened to his ancestors in the meantime. The Christ would be the 'Son of David'!

Ideas for what to do

- Reflect on whether you are consistently thinking about the present time, or whether you are truly someone who see things on the larger canvas of history. It can be important to step outside our present time and look at God's sweep of time in all its grandeur.
- Pray for all who find the idea of Jesus as God's anointed Messiah difficult; Jewish people, people of other faiths and those who do not see the point of religion.

Questions (for use in groups)

1. What other elements of God's Word can you find within this scripture upon which the study has not concentrated?
2. What would have been the consequences if God had told Nathan in a vision the whole plan of salvation up to the time of Jesus? Would this have been helpful?
3. If you are looking at this study in a group, please check out how much you know of what actually happened to David's 'dynasty' after his death and beyond the time of Solomon.

Final Prayer

Almighty Lord, You see the whole of creation in your gaze, and hold the whole of time within Your grasp. Help us who are limited by time and space to see eternity through the revelation You have given in Your Word, and treasure it for its immense value. Thank You for

prophecies of old which sustain us even to this day, and help us to pass on all truth to future generations. AMEN