

2 Samuel 7

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[0 : 00] Well, it's certainly not the way that I hope that we will look at it tonight. You'll always get people who will criticize the Bible, who look just at what they call the literally value of the Bible to the Word of God.

If we simply take it at face value as being a historical account of something that took place, then and only then is when we'll derive something out of this chapter.

In actual fact, the chapter is one of the most magnificent chapters in the whole Bible. Because it's what we call one of the promised chapters.

And it reminds us, it takes us all the way back to David's roots. He's rooted in his relationship with God, and it's a covenant relationship.

If you want to really understand the Old Testament, God's dealing all the way through. If you want one single thread that runs all the way through the Old Testament, the thread is covenant.

[1 : 01] And it's the arrangement which God came into with Abraham, starting off with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and then all the way through Moses, and then to David, and then to Jeremiah, and then all the way through into the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

A covenant was, I think I've said this before, but maybe it's a while now. Supposing, for example, you had two kingdoms. The classic occurrence of a covenant was where two kingdoms were at war with one another.

And one kingdom overcame the other kingdom. And the two kings, the victor, or what was called the suzerain king, that's what they called the suzerain king, he met with the vassal king, who was the defeated king, and he said, let's not fight anymore, because we are much bigger than you, so let's enter into a covenant.

Let's just, let's prevent any more loss of life, and let's enter into a covenant. So they would go through this ceremony, where by means of animals being cut in half, and walking through two kings, walking through the animals which had been cut in half, the two kings entered into a relationship with one another, and that relationship must never, ever be broken.

In other words, in fact, the whole idea of the animals cut in half was that one king would say to the other, if either one of us breaks the terms of this covenant, let us be as those animals.

[2 : 30] So that's the kind of seriousness that a covenant was. And you find it not just in Israel, you find it in lots and lots of historical documents in the ancient Near East at that time.

It was quite a common political agreement, where one king and another would enter into a pledge, it was a promise to be true to one another, and to be faithful to this covenant.

That's why we regard marriage as a covenant, in which a pledge is made, a promise is publicly made, and the promise was going to be perpetual. It was not going to come to an end, just like a covenant wasn't going to come to an end.

Well, that's the way that the Lord chose to enter into relationship with His people, through Abraham and Isaac and Moses, and then here in David's time as well. And what we have here is the chapter that brings out for us, that establishes once and for all, God's covenant with David as the king, and as a representative of His people Israel.

That's why it's so important. It's one of those chapters in which God is telling us, right, stop. Okay, if you're reading through the Old Testament, this is where you stop, and say, let's recap once again, on what it is I am doing with my people Israel.

[3 : 49] It was not some random series of events. History in the Old Testament wasn't random. There was nothing that happened by accident. It was God bringing to pass His purposes and His plans all the time.

And here's one of these places where we stop, and we review God's arrangement with His people Israel. Now, if you look back over the pages of Exodus and Leviticus and Numbers, you'll find that on many occasions, God's people had sinned against God, and yet God had persisted with His people.

He hadn't abandoned them. He hadn't given up on them. He was still their God. They were still His people because He had promised Abraham that they would always be His people and He would always be their God.

That was Him being true to His promise. And here He is, at this stage in history, and He's coming now to David. David is the king. All the other men are gone. They're dead and buried. Now David, this is David, the representative of the people of Israel.

And this is one of those great chapters in the Old Testament in which the covenant is brought out for us. One of the questions, of course, is that when did this take place?

[5 : 05] And it's not really important. Some people say that this conversation between David and God through Nathan the prophet, it took place later on during David's reign, maybe towards the end of his reign.

Well, it might have. We've got to remember that not everything in Samuel is necessarily given to us in chronological order. But that doesn't really matter.

What really matters is that this happened and this was a key route. It was one of the keys to understanding David's reign and its theological significance, its significance in the Bible.

That's why David is such an important figure. He wasn't just a king. He was a representative of the people of Israel before God. He was a mediator before God and he ruled in righteousness.

I want us to look at this chapter then. And it's two halves. We read, first of all, the promise that God had made to David. In response to David's intention to build a temple for the Ark of the Lord.

[6 : 07] He had already taken the Ark from the house of Obed-Edom into Jerusalem, but obviously it was still in a temporary location. It was in a tent. And David's intention, quite rightly so, you can understand, was for him to build a temple as a permanent resting place for the Ark of God.

There's nothing wrong with that intention. In fact, God said to him that there was nothing wrong with that intention. However, he was not the man to build it. I think I said before that when it comes to thinking about how God guides us as Christians, sometimes we've got to be prepared to put our plans to one side in deference to God's plans.

We have to ask, is this really God's will? Or am I saying, this is what I want to do and I'm asking God to bless it? Well, this is how this chapter starts off. This is what David wants to do. He's asking God to bless it.

God comes to him and says, no, you mustn't do this. You're not to do this. And the first chapter, of course, is God's, the first, sorry, half of the chapter is God's answer in response to David's intention. I want us to notice, first of all, what God said in this about himself. And again, again, this is key to our understanding of what God was doing.

[7 : 34] He's saying, I traveled, verse 6, this is what the Lord says, are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? And this is what God says about himself. I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up of Egypt to this day.

I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of the rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, why have you not built me a house of cedar?

Now then, tell my servant David, this is what the Lord Almighty says, I took you from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel. Now, what God is saying there is he's reminding David of his unique relationship with Israel.

And he's saying that it's a relationship in which he has come in amongst Israel and where Israel, he has chosen Israel primarily as his dwelling place.

And he has wandered from place to place to be with his people. God's desire, God's intention, God's grace meant that he came down, as it will, we are to look in these words at how God condescends to dwell amongst his people Israel.

[8 : 46] This all goes back, of course, the promise we spoke about where God promised Abraham to be their God. But it wasn't to be a God who was afar off. He wasn't going to be a detached God. He wasn't going to be an impassionate God.

He was going to be there amongst them. He was going to walk with them and be involved in every decision that they took and every place where they were. He was going to hear their prayer. He was going to be part of their suffering when they suffered under the hands of the Egyptians in Egypt. He was going to be there amongst them and He was going to hear their prayer to deliver them from Egypt.

You see, there's this constant bond with His people Israel. There's this bond of love that God, in which God has promised to be with His people. And we're to see that.

And that meant that where they moved, He would move. Where they went, He would go. If they lived in tents, He was going to live in a tent. If they went from place to place, He was going. And that has never, ever changed.

[9 : 44] Because today, God's people live in covenant relationship with Him in which God has promised to be with us. And to that same pledge, that same commitment, that same oneness by which God has promised to be one with His people and to dwell amongst them is still in effect through the Lord Jesus Christ today.

And so when we read those words, there's a marvelous message to the New Testament church and the 21st century church in which He says, I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt.

I've been moving it from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. And He says to us tonight, I move with you. And if it means having a tent as my dwelling, then so be it.

Because I am where my people are. Ah, and in all their afflictions, the Bible tells us, He is afflicted. It tells us that we have not a great high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. And the greatest, of course, the greatest expression of God with His people, being amongst His people, was, of course, in the person, the ultimate, the ultimate fulfillment of this great truth came in the person of Jesus Christ in the name Emmanuel.

[11 : 01] God is with us. And today, what a wonderful, wonderful relationship we have with the Lord. It's not a relationship in which we have to go through some kind of process to get right with God.

It's a relationship in which God has condescended to be with us and to draw us, to redeem us to Himself. He's taken the initiative.

And that's the whole point of this chapter. It's the whole point of the words which God tells David in the following verses. Because the next thing God says, the next thing God reminds David of is what he did for David.

He's saying what he did in himself, but then secondly, he's telling David what he did for him. David didn't earn his way into the palace.

David didn't work his way up. He didn't go up the promotional ladder. David is where he is by the sheer grace of God. I took you from pastoring your father's flock, from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel.

[12 : 08] There's no other explanation but the grace and the power and the mercy of God. I have been with you wherever you have gone. And I've cut off all your enemies from before you. He says two things.

First of all, that he took them from nothing. Remember David? The seventh son, the obscure one, the person who, the rest of the family didn't even give him the time of day.

He was the one. Because man looks on the outward appearance, he said to Samuel, God looks on the heart. He was the one that God chose to be his king. The last person that anyone ever thought of as the future king of Israel was what God, who God had planned to sit on the throne in Jerusalem.

But not only had he chosen from the flock, he had taken him and he had preserved him. You look at the life of David as we've done. It's miraculous, isn't it, how David's life was preserved against all the odds, against all the threats.

And we've seen time and time and time again how for years David was hounded by King Saul and yet God preserved him and he's brought him and he's kept him safe from all the threats which his enemies were to him.

[13 : 16] And he's made his name great. But not only does he tell him what he's done for David, he tells him what he's going to do for David. He's going to establish a name for David.

And this is where we get to the actual heart of what God says in these verses. And in order to try and understand this chapter, we have to start at the beginning and to ask ourselves, well, how does it begin?

It begins with David saying to the Lord through Nathan, I am going to build a house for you. That was David's intention. I am going to build a house for you. A temple in which the Ark of the Covenant could stay permanently.

But God says to him, are you the one to build a house for me? Rhetorical question, no answer. The answer is obvious. No, you are not the one to build a house for me. Because the point was a wrong point.

what God wanted to get across to David was that it wasn't a matter of him building a house for God, but God building a house for him.

[14:24] You see, God takes, in these words, God takes David's intention and he turns them upside down. And in these words, especially if you, if you, I've probably forgotten in the eight years I've been in the ministry, I've forgotten most of my Hebrew, but if you want to read the books that tell you all about the Hebrew language, what they tell us is that the Hebrew language, it plays, this chapter plays on two words.

First of all, the word house and the word build. And it tells us that God literally takes David's intention and his desire and he says, no, we are going to do the reverse.

The initiative, although you want to take the initiative to build a house for me, David, the initiative must come from me. I am actually going to build a house for you.

And it's enormously important for us to see this because in this is a revelation of the grace of God.

And God will not be revealed in any other way but a God of grace.

And the God of grace is the one, first of all, who takes the initiative himself to come down and to dwell with his people and to draw them and to speak to them and to redeem them and to make them his people for himself.

[15:44] In verse 9, for example, we read these words, I have been with you wherever you've gone and I have cut off from before you. Now I will make, now that's a variant on the word to build, I will make your name great.

In verse 10, God says, I will provide a place for my people Israel. And then he says, I will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. In verse 11, God says to David, I appointed leaders over my people, I also will give you and I will establish a house for you. And when your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you who will come from your own body and I will establish his kingdom. There's loads and loads of words and terminology there in which God is saying to David, it's me who's going to build a house for you.

This is all about God's promise. It's not about David's intention, it's about God's promise and God's commitment to his people Israel. And that's a commitment that was going to last beyond David's death.

It was going to be a commitment which was completely unshakable and which was going to be indefectible altogether. Now then, in other words, God was saying to David that the temple could wait.

[17:06] There was going to be a temple, but in actual fact, when you look at the temple, the temple was going to be a monument to the grace of God. And if you follow on in the Old Testament and you'll, of course, you'll come to the death of David and you'll come to the coronation of Solomon and how Solomon sits on the throne and eventually Solomon builds a house or the temple for the Lord and the ark is taken into the temple.

But then, when that's finished, there's this wonderful prayer which Solomon prays to the Lord. And in it, he commits and dedicates the temple to the Lord.

Now this prayer is so fascinating because it reveals to us, under the inspiration of God, it reveals God to us once again. And it commits the temple in its being a monument or a testimony to the grace of God.

Verse 33, when your people Israel, this is, sorry, this is 1 Kings and chapter 8 and verse 33, when your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you and when they turn back to you and confess your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave their fathers.

When the heavens are shut up and there's no rain because your people have sinned against you and when they pray towards this place and confess your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. [18 : 48] Teach them the right way to live and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance. Now what's the difference between this temple and every other religious temple in the whole ancient Near East at that time?

Well other temples were built by all means towards their deities as a means of appeasing the gods because of course the gods were in control of the rain and the harvest and the crops of the land and so when these crops failed, the people felt well, the people thought well the gods must be displeased with us and so we have to build a temple and it has to be as elaborate as possible in order to please the gods and the more elaborate the more majestic the temple is the more we've got the better chance we have of pleasing the gods and so religion for all of them was trying their best to please the gods in order for the gods to give them fertility and in order for them to give a harvest and all the rest of it but here is the God of Israel and he's saying it's entirely the opposite all these other nations were taking the initiative themselves in building the temple and this is why it was so important that he shows David that he's the one who takes the initiative because it's all about our relationship with the living and true God is one which is based on his forgiveness and his grace and so when Solomon came to build the temple and dedicated it to God and the prayer of dedication it was all about forgiveness because the temple every time someone looked at the temple that they saw what God was in himself the God who's full of loving kindness towards his people now that didn't give them a ticket to do anything they want or live any way they want but it did show them and remind them that God had redeemed his people Israel and had made provision for the forgiveness of their sins through the shedding of blood and was ultimately going to do that by sending his own son into the world in order to obliterate sin once and for all from his people in fact Solomon and his temple and his palace and his glory and his riches everything you saw in Solomon spoke and reflected the God who he had served that's the wonderful thing about Solomon you look at Solomon I know that he went wrong I know that he sinned later on in his life I know that he fell into the trap of his love for various women but in so far as he reflected for a large part of his life he reflected the true meaning of kingship as it was in relation to God so everyone who looked at Solomon they saw something of the God they served and the God they loved and here where Solomon prays this prayer to the Lord it's a prayer of forgiveness and it's a promise of forgiveness it's a promise that ultimately looks to the Lord Jesus Christ who himself is the living temple of God the place where God dwells amongst his people

God's intention was the forgiveness of our sins God's power was the forgiveness forgiveness is a power that forgives all our sins God's purpose in this world was to send his only son into the world why?

to forgive our sins by his death on the cross at Calvary everywhere you look you'll find forgiveness written all over God and it's a forgiveness that will last it's a promise that will last a promise that can never ever be destroyed and so the promise was that in days to come after David's death that God would raise up a seed namely Solomon but not just Solomon it was going to extend beyond Solomon and that seed that dynasty that family was going to through that family God was going to continue to communicate with his people and he was going to continue to be their God and nothing nothing nothing nothing was ever going to change that death was not going to annul it sin was not going to destroy that promise and time will never ever exhaust that promise that God was going to make had made to David now the question might arise well I know some of the Old

[23 : 26] Testament and I know some of the kings who lived after David and they were wicked kings they were really really wicked kings and they did not live up to God's word they didn't obey God's word they didn't live in God's commandments and they certainly were a poor example a very very shameful example of the God that they served what about them surely if they broke their part of the bargain surely God had every right to break his part of the bargain and to abandon this promise that he made to David it's all very well him coming to David because David was a man after God's own heart what about the kings who lived after him what about Solomon when he fell into the arms of his 700 wives and when they led him astray to worship other gods what about the promise then what happened to it surely surely God has every entitlement to break that promise now remember what I said before it's a covenant and that meant that even if

Solomon and Rehoboam and the kings after him even if they fell into sin and even into idolatry they themselves would be punished individually by God and yet God would never ever abandon his people Israel it's marvellous isn't it absolutely marvellous rock solid nothing was going to change God's love towards his people and it was in response to this that David went in and sat before the Lord and he prayed he prayed a two part prayer the first part was a statement of just sheer speechless wonder at what God had done for him you know when we in the New Testament when we reflect not only on this promise and what this promise reveals to us about God but on how it has been fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ and how in

Christ God God has personally come down himself and died on the cross Jesus died on the cross in order to pay the penalty for our sin in order to secure that promise and the fulfilment of that promise you know these words ought to be ours this evening oh sovereign Lord who am I that you have brought me this far part of our worship every Lord's day and every time we sit down with our Bible ought to be speechless it ought to be a sense of coming to God and just not knowing what to say that's what David says in verse 20 what more can David say to you he was lost for words as he listened to Nathan relating to him what God had said and there's a sense in which we ought to be the same that it ought to be part of our worship to just sit before the Lord and to say I just don't know what to say words fail me you know when words fail me you get frustrated don't you when you don't know what to say in certain situations and yet here's a situation where words fail you and yet you're filled with a joy because you're so thankful and you're so amazed at what

God has done Ralph David calls it happy frustration you haven't had happy frustration with God that's what David's got he's got happy frustration because he doesn't know what to say he's completely completely taken aback because here and now he's just been confronted by this great grace of God and he's saying who am I I don't understand why God has taken me from being a nobody from being an undeserved sinner and he's raised me and he's included me in his purpose and he's forgiven me and he's revealed himself to me and he's taken away all my sins and he's made me part of his people and he's established a dynasty for me he's going to make my name great and part of his family he's called me his father he's called me his he's called me my father and he's called me his son and we can say the same in Christ exactly the same has can be said about us we enjoy the same privileges tonight we're part of the same movement the same family the same dynasty in which

Jesus Christ is the head cornerstone he is the heir who has bought us with the price of his blood and he has redeemed us and taken us to be his own but not only did did God talk about David and his and his son but he said that he had a plan for all the earth you know look with me for a moment at verse 19 look with me at this verse 19 second part of verse 19 you probably didn't notice it when we read it before the second half says this is this your usual way of dealing with man oh sovereign lord right and you probably say well that's just a very innocuous phrase we don't really give it much thought and don't give it much attention is this your usual way of dealing with man oh sovereign lord [29 : 09] I tell you you wouldn't believe the number of technical papers that have been written about this verse this one single verse arguing about what it means arguing about the nuances of various Hebrew words and expressions and all the rest of it you wouldn't believe even in my small library I can find articles and chapters and books just written about this one verse it's quite incredible and the reason why it's so controversial is because because despite what the NIV says it's actually not a question it's a statement and it's one of the most marvelous statements in this chapter and it really means what it really means I'll spare you the arguments about what it might mean and what it might not mean I'll just give you the conclusion that most people seem to come to and that's as simple as this that God's promise didn't just apply to David but it was to go to the whole of mankind it's not a question it literally means this is your charter for mankind in other words

David sees prophetically that the promise of God doesn't just stop with him and his house and his temple it goes all the way throughout the world throughout the nations of the world and throughout the history of mankind into the future down the centuries he was never going to see any of it but we do we've seen the fulfillment much more than David has in Jesus coming into the world in the establishment of the New Testament church on the disciples going out into every country and village and tribe and town with the message of the gospel and our task is the same tonight because this chapter it reveals to us the grace and the glory of God but it's a grace and glory that has to be shared with mankind and it's one and it's forgiveness is offered to them all mankind humankind wherever we find men and women boys and girls made in the image of God lost and dead in sins

tonight we must go the church has to go to them and share with them the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and this great promise that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life I can't think of any greater message tonight to take to a lost world than this promise and just the same way as we can now witness through the pages of history and the pages of the Bible that God having made this promise has never abandoned it so God will also continue to fulfill that promise and the gospel will be spread all over the world and many many more people will come to know him and one day the world will come to an end Jesus will come back again the graves will open the dead in Christ will rise and there'll be the new heaven and the new earth and then there will be a place there will be a temple God will be the temple and God will be the Lord God will be the light God will be your permanent dwelling and resting place there will be no more tears no more sadness no more war no more misery no more sin we shall be forever with the Lord and God will have completely fulfilled his promise we are part of that we are part of this wonderful movement the greatest movement in all the world doesn't feel like it sometimes does it you feel the force of this world closing in on you when people sneer and laugh at you tell you you're old fashioned and you feel that you're in a minority no you're not you are not heaven is full tonight of thousands upon thousand and ten thousand times ten thousand and God has promised that the number of people who will one day surround the throne in heaven will be beyond our ability to count people like you and me who have been taken from cultures and colors and tribes and nations from north and south and east and west and one day they'll all be gathered in and God's promises will be fulfilled that's why chapters are like this are so crucial and why they're so why they're so foundational in our understanding of what

God is we're part of that are you are you sure is there anyone here tonight who's not part of it well you can be you can come in because you don't have to do anything to come in you don't have to earn your own salvation remember what we've been talking about all evening the grace of God come down in Jesus Christ to give his life for sinners you're a sinner that's your greatest problem tonight you're a sinner that's the one thing that keeps you apart from God the one thing that keeps you out of this kingdom is your sin and there's only one way in which that sin can be dealt with and that's by the death of Jesus you come to trust in him and come to accept his free gift the gift that he came into the world to give you take it turn away from your sinful life turn away and accept him and trust him and follow him now and come into his kingdom because he invites you to do so he says whosoever comes to me I will in no way no way cast out he invites you freely to come and to take and to drink of the water of life that he gives us will you come will you come and take it and take it now and be part of his everlasting kingdom and see and discover this great promise that no one can destroy and no one can reverse bow our heads in prayer sword and donne into the storm in hospital house and see

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