

OLD TESTAMENT READING FOR JULY 19, 2015

START WITH SCRIPTURE: 2 Samuel 7:1-14a

OBSERVE:

David's first impulse after consolidating his reign over the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in Jerusalem, and bringing the ark of the Covenant into his capital, is to build a suitable shrine for the ark. His motivation is good: *he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent."* Nathan obviously agrees with David and confirms his decision.

But David's plans are not to be. Not yet. Nathan's dream that very night is a powerful deterrent from the erection of a temple to the Lord.

The reasons given are three-fold:

- The Lord makes clear that this idea has not originated with him. He has never asked David to build him a permanent shrine. Rather, he reiterates his own "itinerant" nature: *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.* Like the Israelites themselves, the Lord has been a pilgrim with them.
- The Lord also makes clear through Nathan to David that it is his own divine purpose to provide for David and his people, not for David to provide anything for him! The Lord has exalted David from his humble job as a shepherd and made him the great king over God's own people. Moreover, God has provided a place of safety for the people of Israel. God is to be *their* refuge in the land.
- And, in an ironic twist, the Lord declares that David won't make *him* a house; rather, the Lord will make a house for David. This play on words implies that the Davidic dynasty that will arise from David will reign in Jerusalem for centuries to come. And it is David's offspring who will build a temple in Jerusalem — whom of course we know to be Solomon, who is yet unborn. God promises to guide this heir of David as would a father — but also to discipline him the way a father disciplines a son when he strays.

But there is another, more serious explanation for the Lord's refusal to allow David to build the temple: *King David rose to his feet and said: "Listen to me, my fellow Israelites, my people. I had it in my heart to build a house as a place of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for the footstool of our God, and I made plans to build it. But God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood'"* (1 Chronicles 28:2-3).

This suggests that the Lord will not allow his holy place to be tainted in any way.

APPLY:

There is a big picture application here, as well as a smaller picture.

The big picture is what these promises mean to David and the Davidic dynasty. David, who has been exalted by God to greatness, is assured that his legacy will also be great. He doesn't build *God* a house; God will make *David* a great house!

Of course, we know the rest of the story. When David receives the promise on behalf of his heir — *I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever* — we know what will happen. Solomon will be great, the wisest man in the world; and yet he will stray to false gods through the temptation and appeasement of his many wives. The kingdom of Israel will secede from Judah when David's grandson Rehoboam reigns because of Rehoboam's tyrannical attitude toward Israel. And after a succession of good and bad kings in Jerusalem, the reign of David's descendents in the holy city of Jerusalem will end in disaster with the reign of Zedekiah in 587 B.C. This will come nearly 400 years after the glorious reign of David, when the Babylonians conquer Judah and Jerusalem.

So, Nathan's prophecy was wrong, right? No. Because the eternal reign of the house of Judah is fulfilled in the greatest Son of David of them all: Jesus of Nazareth. This is the fulfilled promise revealed by the Angel Gabriel to Mary: *"You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end"* (Luke 1:31-33).

This reign will indeed be an eternal reign.

On a smaller scale, we also learn something about our own dependence on God. In our religious zeal we want to do something great for God. But the fact is God is the one who does something great for us!

Grace is God's loving initiative on our behalf. All we do is respond to what he has done, is doing, and will do in our lives. We don't need to offer to God what he has not asked for. What we must do is obey that which he commands us to do.

RESPOND:

Henry Blackaby has said something like this: real spiritual leadership is finding out what God is up to and where he is going, and following him. I couldn't agree more.

Usually when I've attempted to take initiative with good intentions, and "help God out" by my own efforts, it has been less than blessed! Oh, God has intervened in such circumstances to bring good out of my tattered purposes, but that's his gracious nature at work.

But when I've sought his will through prayer and fasting, and confirmed it with Godly counsel, I've found myself to be at peace no matter what happens. Then I know that God is in it, and not my own will.

Lord, we want to do something great for you. But we must begin with the simple realization that you've already done something great for us through the saving death and resurrection of your Son, and through the power of your Holy Spirit. Empower us to do your will instead of seeking your approval for what is clearly only our will. Amen.

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