

## The Real House of God

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the true heir to King David's throne, Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.

Last week we read about the final days of the Judges of Israel with the birth of Samuel. (SLIDE) I described how Samuel became the one to anoint both King Saul and King David. This week we skip ahead in the Biblical narrative from first Samuel to the second book of Samuel. Saul is now dead and laid to rest with his ancestors and King David is on the throne of Israel. (SLIDE) The first 6 chapters of Second Samuel consist of King David's victories in battle. He was such a success in battle, he recaptured the Ark of the Covenant held by the hated Philistines, and brought it to his headquarters town of Jerusalem. (SLIDE) That's where we pick up the story today. This is the first period of relative peace for David and the Hebrew people. With the Ark safely in Jerusalem it occurs to David God should have a permanent home. So, he consults his trusted friend and prophet Nathan. At first Nathan gives the go-ahead to begin planning the house of cedar for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Why, no true God should have to live in a tent... (SLIDE)

Here we see another example of the old adage, "When we make plans, God laughs." David wanted to build a great edifice to commemorate Yahweh. Scripture doesn't tell us exactly why God rejects David's plan, but God comes to

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Nathan in a dream and advises against it. David's son Solomon is the one who finally gets the go-ahead to build the first Temple in Jerusalem long after David goes to sleep with his ancestors. For now, David will have to be content with his own house and God's Tabernacle.

I said, with tongue in cheek that God laughs at our plans, but in this case, God wasn't laughing at David for wanting to build a house to honor God. God rejected David's plan because God had something much bigger and more perfect than anything built by human hands could deliver. God planned to build a house, not made of wood, stone, or even with a golden façade. God's plan was to build the Church made of living stones. Yes, a descendant of David would be used by God to inaugurate this new structure. His name was Jesus, but He wouldn't come along for another 1000 years. In the meantime David must learn patience.

Rather than discussing what kind of house God was going to build for David, today we'll consider how God's "no's" have been a blessing to you and to me. Maybe he said "no" to that job you applied for, but you ended up getting a better job. Maybe he said "no" to your prayer for a better paycheck, but instead he gave you the gift of contentment. Perhaps he said "no" to healing a loved one, but instead took that loved one home to him in heaven where no pain will ever touch them again. Rather than criticize God's "no's" to our requests, we can trust his

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“no’s” will lead to our “Oh’s!” In a perfect world, we would be able to see all the “Oh’s” and be thankful for the blessings. In David’s case he never got to witness, in this lifetime, the blessing God had in store. That has been the case with God’s promises almost from the beginning. Abraham never got to see his descendants outnumber the stars in the night sky. His faith and trust in God led him to believe in the promise even though he never got to see the promise made real. The same is true for David. He heard the promise of God that his kingdom would never end, but David had to accept that greater blessing on faith, trusting in the faithfulness of God. (SLIDE)

I imagine it was pretty hard for David to accept God’s “no” on building the Temple. David knew his own faults. He remembered how he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then killed her husband in order to make her his wife. David’s sin was ever before him as he wrote in the Psalms. Despite all his shortcomings, David was a very successful king over Israel, but he knew he was a good king only because God made him one. He had no rights, only a great debt that he owed to God. It was David’s humbleness and his repentance that made him a man after God’s own heart. God rewarded David by denying him the approval to build the temple, but made a greater promise that David’s lineage would rule over God’s people forever and ever.

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I can't guarantee every time God answers your prayers with a "no", God has some greater blessing planned for you or that you'll ever see the promise of blessing fulfilled in your lifetime. David never saw the completed Temple in his city, (SLIDE) and you may never see the blessing God has in store for you either. If we could see the end result of every action of God in our lives we wouldn't need to have faith nor trust in God to provide for us. The number one thing God asks of us is to trust Him for everything, that includes everything from our daily bread to even our future eternal life which only God knows.

(SLIDE) David was a great king. He was an outstanding warrior. Likewise, you may be a creative teacher, an able troubleshooter, a straight-A student, an amazing athlete, a skilled musician, a wonderful host... but remember you are these things because what God made you. When I forget that fundamental truth, I either become proud, thinking that my accomplishments are due to my hard work, or as has happened to me in the past, I fall into despair when I hit a rough patch and question my value. (SLIDE) Just as God was with David when he was nothing more than a shepherd boy, just as he was with David when he faced Goliath, and just as God was with David while he enjoyed success as a king, God is with me and with you at all times and in every circumstance. God might not slay all your enemies, but God is always with you in times of trouble and times of abundance.

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Here's another way God's promise to David has an impact on us. (SLIDE)

God said of David's son, "I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. <sup>15</sup> But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you." These verses apply to both Solomon and Jesus. We can see how they would apply to Solomon who did veer from God's Word when he built a temple to a pagan god for one of his many wives and God would chastise him for that, but how can the words apply to Jesus who never sinned? Jesus never sinned, but he did face the rod of punishment and floggings inflicted by human hands. (SLIDE) Jesus endured suffering on our behalf and as our substitute. Jesus suffered and died so we would have forgiveness. He sent his Son who put himself beneath us as our servant in order to exalt us. When I was in college, I remember my biology professor telling us about the altruism of dolphins. When a school of dolphins has a sick member, some of the healthy dolphins will swim underneath the sick one in order to hold them up to the water's surface so they can breathe. (SLIDE) This saves the life of the sick dolphin who might have drown if he had not been held up by the others. (SLIDE)

And he gives a kiss of thanks! Likewise, Jesus dove into hell when he suffered on the cross for the purpose of pushing us up to our heavenly Father who grasped our hands and hauled us into heaven. In my analogy, did you notice none of the saving

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actions depended on the sick dolphin. It was all done for him. (SLIDE) Again, likewise, your salvation and mine has nothing to do with what we've done or accomplished. It has all been done for you. Those words echo all the way to our Communion Liturgy when we hear the very voice of God saying this is my Body and this is my blood shed for you.

May we never lose faith in the unseen or unrealized promises of God. May God grant us the faith to trust in Jesus for our life, for our blessings, and for our eternal salvation. Amen.