

The Covenant

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[0 : 00] We are carrying on tonight in the Life of David series that we had been doing. And one commentator says that 2 Samuel 7, he calls it the banquet of words.

And that's because this is the longest speech from God's mouth since Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus. And that makes sense because this is a covenant moment.

This is when God makes a covenant with David just like God made a covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai. Now you won't find the word covenant anywhere in the passage like you do in some other texts that are clear that God's making a covenant.

But we're going to sing it after the sermon, Psalm 89, verses 27 and 28, call 2 Samuel 7, God's covenant with David.

Now a covenant is when God makes an unbreakable relationship with human beings and he attaches to that unbreakable relationship promises.

[1 : 06] And when you look back at all the covenants in the Bible, they always come with a certain set of promises that are actually the same. They build on one another and there will be a dynasty of people, a community, and that they will have a land to live in and that in that land they'll have a hope of resting from their enemies, a Sabbath day that is coming.

And in the midst of all that, that God will be with them forever. And those four promises you see in every single moment that God comes down to make a covenant. And the three great moments of covenant in the Old Testament are Abraham, Moses, and 2 Samuel 7, David.

And that means that this is one of the great, what we've just read is one of the most significant moments of all of human history. It's one of the great moments of human history when God comes down to make a covenant, the Davidic covenant as it's called.

Now, there's multiple ways to preach about a covenant, about 2 Samuel 7, and one of them would be to look at all the details of the covenant and how it relates to all the other covenants and how it relates to the New Testament, the New Covenant.

But actually, when you read Abraham's covenant, Moses' covenant, David's covenant, one of the things that I think really jumps out is that every one of the passages is actually about God and about the nature of God.

[2 : 31] It's the nature of God that jumps off the page every time God makes a covenant. And this passage is unusual because we don't have that often in the Old Testament a certain way of addressing God.

And David uses it nine times. It's translated at the end of the passage as Lord God, and it's the word Adonai, Adonai God. And it's the name that gets used when covenants get made.

And it really means God the King. And David says it nine times, and he points us to the fact that when you read God say, I'm going to make an unbreakable relationship with you, and here's all the promises and the way I'm going to fulfill it, that you've got to turn around and say, wow, this is about God.

And verse 22 really sums up the way to respond. I think David says, Lord God, I heard the promises, and all I have to say is you are great.

That's the sentence he gives us. And that's it. When you look at the covenant, the response is, Lord, you're great. These promises, they are great. And so tonight, just for just a few minutes, this covenant story tells us something about God.

[3 : 43] We learn what kind of God the Christian God is here in 2 Samuel 7. So let's see three things. God's covenant wisdom, His covenant presence, and His covenant love.

Okay, so first, the covenant wisdom. Verse one is actually a very unusual moment in the books of Samuel because it says that the King lives in his house and has rest from all his enemies.

David was always at war, almost always throughout his whole career. And this is one of those very unusual moments where there are no enemies at the door and David's heart is right, actually, that his heart is at peace and oriented unto God.

And so David, in his right mind, rest, it looks like the covenant promises are being fulfilled already. He turns to Nathan, who is an unknown prophet.

We've never heard of Nathan until 2 Samuel 7. He just pops up out of nowhere and he says, I'm in luxury. I've got a house to live in, palace, and God's given us rest.

[4 : 51] And it's not right that God's ark, the sacrament of His presence, should be in a tent next door, a little bitty tent, and not a temple, a palace.

It's not right. I'm living proportionally greater than the God who has delivered us unto this moment. Because the Nathan, the prophet says, God's with you, your heart's in the right place.

Let's do it. Let's build the temple. Now, a couple things. One is that the word house here is the most frequent word that shows up in this passage, 12, 13 times, and it's a triple entendre.

When David says, I live in a house, he means a palace. But then he said, God doesn't have a house, means a temple. And in a moment, we're going to see that God then comes and says, no, no, no, you can't build me a house.

I'm going to build you a house, meaning a dynasty. So the word house is the feature word with three different meanings. And so far, we've had two already where David says, I've got a house, a palace, but God doesn't have a house, a temple.

[5 : 57] And here, every indication from the writer, every indication from the climax, this climax moment in the story of David is that David should build God a temple, that his heart is in the right place, and that he means well, and that God has fulfilled so many of the covenant promises from Abraham and Moses for it in this moment.

And you come down to verse five and God says, no. He says to David, through Nathan, you want to build me a house? When did I tell you to do that?

Even in the past, have you read from the scriptures that have been written so far that I ever said to any of the rulers, including you, build me a temple that I should dwell in the midst in your midst forever.

And that means that David's heart is in the right place, but David, David does not have what we call the wisdom of God.

And that's a very specific term, actually, in God's providence, Derek talked about this this morning, because the New Testament term for the wisdom of God is the term mystery.

[7 : 10] And a mystery is something that you cannot know, the plan of God, until God decides to let you know it and unfolds it before you. And in the equivalent term in the Old Testament is a phrase, the wisdom of God.

And the wisdom of God is that great plan of God that you cannot know until God lets you know, until he unfolds it before you. And right here, this is what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 1 when he says, the wisdom of God is often foolishness in the eyes of human beings.

It always is, because whenever we look at something God's doing throughout history, how many times in your life have you ever come to a moment where you said, I feel like my heart's in the right place, and I've done what I'm supposed to do, and I'm in worship, and I'm using the means of grace, and I'm in scripture and prayer, and God has brought this into my life, and I don't understand it.

And he was leading us down this road, and then all of a sudden, we're going down this road, and it's suffering, and it's hard. And David, David's heart was in the right place, and he was in the best shape of his life spiritually, and it makes total sense on paper that he would build God a temple, and God comes down and says that the wisdom of God is wiser than the foolishness of God.

I said it backwards. It's wiser than the wisest wisdom of men. And you see, in other words, the first rule about covenants is a rule for all of the Christian life, and that's that God makes them, God determines them, and God comes down and tells us that this is what my plan is, and I initiate it, I decide it, I determine it, I tell you.

[9 : 00] And throughout the history of covenants in the Old Testament, covenant history, the one thing that we learn all the time is that we can't see all that God is doing in any given moment.

And there's this complex web where every single event that God has ordained from the beginning is happening and pouring forth into millions of consequences, God intended consequences that we can't possibly understand, and it's the wisdom of God.

And David couldn't understand it here, and God responds and says, Versailles, and I love this, he says, David, you were out in the pasture, you remember, tending to the sheep, the smallest brother of the house of Jesse, and I was leading Israel across the Red Sea.

I was, do you know what I've been doing? And you were in the pasture, and I came and I got you, and I made you prince, and I made you, and the reason God can say that is because he's God. And he says, I determine what's going to happen in the midst of human history. And when we say, you know, if you're struggling tonight, maybe you've come here tonight and you're struggling with the question of Christianity and the Christ, and you're saying, I actually, I want to believe this, but I look at my life and I look at the suffering out in the world, and I don't understand why God would do it the way that he's doing it.

[10:29] And you fall into this classical dilemma that says either God is good, but he's not powerful enough to deal with the problems in our midst, or he's powerful and he's not good, so he won't deal with the problems in our midst.

And what the Bible does is it comes over and over again, every time we see these great moments, these covenant moments, and says, God says, look, you can't possibly understand all I'm doing. And we've got to be in a place actually where we're open enough to say that really does make sense. You know, it makes sense to say that even though I can't think of a reason why this could be happening, or why God wouldn't open this door, but he's opening this door, why God would say no about this and yes about this, though I can't think of a reason if there really is a God, and he created the world and he controls all things, it makes total sense that I wouldn't understand all he could possibly be doing in every single moment.

And it's not an easy providence, but it's true. It makes sense, and here we see at the very beginning the wisdom of God. Two things to take away from this. One is this, God says the way to respond to this is to say that in the midst of the Christian life we desire to think God's thoughts after him more and more and more as we walk down the path of our life, meaning there's a way in the New Testament to actually grow into the wisdom of God, where you so think like God thinks that you can start to see reality the way God sees it.

Not that you know everything that's going to happen, but that you start to, in heart, you understand you're okay, you're settled, you're buoyant, you have a buoyant heart. No matter what the circumstances of life are doing to you, you're okay because you have the wisdom of God.

[12:19] And here it is. It's a very simple application. Here's James 1, verse 5, he tells it to us straight. He says, if you lack wisdom, if you're having a tough time in the midst of your trials seeing, why would this be happening?

He says, ask for wisdom. And God will give it to you because he's generous. And it says ask in faith, and he will give you the wisdom of God. He will help you to think like God thinks, like God sees the world.

Now the second takeaway is this, verse 11, God says, David, you've said you want to build me a house, you will not build me a house until I build you a house.

And remember, house is a triple entendre. And here he's saying, you want to build me a temple, you cannot build me a temple because I'm too busy building your dynasty, building a kingship for you and around you that will last forever.

And here's the principle. This is what it means. God always, always builds something for you, for us, before you can ever build anything for him.

[13:28] God always has to build first. And only then can you respond to God by building something second. God has to take Israel across the Red Sea before Israel can respond in obedience and faith.

God has to send great David's greater son to you before you will ever reach up in faith and say yes to him. God always has to move first. And that's the great principle of the wisdom of God in the Old Testament.

Now secondly, and briefly, God's covenant presence. Now the second thing, not only God's covenant wisdom we see, but God's covenant presence, verse six and seven, God's response here, he turns to David then and says, I've not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt till now.

I've been moving about in a tent for my dwelling. In every place where I've moved, I've moved with the people of Israel. Now hear what God's saying here.

He's saying, my people, David, here's why you can't build me a house. My people have been exiles for a long time.

[14:44] And how can I be where my people are not? And so it's not time yet. And this is what one commentator, Ralph Davis, says about it.

Do you see what God is saying about himself? He's saying, I'm the God who travels with my people in their topsy-turvy here in their journeys and wanderings.

The God's people live in tents, so will he. Are they a pilgrim people in their way to a land of promise? So he makes himself the pilgrim God.

And just understand the implications of this. And this is, you know, we mentioned the first rule of the covenant, God has to do it. God has to make it. It's a top-down activity. But the second rule is that God does indeed make an unbreakable relationship with people when he covenants with them.

So here, here are the nature of this unbreakable relationship. I read an article this week from a group of astrophysicists from Australia, a university in Australia, giving some fun facts to the lay reader, the non-specialist scientist reader, things that we have over the last 10 years come to unfold in their team in particular about creation, about nature.

[16:02] And this is what they listed a bunch of facts. They said, when we now think that at minimum there are 76 trillion stars in our galaxy, that's 70,000 million, million, million, 70,000 with 21 added zeros, stars in the galaxy.

And that's, they said a modest guess. Some of those are neutron stars. Neutron stars spin 600 times in complete rotation every second, which is unfathomable.

That's in our solar system. Also in our solar system, 99% of all the mass, the matter, is in the sun. So all the other planets and stars comprise 1% of the total mass of the entire solar system.

The sun comprises 99% of that entire entirety of what's in our solar system. And the sun's rays touch the earth every hour. And when they do, one hour of the sun's rays contain more power, more energy than all of the human race uses a year in all of its energy consumption.

One hour of the sun's rays. That's how powerful it is. And we know, of course, from the beginning of the 20th century and even more in the 21st century, that time is almost impossible to understand.

[17:23] That one day on Venus is longer than a year on earth. And understanding that it's even more complex than Einstein thought it was. And all of it is made up of subatomic particles, the quantum field that we now know we do not understand at all.

Now listen, God is the maker of heaven and earth. The first line of the Creed tells us. And he is the word that upholds all 76 trillion stars in the galaxy.

And he says, if my people are poor and they're living in tents in the middle of the desert, I'm there. I'm going to stay in a tent in the middle of the desert. And you see, God's closeness in the midst of covenant.

This is technically speaking for theologians an inappropriate category for God. But God's closeness can almost make you want to talk about God's humility.

[18:30] That he is so humble that he wants to bind himself to me and to you as a pilgrim people in the midst of a universe like that. And that means that God is a pilgrim God for a pilgrim people.

He's close to us. And the Psalms say to you the same thing that David probably was thinking when God said, you're not going to build me a temple, no matter how you feel about it.

They say, cry out. You cry out to God and you say, how long go Lord? Why, oh God, my life is confusing. I don't know why this road and not that road.

I don't know why I haven't had this relationship or I did have this or this or this. Whatever it may be. And they say, where are you? Where are you? And listen, God wants you to hear in 2 Samuel 7 that you can't understand his closeness.

That he is a pilgrim God with you, the pilgrim who's walking through this life. And this is his answer to you. His answer to you is when my people are ravaged by sin and death and misery and sorrow, even when it was their fault, he did not consider equality with God in heaven, a thing to be held on to, but made himself nothing taking on the form of a servant.

[19:46] He became a pilgrim God man to be with you. And that's how close the covenant God gets in the midst of his covenant people. And if you have the son of the covenant tonight, the true David, David's great heir, then you need to know tonight that right now you've got the covenant presence of God and it won't go away.

He won't go away. Now thirdly and finally, God's covenant love, covenant wisdom, covenant presence, covenant love. Verse 15 at the wrap up of all of God's promises, which we'll touch on briefly.

God says, my steadfast love will not depart from the son of the king, him, as I took it from Saul. And there we're introduced to that very famous word in the Old Testament, steadfast love.

It's the Hebrew word, hesed. We talked about it a couple months ago from the pulpit. Every time God makes a covenant, we get this word that God says, my love is hesed love, meaning it's covenant love.

It's not going to go anywhere. It's going to stick with you. It means here there's going to be hesed love for David's son, an unbroken dynasty.

[21 : 05] God says that will last forever. Now, that word shows up in all the covenant making moments, Noah and David and Abraham and Moses, steadfast love.

But when you look across the covenants in the Old Testament, these moments of making these unbreakable relationships, every one of them actually introduces new things.

These new promises that haven't come before. It takes the land promise, the dynasty promise, the Sabbath promise, God's presence promise, and it builds on it and attaches new things.

Now, let me show you just what's new here, what God has never said before like he says to David here in these promises. He says, verse 10, now this is not entirely new, but only slightly new.

Violent men will no longer afflict the people. So he says, you will no longer have violent men, covenant people coming after you.

[22 : 05] Verse 14, David, your son, I will be to him a father. He will be to me a son. He's not said that before. This is new.

And verse 13, he says, your son will build a house for my name. He will build a permanent home for me, a temple, a place for me to be with you forever.

He's not said that before. And verse 16, your throne, David, will be forever. It's not going anywhere. He's never said that before in the whole of Testament to anybody.

And verse 15, in the midst of all that, let me repeat to you again what I said to Abraham and what I said to Moses, I will give you my hesed, my covenant love. It's not going just so you know that these promises are so secure.

Now, this is where the passage gets sticky because when you read the rest of the Old Testament, there's a way of actually looking at that list and what's new here and saying, this is exactly why the prophets exist.

[23 : 06] You know, Amos and Obadiah and Micah and Nahum and the other. This is why they're in the Bible because of 2nd Samuel 7 and how it gets sticky, challenging.

As God, just listen, God says verse 10, I'm going to plant you in a place, David, through your son and your people will be disturbed never again.

No more violence. And you know, if you've read through the Bible, you know something and you know that 375 years later, a kingdom is going to march in and destroy the people of God and 415 years later, the southern kingdom where David lives right now is going to be leveled and God's people are going to be oppressed and enslaved for 400 years.

All right, verse 11, here's another promise. You will have a man, your son on the throne of Israel forever. Your dynasty will never end.

And in 2nd Kings 25, and if we had time to turn there, we would. 2nd Kings 25, Zedekiah is the very, well Babylon has taken the kingdom.

[24 : 24] And Zedekiah is David's lineage and he's brought up and Nebuchadnezzar kills all of Zedekiah's children in front of Zedekiah's eyes.

And then he takes Zedekiah's eyes so that he will see no longer. And Zedekiah lives out the rest of his days in the midst of Babylon. And at that moment, what do the prophets say?

The line of David, the forever line, the land, the violence, the where is the fulfillment of the promises of God?

And how can I, when I say, you know, either God is all powerful or he's not good because he won't deal with this problem or he's not good and all power.

What do I say? Why, Lord? And then the prophets start to say what the people said. They say, why, oh Lord, when are you going to, what is this?

[25 : 25] We read 2nd Samuel 7. And now we're here in the line of David is gone. And it feels like it's gone forever. You know, the people said, where is the hesed of God?

Where is the steadfast love of the Lord in the midst of a situation like this? And David prays, in fact, in verse 25, Lord, confirm this.

Will you right now confirm that these promises will last? And that's exactly what the people cried out. Will you confirm it and you read the rest of Old Testament history?

And it's a question mark. Now if you have a Bible, we don't normally do this, but if you have a Bible, flip over to Matthew chapter one.

And it's good to see it. Matthew one, the very first line, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, which is a connection to Genesis, which starts with the genealogy of Adam, the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, and the very first line, the very first way, the very first thing to say about this man, Jesus Christ, is he is the son of David.

[26 : 39] And all the prophets cried out, what about 2nd Samuel 7? What about the land and the promises and the forever dynasty? And Matthew opens up and says, let me tell you, he is the son of David.

And you flip a couple pages over and Jesus Christ goes through the waters and he comes out again and the heavens open. And God had said in 2nd Samuel 7, I will be a father to him, he will be a son to me.

And the heavens open and God says, behold, my son. The prophets have been writing about it. You've been looking for it. Let me tell you, you see what the Israelites in that moment, they knew. They said, he's talking about 2nd Samuel 7. He's talking about, this is the son. This is the son of David that's been talked about all these years. This is hundreds of years in the making.

All the promises of God are yes in Christ, but hundreds of years where you're saying, where's the wisdom of God now? And they had to wait.

[27 : 39] And you say, how are all the promises filled? And we'll close with this. We'll close with this, something I didn't mention earlier. And that's that at the very beginning, when David has denied the ability from God to build the temple of God, we're actually given a real reason for it.

First Chronicles 17.6 tells us, it's a parallel passage that the reason David was not allowed to build God's temple. It says, you may not build my temple because you shed blood.

You are a man of war. And so God says, David, you're not fit to build the temple of God because you've killed too many people.

The reason for that is because it was unfitting. It was, violence was never to be taken out on a human being in the temple of God. It was part of the Levitical law that blood could never be shed apart from an animal sacrifice in the midst of the temple.

And so God comes and says, David, you are not fit. You are the great David in your hearts in the right place, but you have poured human blood onto the ground. You cannot come into the presence of God and build the holy temple that will last forever.

[28 : 56] You're not fit. I need a man. And he's saying, David's son that will build the temple, he's got to be a man of peace. And you know, you say, well, of course, he's talking about Solomon.

But the problem with that is if you've read the story, you know that 415 years later, they're going to come in and the promise was he'll build a temple that will last forever, that God's presence will never leave.

And the temple is leveled. It's destroyed. And Amos realizes that David was unfit and Solomon was unfit and the temple is lost. And you can go to Matthew 1 and you see the son of David.

There's the promise, the forever king, the son. But you go to John 1 and it says he has tabernacled among us. You go to John 2 and Jesus says, I will tear down the temple and in three days I'll build it.

And immediately you say, 2 Samuel 7, the temple promise was about him. It was about he's the temple.

[30 : 04] And you see the answer, all the promises are yes and amen in Jesus Christ. How? And the answer is the cross. Because it was at the cross that the temple of God was torn into pieces.

You see David couldn't build God's temple because he was a man of war, not a man of peace. And so the true son of David, the man of peace had to have war from God onto him.

His blood had to be spilled. He couldn't spill blood. His blood had to be spilled so that you might know the possibility of true peace. He was the temple that was destroyed but in three days it was

rebuilt again.

And all the promises of the Davidic covenant are yes today in Jesus Christ. This week I heard someone mention this.

When we look at our lives and we say, where's the wisdom of God? This feels like foolishness. I don't know why I'm walking through this or I'm passing through this.

[31 : 07] There's a famous saying in the black church in America. It's one of the black gospel songs that's been written in lots of different ways throughout the 20th century especially.

But the most famous of the songs is called the on time God. And the most famous line you may have heard it before is, he may not come when you want him to but he's always on time.

And for hundreds and hundreds of years they said, where's the heir of the covenant? And he didn't come when they wanted him to but he came on time.

In the fullness of time Paul tells us, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, to redeem us that we might be called sons and daughters of God.

And that's an invitation for you as we approach the table of the living God. Let's pray. Father, we give thanks that the promises are yes in Jesus Christ.

[32 : 14] And we come now and ask that you would give us faith in your very covenant presence as we approach your table. And we ask for this faith in Christ's name.