

“Building the House”

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Continuing a series *A King for God's People*

2nd Samuel 7:1-17

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See the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

Like Ontario in the summer, Jerusalem had turned into one big construction site.

Since making the city his own, King David had been busy. Though he had been victorious in war, many nations still threatened. So he was fortifying the city walls. Many Israelites were moving in; people want to be close to the king. So he was building new neighbourhoods. David himself needed a new home in his new capital. So he was building a house worthy of the king of God's People.

The Hebrew word for “house” is *bayit*. *Bayit* can mean different things. When it's a king's house, what do we call it? A palace. David's *bayit* was a palace.

II

Something was missing, however.

Since God's People had left slavery in Egypt, they had carried with them the Ark of God's Covenant. The Ark was not God. God is always infinite, always beyond, always uncontained, always free. Take away the Ark, and God is still God. Yet, within the great scope of God's dealings with humanity, for a time God chose to make this Ark the anchor of God's glory, the dwelling of God's presence, the radiance of God's power. The Ark was like a wedding band, like water in a baptismal font, like bread broken and wine poured at Jesus' table. It was the proof of God's promise, the seal of God's covenant-commitment.

Over the generations, wherever they had stopped and settled, the Ark had “lived” in a tent. The “Tabernacle” they called it. As far as tents go, it was no Canadian Tire camping special. Still, it was a tent.

As King David looked out from his beautiful new house, it hit him: doesn't God deserve a beautiful house for God's Ark too? So David resolved to build a house for God.

Remember, the Hebrew word for “house” is *bayit*. When it's a god's house, what do we call it? A temple. David will build the Lord's *bayit*, God's Temple.

III

That night, while King David slept soundly on his great idea, God was delivering a message to Nathan, the king's advisor. Basically, this is what God told him to tell David.

So you want to build a house for me, eh? [God must be Canadian.] . . . Thanks, but I don't

want one. I have never needed one. When my people move, I move with them. When they stay, I stay with them. I never complain about the tent. That starter-home is just right for Me. What makes you think that I, your Creator, need you to build Me a house?

I can imagine David saying, *“But I’m a king, and kings build temples.”* And I expect God would say, *“But I don’t want you to be a king like other kings.”*

I can imagine David saying, *“But I want to serve You, show my love and devotion to You.”* And I expect God would say, *“Let me show you, then, how you can serve Me, love Me.”*

I can imagine David saying, *“But the Tabernacle-tent, it moves! I want a permanent place for You, to keep You close to me.”* And I expect God would say, *“Do you think a stack of stones, walls of wood, or the glitter of gold will hold Me? I will go where I go, and I will stay where I stay.”*

God has no fixed address.

IV

Instead, God says to David, even as the king stands in his own, brand-new palace: *“Let Me build a house for you.”*

Remember, the Hebrew word for “house” is *bayit*. It can mean an ordinary house, or a palace for royalty, or a temple for worship.

And, *bayit* can mean a dynasty, a family of royal rulers. (Ever hear of the House of Windsor?)

It’s a surprising turn of events, this promise of a dynasty. David had never asked for one. More important, God had always been cool to the “king” idea. When the People had clamoured for a king, God knew they were doubting God’s sole sovereignty over them, saying that God’s leadership was insufficient. When they lobbied for a king, God knew they were drifting from God’s mission for them. God made them to be different from all other nations so they could show God in the midst of this world gone wrong. But they wanted to be like everyone else.

The first surprise was that God gave into them, with King Saul and then King David. But now God gives more, much more. Not a king for a while, but a dynasty, a royal house of David and his descendants, kings for God’s People forever!

V

What’s going on?

This is a crucial turning point in God’s redeeming, restoring, salvation-work in God’s world.

Out of nothing, God crafts all creation. It is an outpouring of God’s love.

Within creation, God crafts human beings, pretty much out of nothing, in God's image. God creates us to represent God within the world, to steward God's creation. God loves us, but not "instead of" the rest of creation. Because God continues to love all God makes, God works through us.

But when we defy our design, when we do things our way instead of God's ways, when we make ourselves sovereign, instead of God . . .

. . . God sets out to make things right. Among all families, God creates one family, pretty much out of nothing. From Abraham and Sarah, God crafts a people, Israel. With Israel, God forges a covenant. God will work through Israel, not "instead of" the rest of the families of the earth, but for them all.

But when God's People defies its design, seeks to be like everyone else, does things its own way instead of God's ways, forsakes the covenant and serves other sovereigns instead of God . . .

. . . God sets out to make things right. From among all the families of Israel, God creates one, pretty much out of nothing. Now it will be through David and his dynasty that God will work. God promises this covenant with David. Again, not "instead of" the rest of Israel, but for it. He and his dynasty will lead Israel to be the holy nation, the priestly kingdom, the divine representatives God made them to be. David and his dynasty will lead God's People in worshipping God and following God's ways. David and his dynasty will fight idolatry. (Idolatry is making anything sovereign but God.) David and his dynasty will bring rest and peace to God's People, so they can shine light into the darkness for the sake of us all.

You see the narrowing God keeps doing: all creation; then within all creation, humanity; then within humanity, Israel; then within Israel, David. Each narrowing does not leave everything else behind. It is for the sake of everything and everyone else that God narrows, God chooses, God elects.

VI

And when the kings in David's dynasty refuse their role? When they seek to be like all other potentates? When they defy their design? Follow the ways of unfaithfulness and injustice? Forsake God's covenant? Make themselves sovereign instead of God? . . .

. . . God keeps God's promise — God's promise to David, God's promise to Israel, God's promise to humanity, God's promise to all creation.

Jesus . . . Jesus is God's promise, kept. Jesus: the Christ, the Messiah, the King. Jesus is David's dynasty. Jesus is Israel's mission. Jesus is humanity's purpose. Jesus is creation completed. Jesus, in whom the fullness of God dwells. Jesus, who is God's *bayit*, God's house. God's house for us all.

Amen.