

2ND SAMUEL

Week 10, chapter 7

We embark on 2nd Samuel chapter 7 today, which is another of those vitally important places in the Bible that could be called a canon within a canon; or a torah within a Torah. This is simultaneously a summary and a mountaintop vista; it is a pause to reflect upon how deeply meaningful and symbolic has been the long path to redemption that began in Egypt but has now led to Yerushalayim. It is also a look ahead to the remainder of the journey. What a major milestone it is that David is now king, that the Promised Land is united and secure, Yerushalayim is the capital of God's earthly kingdom, and the Ark is back among God's people.

One of the difficulties for me as a teacher of God's Word is that after exploring the lofty heights of the 5 books of Torah that set down all the principles that humankind was to live by; and after our discovering of the ideal standard that the Lord has ordained for those who call themselves His (as presented by the Law of Moses), we have for a long time now dealt with the real life historical aspects of Israel's development. We have read of battles, failed leaders and good ones, the ebb and flow of territorial control, the steady diminishing of the priesthood, and so on. It is as if we have been walking through a heavily wooded wilderness, navigating through a maze of details and circumstances, and struggling to keep our bearings. But suddenly we emerge into a clearing atop a hill and now we are given a panoramic view of where we've come from and some reassurance that the direction we have traveled has been correct and that we are on course. We also see that much lay ahead; what we'll experience along the way will take continuing endurance but the end is in sight and the outcome is certain for God will see to it that if we remain faithful to Him He will be our compass.

The backdrop for this overview is David's hope to build a Temple for the Lord and the Lord's rejection of David's plans. But we must understand that this chapter is not about Temple history per se but about examining a critical point whereby the manifestation of the divine purpose, deeper and fuller than we've seen it up until now, is revealed. I hope that after our preparation for this chapter last week that you made the effort to carefully read it ahead of time; it will have been to your advantage.

Let's open our Bibles to 2nd Samuel chapter 7.

READ 2ND SAMUEL CHAPTER 7 all

It is impossible not to see the Messianic overtones in this chapter; the Jewish Sages immediately recognized it as did the earliest gentile Christian scholars. And this is at least one of the reasons why modern academic Bible scholars who mostly adhere to the Literary Critical method of Bible exposition claim that this chapter is a late (and rather dishonest) insertion into the Samuel Scroll that probably occurred after the Jews came home from the Babylonian exile some 600 years after David's day. The argument is that only many centuries later when many other events had come to pass, and when those who wanted the Davidic era to be viewed in retrospect in a certain positive light, did some anonymous editor add this chapter to achieve his agenda. And why do they think that? Because they generally do not believe in divine prophecy or in spirituality; therefore whatever appearance of Messianic fulfillment and future expectations that exists in this chapter could only have been added after the fact with the intent that later generations would be fooled into thinking that this was real.

I know I covered this last week, but it is so critical for us to understand that the teaching in modern Seminaries (not all Seminaries, of course, but certainly the majority) is largely based on this skeptical mindset that emerged after the European Enlightenment of the 18th century. It has been in vogue ever since then to question the authenticity of much of the Bible (especially the Old Testament); and any Bible teacher or Church official who doesn't is looked upon with suspicion as a relic and out of touch with modern intellectualism.

At the same time we must also understand that most books of the Bible were written in retrospect and by editors who compiled documents and traditions to form a coherent history. The writer or writers of the Samuel Scroll weren't necessarily present during the events that occurred during that time. And, under divine inspiration, they wrote and ordered the passages into what we see today. They also wrote within the cultural norms and methods of their time. These were, after all, ancient Hebrew writers. So precise chronologies weren't important; genealogies didn't reflect precision and they weren't exhaustive in the way that we think of in modern Western Society. Thus chapter 7 isn't a logical or chronological continuation of chapter 6, nor did it historically occur before chapter 8. Why, exactly, the writers of Samuel determined that this was the point to insert this chapter we don't know. But it doesn't matter because I'm not sure at what point within Samuel would have been any better.

We should notice an interesting parallel between the characteristics of David's reign and the transition from the days of the End Times on into the Millennial Kingdom (that is still future to us). I have identified 7 of the most notable parallels. 1) In David's time and in the End Times, Judah and Israel are reunited after being divided and separated for a long time. 2) The Ark of the Covenant is once again present and it rests in Yerushalayim. 3) David's era and the Millennial Kingdom are both described as times of "rest" for God's people. 4) Yerushalayim and the Promised Land are secure from its enemies. 5) There is a time of general peace. 6) God's anointed is on the throne (a real earthly throne). And 7) a palace for God's anointed king has been built largely by the contributions of foreigners (non-Hebrews).

Verse 1 opens with David contemplating the amazing events of his life, and how drastically things have changed since he was a simple shepherd in the fields of Bethlehem. Now he wears the crown of a king, and lives in a lavish palace made of Cedar wood. Since we know that his palace was not built until at least halfway through his reign, we also know that when this urge to build a Temple rose up within him, it was well after the time that the Ark had been brought into the City of David (as we studied in Chapter 6). We find David expressing this longing to build a Temple to his prophet Nathan (a longing that is accompanied with a certain measure of personal unease, bordering on guilt). And the stated reason is that while David lives in a beautiful palace the Lord's Ark resides in a mere tent.

What is it that would cause David to think that this was the proper time to build God a Temple, since it had not been attempted before now? The Rabbis say that David probably thought he was fulfilling the promise of Deuteronomy 12:10 -11.

¹⁰ But when you cross the Yarden and live in the land ADONAI your God is having you inherit, and he gives you rest from all your surrounding enemies, so that you are living in safety;

¹¹ then you will bring all that I am ordering you to the place ADONAI your God chooses to have his name live- your burnt offerings, sacrifices, tenths, the offering from your hand, and all your best possessions that you dedicate to ADONAI;

It probably rightly seemed to David that Israel was finally living in relative "rest" from their surrounding enemies as compared to the turmoil and constantly present dangers of the last

several hundred years. And it seemed as though Yerushalayim must be the place where God has chosen to have His name live. However there is certainly no commandment to build God a beautiful Temple that is implicit in these verses of Deuteronomy. That said, the entire known world built their gods fabulous temples so David naturally assumed that's what he would build as the place where "Adonai your God chooses to have His name live".

We don't really know who this **Natan** (Nathan) is; he's not previously mentioned and just appears in the texts (not miraculously, it's just that we're given no information about him). That David refers to his palace as a "cedar wood" palace is because a palace paneled with Cedar wood was considered opulent. Further, the use of strong Cedar logs permitted a little different kind of roof construction that allowed for larger interior rooms without as many columns and/or load bearing walls to hold up the roof span. Construction of all buildings in that era used stone, so it's not that we have a palace made for David purely out of wood. Rather it's that Cedar wood was used to beautify and to facilitate some otherwise impossible architecture. So relative to David's day indeed his palace was top-of-the-line. And by the way, the very recent archeological discovery of his palace in the City of David bears this out.

Verse 2 speaks of the Ark resting in a tent. Your Bible version might say, "Dwelling in curtains". The Hebrew word being translated is **yeriy'ah** and between the two interpretations "curtains" is the better. Tents in that day were usually lengths of animal skins or cloth assembled and layered over a wooden framework. Yet since the common word for tent is **ohel** (and it was used in chapter 6 to explain where the Ark was placed), then no doubt **yeriy'ah** (curtains) is intended to tell us that the tent had a space divided off by curtains and the Ark was placed inside of it. Thus a picture emerges that while this tent was certainly not on par with the Wilderness Tabernacle (and it is never called a Tabernacle, a **mishkan**, in the original Hebrew Scriptures), that it also was no ordinary shepherd's tent. It was nicely built, and had at least one separated compartment that served the same purpose as the Holy of Holies.

There have been many scholarly arguments about the nature of this tent and whether it should be considered as the first Temple since there is no indication that it was built to be portable. The reason for the concern over this is because we're told that the Millennial Temple will be the 3rd Temple, so if the tent in David's City was the 1st Temple, then Solomon's was the 2nd and Herod's the 3rd and therefore there IS no actual future Temple to come. Rather the future Temple is purely spiritual in nature and the mention of it is somewhat allegorical. I'll not get into the lengthy subject of the 3rd Temple but I can state confidently that there will be another Temple and it will be quite literal and real.

Here's the thing that can help us to understand the nature of the tent David built for the Ark, and how we should consider it: there is actually a much earlier example in the Bible of regularly meeting God in a tent that is NOT the Wilderness Tabernacle. And it was divinely authorized and thus completely satisfactory to Yehoveh. So David really wasn't even doing something that was groundbreaking in putting the Ark into a tent. We find this story in Exodus chapter 33, so turn there now in your Bibles.

READ EXODUS 33:7 – 11

This tent is not the Wilderness Tabernacle. In fact this instruction to set up this special tent of meeting was given before the Wilderness Tabernacle was built. For timing purposes, this is told in the context of the Golden Calf incident. Naturally the Hebrew word used to describe this tent of meeting is *ohel*, a common tent. We even see that Joshua was allowed inside of it. Once the Tabernacle was built and the Priesthood was presiding over it only the Priests could go inside the tent. Moses went into this tent of Exodus 33 when the fire-cloud would descend upon it, indicating that God wished to speak with Moses. In fact, there wasn't even an Ark in the tent.

Notice the location of Moses' tent; it was apart from the people. David's tent was located inside of his own personal walled complex, the City of David, and so it too was apart from the people. Therefore let's put to rest any theological notion that David's tent was actually intended, or thought of, as the 1st Temple. Therefore Solomon's Temple would be the first, Herod's the 2nd, and the 3rd Temple is yet to come. David's tent was similar in nature to Moses' tent.

So David tells **Natan** of his plan to build a Temple for Yehoveh and **Natan** responds: "Go, do everything that is in your heart, for Adonai is with you." Then in verses 4 – 16, the Lord chastises **Natan** for assuming that building this Temple must have been divinely directed. Wow; there is probably a couple of sermons trapped inside these verses however I'll restrain myself and just try to give you the highlights.

First, notice something about Prophets in general; Prophets are ONLY infallible when they reveal a truth that has been given directly to them by God. A Prophet is no more a great thinker, or a man of profound theological understanding, or supremely pious, or incapable of sin than any other man. For Nathan to assume that because building a Temple sounded like a really great religious thing to do, and therefore God would want it done, is the height of folly. A

Prophet is merely an ordinary man that the Lord has chosen to bring His perfect oracle to God's people or (in this case) to God's anointed king. Any other statements by a Prophet (his personal beliefs and thoughts) are subject to error.

Second is Nathan's statement that David should do what seems right in his heart. If I've heard it once I've heard it a thousand times from Believers: if they feel it in their heart, then THAT is the signal that it must be from the Lord. Really? The Scriptures tell us the opposite.

Jer 17:7-10 CJB ⁷ Blessed is the man who trusts in ADONAI; ADONAI will be his security.

⁸ He will be like a tree planted near water; it spreads out its roots by the river; it does not notice when heat comes; and its foliage is luxuriant; it is not anxious in a year of drought but keeps on yielding fruit.

⁹ "The heart is more deceitful than anything else and mortally sick. Who can fathom it?"

¹⁰ I, ADONAI, search the heart; I test inner motivations; in order to give to everyone what his actions and conduct deserve."

Even the man who trusts the Lord cannot rely on his own heart (or as it is further expanded upon here in Jeremiah, he cannot trust in his own inner motivations). So here is your sermonette: stop trusting your heart. Don't confuse God's will with what you feel or think in your heart. And remember, in all Biblical eras (Old and New Testaments) the heart was NOT indicative of emotions; it was referring to the intellect, the mind, because the ancients thought that the heart organ was where thinking took place. Nathan thought of David as a Godly man, even God's appointed king so if David thought of something that sounds so wonderfully religious, it must be from God. Nathan thought that since he was God's anointed Prophet (the king's own personal prophet and closest advisor) that his elevated status meant that he had also been anointed with elevated wisdom and judgment. He was wrong, and somewhat impulsively he gave King David wrong advice.

So do me a favor; don't ever come and tell me about something you've decided you are going to do because you "know it in your heart" and therefore it must be from God. This is such common Christian-eze and it really needs to be removed from our vocabulary and our thought processes. Nothing could be a worse benchmark for deciding to do or not to do something in

the Name of God than what your heart tells you. Pastors, priests, and Bible teachers are not less fallible than any other follower of Messiah. Therefore I don't want to know if you are acting solely on what your heart tells you because you'll be offended when I question your motives and am skeptical that the Lord actually told you anything. As with David it is far more likely that this urging is just something that sounds good, feels comfortable, and pleases you; and I have no intention of being a Nathan that validates it unless I get a direct word from God about it. And since I am NOT a Prophet I can't imagine that I would.

Let's delve into the details of what the Lord told Nathan. We are informed that Yehoveh wasted no time in intervening to set him straight; it was the night of the same day that Nathan validated David's misguided intentions that the Lord came to Nathan. Please note that as is usually (but not always) the case, God's prophet is awake and conscious when he receives God's word. This was not a dream but rather a vision that Nathan experienced. In a nutshell the Lord says to go tell David that He has never asked for a house to dwell in. In fact from the day the Lord decided to rescue His people from Egypt until now (a period of around 5 centuries) He traveled with His people in a tent and a tabernacle. The key word is "travelled".

OK, notice something that can fly right by us: the Lord says He traveled with His people in BOTH a tent and a tabernacle (in Hebrew an **ohel** and a **mishkan**). These are not synonymous terms, are they? We read earlier about Moses' **ohel** where God met with Moses BEFORE the **mishkan** was built. The reason these words are spoken to Nathan is because David was currently using a tent, an **ohel**, (like Moses did for a time) as a place of meeting where he met with God and God has no need for anything else (but David thinks He does).

And then in verse 7 the Lord says that He has at no time issued an instruction to any Israelite who shepherds over God's people to have a cedar-wood house built for Him. Here's the thing; there is no doubt that David, Nathan, and probably most of the Israelites had a pretty distorted view of God, of His attributes, of particularly where He lived. We know from all of our Torah Class studies that by David's time Israel looked as much like a typical Middle Eastern society as any of the other nations that surrounded it. We know that Israel had precious little knowledge of the Torah and the Law because they made all sorts of ritual protocol mistakes and followed their traditions and assumptions instead. Their conception of Yehoveh was quite in line with the conception that the gentile tribes and nations of the rest of the world had for their gods. And of course, it was incorrect.

The gentile nations (pagans) built houses (temples) for their gods because their hearts (their intellect) told them that gods needed somewhere to dwell (goodness, you couldn't expect the gods and goddesses to live out in the hot sun or the rain!) Food was brought to the gods

because obviously gods needed to eat (all beings needed food). Idols of gods were carried around in elaborate boxes by priestly processions because how else could gods get from one place to another (they didn't have legs)? David and his royal court had similar thoughts about Yehoveh. Surely God needs a place to dwell on earth or else how can He come? And just as surely it must be a place that is at least as expensive and elaborate as the one for the king otherwise God would be offended.

We can chuckle a little bit and even feel a tinge of contempt towards these ancient people for harboring such primitive and superstitious thoughts; but just take a look around at some of the enormous Churches and Cathedrals that have been built for the sake of honoring God. These grand edifices that are typically called "God's house" (and are seen as a place where the Lord shows up) were built that way because well-intentioned Believers thought that the more elaborate and expensive that these facilities were the more appropriate and pleasing it would be to Our Lord. Especially in days gone by, poor people gave so much money (and at times had it simply taken from them) to build these monuments to religion that many had no money left to feed their families. Some folks today would not think to walk into a church if it was not richly built, decorated, and furnished and contained all the expected comforts and amenities. But in the divine reality presented right here in 2nd Samuel 7 we receive The Father's attitude about such things: YOU are going to build for ME a house (we should probably add some incredulous laughter for emphasis)? The Lord's will is not for us to take large sums of money and effort and build a magnificent building with it; rather that money and effort ought to be used to care for His people who have needs, and to bring the Good News to others who have not heard of it. Facilities to meet in are indeed needed; but they can be quite simple and efficient (God happily met with Moses in a tent). After all, if the enormous and costly buildings of wood and stone are supposedly dedicated to God but they are not pleasing to God, then who are they pleasing to? Just as the thought of building God a Cedar-wood Temple was personally pleasing to David and to Nathan, it didn't impress YHWH at all.

Men thought that a Temple was to serve a god and to confine a god. This is why verses 6 and 7 speak about God travelling with Israel. The God of Israel cannot be confined. The God of Israel comes and goes by His own will and by His own means. The God of Israel dwells wherever He chooses and the choice has nothing to do with cost, size, mode of transportation or a king's pious intent. We find this same thought brought forward into the New Testament when the issue is not only WHAT the Lord dwells in but WHOM.

2Co 6:16-18 CJB

¹⁶ What agreement can there be between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God- as God said, "I will house myself in them,... and I will walk among you. I will be their God, and they will be my people."

17 Therefore ADONAI says, "Go out from their midst; separate yourselves; don't even touch what is unclean. Then I myself will receive you.

18 In fact, I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters.' says ADONAI-Tzva'ot."

Some pretty strong and unequivocal language is used to express God's view of a temple versus man's typical distorted view of a temple or a "house of God". Thus in 2nd Samuel 7 verse 8 the tables are turned. The Lord says, let's get something straight: it is not you who can do anything for Me (such as building a dwelling place); it is I who will do for you. It is I who took you from the Shepherds fields, David, and made you a king over My people. I have been with you wherever you went. Understand: God knows that David's chief concern is that God is always near to him. And David wants to build a Temple in Yerushalayim so that it is guaranteed that God will always be there (God will essentially be confined there). Again, this last verse especially goes back to the issue of God's traveling and presence; and traveling and presence goes back to the issue of God's characteristics and attributes that as of this time were confused with those false gods of Israel's neighbors.

"I have been with you wherever you went" is the Lord saying that He has always travelled around with David and yet He wasn't being hauled around in a box by men, nor even did His presence with David require the presence of the Ark or some kind of a dwelling place. Thus David needed to be reminded that all during the time that he was fleeing from Saul, and when David fought the Philistines and others (and defeated them) he certainly didn't have possession of the Tabernacle nor did he set up a special tent to meet with God, and he obviously didn't have the Ark of Covenant with him. Yet somehow God was still there with David wherever David was. Newsflash: David, you don't need a Temple in order for Me to be with you. And brothers and sisters in the Lord, you don't need a church building or synagogue for Him to be with you. He "travels" within you (so to speak). You are His portable Temple and it pleases Him that it is so. He is only present within these grand edifices to religion that we build, when you are there. And the idea that mankind could fashion with our own hands something glorious enough to appropriately house His glory is simply not attainable, and is more a monument to our own conceit.

Verse 10 is the portal into some stunning Messianic prophecy. And here is where we have to bring our Reality of Duality principle back into focus because what is being pronounced in these passages is not only literal but is also simultaneously symbolic. And even though the conditions that are being described are occurring at that moment in David's kingdom (to some degree), these same conditions will occur again at a more complete level in the future (when one of David's descendants is reigning).

Let's look at these conditions one-by-one. God will assign a place for His people. That has already happened. The land David is controlling was assigned by God for His people first to Abraham (as a future promise) and then in actuality through Moses and then Joshua. But at a later time (the End Time) not only will the amount of land be expanded but Israel will become the governmental seat of God's Kingdom that will encompass the entire Earth.

Yehoveh also promises that the wicked will no longer oppress Israel. Things were relatively peaceful right now for David. The Philistines were subdued and other of Israel's enemies were quiet. That doesn't mean that there weren't skirmishes or that marauders didn't occasionally harass various Israelite tribes and clans, but it did mean that there were no major wars underway or envisioned. But at a later time, in the era of Christ reigning from Yerushalayim, the wicked absolutely will not oppress God's people. There will be no need for forts, soldiers, or weapons. It isn't only that there will come a time when Israel's military strength is sufficient to deter an enemy from attacking (like in David's day) it is that in the Millennial Kingdom era Israel will have no enemies among the earth's nations.

The Lord says that Israel will achieve its rest. Israel has already received its rest in the sense of having received a place of its own as based on the Abrahamic Covenant. It has achieved its rest in that God's anointed king is ruling over them instead of an evil king or a foreign king. Israel has achieved its rest in that it is in a somewhat (although highly imperfect) harmonious state with God. But in later times God Himself will rule over Israel. There will be no evil kings. In later times (with Messiah reigning) Israel will be in perfect harmony with God.

Let's break off here and we'll pick up next week with even more prophetic pronouncements from Chapter 7.