

## II Samuel Chapter 7 *“God Expands the Scope of His Revelation”*

### Introduction:

This chapter represents a turning point in redemptive history. In the Book of Genesis (12:1-3) it is recorded that God promised to make a great nation from the seed of Abram, and that through his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed (22:18). This promise was confirmed and made specific by the promise recorded here to David. It was revealed here that one of his offspring would sit on an eternal throne. There is nothing in the text to suggest that David deserved this favor from God. Rather, God made this Covenant with David as an expression of His sovereign will, and because of the steadfast love He had chosen to set upon David (vs.21).

The content of this chapter is dominated by speeches. This is significant because in Hebrew narrative literature we find that such chapters fit into a specific pattern. Climactic portions of a story are often characterized by a slowing of the narrative pace and a dominance of speeches over accounts of actions by the individuals in those narratives. Therefore, this account is meant to be understood as the climax of David's story. Another important theme in the chapter is the building of a “*house*”. This key word is found fifteen times in this chapter, and it is used in such a way as to highlight the two-fold definition that the word carries. The Hebrew word translated as “*house*” can refer either to a physical structure in which someone dwells, or it can refer to a family, including a person's descendants.

This chapter was designed to be a major foundational revelation concerning the disclosure of the coming of the Messiah, and the means by which God would fulfill His redemptive promise. These concepts would continue to receive more revelation in the messages of the prophets and the poetry of the psalmists. However, the fullest expression of these things would not come until the first century A.D. In the New Testament God would provide the fullest disclosure of the messianic implications inherent in this chapter. While it is true that direct citations of this chapter are few and far between (II Cor.6:18; Heb.1:5), various elements of the Davidic covenant are alluded to in the NT repeatedly. For example, Stephen concluded his summary of Israel's history with transparent references to the Divine promise to David that are recorded in this chapter, “*who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built the house for him... What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be?*” (Acts 7:46–47, 49).

Although the word “*covenant*” does not appear anywhere in this chapter, it is clear that in it we have a record of God establishing one between Himself and David. Several Old Testament texts do in fact refer to Nathan's oracle as the exposition of a “*covenant*” which was established by Yahweh with His servant (II Sam.23:5; I Kgs.8:23; II Chron.13:5; Ps.89:3, 28, 34, 39; 132:12; Isa 55:3; Jer 33:21).

But, given the fact that a covenant was established between Yahweh and David, the question must be answered regarding its nature. Was that covenant conditional

or unconditional in nature or was it perhaps a combination of the two. In the history of the ancient Near East there were basically two types of official covenantal structures that could be established between either individuals or nations. One type was basically the format for establishing a political treaty, while the second type was the format for establishing a royal grant. Both covenantal forms contained the same basic elements:

- historical introduction
- border delineations
- stipulations
- witnesses
- blessings and curses

Functionally, however, there is a vast difference between these two types of covenants. A covenantal treaty primarily expressed what the obligations were of a vassal (one who was in the role of servant) to his master, the suzerain. However, a grant covenant expressed the obligations of the master to his servant. In a grant covenant the curse was directed towards the one who violated the rights of the king's vassal, while in the treaty the curse was directed towards the vassal who violated the rights of his king. In other words, a grant covenant existed mainly to protect the rights of the servant while the treaty covenant functioned to protect the rights of the master (suzerain). Additionally, the grant covenant was a reward for loyalty and good deeds already performed. However, the treaty covenant was an inducement for future loyalty. It is clear that the type of covenant that God established with David was a royal grant. This type of covenant, by its very nature, tended to be unconditional. However, this did not mean that the format itself eliminated the possibility of it having conditions or obligations. In the case of the covenant established here, Yahweh's grant to David placed no obligations on David for its enactment or perpetuation. It was unilateral, and in that sense unconditional. On the other hand, the application of the covenant agreement placed an explicit condition upon those who would benefit from the promises of the Davidic covenant. These promises were extended irrevocably only to those faithful sons who kept the obligations of the treaty (I Kings 2:4; 6:12–13; 8:25; 9:4ff). God clarified this latter aspect of the covenant when He reiterated the terms of the Davidic Covenant to Solomon (I Kings 9:4–9). It was made eminently clear that conditions were laid down by God. The tensions this created between Divine commitment to an unalterable promise on the one hand and the inexorable human bent toward sin on the other is explored in Psalms 89 and 132. The implication of all of this is that the overall Covenant itself was eternal and unconditional from the Divine perspective, but in the course of time, there was a condition upon who would and who would not enjoy the blessings and realization of the promise. Those who were faithful and obedient would be considered participants in the Covenant, while those who were unbelieving and rebellious would not be considered to be participants in the Covenant.

This chapter is also significant in regard to a second aspect of the development of Old Testament Theology. The books of the Old Testament that provide the

narrative of the history of Israel (Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings) were all consciously written in light of the giving of the Law in Deuteronomy. In the fifth book of the Law, Moses (through five sermons) reiterated the Law of God to the new generation of Israelites who would settle in the Promised Land. In Deuteronomy, Moses outlined the stipulations of God's Covenant with Israel and admonished them that obedience to those stipulations would result in blessing, while disobedience would lead to being cursed by God. Therefore, one purpose of the narrative history was to reveal both how Israel responded to that admonition, and what happened to them as a result of the choices they made. In this way the accounts validate the truthfulness of the warnings that God gave Israel through Moses. The initial portion of this chapter (7:1–17) represents the center and focus of this Deuteronomic history. It reveals that the fulfillment of the Covenant would not only come through the seed of Abram, but also through the seed of David.

It is helpful to be aware that in I Chronicles 17:1-15 there is a parallel account to what is recorded in II Samuel 7:1–17.

### **I. David's Initial Plan: (vs.1-3)**

In verse one we read, *“Now it came to pass when the king was dwelling in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies all around”*. As one reads this verse it becomes immediately apparent that nothing is recorded here that specifically indicates how much time had elapsed between the events recorded in the previous chapter, and those recorded in this chapter. The complicating factor in regard to this is the statement that Yahweh had given David *“rest from all his enemies all around”*. This is an interpretive problem because chapters eight through ten record David's successful subjugation of Israel's enemies through a series of military campaigns. There are basically two possible ways this can be interpreted. One option is that the *“rest”* that the author referred to here was not a permanent one, merely a lull in David's military campaigns. A second option is that these chapters were not intended to be understood as recording events in strict chronological order. This would mean that the author placed this account next to the one about the placement of the Ark for thematic reasons, even though what was recorded here happened after what was recorded in chapters eight through ten. The second option makes the best sense. Therefore, it was not until the kingdoms of Philistia, Moab, Zobah, Damascus, Ammon, Amalek, and Edom were subdued that David turned wholeheartedly to his concerns about reforming Israel's worship. It is also very likely that David's palace was also not constructed until after David had completed his subjugation of Israel's enemies. The Hebrew term translated as *“rest”*, when used in a context like this one, would mean security from one's enemies and peace from wars. The reality is that in ancient Near Eastern history the costly building of palaces and temples was normally done during times of prolonged peace and political stability, when resources were not needed for ongoing warfare.

In verse two we read, *“that the king said to Nathan the prophet, ‘See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains’*”. Having established the situational context, the narrator informs us that David had a

conversation with Nathan, the prophet. This is the first time that Nathan is named in the Book of Samuel, but he would come to play a major role in the course of David's life (12:1–25; I Kgs. 1:11–45) and in the preservation of Israelite history (I Chr. 29:29; II Chr. 9:29). David was troubled that he, Yahweh's servant, was dwelling in opulence while the Ark of God, the symbol of God's presence on earth was being housed in a simple tent. It seemed inappropriate to David that he should have a more luxurious dwelling place than Yahweh, since Yahweh was His Divine master. There is a compelling logic in David's discomfort that people of any age can recognize. But in addition to this, there were cultural factors that would have increased David's discomfort with the situation. Throughout history, Near Eastern kings (including those who reigned long before David's time) had devoted national resources to the enhancement of temples in order to honor their gods and secure divine blessing for themselves and their kingdoms. Therefore, the present situation had David giving less honor to the true God, than pagans gave to the false gods they worshiped. Therefore, David decided that the time had come for him to do what any self-respecting king should do. He would build an appropriate temple for Yahweh. In describing his palace, David referred to it as a "*house of cedar*". The idea is that the palace walls were paneled with cedar wood, having been built by craftsmen from Tyre (5:21). The walls themselves were constructed with limestone.

David's intention to build a temple would have seemed to harmonize well with what was written in Deuteronomy 12:10ff. There it was expressed that when peace had been won in the Land of Promise, the people of Israel were to visit the central sanctuary as occasion demanded. Building a proper temple would have seemed to be the appropriate thing to do in preparation for the nation's return to the worship that God had commanded in His law.

In verse three we read, "*Then Nathan said to the king, 'Go, do all that is in your heart, for the LORD is with you.'*" In response to David's proposal, Nathan encouraged the king to proceed with his plan. The idea of doing "*all that is in your heart*", simply means that Nathan was expressing that David should do everything he wanted to do in regard to building the temple. The reason for Nathan's confidence in this plan was the fact that Yahweh was with David. This is the ninth time in the Book of Samuel that it has been stated that Yahweh was with David. This phrase meant that David could anticipate blessings and success in the endeavors he pursued, because he was the object of God's favor.

## **II. The Different Plan Revealed by God: (vs.4-17)**

In verses four and five we read, "*But it happened that night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying, 'Go and tell My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD: Would you build a house for Me to dwell in?''*" The wording "*that very night*" indicates that Yahweh gave this message shortly after Nathan encouraged David to precede with his plans. The wording also implies that the Word of Yahweh came by a dream given to the prophet. But whatever the means of the revelation, the text indicates that Yahweh was going to enlist Nathan to serve as His messenger and tell David what He Himself thought about David's plans. The rest of Yahweh's

speech conveys that Yahweh was not in favor of David pursuing his plan to build a temple for Him. The question then is, how are we to interpret what this means regarding Nathan's initial approval. Why did he give his approval to David as God's prophet, when God did not approve of the idea? To begin with it is helpful to recognize that a later narrative in II Samuel (ch.12) makes it clear that Nathan was not like the prophets who would later serve Ahab. Those later prophets simply told the king whatever he wanted to hear (I Kgs.22:6). In contrast to this, Nathan was a faithful prophet willing to courageously confront a king if he knew the king was wrong. This is an important fact that guards us from misinterpreting the discrepancy between Nathan's initial response in verse three, and the Divine revelation that was given through him to David. The most natural way to interpret this is that Nathan's earlier approval of David's plan represented his own opinion as a counselor before the king. It seems safe to assume that Nathan gave that response without first consulting God in this matter, because he did not consider it necessary to do so. However, after the dream he was acting in his role as prophet giving God's response to the plan. As a side note, David and Nathan were both godly individuals, not rebellious sinners. Their failure to discern the will of God on their own should teach the reader to be cautious about assuming he or she knows God's will in every situation. It serves to remind us that a safer way to proceed is to first seek out God's will through prayer.

When God refers to David, He does so by speaking of him as "*My servant*". This title was only applied to a few individuals in the Old Testament, and normally it is done near the end of that person's life. Thus, Yahweh's reference to David as "*My servant*" places him as having a significant role before Yahweh, and that he was among a very select company of godly saints. The use of the title sets what is said next in the context of the relationship that existed between Yahweh and David. The idea seems to be that this was to make clear that it was David's proposal that was being rejected, not David's intentions or inclinations. God's rhetorical question does not represent a complete rejection of David's proposal, for later in God's revelation through Nathan He consents to the building of a temple. Instead, this situation provided opportunity for God to more fully instruct David in the role that He had given to him. During God's speech, it would soon become clear to David, that among other things, God did not want a temple constructed for Him at that time.

The phrase "*thus says the LORD*" is the quotation formula used frequently by the prophets of Yahweh, and it was used to indicate that what followed was an authentic revelation from God.

In verse six we read, "*For I have not dwelt in a house since the time that I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt, even to this day, but have moved about in a tent and in a tabernacle.*" The Hebrew word translated here as "*dwelt*" refers to where one makes his or her residence. When God said that He had not dwelt in a "*house*", He was referring to a permanent structure in contrast to the tent that He was currently dwelling in. In this first part of God's message to David, He was questioning David's assumption that He had been expecting His people to

build Him a permanent structure in which he might dwell (or perhaps questioning the idea that they should do so even if He did not ask them to do it). God reminded David that when He brought the Israelites up out of Egypt, He did so without any sort of permanent residence. The implication being, there was no need now for anything different.

Though it was not included in this account, it is recorded in First Chronicles (22:8-10) that God did not approve of David's plan because he was a man of war, and God wanted a man of peace to build His temple.

In verse seven we read, *"Wherever I have moved about with all the children of Israel, have I ever spoken a word to anyone from the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'"* Here Yahweh reminded David that throughout the events following Israel's departure from Sinai, He had never expressed displeasure with having a tent as His earthly domicile, nor did He ever order anyone who was a leader in Israel to build Him a permanent temple. The Hebrew word translated as *"shepherd"* literally refers to the staff a shepherd would carry. In this case it refers to an ancient symbol that represented authority that had been invested in an individual. The reality was that even in the absence of an impressive building that people could see, Yahweh's presence among them was discernible. Yahweh's declaration here represents an idea that was radically contrary to the beliefs of the other peoples that surrounded them. The more typical idea was that a god wanted his followers to build him bigger temples than all the other gods dwelt in.

The main thrust of what God was saying here was that the time when there would be the erection of a temple for Yahweh would result from the will of Yahweh Himself and would not come about because David was doing Him a favor. Both the initiative to build a temple and the choice of the person for the task was to come from God Himself and not from a human king.

In verse eight we read, *"Now therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the sheepfold, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people, over Israel.'"* In this portion of God's speech to David, the stress is upon His initiation in what had transpired. This was being done to focus David's attention on idea that God's will, rather than what seems right to His people in the moment is what should guide the choices of God's people. Yahweh's speech concerning His royal grant to David can be divided into two parts:

- promises to be realized during David's lifetime (vs.8–11a)
- promises to be fulfilled after his death (vs.11b–16)

Verses 7b–8a constitute a brief historical prologue in which Yahweh reviews His earlier blessings on His servant David. At this point, it is helpful to understand that unlike English, the tenses of Hebrew verbs are not specifically built around time. Identical forms can express actions that are either in the present or the future. In verses 8b-9a, God was expressing what He had done already, while later (vs.9b-16) they express what He would do in the future.

As God addressed David's personal history, He reminded David that when God first called him, he was working with sheep. And to further the emphasis on the

humility that David should have before God, Yahweh expressed this with an emphatic pronoun (focusing on the idea of God's initiative in contrast to anything about David that might have influenced God's choice). And though David had at one time only been a shepherd of sheep, he had since been exalted to the role of king (being a shepherd of God's people). The idea here is that Yahweh had not selected David because of his significance (it was not because he was a great warrior or a successful military leader), but because of his faithfulness toward God. In addition to this, an important idea here is that David had not been exalted for his own sake or for his own benefit but had been exalted for the benefit of God's people.

In verse nine we read, "*And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you, and have made you a great name, like the name of the great men who are on the earth.*" The statement that God had already cut off all of David's enemies demonstrates that the "*rest*" referred to in verse one did not represent a lull in David's military campaigns, rather it was a more permanent rest. Therefore, this verse is further support for the conclusion that this promise was given after the events recorded in chapters eight through ten.

The reference to Yahweh having made a great name for David relates to David's reputation. And this promise echoes a part of the promise that God made to Abram (Gen.12:2). This declaration also stands in sharp contrast to the self-aggrandizing boasts of the builders of the tower of Babel, where they swore they would make a name for themselves (Gen.11:4). An example that illustrates how we are to understand the way in which God would give David a great name is found in 8:13, where the narrator reports that David made a name for himself (by gaining a military victory).

The idea then is gaining a significant reputation among a broad scope of people.

It is in the middle of this verse that the present tense verbs cease. As the promise continued to be recorded in the following verses, future tense verbs begin to be used. Therefore, the clause about David's name should be translated as "*and I will make for you a great name*" (in harmony with the ESV). This transition indicates that there was a level of achievement which David and Israel, victorious though they may have been, had still failed to achieve, but which God would accomplish on their behalf.

The reference to "*all your enemies*" would refer to all those who stood in the way of David's kingship, including Saul and Ishbosheth. This makes it clear that the statement that God was with David did not mean that he had no enemies, it meant that God would at some time give him victory over those enemies.

In verse ten we read, "*Moreover I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more; nor shall the sons of wickedness oppress them anymore, as previously*". Idiomatically, the phrase "*appoint a place*" means to provide somewhere for someone to exist. Therefore, this expression refers to Israel's establishment in the Land of Promise. At first, it may seem odd that God would speak of appointing a place for the Israelites as a future action because the Israelites had been in Canaan for approximately four hundred years. However, as the statement continues it becomes

clear that what God was talking about was providing Israel with security in the land, not mere possession of it. And that security had not existed during the period of the judges or under Saul. This was something that God had predicted He would do long before this (Deut.11:24; cf. Josh.1:3–4). In addition, the idea is not that this would be a temporary security in the Promised Land, instead, it would be permanent, so that they would never again be oppressed by the wicked. What is described here is consistent with the Hebrew idiom, Shalom, which refers to full and complete well-being, both circumstantial and relational. It is in this latter promise that we find a hint that the promise extends beyond what David himself would provide, it also looks forward to what David's greatest Son, the Messiah, would provide. The preaching of later prophets made it clear that the fulfillment of this promise would come in some future period (Isa.9:7; 16:5; Jer.23:5–6; 33:15–16).

In verse eleven we read, "*since the time that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel, and have caused you to rest from all your enemies. Also the LORD tells you that He will make you a house.*" In the first portion of the verse Yahweh continued to express the certainty that He would provide David with a rest from all his enemies. Then, in the last clause of the verse, Yahweh added that He "*will make you a house*". Here the word "*house*" refers not to a structure, but to a family, and particularly here to a dynastic family. The importance of this word "*house*" (used here to convey the idea of a "*dynasty*") is underscored by its appearance at the beginning (vs.11b) and end (vs.16) of this literary unit, thus serving to frame that portion of Yahweh's speech. This clause is critical to understanding the thrust of Yahweh's entire speech. This chapter began with the notation that David wanted to build a physical "*house*" (temple) for Yahweh, but here Yahweh responded by saying that it was His intention to build a "*house*" (dynasty) for David. Whereas David's focus had been on the disparity between his dwelling place and that of Yahweh, Yahweh was revealing here His eternal plan of salvation that was to be realized through the agency of David's lineage. This ironic twist highlights the theme of the chapter, David's misunderstanding of his role before God. David understood his role as accomplishing great things for God, when the truth was that God had intended to use David to accomplish His own great work. The establishment of a lineage that would be critical to God's redemptive plan. By establishing a dynasty of kings through David, God would fulfill the ancient promise in the Abrahamic Covenant that the patriarchs would be the fathers of kings (Gen.17:6,16; 35:11). It would also fulfill a prophecy given to Judah, great-grandson of Abraham. Jacob had prophetically pronounced the explicit pledge that a promised ruler would come from Judah's descendants (Gen 49:10). Centuries later, Samuel anointed David, a descendant of Judah to be king of Israel. Through this revelation David was being made aware that he was the beginning of the future line of kings that God had promised would arise from among His people. The prophets would also later attest to the Davidic Messiah, the One who would rule over all and forever on His throne (Isa.9:1-7; 11:1-5; Jer.30:4-11; Ezek.34:23-24; 37:24-25; Amos 9:11-15).

In verse twelve we read, "*When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will*

*establish his kingdom.*” Here David was told that the incredible blessings that Yahweh had both given up to this point, and that were pledged to come in the future, would not fall into the hands of someone who would usurp the throne. Instead, Yahweh included in His promise that one of David’s own sons would succeed him. The emphasis on the seed who would come from David’s body links this Covenant with the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.15:4). Though the word “*seed*” is in the singular, it is often used in a collective sense. Here the word denotes a particular descendant. Like Abraham, David was receiving a promise about a son who was yet to be born (demonstrated by the use of the future tense).

All the promises that follow this verse concern things that would be fulfilled after David’s death. The expression about resting with his fathers (I Kings 1:21; 2:10) was also used in reference to Moses (Deut.31:16) and others (Gen.47:30). It reflects the ancient Israelite practice of having multiple burials in family tombs. The emphasis that David’s offspring would “*come from your body*” (literally “*loins*”, understood as the locus of procreation) forges yet another striking link to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen.15:4), and to the repeated references to Abraham’s seed (Gen.17:7–10, 19).

In verse thirteen we read, “*He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.*” Here Yahweh told David that he would not be the one to build the temple, instead, his son would be the one to build it. The pronoun “*he*” is emphatic in the Hebrew text, reflecting the similar use of the pronoun “*you*” in verse five. This sort of expression would stress the idea that contrary to what Nathan had told him earlier, David would not be the one to build the temple. In verses eleven and sixteen, God used the word “*house*” to refer to a dynastic family. In contrast to this, here God used the word to refer to the structure in which His presence would dwell, a temple. The expression “*for My name*” implied the idea that the Ark would be housed in the future temple, because this expression was equivalent to speaking of God’s very presence. Viewed in its immediate historical context, this is a prophetic reference to the fact that it would be Solomon who would oversee the construction of the future temple. Historically it was erected in Jerusalem between 966 and 959 B.C. (I Kgs.6:1–38).

Centuries later, with the coming of the New Testament, though it does not deny that some aspects of the prophetic revelation of this verse referred to Solomon (Acts 7:47), its authors understood that the primary application of this verse was to Jesus, the ultimate son of David (Matt.1:1). It was clear to them that Yahweh’s promise to establish the throne of the descendant’s kingdom forever indicated that this portion of the prophecy was no longer about Solomon’s reign but was about the eschatological Messiah. History made it clear that Solomon’s kingdom was not permanent, instead, it ceased to exist immediately after his death when the ten tribes broke away from the kingdom over which Rehoboam reigned (I Kgs.11:31–38). This incongruity between Divine prophecy and history revealed that the Jews needed to anticipate that a different son of David would fulfill the promise of an eternal kingdom. Jesus Himself taught this perspective on the Divine promise. Jesus cited this verse and applied it to Himself three times. First, Jesus claimed He

would build a temple (Matt.26:61; 27:40; Mk.14:58; 15:29; Jn.2:19–22). Second, He claimed to possess an eternal throne (Matt.19:28–29). Finally, He claimed to possess an imperishable kingdom (Lk.22:29–30; Jn.18:36).

Though Yahweh did not use the word “*covenant*” in this promise, Psalm 89 demonstrates that this promise was covenantal in nature (vs.3, 28), since it is said that it was given by oath.

In verse fourteen we read, “*I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.*” The first thing said about the seed of David in this verse is that God would be his Father, and that the seed would be God’s son. The Hebrew grammar indicates that in the initial statement “*I will be his Father, and he shall be My son*” the pronouns “*I*” and “*he*” are emphatic to stress the relational bond that would exist between God and David’s son. In this prophecy’s original setting, it is clear that the “*son*” God was referring to initially was Solomon (it is the subsequent context that makes this clear as does the parallel passage in First Chronicles 22:9–10). But what would it mean that David’s heir would be a son of God? In the culture of the time, this statement would convey that David’s son would possess a special relationship with God that would be comparable to that between a father and a son (therefore, the statement is an analogy). In contrast to pagan beliefs, this sonship would not be based on physical descent, nor would it suggest that the son would in any way be exalted to the status of deity. Given that the format of the promise is according to the pattern of a royal grant, the statement implied that the son would be adopted by God into His family. But though the initial application of this portion of the promise was to Solomon, it also (like the promise before it) anticipated that it would ultimately find its fulfillment in the Messiah. Though they tended to interpret the implications of these things according to their own theological perspective, the Jewish sectarians of Qumran understood this promise messianically. Documents that have been recovered prove that these Jewish scholars came to this conclusion prior to the birth of Jesus Christ. This reality disproves the claims of secular critics who argue that the authors of the NT twisted portions of the OT so as to apply them to Christ. These critics used to claim that no Jewish teachers thought these were messianic references until Christians read that conclusion into the OT to justify their belief that Jesus was the Messiah. Instead, the truth is that the authors of the New Testament were simply expressing the same conclusions that were embraced by many Jewish teachers in both their own time and those who wrote centuries before they did. They were making use of well-established, exegetical methodologies that had long been recognized in Jewish scholarly circles. All of this means that the title “*Son of God*” was generally recognized as a messianic title among the Jews of the first century. Jesus’ original disciples and the New Testament writers freely applied this title to Jesus as an expression of their recognition that He was the Messiah who was promised in this specific prophecy (Mk.1:1; Jn.20:31; Acts 9:20; Heb.1:5). In addition, the application of this title to Jesus was supported by how Jesus applied this title to Himself (Matt.27:43; Lk.22:70). And elsewhere in the NT the specific promise in this verse

is cited as a messianic reference (II Cor.6:18; Heb.1:5). A further insight into this metaphor of sonship is found in its original Mesopotamia setting. In that culture the title was used to express political ties between a sovereign and some subordinate who was rewarded with a position of privilege and responsibility.

These verses, then, are a good example of an Old Testament passage in which some elements find fulfillment in the immediate future (Solomon and other strictly human descendants of David), while other elements would only be realized in the more distant future (Jesus Christ, the Son of David; cf. Luke 1:31-33).

But in this verse, we find not only the promise of privilege, but God also outlined some responsibilities that were going to be laid upon David's descendants. That responsibility was expressed in the form of a qualification to the promise, disloyal sons would not be included in Yahweh's covenantal promise, "*If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.*" Yahweh said that He would punish any of David's seed "*if he commits iniquity*". The Hebrew word translated as "*iniquity*" refers to serious sin and acts of rebellion, not minor transgressions. The punishment that Yahweh warned would be directed to the rebellious would be "*with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men*". This warning restates the Law's teaching that Yahweh would punish disobedient covenant people with the instrumentality of human oppressors (Lev.26:25; Deut.28:25, 49-52), and this was literally fulfilled in the case of Solomon (I Kgs.11:14, 23-26). And without suggesting that Jesus was in need of punishment due to personal sin, the writer of the Book of Hebrews understood this verse to be messianic (Heb.5:8-9). Therefore, this demonstrates that rather than implying that the promise brings greater freedom from accountability, it indicates that the seed would be held all the more firmly within the Fatherly constraints of Yahweh. This warning was also a customary part of the father-son relationship of the suzerain and the vassal in Near Eastern treaties. This verse reveals an important part of the relationship that God was establishing with the family of David. Individual disobedient sons would be disciplined. The question then would naturally be, how would the rise of a disobedient Davidic son affect God's overall relationship with the descendants of David?

In verse fifteen we read, "*But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you.*" In this verse we receive the answer to the question above. God's judgment on individual disobedient sons in the Davidic line would not affect God's commitment to the Davidic dynasty. In asserting this Yahweh stated that "*My mercy shall not depart from him*". This declaration ensures that the adoption of the Davidic family was irrevocable. The Hebrew word translated as "*mercy*" speaks of a loyal committed love. This word implies that the continuance of the relationship would not rest on the merit of the Davidic line, it would rest on the sovereign and gracious choice of God. But in this statement Yahweh made a contrast between what He would do in regard to David's seed, and what He had done in regard to Saul. Whereas Saul fell from Divine favor and was rejected as king because of his sin, God's promise in the Davidic Covenant here introduces a better hope for the dynasty of David. Though this promise

acknowledges the possibility of a future descendant sinning, assurance was given that Yahweh would respond mercifully toward the Davidic line. This warning would make it clear that Davidic kings could not use God's promise here as a justification for disobedience but also assured that such disobedience would not change God's loyalty to the Davidic line.

In verse sixteen we read, "*And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.*" Here God promised to eternally establish three aspects of David's legacy:

- His house (David's dynastic line)
- His kingdom (a realm over which David's son could reign)
- His throne (the possession of the actual authority to rule)

Once again, the course of history demonstrated that the Davidic dynasty's grip on royal power in Israel was tenuous and that foreign conquerors would prevent David's heirs from reigning over Israel for centuries. In light of these undeniable facts, later generations of Jewish scholars recognized that this statement should also be interpreted eschatologically, that the ultimate fulfillment would come in the person of the Messiah. This understanding was revealed to be true with the arrival of Jesus Christ (Heb.1:8). The promise of the eternity of the Davidic throne is particularly emphasized with the final clause of the verse, "*your throne shall be established forever*". This statement revealed that even if David's sons proved to be like Saul (unworthy to sit on David's throne as Yahweh's vice regent), their sin would not bring an end to the dynastic promise. The only one who could fulfill the promises of the Davidic Covenant was the Messiah. The failure of the Davidic kings would not bring about the end of these dynastic promises. Instead, they were part of the prophetic picture that pointed to the Messiah. Only someone without moral frailties could truly succeed, and only an immortal individual could sit on a throne forever. In essence, David's throne was Yahweh's throne. In Christ, both God Himself and a human descendant would sit on the throne of Israel.

In verse seventeen we read, "*According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.*" Here we are told that Nathan told David everything that was revealed to him by Yahweh. The report on this revelation might have come to the king in both oral and written forms (I Chr.29:29; II Chr.9:29). It was incumbent on a prophet (as a messenger of God) to report everything that God commissioned him to proclaim (Jer.42:4), and Nathan obediently kept nothing back.

### **III. David's Response to God's Revelation: (vs.18-29)**

In verse eighteen we read, "*Then King David went in and sat before the LORD; and he said: 'Who am I, O Lord GOD? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?'*" The account in this chapter began with David sitting in his palace, pondering what he should do for Yahweh. Now, moving into the last half of the chapter, David was sitting before Yahweh, pondering and praying in amazement at what Yahweh had promised to do for Him. The title for God that David used here, "*Lord GOD*" is literally "*adonai Yahweh*" (lord Yahweh). This title is found only in

this chapter, and nowhere else in the two books of Samuel. And in this chapter the word was employed seven times (vs.18, 19, 20, 22, 28, 29).

It is recorded that David “*went in and sat before the LORD*”. The place that David entered was the tent that was the dwelling place of the Ark of the Covenant. And David went in there to offer praise to Yahweh in response to everything Nathan had revealed to him. When we are told that David’s posture was that he was sitting, we should not picture him sitting on a chair. Rather, according to Near Eastern custom, he was sitting on the ground, resting back on his heels, with his head erect.

David’s response to Yahweh’s magnificent declarations was an expression of awestruck humility, solemnity, and bold faith. The speech that follows is the second-longest monologue recorded from the lips of David in the books of Samuel (it consists of 198 words). The similarity of the size of David’s speech to Yahweh’s immediately preceding pronouncement (it is only one word longer in the Hebrew text) suggests it was meant to be understood as being as thematically important as the Divine words themselves. This faith-filled response of the king serves as a model for all who receive unmerited blessing from the living God. Like David, all believers are implicitly encouraged to be humble, teachable, and emboldened by the incredible goodness God has bestowed upon them. David’s response indicated that he understood that Yahweh was his sovereign, and that he was Yahweh’s vassal (*servant*). This latter idea is emphasized by David referring to himself as God’s servant ten times in this passage (vs.19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29).

The central theme of David’s prayer revolves around the word “*house*”. Like the special name David used to address God (Adonai Yahweh) this word appears in the first and last verses of the prayer as well as seven other times in the speech (vs.18, 19, 25, 26, 27, 29). David expressed that though his household was insignificant at the time (vs.18), he was confident that it would become great in the future because of the proven reliability of God and His promises.

The rhetorical question in this verse conveys David’s humility before Yahweh His sovereign in regard to himself and his house. He expressed his unworthiness to be the recipient of God’s providential grace upon himself and his house.

First Chronicles has a parallel to what is written in this passage (17:16–27).

In verse nineteen we read, “*And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant’s house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?*” David’s question implicitly recognized that Yahweh, not David, was the source of the transformation of the lowly shepherd of Bethlehem into Israel’s king. David’s employment of the phrase “*Lord Yahweh*” is significant. This phrase appears for the first time in the Old Testament in a conversation between Yahweh and Abram in which Yahweh revealed the blessed future of Abram’s family (Gen.15). David’s reuse of this relatively unusual appellation for God in a similar context to when Abram used it indicates a deliberate association with that earlier passage. In addition to this, there are other lexical links between Yahweh’s conversation with Abram in Genesis and the prayer that David was expressing to Yahweh here. These numerous links invite the reader

to compare the two events and see that there is an intended connection between them. Coming out of Abram's experience with God was the promise of land for Israel; out of David's experience came the promise of a leader for Israel within that land. But despite the magnitude of God's blessings that had been bestowed upon the house of David, David was moved to say that he now regarded those things as "*a small thing*" in comparison to what God had promised He would do in the future.

When David wrote "*Is this the manner of man*", he was using the term "*man*" to refer to mankind as a whole. Thus, David was expressing here his amazement at God's treatment of him and his household in contrast to how God normally dealt with humanity as a whole.

In verse twenty we read, "*Now what more can David say to You? For You, Lord GOD, know Your servant.*" The word "*know*" is used here in a covenantal sense, to recognize someone in a special way. And in David's acknowledgment of God's concern for his descendants, he referred to himself as Yahweh's servant. This is the first of ten times he would do so during this prayer to God. In so doing David was following a pious tradition of using this socially demeaning term as a badge of honor. It is noteworthy that in Old Testament narratives David is recorded as having used this title more than any other person (thirteen times). David's use of the pronoun "*You*" is emphatic, it stressed that God knew David in a way no one else did or could.

In verse twenty-one we read, "*For Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart, You have done all these great things, to make Your servant know them.*" Although David did not profess to understand why he had received Yahweh's wonderful promises, he recognized that these promises had been given for a reason. He knew they were not a reward for David's righteousness, but instead were "*for Your word's sake, and according to Your own heart*". David did not specifically indicate what "*word*" he was referring to here. It is possible that in keeping with the larger purposes of the books of Samuel, he was alluding to a promise found in the Scriptures. The most likely reference would be one that links royal leadership with the tribe of Judah (Gen.49:10). Another possibility is that this expression refers to God's will and purpose as revealed in the Scriptures in general and was not necessarily meant as a reference to any specific passage. The phrase "*according to Your own heart*" refers to the grace, mercy, and love that motivates God to perform His works. David said these things to express that he recognized that God's goodness was not bestowed because of some merit that God found in him.

David's failure to understand Yahweh's gracious activity in no way minimized his recognition that it was a great thing. And the greatness of it was magnified by the fact that God had revealed all these things to him. God's gift of this prophetic revelation added an additional reason for David to marvel at God's gracious activities on his behalf.

In verse twenty-two we read, "*Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.*" The word "*therefore*" does not indicate a conclusion drawn from the previous verse (as it usually does). The idea it conveys here is that God's promise to

David did not make God great, rather the greatness of God was revealed through the promises He made in the revelation, and in the awesomeness of what God would have to do to bring those promises to fulfillment. This verse and the next two are a hymnic praise directed to Yahweh in which David stressed the incomparable nature of God's greatness. The clear implication from all God said was that no being was or could be His equal. Only an almighty God could possibly do or be all that would be required in order to fulfill the promises that He had made. David declared that "*there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You*", this was an explicit statement of David's monotheistic beliefs.

In verse twenty-three we read, "*And who is like Your people, like Israel, the one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem for Himself as a people, to make for Himself a name — and to do for Yourself great and awesome deeds for Your land — before Your people whom You redeemed for Yourself from Egypt, the nations, and their gods?*" David recognized that Yahweh's promise to establish his dynasty was part of God's redemptive purpose for Israel. In light of this, David added that not only was God Himself incomparable, so were His people, Israel. David was not saying that Israel was uniquely great because of itself, instead, his point was that the nation was incomparably great because of what God had done in and through them. Their uniqueness lay in the redemptive work that God had done on their behalf. For they were the one nation on earth that God went out to redeem as a people for Himself (Amos 3:2). They were the one nation that had been Divinely rescued from an oppressive nation. David recognized that God did these things "*to make for Himself a name*", meaning God did these things to bring Himself glory.

In this verse David cited three things that God had done:

- He had redeemed His people (Deut.7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18; Neh.1:10; Jer.31:11)
- He had made a name for Himself (vs.9, 26)
- He had performed great and awesome wonders (Deut.10:21; Neh.9:32; Ps.99:3; 106:22; 145:6; Isa.64:3; Dan.9:4)

Here David associated the covenant made with him with the one made with the nation of Israel during the time of the Exodus, indicating that the Davidic covenant and the Siniatic Covenant were linked together.

In verse twenty-four we read, "*For You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever; and You, LORD, have become their God.*" In this verse David pointed to Israel's covenant relationship with Yahweh that made the nation distinct from all others. The wording "*You have made Your people Israel Your very own people forever*" is a variation on the repeated formulation that He would be their God, and they would be His people, and these declarations expressed the quintessence of the covenant concept. These statements emphasize the unbreakable bond that has been made to exist between Yahweh and the nation of Israel, a bond that would now be mediated through the Davidic dynasty. Yahweh's covenant with Israel was an eternal one. The word "*forever*" (Hebrew-*ôlām*) was previously used in reference to David's throne, dynasty, and kingdom (vs.13, 16). Thus, this word ties all these things together as different elements of a single

promise. David expressed that he recognized that the ancient establishment of Israel as God's own people was now going to be channeled through his dynasty, which would also continue forever.

In verse twenty-five we read, "*Now, O Lord GOD, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant and concerning his house, establish it forever and do as You have said.*" The Hebrew word translated as "now" is a standard marker to indicate a shift from what has gone before to its logical conclusions. Here it marks the transition from David's rehearsal of what God had promised to do, and David's confident prayer that God would keep those promises. At first glance, it might seem inappropriate that David would pray for God to keep His promises. After all, Yahweh had affirmed His intention to permanently establish David's dynasty. But rather than this being evidence of a lack of trust in God's faithfulness, this prayer, in that culture, was a polite way of seconding the Divine decree, somewhat similar to the idea of saying amen. Another interesting aspect regarding how David phrased himself in this verse is the fact that his prayer here was expressed in the form of a command (he used a hiphil imperative). But this act of giving an order to God should not be viewed as an irreverent act on David's part; on the contrary, it was an act of great faith. David heard Nathan's prophecy and accepted it for what it was—a solemn promise from God. Through this grammatical form David was acknowledging that he believed and accepted what Yahweh had said and was confidently asking God to do what He said He would do.

In verse twenty-six we read, "*So let Your name be magnified forever, saying, 'The LORD of hosts is the God over Israel'. And let the house of Your servant David be established before You.*" In this portion of his prayer, David was saying that God, by fulfilling His promise to establish the dynasty of His servant David would make His name great forever. This would be accomplished because God's trustworthiness and goodness would be made manifestly evident to all, as people (especially the covenant people of Israel) witnessed God's incredible display of mercy and favor to the family of David. In response people would acknowledge that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was the true almighty God. In the title "*Yahweh of hosts*", the term "*hosts*" refers to the legions of heavenly warriors (angels) at God's command. This title was in a sense God's fighting name, and using it here implied that David's dynasty would be eternal because God would defeat the enemies of his family so his family could continue to reign.

In verse twenty-seven we read, "*For You, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, have revealed this to Your servant, saying, 'I will build you a house'. Therefore Your servant has found it in his heart to pray this prayer to You.*" In this prayer, David is set forth as an excellent example of faith, for David did not wait for the historical outworking of the promises before making his confession of faith. Instead, immediately after hearing Nathan's prophecy he accepted it as God's "*revealed*" truth. The Hebrew wording translated as "*revealed*" literally means to uncover someone's ear, and it conveys the idea of confiding in someone about one's plans and purposes. This expression pictures God whispering into David's ear things that others do not hear.

The expression, “*found it in his heart*” refers to David finding courage in response to what he was told.

In verse twenty-eight we read, “*And now, O Lord GOD, You are God, and Your words are true, and You have promised this goodness to Your servant.*” The reference to God’s “*words*” points to the concrete and specific promises God had made to David.

David’s expression of faith was expressed in a logical syllogism consisting of a major premise, a minor premise, and an implicit conclusion stated as a prayer request:

- Major Premise: Yahweh’s words are true (meaning they are reliable)
- Minor Premise: Yahweh promised good things to David
- Implicit Conclusion: Yahweh would bless the house of David
- Resulting Prayer: “Please bless the house of your servant David

The expression “*this goodness*” is synonymous with the Covenant David has been alluding to.

In verse twenty-nine, “*Now therefore, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue before You forever; for You, O Lord GOD, have spoken it, and with Your blessing let the house of Your servant be blessed forever.*” Here David’s prayer continues in which he focused on God’s goodness to him and his line, and his recognition that this was done within God’s redemptive purposes for the nation of Israel as a whole. All of this gave him even greater confidence that God would do what He had just promised to do. David’s simple acceptance of Yahweh’s word mirrored the faith of Abram (Gen.15:6) and confirms that David was indeed a man after Yahweh’s own heart.

David concluded his prayer with a request that Yahweh bless the Davidic dynasty. The root of the Hebrew word translated as “*bless*” occurs three times in this verse. It is used as a summarizing request that includes everything David prayed for in this passage. The Hebrew word “*bless*” often relates to the propagation of numerous descendants (Ps.115:14–15). The promised blessing would not only come upon David’s family, but through his family all the nations of the earth would acquire blessing, as promised to Abram (Gen.12:3). Since it was Yahweh Himself who made the promise (once again there is an emphatic pronoun, “*you*”), David was assured that God was with him.

### **Conclusion:**

The hopes that were raised by Yahweh’s words (that God would place a seed of David on an eternal throne and establish a kingdom that would never perish) were things that no Israelite or Judahite monarch accomplished, nor would it have even been possible for them to have accomplished these things. This is partly why first-century Christians understood that these things had always been intended to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Yahweh’s speech in this passage arguably plays the single most significant role of any Scripture found in the Old Testament, in regard to shaping the Christian understanding of Jesus. These Divine declarations proclaimed here through the

prophet Nathan are foundational for seven major New Testament teachings about Jesus:

1. He was the son of David (Matt.1:1; Acts 13:22–23; Rom.1:3; II Tim.2:8; Rev.22:16)
2. He was the one who would rise from the dead (Acts 2:30; 13:23)
3. He was the builder of the house for God (John 2:19–22; Heb.3:3–4)
4. He was the possessor of a throne (Heb.1:8; Rev.3:21)
5. He was the possessor of an eternal kingdom (I Cor.15:24–25; Eph.5:5; Heb.1:8;
6. II Pet.1:11)
7. He was the son of God (Mk.1:1; Jn.20:31; Acts 9:20; Heb.4:14; Rev.2:18)
8. He was the product of an immaculate conception, since He had God as His father (Lk.1:32–35)

It should be understood that the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants did not promise uninterrupted occupation in the land, or an unbroken line of kings ruling over Israel. Rather the pledge was that the right to rule over Israel would remain with the Davidic dynasty. The ultimate fulfillment of which would be at the Second Coming of the Messiah when He comes to rule physically upon the earth.

God's promises to David in this chapter are an expression of the Davidic Covenant. In this unconditional Covenant are eternal, and literal promises that enlarge upon the promises made in the Abrahamic Covenant. This Covenant had the following elements:

- David would have a son who would succeed him as king of Israel
- That son would build a temple for Yahweh
- The throne of David's son would be established forever
- David house would be established forever
- Israel would remain in her land forever

Finally, a key idea in this chapter is that the role of the saints is to be attentive to being used in God's service as He intends to use them. Our role is not to seek out what we think should be done, our role is to seek out what God wants us to do. It is part of the overall theology of the Scriptures; the revelation that reality is God's story, not ours, it is about what He is doing for us, not about what we are doing for Him. This does not mean we don't have responsibilities. It means our responsibilities are to be obedient to God's agenda, not our own.