

God's Promise

Devotional Reading: Isaiah 9:1-7

Background Scripture: 2 Samuel 7:1-17

2 Samuel 7:4-17

⁴ But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying:

⁵ “Go and tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?’ ⁶ I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. ⁷ Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, ‘Why have you not built me a house of cedar?’”

⁸ “Now then, tell my servant David, ‘This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. ¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no lon-

ger be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

“The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you: ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. ¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

¹⁷ Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

Key Text

“Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

—2 Samuel 7:16

A King

Forever and Ever

Unit 1: Jesus, the Heir of David

Lessons 1–5

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize David's intent and God's response.
2. Explain the differing senses of the use of the word *house*.
3. Write a prayer for obedience to God, even when his plans differ from human plans.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

- A. Temporary Dwellings
- B. Lesson Context

I. History Lessons (2 Samuel 7:4-9a)

- A. Israel's Past (vv. 4-7)
- B. David's Past (vv. 8-9a)

II. Future Plans (2 Samuel 7:9b-17)

- A. David and Israel (vv. 9b-11a)
Legacy of Faith
- B. Solomon and Christ (vv. 11b-17)
A Grandmother's Faith

Conclusion

- A. Eternal Home
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. Temporary Dwellings

Twelve years ago, my wife and I moved to a remote town in western Alaska. The area where we spent the first decade of our Alaskan journey was accessible only by boat or plane. Besides our town, 89 smaller villages are located in western Alaska off the road system. Many of these communities are near rivers, providing more accessible summer transportation and an abundant supply of salmon.

One distinctive aspect of life in this region is that homes are constructed on permafrost, a frozen layer of soil. Due to the thawing permafrost and harsh weather conditions, these houses require more upkeep than those built in the contiguous United States. In Newtok, a small Alaskan village, erosion and deterioration became so severe that the entire community had to be relocated to higher ground, away from the river. Many villagers witnessed the river slowly eat away at their homes until it finally engulfed entire structures. The homes we construct are temporary.

In King David's mind, the time for the Lord to live in a tent (the tabernacle) was officially over (2 Samuel 7:1-2). What followed the king's decision would be much different than he anticipated.

B. Lesson Context

David ultimately became king over a united Israel. This happened approximately 1000 BC (2 Samuel 5–6). After a long civil war (3:1-2) and the conquering of the Jebusites and their city of Jerusalem (5:6-7), he made that city the capital of the reunited kingdom of Israel (5:8-12). Victory over the Philistines followed (5:17-25). After that, David brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (also known as "the City of David" [6:16]) and placed it inside a tent (6:17). This move cemented Jerusalem as both the political and religious capital of the kingdom.

After the ark's arrival in Jerusalem, David confronted what he considered to be a grave disparity. Although he dwelled in a grand palace

(2 Samuel 5:11; 7:2), no permanent abode existed for the ark of the covenant (7:6-7, below). Disturbed by this state of affairs, David decided to build a house for God. David communicated his plan to the prophet Nathan, who initially offered encouragement and approval for the king to proceed (7:1-3, not in our lesson text). Apparently, neither man had asked God for his approval, and what follows in chapter 7 was God's reaction to the plan (1 Chronicles 17:3-15 is a parallel account).

I. History Lessons

(2 Samuel 7:4-9a)

A. Israel's Past (vv. 4-7)

4. But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying:

Unlike God's direct communication with King Solomon later (1 Kings 3:5), God chose to speak to David indirectly through *Nathan* the prophet. The reason for this difference is a matter of speculation. But perhaps the prophet also needed the forthcoming corrective himself since he had encouraged David in his wrong thinking (2 Samuel 7:3).

The prophet would later risk David's wrath by confronting the king regarding David's sin with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 12). Nathan would also anoint Solomon as David's successor (1 Kings 1:34).

5. "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?'"

With this verse, God's corrective begins. The issue at hand seems to be not one of disobedience but rather one of presumption. Has *David*, God's *servant*, presumed that he would be doing God a favor?

6. "I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling."

For God to have the kind of house that David desired to build was never high on God's list of priorities. To this point, the tabernacle, as prescribed by God to Moses centuries earlier, had sufficed (Exodus 26). At the future dedication of the

temple, David's son Solomon will cite the words of the verse before us (see 1 Kings 8:16). He will note in the same verse that while God was not concerned about choosing a city in which to dwell, he was concerned about choosing a person. This is what the Lord addressed in the next part of his message.

7. "Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, 'Why have you not built me a house of cedar?'"

God had never required a permanent structure for his dwelling place in *Israel*, let alone a grand one as *a house of cedar* would surely be (compare 2 Samuel 5:11).

God's faithfulness to his people had always far exceeded their faithfulness to him. Yet God had not called on anyone to respond by building a house of cedar (a temple) as a visual aid (or anything else) to influence their faithfulness.

What Do You Think?

What questions should a congregation ask when discerning how to steward a house of worship?

Digging Deeper

What sorts of answers might suggest that a congregation should choose a different course regarding a place of worship?

B. David's Past (vv. 8-9a)

8-9a. "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you.'"

The image of shepherd-leadership echoes throughout the passage as God reminded *David* of that man's own history. God had sent the prophet Samuel to Jesse's family in the small village of Bethlehem to anoint a new king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1). There, Samuel reviewed each of the sons of Jesse who were present. Jesse

had not bothered to present to Samuel the youngest son, David. Instead, David was left caring for the sheep (16:4-11).

But God had chosen David to be the new king (1 Samuel 16:12-13). Though David had once been a shepherd of sheep, he would now be a shepherd of *Israel* (Ezekiel 34:23; compare John 10:1-18). And as God had been with the nation of Israel, so also would he be with David in victories over his *enemies* (examples: 1 Samuel 17:45-54; 23:14-26:25).

What Do You Think?

What events in your life do you point to as reasons for confidence in the Lord?

Digging Deeper

How can recalling this history help you or a friend continue to rely on God in difficult circumstances?

II. Future Plans

(2 Samuel 7:9b-17)

A. David and Israel (vv. 9b-11a)

9b. “Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth.

Whatever greatness David had achieved to this point, God had given through military victories. It is in this light that God gave the reason for not allowing the man to build a temple: “But this word of the Lord came to me: ‘You have shed much blood and have fought many wars. You are not to build a house for my Name, because you have shed much blood on the earth in my sight’ (1 Chronicles 22:8). David would not have the chance to think of himself as a great builder (compare Daniel 4:28-30).

Legacy of Faith

Christians living in the Soviet Union faced persecution. Laws prohibited their sharing the faith, even with their own children, unless the teachings aligned with the government-approved Orthodox church. According to the law, those teaching the gospel were subject to imprisonment and could be stripped of their parental rights, resulting in children being placed in orphanages.

Even so, Christians instilled in their children a legacy of faith. Many of those children grew up to be church leaders and were ready and willing to pass on their legacy to their own children. When the Soviet government crumbled, these same church leaders jumped at the opportunity to evangelize freely within their communities.

David had a legacy of faith that began with Abraham. David remained true to that legacy. And God promised David that his children would be blessed and his name would be great. God fulfilled that in Jesus. What is your faith legacy?

—L. M. W.

10. “And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning

The greatness God granted to David was not for David’s benefit alone. The Lord was concerned for his *people Israel*. God desired not only to give David “rest” (2 Samuel 7:1) but also to give his people *a home of their own* and relief from those who had afflicted them in the past (see 7:11a, below). God did indeed desire a place—not for himself but for his people. This promise would be the fulfillment of the promise God gave Moses (Exodus 3:16-17; 33:1). The agricultural metaphor emphasizes growth and longevity within the land. God would *plant* Israel (see Amos 9:15; Jeremiah 31:27-28).

11a. “and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.”

The period of the judges (from about 1380 to 1050 BC) followed Israel’s conquest of the promised land. So, we might think of that period as the first era of Israel’s life as a settled nation. That time was filled with conflict as one nation after another rose against *Israel*. God delivered Israel through the leadership of judges, but he also allowed threats to arise as Israel sank back into sin.

B. Solomon and Christ (vv. 11b-17)

11b. “The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you:

Initially, David intended to construct a sanctuary for God. But God planned to turn the king's plan on its head and instead build a *house* for David. And though David's initial thought upon hearing this might have been of a new palace, God's further promises made clear that he would establish a kingdom and lineage for David.

12. "When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom.

God's promise would come to fruition through a descendant of David who would rise to power after David's death. The *King James Version* translates the Hebrew expression literally: David's "seed" (here translated *offspring*) is the focus of the promise. This word referring to one's descendant or descendants has a rich background in earlier texts of the Old Testament. God uses this word repeatedly in Genesis in promises of redemption (Genesis 3:15; 9:9; 12:7; etc.); the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in particular, received promises regarding their "seed." Now David receives a promise that builds on theirs: God will firmly establish the kingdom of one of David's offspring, one physically descended from him. This wordplay recalls how the Lord would plant Israel in the land (see 2 Samuel 7:10).

What Do You Think?

What hopes do you have for your family when your own days are fulfilled?

Digging Deeper

What actions can you take now to ensure those are *hopes* for your family and not mere *wishes*?

13. "He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Prophecies with dual fulfillments underscore the cohesion of God's plan of salvation found in the Scriptures. Such prophecies have a "nearer" fulfillment, and the one in the verse before us was realized in the near future through David's son Solomon (1 Kings 6:1, 37-38; Acts 7:47). He did build a *house* for the Lord. But quickly it became

clear that Solomon's *kingdom* would not last forever. He sinned against the Lord by worshipping other gods (1 Kings 11:4, 9-13, 31-33).

For the sake of this promise made to David, God did not strip the kingdom away from Solomon. Nor did God take it entirely from Solomon's heirs—at least not for many generations. David's family ruled two tribes for generations. But during the Babylonian exile that began in 586 BC, the rule of David's family came to an end.

What, then, are we to make of the promise to *establish the throne of his kingdom forever*? We look to the fulfillment found in Christ (Acts 2:29-36; Hebrews 1:5). While the temple Solomon built was destroyed (2 Chronicles 36:18-19), Jesus builds believers into God's temple in the New Testament era (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22). And "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

14. "I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands.

As in the previous verse, this promise applies first to Solomon and ultimately to Christ. The first statement in the verse before us is quoted in Hebrews 1:5, which clearly affirms its fulfillment in Jesus. But how can sinless Jesus be the fulfillment when he, as the ultimate son of David, did not do *wrong*?

We recall that Jesus was treated as though he had committed blasphemy (Matthew 26:65)—the ultimate iniquity. He took the stripes inflicted by *floggings inflicted by human hands* and was crucified (Isaiah 53:4-5). That suffering was not due to personal guilt; rather, he took upon himself the punishment that guilty sinners deserve.

15. "But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

We move to a second question: If the promise also applies to King Solomon (reigned 970–931 BC), how can God say that *my love will never be taken away from him* when we recall that God judged Solomon for his foolish acceptance of the



GOD'S KINGDOM WILL LAST FOREVER.

Visual for Lesson 2. Discuss the questions associated with verse 16 as learners contemplate the nature of God's kingdom.

gods of his many wives who turned his heart away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:4, 9-13, 31-33)?

The key is the phrase *as I took it away from Saul*, who was Israel's first king (reigned 1050–1010 BC). The people of Israel had longed to “be like all the other nations” that had kings (1 Samuel 8:7, 20). Following divine guidance, the prophet Samuel was instrumental in shaping Israel's leadership into a monarchy (12:13-15). But Saul's sin and paranoia doomed his kingship (1 Samuel 13:10-14; 15:10-26; 18:8-12; 19:9-10; etc.). This pattern persisted, ultimately leading to the Lord's rejection of Saul as king (15:23, 26, 28).

The same cannot be said of either David or Solomon. David was not a perfect man or king, as events yet to come were to demonstrate (see Psalm 51). But his heart was not the same as Saul's (1 Samuel 13:14), so God chose to establish a relationship of enduring *love* with David. That is proven in the history of the kings of Judah—where descendants of David and Solomon reigned after Israel was divided following Solomon's death—even as judgment was enacted (Isaiah 14:1-2; compare Romans 11). God's power, not David's achievements, was to be the basis for house-building, kingdom-securing, and throne-establishing.

16. “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.”

The verse before us summarizes God's promise to David and concludes God's word for the king. Even when Solomon's magnificent temple fell to ruins at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 BC, God's promise to David remained unshakable. That *house*, that *kingdom*, is established in Christ. He is David's true heir (Matthew 1:1). And what Jesus said of his church remains true: “The gates of Hades will not overcome it” (16:18).

God's promise was given not because David proved worthy where others did not. Moving beyond 2 Samuel 7, we see David's deep failures: favoritism within his family, sexual immorality, and even murder. The promise is to David by God's grace. It is an unmerited gift, given to David despite his unworthiness. It is given to Israel despite the people's unworthiness. Ultimately, it is offered to all humanity despite all our unworthiness.

What Do You Think?

Imagine you are David learning how God fulfilled this promise. What thoughts and emotions do you have?

Digging Deeper

What encouragement regarding God's promises can you take away from this lesson?

A Grandmother's Faith

As a young girl, Lucy attended a small country church with her family. While her brothers and sisters dreaded the long sermons in a hot sanctuary, Lucy looked forward to learning more about Jesus every week. As she grew, she volunteered in her church and looked for ways to honor God in her daily life.

One Sunday, a guest missionary visited their church. Lucy listened, her full attention on the man. She imagined eating strange foods, learning a new language, and especially telling people about Jesus for the first time. She began to dream about becoming a missionary herself. But it was not to be. Still, Lucy taught her boys and then her grandchildren about Jesus. It was first Lucy's granddaughter and then a great-granddaughter

who fulfilled Lucy's dream of cross-cultural mission work.

David's heart was in the right place in his desire to build God a house (temple). But the project would fall to his son Solomon. If David made any mistake here, it was that he did not check with the Lord first before deciding. We may have good ideas, but the people or the timing may not be right in God's eyes. How often do you fail to check with the Lord before launching your own projects? See James 4:13-17.

—L. M. W.

17. Nathan reported to David all the words of this entire revelation.

In keeping with his role as a prophet, *Nathan* relayed what the Lord had revealed to *David* (compare 2 Samuel 12:1-14). David's response (7:18-29, not in our printed text) reveals that the king knew this promise was not for David's family's glory but for God's. We, too, do well to remember that the fulfilled and yet-to-be-fulfilled promises we enjoy are opportunities to praise the Lord and bring glory to his name. Do we?

What Do You Think?

How is your sharing the gospel similar to Nathan's sharing these words with David?

Digging Deeper

What details of God's promises to David might you include when you share the gospel?

Conclusion

A. Eternal Home

Last year, my mother passed away suddenly from a brain tumor discovered only a few months prior. My father followed her in death less than a week later. One of the final requests Dad shared with the family was that he wanted our brother to inherit the family home since the rest of us already owned properties.

We spent our entire childhood in our parents' house in a small Indiana town, never relocat-

ing. As funds permitted, Mom and Dad would periodically update the flooring and replace the roof, among other things. However, before my wife and I returned to Alaska after the funeral services, I provided my brother with a list of outstanding repairs that our parents had not finished, and with a good-humored tone, I let him know that the burden of maintaining the house now fell on him.

King David had to leave the construction of God's house to his son. But God's grand plans went far beyond the building and upkeep of an inanimate temple. In Jesus, we are part of God's everlasting and holy temple. And one day, we will arrive home in the Lord, enjoying the everlasting kingdom in ways David could only dream about in his own days. This eternal residence, crafted by God, is where Christ, a descendant of David, reigns for all eternity.

B. Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for your everlasting covenant promises, given to David and fulfilled in Jesus. Redirect us when our plans are out of step with yours. In the name of your Son, Jesus, we offer this prayer. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

God's promises are sure.

How to Say It

Abraham	Ay-bruh-ham.
Babylonians	Bab-ih-low-nee-unz.
Bathsheba	Bath-she-buh.
Bethlehem	Beth-lih-hem.
Hebrews	Hee-breus.
Isaac	Eye-zuk.
Israel	Iz-ray-el.
Jacob	Jay-kub.
Judah	Joo-duh.
Moses	Mo-zes or Mo-zez.
Philistines	Fuh-liss-teenz or Fill-us-teenz.
Solomon	Sol-o-mun.
tabernacle	tah-burr-nah-kul.
Uriah	Yu-rye-uh.

Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Allow one minute for learners to silently consider promises they have made (whether these have been honored, have yet to be fulfilled, or were broken). Ask volunteers to share one promise. Then, ask learners to break into pairs to brainstorm promises that God has made. After a few minutes, ask volunteers to share these answers as well, writing these on the board. After a brief period, ask the pairs to consider these two questions: 1—What factors prevent people from keeping promises? 2—Do any of these factors apply to God? Why or why not? After a few minutes, bring the class together to discuss.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “God’s Promise to David” exercise on the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work in pairs to complete as indicated.

Transition into the lesson by stating, “Today, as we delve into the heart of 2 Samuel 7:4-17, we will concentrate on the importance of God’s commitments, particularly his divine promise to King David.”

Into the Word

Before class, prepare a brief lecture covering what had happened in Israel between last week’s lesson on Ruth 4:9-17 and this week’s on 2 Samuel 7:4-17. This lecture should include information about the last days of the judges, Samuel’s ministry in Israel, Saul’s disastrous rule, and how David came to the throne. *Option 1.* Assign this overview to a volunteer to prepare before class. *Option 2.* Ask small groups to work together to summarize the events from the days of the judges to this point in David’s reign.

Ask a volunteer to read 2 Samuel 7:4-17. Distribute a handout (you create) with two headers: “Fulfillment in the Past” and “Fulfillment in the Future.” Instruct pairs to identify under the first header which promises named or alluded to in this passage were fulfilled *before* God spoke to Nathan.

Answers should include delivering Israel from Egypt (Genesis 46:3-4; Exodus 12:31-42), meeting the people in the tabernacle (25:1-22; 40:34-35), and making David king over Israel (1 Samuel 16:1-13; 2 Samuel 2:1-7).

Next, the pairs should identify under the second header promises that were fulfilled *after* God spoke to Nathan. Answers should include Solomon’s ascending to the throne in Jerusalem (1 Kings 1:38-40) and Jesus’ inheriting the throne to reign forever (Luke 1:29-33).

After a few minutes of work, bring the class together and discuss their answers. Again in their pairs, have learners identify evidence that David was obedient to the instructions God gave him through Nathan. These will include that David believed that God would fulfill these promises (2 Samuel 7:18-29) and did not build the temple (1 Kings 5:3-5), although he did help prepare for its construction (1 Chronicles 22). Using sanctified imaginations, ask learners to consider how the story might have been different if David had not accepted Nathan’s words as true and obeyed the Lord’s instruction.

Into Life

Allow one minute for learners to bring to mind a course of action they have been considering. Ask them to discuss in small groups how, without the aid of a “Nathan” to definitively speak for God, they can make faithful decisions. Ask what steps learners can take to discern when the course they *want* is not *best*.

Alternative. Distribute the “Prayer Chart” exercise from the activity page to be completed individually in a minute or less. *Option.* This can be sent home with students to ponder in the week to come.

Have pairs write a prayer for obedience to God, even when his plans differ from our plans. Encourage pairs to pray together before ending class.