

Promise Over Plans

2 Samuel 7:1-16

I. David's Plan vs. 1-3

- a. Rest – settle down
 - i. On all Sides from all Enemies
 - ii. This is especially significant in this context where David wants to build a temple, because in the ancient Near East the temple of the deity was supposed to offer rest to the deity. Some of the temple names even suggest that as a primary function of the temple. This divine rest then often results in rest for the people in their land. In contrast the Bible says little about divine rest, and it is never the prerequisite for human rest except for the sabbath.
- b. Dwell – to sit, to remain, to stay
 - i. I Dwell –
 1. House of Cedar
 - a. the ancient symbol of authority used metonymically to signify a person with authority—to build him “a house of cedar.” Even in the absence of an impressive building that people could see, the Lord’s presence among them was discernible, especially as he acted through the leaders “whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel
 - b. The events of this section occurred sometime after Hiram’s stonemasons and carpenters had built David’s palace (cf. 5:11). They also took place after the Lord had given David “rest from all his enemies around him” and after the ark had been deposited in Jerusalem (cf. v. 2); thus, it was likely a period of at least a few years after David’s conquest of the Jebusite city and probably after the events described in 8:1–14 and 10:1–19. Having entered into a period of rest because of God’s help (cf. Heb 4:3), David desired to provide a rest for God.
 - ii. God Dwells -
 1. According to this view, the verb *šākan* and its derivatives are reserved for any concepts of the immanence of God or of his “tabernacling with the men” of the OT. Usually the Lord is said to dwell in heaven (Ps 2:4; 9:7 [H 8]; 29:10; 55:20; 102:13; Lam 5:19) or is “enthroned with the cherubim” (I Sam 4:4; II Sam 6:2 = I Chr 13:6; II Kgs 19:15; Ps 99:1).
 2. Tent Curtains

- a. Before the Israelites left Mount Sinai, they obeyed the Lord's command and constructed a special skin "tent" that served as a divine "dwelling" place (cf. Exod 26:1–37; 40:34–38). Throughout the events following Israel's departure from Sinai, the Lord had never expressed displeasure with having a tent for his earthly domicile, nor did he ever order any of the Israelite "staffs"
 - 3. It was a common occurrence in the ancient Near East for a victorious king to show his gratitude to the patron deity by building a temple. Examples go back into the mid-third millennium among the Sumerians and continue down into Assyrian, Babylonian and even Persian times. The temple (home of the god) was expected to bring the protection of the deity to the king and his land. A permanent and luxurious dwelling (cedar) would be intended to insure the Lord's presence and favor. In Ugaritic literature the father god, El, was believed to inhabit a tent shrine (as were many of the Canaanite deities). Baal, in contrast, built for himself a beautiful palace.
 - 4. David was troubled that he, the Lord's servant, was honored and blessed by a palace, while "the ark of God"—the Lord's locus on earth—was still in a tent (v. 2). It seemed inappropriate to David for an underling to be living in greater luxury than his divine master.
- c. Desire – Great Intent
 - i. Go Do
 - 1. Your Mind - affections and will
 - a. At that time David had a conversation with "Nathan the prophet" (v. 2), a previously unknown spokesman for the Lord who would come to play a major role in the course of David's life (cf. 12:1–25; 1 Kgs 1:11–45) and the preservation of Israelite history (cf. 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29).
 - 2. The Lord is with You-
 - 3. In the ancient world it was important to procure divine permission to build a temple. If the king proceeded on his own without direction as to the location, orientation, size and materials, he could expect only failure

II. Not the Plan vs. 5-7 1 Chronicles 28:2

- a. God Declines David's Efforts
 - i. Are you the One who should build?

1. Since Nathan later received a word from God contrary to what he told David, however, it seems safe to assume that Nathan spoke without first consulting God in this matter
- ii. I have been good in the tent
 1. When God “brought the Israelites up out of Egypt” (v. 6), he did so without any sort of a material residence—not even a tent. Even so, his presence among the Israelites was real and certainly impressive (cf. Exod 13:21–22).

III. Future Promise vs. 8-16

- a. What I have Done for You
 - i. I took you from – carried away
 1. Pasture
 2. Sheep
 - ii. To Rule over my people
- b. Present with You
 - i. With You
 1. Cut off enemies
- c. I will make you a great name
 - i. Names of the great men on earth
 - ii. David did not need to construct an impressive but lifeless building in which the Lord could dwell; the Lord had already constructed an impressive living building in which to dwell, and that edifice was the life of David And the Lord was not finished adorning his earthly dwelling place; he would make David’s “name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth”—a covenantal promise not made by the Lord to an individual since the days of Abraham (cf. Gen 12:2).
- d. I will appoint
 - i. A place
 - ii. Plant them
 1. Live
 2. Not Disturbed
 3. Wicked will not Afflict them
 - iii. Judges
 - iv. I will give Rest
 1. From enemies
 2. The Lord planned a further benefit for David beyond those already mentioned: an era of tranquility awaited Israel’s king, for the Lord would “also give” David “rest from all” his “enemies” (v. 11), an apparent reference to a continued and increased freedom from the threat of non-Israelite aggressors (cf. v. 1). These promises, however, were not fulfilled in David’s lifetime; later prophets

understood them to refer to a future period (cf. Isa 9:7; 16:5; Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16).

v. I will Make

1. Make a House for you.
2. In fact it was not God's will for **David** to **build** Him a **house**; instead God would build a **house** for David! (v. 11) God had called **David** from inauspicious beginnings **to be** a shepherd of God's **people** (v. 8). Likewise, God had gathered **Israel** to Himself and would **plant them** securely in their own land. The house to be built for David would be a royal house, a dynasty of kings. It would originate with him but would never end (v. 16). The **kingdom** and its **throne** would be permanent, a realm over which the Son of David would reign **forever** (cf. 23:5).

e. I will Raise

i. Descendants

1. Instead, the Lord "will raise up your offspring [Hb. *zera* ' ; lit., "seed"; cf. Gen 13:15] to succeed you" (v. 12). For the New Testament Christian community, this verse apparently was viewed as proof that Jesus was indeed the Messiah; God did indeed "raise up" Jesus (cf. Acts 2:30; 13:23), thus legitimizing him as the messianic son of David
2. Establish his kingdom

ii. He shall

1. Build my house

- a. As for a temple, David would not be allowed to **build** it, but his son after him would have the honor of doing so (2 Sam. 7:12–13). That this refers to a literal house and not a dynasty is clear from the context, which speaks of the results that would follow if the **son** would be disobedient to the Lord (vv. 14–15).
- b. First, Jesus claimed he would build a temple (cf. Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19–22). Second, he claimed to possess an eternal throne (cf. Matt 19:28–29). Finally, he claimed to possess an imperishable kingdom (cf. Luke 22:29–30; John 18:36).
- c. It would not be David but his successor who would "build a house for" (v. 13) the Lord. Viewed in its immediate historical context, the prophetic reference was to Solomon, who constructed the temple for the Lord in Jerusalem between 966 and 959 B.C. (cf. 1 Kgs 6:1–38).

2. Establish the throne

- a. But for the New Testament writers, the primary application of this verse was to Jesus, the ultimate "son of David" (e.g., Matt 1:1). One reason for this is that the Lord's promise to

“establish the throne of his kingdom forever” seems to vault this portion of the prophecy beyond the bounds of Solomon’s reign and give it eschatological and/or messianic overtones.

b. Kingdom

- i. The significance of the eternal covenant between the Lord and David for the New Testament writers cannot be overemphasized. These words played an essential preparatory role in developing the messianic expectations that were fulfilled in Jesus. The hopes that were raised by the Lord’s words—that God would place a seed of David on an eternal throne and establish a kingdom that would never perish—were ones that no Israelite or Judahite monarch satisfied, or even could have satisfied. But they were ones that the first-century Christians understood Jesus to fulfill.

iii. I will be his Father

1. He will be my son

- a. the New Testament writers accepted the claim literally. Jesus is unambiguously understood in the New Testament to be the Son of God (Mark 1:1; John 20:31; Acts 9:20; Heb 1:5), an understanding fostered by Jesus’ own self-claims (cf. Matt 27:43; Luke 22:70). In taking this verse literally and applying it to Jesus, the New Testament connected it with Jesus’ virgin birth (cf. Luke 1:32).

b.

2. I will correct him

3. Lovingkindness wont leave him

iv. House

1. Shall endure

2. It shows what we know as the Messianic expectation, which pictured the perpetual rule of the house of David. But this expectation was not fully formulated until the time of the Exile, when the loss of their dynasty made the pious Israelites value it the more.

Word Studies

Mind - Your Heart affections and will, or, in connexion with certain verbs

Rest- settle down

Dwell- Some have argued that this verb *yāšab* is never used of Yahweh “dwelling” on the earth or any appearance of Yahweh to Israel. According to this view, the verb *šākan* and its derivatives are reserved for any concepts of the immanence of God or of his “tabernacling with the men” of the OT. Usually the Lord is said to dwell in heaven (Ps 2:4; 9:7 [H 8]; 29:10; 55:20; 102:13; Lam 5:19) or is “enthroned with the cherubim” (I Sam 4:4; II Sam 6:2 = I Chr 13:6; II Kgs 19:15; Ps 99:1). In places where the Lord is said to dwell in heaven or in Zion, the thought is that he is enthroned. He is also “enthroned on the praises of Israel”¹

Took – Carried Away

¹ Walter C. Kaiser, “[יָשַׁב](#) 922.” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 411–412.

Commentary Studies

The covenant between the Lord and David has been compared both to Amorite⁵²³ and Hittite⁵³⁴ treaties, as well as to the one established between the Lord and Abraham (cf. Gen 15).⁵⁴⁵ As noted by G. E. Mendenhall and G. A. Herion, the two primary similarities between God's commitments to Abraham and David are (1) that God is bound by an oath and (2) that God made a promise to the individuals. The agreement that God made with David sometimes has been termed a grant/promissory/oath-type covenant—a concept that suggests unconditionality—and sometimes a charter—a concept that emphasizes the role of the initiator while downplaying the responsibilities/role of the recipient.

7:1–3 The events of this section occurred sometime after Hiram's stonemasons and carpenters had built David's palace (cf. 5:11). They also took place after the Lord had given David "rest from all his enemies around him" and after the ark had been deposited in Jerusalem (cf. v. 2); thus, it was likely a period of at least a few years after David's conquest of the Jebusite city and probably after the events described in 8:1–14 and 10:1–19.⁵⁵⁶ Having entered into a period of rest because of God's help (cf. Heb 4:3), David desired to provide a rest for God.

At that time David had a conversation with "Nathan the prophet" (v. 2), a previously unknown spokesman for the Lord who would come to play a major role in the course of David's life (cf. 12:1–25; 1 Kgs 1:11–45) and the preservation of Israelite history (cf. 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29). David was troubled that he, the Lord's servant, was honored and blessed by a palace, while "the ark of God"—the Lord's locus on earth—was still in a tent (v. 2). It seemed inappropriate to David for an underling to be living in greater luxury than his divine master.

Near Eastern kings throughout history—certainly long before David's time—had devoted national resources to the enhancement of temples in order to honor their gods and secure

²⁵³ Cf. G. E. Mendenhall and G. A. Herion, *ABD*, s.v. "Covenant," I:1188: "There is little reason to doubt that the prophet Nathan, in proclaiming the divine promise to David, was simply applying the age-old Amorite political theory of Jebus (now Jerusalem) to its new king (and now in the name of its new king's God, Yahweh)."

³⁵⁴ Cf. F. C. Fensham, *IBD*, s.v. "Covenant," I:329: "The eternal throne of David's descendants can be paralleled to the promise in the form of a blessing in the Hittite vassal treaties, i.e., that the faithful vassal's sons would reign eternally on his throne."

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. Gordon, *I and II Samuel*, 236; also R. E. Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis 15 and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition* (London: SCM, 1967).

⁵⁵⁶ For agreement with this position, cf. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *II Samuel*, trans. J. A. Martin (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 341.

divine blessing for themselves and their kingdoms.⁵⁶⁷ Nathan saw no problem in David introducing this practice into the Israelite royal tradition. Accordingly, he encouraged the king to “go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you” (v. 3). Since Nathan later received a word from God contrary to what he told David, however, it seems safe to assume that Nathan spoke without first consulting God in this matter.⁷

The events portrayed in this section may rightly be understood as the flowering of a Torah prophecy, the climax of David’s life, and the foundation for a major theme in the writings of the Latter Prophets. Youngblood understands this section to be “the center and focus of ... the Deuteronomic history itself”; Brueggemann sees it as “the dramatic and theological center of the entire Samuel corpus” and in fact “the most crucial theological statement in the Old Testament.”⁵⁸⁸ The Lord’s words recorded here constitute the longest recorded monologue attributed to him since the days of Moses (197 words). The prodigious size of this divine pronouncement suggests that the writer intended it to be interpreted as centrally important—perhaps on a plane with the Torah itself.

The Lord’s words spoken here demonstrate him to be the promise-keeping God; having prophetically placed the scepter in Judah hundreds of years earlier (Gen 49:10), he here secured its place within that tribe “until he comes to whom it belongs.” Through the prophetic pronouncements of this chapter David is made the founder of the only royal family the Lord would ever sanction in perpetuity; not only would he become the source of all Israel’s uniquely favored dynastic line, but he would become the standard by which his descendants would be judged.

The covenant that the Lord established with the house of David became the nucleus around which messages of hope proclaimed by Hebrew prophets of later generations were built (cf. Isa 9:1–7; 11:1–16; 16:5; 55:3; Jer 23:5–6; 30:8; 33:15–26; Ezek 34:23–24; 37:24–25; Hos 3:5; Amos 9:11; Zech 12:7–8). To a people broken and humbled by invaders sent as agents of divine punishment, the Lord’s promise to David of a kingdom that “will endure forever” (v. 16) was the

⁵⁶⁷ Pre-Davidic efforts on the part of UR III period (ca. 2100–2000 B.C.) kings to construct/ improve temples for national deities are found in the date formulae of cuneiform inscriptions. Cf. N. Scheider, *Die Zeitbestimmungen der Wirtschaftsurkunden von Ur III* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1936); and A. B. Mercer, *Sumerian-Babylonian Year-formulae* (London: Luzac, 1946). An example of an Ur-Nammu period date formula is: “The year the foundation of the temple of Ningubla was laid.” A Shulgi period date formula reads: “The year the foundation of the temple of Ninurta was laid.” Typical of a Semitic king’s recorded efforts to undertake construction projects in behalf of deities is the claim of Zakir of Hamat and *Lu’ath* (early eighth-century B.C.): “I built houses for the gods everywhere in my country.” Cf. *ANET*, 501–2.

⁷ Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 334–335.

⁵⁸⁸ Youngblood, *1, 2 Samuel*, 880; Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 253, 259.

seed of hope that resurrected a nation. The Lord's promise of an enduring house for David became Israel's assurance that God would once again lift the nation up and cause it to flourish anew.

The significance of the eternal covenant between the Lord and David for the New Testament writers cannot be overemphasized.⁵⁹⁹ These words played an essential preparatory role in developing the messianic expectations that were fulfilled in Jesus. The hopes that were raised by the Lord's words—that God would place a seed of David on an eternal throne and establish a kingdom that would never perish—were ones that no Israelite or Judahite monarch satisfied, or even could have satisfied. But they were ones that the first-century Christians understood Jesus to fulfill.⁶¹⁰⁰

The Lord's words recorded here arguably play the single most significant role of any Scripture found in the Old Testament in shaping the Christian understanding of Jesus. The divine declarations proclaimed here through the prophet Nathan are foundational for seven major New Testament teachings about Jesus: that he is (1) the son of David (cf. Matt 1:1; Acts 13:22–23; Rom 1:3; 2 Tim 2:8; Rev 22:16, etc.); (2) one who would rise from the dead (cf. Acts 2:30; 13:23); (3) the builder of the house for God (cf. John 2:19–22; Heb 3:3–4, etc.); (4) the possessor of a throne (cf. Heb 1:8; Rev 3:21, etc.); (5) the possessor of an eternal kingdom (cf. 1 Cor 15:24–25; Eph 5:5; Heb 1:8; 2 Pet 1:11, etc.); (6) the son of God⁶¹¹¹ (cf. Mark 1:1; John 20:31; Acts 9:20; Heb 4:14; Rev 2:18, etc.); and (7) the product of an immaculate conception, since he had God as his father (cf. Luke 1:32–35).

7:4–7 The Lord did not delay in correcting the word Nathan had given David. “That night” he instructed the prophet to convey a message to David that would dramatically change his life and the future of his dynasty forever.⁶¹²²

⁹⁵⁹ See, e.g., R. F. O'Toole, “Acts 2:30 and the Davidic Covenant of Pentecost,” *JBL* 102 (1983): 245–58.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Cf. D. Juel, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

¹¹⁶¹ The theory put forth by liberal NT scholars that the first-century Christian community's doctrine of Jesus' theanthropic nature represents the syncretization of pagan mystery religions with Judaism cannot be sustained (cf. R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. K. Grobel [New York: Scribners, 1955], 128–33). The NT writers consistently employed Hebrew scriptures as the intellectual basis for their belief that Jesus was indeed the Son of God (cf. Heb 1:5; Acts 13:33). Cf. Youngblood, *1, 2 Samuel*, 891–92, for further treatment on the application of this text to Jesus Christ. Also cf. W. C. Kaiser, Jr. *Toward an Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 143–64; G. Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 287–304.

¹²⁶² A. A. Anderson concludes that “the best setting for the origin of vv. 5–7 is the early exilic period when the temple was reduced to rubble” and that “the purpose of this *vaticinium post eventum* was to serve as a literary device in order to provide a theological interpretation of a tragic event, i.e., the destruction of Yahweh's house” (*2 Samuel*, WBC [Waco: Word, 1989], 119). Such a perspective assumes that the canonical form of the text misrepresents the facts of history and that statements were

The divine revelation began with words of commendation for David; the Lord called the king “my servant” (Hb. *ʿabdî*; v. 5), a term used elsewhere in speeches by the Lord to refer to honored faithful patriarchs, prophets, Israel, and the Messiah.⁶¹³³ However, immediately following this positive word, the Lord indicated by means of a rhetorical question that David was not to be the one to build God’s house.

In fact, the Lord questioned the desirability of anyone building a permanent structure in which he might dwell—at least doing so unbidden and at that point in time.⁶¹⁴⁴ When God “brought the Israelites up out of Egypt” (v. 6), he did so without any sort of a material residence—not even a tent. Even so, his presence among the Israelites was real and certainly impressive (cf. Exod 13:21–22). Before the Israelites left Mount Sinai, they obeyed the Lord’s command and constructed a special skin “tent” that served as a divine “dwelling” place (cf. Exod 26:1–37; 40:34–38). Throughout the events following Israel’s departure from Sinai, the Lord had never expressed displeasure with having a tent for his earthly domicile, nor did he ever order any of the Israelite “staffs” (v. 7; NIV, “rulers”)⁶¹⁵⁵—the ancient symbol of authority used metonymically to signify a person with authority—to build him “a house of cedar.” Even in the absence of an impressive building that people could see, the Lord’s presence among them was discernible, especially as he acted through the leaders “whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel.”

7:8–11a Through David God had presented additional testimony to his presence among his people. David’s meteoric rise to prominence and power in Israel—being taken “from the pasture and from following the flock to be ruler over my people Israel” (v. 8)—was compelling evidence of the Lord’s presence. The Lord himself had brought David from the pasture; the Lord had made David ruler; the Lord had “been with” (v. 9) David wherever he had gone; and it was the Lord who had “cut off all” David’s “enemies from before” him.

formulated and then attributed to Yahweh—albeit for pious and noble reasons—that were not in fact spoken by Yahweh. This scholarly tendency to second-guess the claims of Scripture, a tendency sometimes present even among evangelical scholars, represents an unacceptable departure from the historically orthodox view of Scripture that accepts all canonical statements of Scripture as completely accurate as written. Certainly the Chronicler (cf. 1 Chr 17:4–6) accepted the words of Nathan presented in vv. 5–7 as historically accurate. It seems reasonable for those of us even further removed in time than he to be hesitant to reject his conclusion.

¹³⁶³ Abraham (Gen 26:24); Jacob (Ezek 37:25); Moses (Num 12:7–8; Josh 1:2, 7; 2 Kgs 21:8); Caleb (Num 14:24); Isaiah (Isa 20:3); Zerubbabel (Hag 2:23); Job (Job 1:8; 2:3; 42:8); Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 25:9; 27:6); Israel (Isa 41:9; 44:1–2, 21; 49:3; Jer 30:10); and the Messiah (Isa 52:13; Zech 3:8).

¹⁴⁶⁴ Cf. M. Ita, “A Note on 2 Sam 7,” in *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers*, ed. H. N Bream, R. D. Heim, and C. A. Moore (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1974), 406.

¹⁵⁶⁵ The term *שְׂבָטֵי* is normally translated “tribes of” (cf. LXX, NKJV, NASB). However, none of the tribes of Israel was ever appointed to shepherd Israel. Consequently the NIV—and most recently NLT—opted for a translation that implies individual leaders.

David did not need to construct an impressive but lifeless building in which the Lord could dwell; the Lord had already constructed an impressive living building in which to dwell, and that edifice was the life of David. Though the ark resided in a lifeless tent of skin, in a very real sense the Lord resided in the living tent of David.⁶¹⁶⁶ And the Lord was not finished adorning his earthly dwelling place; he would make David's "name great, like the names of the greatest men of the earth"—a covenantal promise not made by the Lord to an individual since the days of Abraham (cf. Gen 12:2).

The Lord's words become eschatological in character as they describe the benefits that will accrue for Israel with the magnification of the house of David. David's rise to the ranks of the "greatest men of the earth" would mean that the Lord would provide Israel a secure and peaceful homeland (v. 10). In addition,⁶¹⁷⁷ justice would prevail for the Lord's people: "wicked men will not oppress them anymore." The Lord planned a further benefit for David beyond those already mentioned: an era of tranquility awaited Israel's king, for the Lord would "also give" David "rest from all" his "enemies" (v. 11), an apparent reference to a continued and increased freedom from the threat of non-Israelite aggressors (cf. v. 1). These promises, however, were not fulfilled in David's lifetime; later prophets understood them to refer to a future period (cf. Isa 9:7; 16:5; Jer 23:5–6; 33:15–16).

7:11b–17 Even more significantly, "the LORD himself will establish a house" (v. 11)—that is, a dynasty—for David. David had sought to build a house (= temple) for the Lord, but the Lord would instead build a house (= dynasty) for David. The incredible blessings that the Lord both gave and pledged would not be set aside for some usurper to the throne. Instead, the Lord "will raise up your offspring [Hb. *zera*; lit., "seed"; cf. Gen 13:15] to succeed you" (v. 12). For the New Testament Christian community, this verse apparently was viewed as proof that Jesus was indeed the Messiah; God did indeed "raise up" Jesus (cf. Acts 2:30; 13:23), thus legitimizing him as the messianic son of David.⁶¹⁸⁸ According to the prophecy, the royal successor would be one "who will come from your body."⁶¹⁹⁹ The emphasis on an offspring/seed who would come from

¹⁶⁶⁶ Later Yahwistic prophets referred to the Davidic dynasty as the "tent of David" (cf. Isa 16:5; Amos 9:11; Acts 15:16); the metaphor is appropriate to this passage.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Disagreement exists among scholars about what מקום, "place," refers to. It probably refers to a peaceful homeland, i.e., the Promised Land; cf. D. F. Murray, "מקום and the future of Israel in 2 Samuel vii 10," VT 40 (1990): 298–320.

¹⁸⁶⁸ The Hebrew verb used here is קום, which in certain contexts is synonymous with חיה, "to live" (cf. Isa 26:14, 19). The LXX verb in this phrase is ἀναστήσω, also translatable as "I will resurrect." For further discussion of this translation point, along with its messianic implications, cf. O. Betz, "Das messianischen Bewusstsein Jesu," NovT 6 (1963): 20–48.

¹⁹⁶⁹ The prophetic verb forms (prophetic perfects) suggest that the individual who would become David's royal successor had not yet been born. This, of course, accords well with the facts surrounding Solomon. He was certainly much younger than any of the sons born in Hebron and probably was not the first son born to David in Jerusalem. Carlson, however, understands this as a reference to Absalom (*David the Chosen King*, 122).

David's body links this covenant with the Abrahamic covenant (cf. Gen 15:4). As with David, so with the royal successor—the Lord would “establish his kingdom.”

It would not be David but his successor who would “build a house for” (v. 13) the Lord. Viewed in its immediate historical context, the prophetic reference was to Solomon, who constructed the temple for the Lord in Jerusalem between 966 and 959 B.C. (cf. 1 Kgs 6:1–38).

The New Testament does not deny that some aspects of the prophetic revelation of v. 13 referred to Solomon (cf. Acts 7:47). But for the New Testament writers, the primary application of this verse was to Jesus, the ultimate “son of David” (e.g., Matt 1:1). One reason for this is that the Lord's promise to “establish the throne of his kingdom forever” seems to vault this portion of the prophecy beyond the bounds of Solomon's reign and give it eschatological and/or messianic overtones. The throne of Solomon's kingdom was not permanently established; in fact, his kingdom—in the strict sense of the word—ceased to exist immediately after his death (cf. 1 Kgs 11:31–38). This incongruity between divine prophecy and human history invited the New Testament writers to look to a different son of David for the fulfillment of the word.

In applying v. 13 to Jesus, the New Testament writers took their cue from Jesus himself. Three of Jesus' claims concerning himself allude to this verse. First, Jesus claimed he would build a temple (cf. Matt 26:61; 27:40; Mark 14:58; 15:29; John 2:19–22). Second, he claimed to possess an eternal throne (cf. Matt 19:28–29). Finally, he claimed to possess an imperishable kingdom (cf. Luke 22:29–30; John 18:36).

Of this promised descendant of David the Lord said “I will be his father, and he will be my son” (v. 14). Although some Old Testament interpreters suggest this may refer to an otherwise unreported practice whereby an Israelite king was ritually “adopted” by the deity upon assumption to the throne,²⁰⁰ the New Testament writers accepted the claim literally. Jesus is unambiguously understood in the New Testament to be the Son of God (Mark 1:1; John 20:31; Acts 9:20; Heb 1:5), an understanding fostered by Jesus' own self-claims (cf. Matt 27:43; Luke 22:70). In taking this verse literally and applying it to Jesus, the New Testament connected it with Jesus' virgin birth (cf. Luke 1:32).

The Lord indicated that he would punish David's seed “when he does wrong.” Punishment would be “with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.” This warning restates the Torah's teaching that the Lord would punish disobedient covenant people with the instrumentality of human oppressors (cf. Lev 26:25; Deut 28:25, 49–52): it was literally fulfilled in the case of Solomon (cf. 1 Kgs 11:14, 23–26). Without affirming Jesus' need for punishment due to personal sin, the writer of the Book of Hebrews seems to suggest that this passage is likewise messianic (cf. Heb 5:8–9).

Though sin by David's descendants would bring punishment and alienation, it would not result in the Lord's withdrawal of love. In fact, the Lord's faithful, loving commitment (Hb. *hesed*) to David's descendants would “never be taken away” (v. 15). What God had done in

²⁰⁰ Cf. McCarter, who cites Pss 2:7–8; 89:27–28 [Hb. 26–27] as evidence that Yahweh ritually adopted David, thus “qualify[ing] the king for the patrimony Yahweh wishes to bestow on him” (*II Samuel*, 207). In the present case, according to McCarter, “Israel becomes, in effect, the patrimonial estate of David's family,” one that is both permanent and inalienable. Cf. also R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, vol. 1: Social Institutions*, trans. J. McHugh (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 112–13.

removing the dynasty of Saul from Israel he would never do to the house of David, though because of sin David might later think it possible (cf. Ps 51:11 [Hb. v. 13]).

God would establish David's "house," "kingdom," and "throne ... forever" (v. 16). Once again the facts of history demonstrated that the Davidic dynasty's grip on royal power in Israel was tenuous. Interloping Israelites (e.g., Athaliah; 2 Kgs 11:1–3) and foreign conquerors perforated Davidic claims to the throne. As a result, these verses also were understood eschatologically/messianically. In the New Testament they were explicitly applied to Jesus (Heb 1:8).

Nathan "reported to David all the words of this entire revelation" (v. 17). This may have come to the king in both oral and written forms (cf. 1 Chr 29:29; 2 Chr 9:29).²¹

C. *The Davidic Covenant (chap. 7)*

7:1–2. **After** David had become well **settled** in Jerusalem and was enjoying a period of peace, his thoughts turned to the idea of building a more permanent structure in which the Lord could reside among His people. The **tent**, he felt, was no longer suitable, especially in comparison with his own elaborate **palace of cedar** (cf. 5:11).

7:3–17. Having communicated his desires to the Prophet **Nathan**, whose initial response was favorable, **David** soon learned that his intentions were premature. Since the Exodus **the LORD** had resided among the people in a temporary structure. There was no need now for anything different. In fact it was not God's will for **David** to **build Him a house**; instead God would build **a house** for David! (v. 11) God had called **David** from inauspicious beginnings **to be** a shepherd of God's **people** (v. 8). Likewise, God had gathered **Israel** to Himself and would **plant them** securely in their own land. The house to be built for David would be a royal house, a dynasty of kings. It would originate with him but would never end (v. 16). The **kingdom** and its **throne** would be permanent, a realm over which the Son of David would reign **forever** (cf. 23:5).

The promise that David and his seed would be kings fulfilled the even more ancient Abrahamic Covenant blessing that the patriarchs would be the fathers of kings (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11). To Judah, great-grandson of Abraham, was given the explicit pledge that a promised ruler would come from Judah (Gen. 49:10). Samuel anointed this one from Judah, David himself, of whom the Lord said, "He is the one" (1 Sam. 16:12). David was aware of his election by God and of the theological significance of that election as part of the messianic line that would result in a divine Descendant and King (Pss. 2:6–7; 110; cf. Ethan's words in Ps. 89:3–4). The prophets also attested 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).

The promise that the people of the Lord, David's kingdom Israel, would have an enduring land of their own was also based on earlier commitments of the Lord. The seed of Abraham, God said, would be given Canaan as a home forever (Gen. 13:15; 15:18; 17:8; Deut. 34:4).

²¹ Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 336–341.

As for a temple, David would not be allowed to **build** it, but his son after him would have the honor of doing so (2 Sam. 7:12–13). That this refers to a literal house and not a dynasty is clear from the context, which speaks of the results that would follow if the **son** would be disobedient to the Lord (vv. 14–15). This could not be true of the King who is spoken of as the climactic figure of the Davidic dynastic line. 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 will be realized only in the more distant future (Jesus Christ, the Son of David; cf. Luke 1:31–33).²²

7:1-29

A Covenant and a Dynasty for David

7:1, 11. rest. Here it is indicated that God has given David rest from his enemies, and throughout the Old Testament the Lord speaks of giving rest to his people. This is especially significant in this context where David wants to build a temple, because in the ancient Near East the temple of the deity was supposed to offer rest to the deity. Some of the temple names even suggest that as a primary function of the temple. This divine rest then often results in rest for the people in their land. In contrast the Bible says little about divine rest, and it is never the prerequisite for human rest except for the sabbath.

7:2–3. prophet as advisor. Prior to the time of Samuel, prophets had exercised political leadership by virtue of their prophetic office. With the initiation of kingship the role of the prophet had become an advisory role. Rather than leading the people as the recipient of divine messages, the prophet offered guidance to the king, who would retain the freedom to accept or reject it. For more information see comments on Deuteronomy 18:14–22.

7:2. cedar dwelling versus tent dwelling. It was a common occurrence in the ancient Near East for a victorious king to show his gratitude to the patron deity by building a temple. Examples go back into the mid-third millennium among the Sumerians and continue down into Assyrian, Babylonian and even Persian times. The temple (home of the god) was expected to bring the protection of the deity to the king and his land. A permanent and luxurious dwelling (cedar) would be intended to insure the Lord's presence and favor. In Ugaritic literature the father god, El, was believed to inhabit a tent shrine (as were many of the Canaanite deities). Baal, in contrast, built for himself a beautiful palace.

7:5. divine permission to build. In the ancient world it was important to procure divine permission to build a temple. If the king proceeded on his own without direction as to the location, orientation, size and materials, he could expect only failure. In the Neo-Babylonian period Nabonidus tells of a king who undertook such a project without the consent of the gods, with the result that the temple collapsed. In the Sumerian *Curse of Akkad*, Naram-Sin seeks an

²² Eugene H. Merrill, "[2 Samuel](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 464.

omen that will permit him to build a temple. Though he does not receive one, he proceeds anyway. His action is consequently blamed for the fall of the dynasty of Akkad.

7:8–11. deity as king’s sponsor. It is common rhetoric in the ancient Near East for a king to claim the sponsorship of the national deity. Hittite and Mesopotamian documents are especially clear. The deity is acknowledged as having brought the king to the throne, given him the land and established his kingship. The god is relied upon to protect the king, give him victory over his enemies and establish his dynastic line, thereby determining the destiny of the king.

7:13. son to build temple. An inscription survives in which Adad-Guppi, the famous queen mother of the Neo-Babylonian empire (sixth century), reports a dream given by the god Sin. The god told her that it was her son who would construct the temple for him in the city of Harran. This was different to David’s situation in that it was a work of restoring a sanctuary that had fallen into ruins.

7:14. father/son relationship between God and king. Egyptian kingship is particularly strong on this point, since the kingship of the pharaoh was seen as derived from the divine realm. More particularly he was conceived as the son of Re, the sun god. In Ugaritic literature, Keret, king of Khubur, is identified as the son of El, the chief god of the Canaanites. Among the Aramean kings the designation was even included in their throne names (Ben-Hadad means son of Hadad). In Mesopotamia, from Gilgamesh in the mid-third millennium through kings such as Gudea, Hammurabi, Tukulti-Ninurta and Ashurbanipal, just to name a few, it was part of the royal prerogative to claim divine heritage.

7:14–15. security despite discipline. In one Hittite treaty of the second millennium the Hittite king, Hattusilis III, guarantees his vassal, Ulmi-Teshup of Tarhuntassa, that his son and grandson will inherit the land after him. The text goes on to say that if Ulmi-Teshup’s descendants commit offenses, they will be punished (even with death), but that the land will not be taken away from Ulmi-Teshup’s family as long as there is a male heir.

7:15. covenant love. Hittite, Akkadian, Ugaritic and Aramaic examples all show that the positive action of the suzerain toward the vassal is expressed as love, kindness and graciousness, and in return the vassal is expected to respond with obedience and loyalty. In the Amarna letters (from vassal kings of Canaan to their Egyptian overlord) “love” is used as a characterization of friendly and loyal international relationships. It expresses the vassal’s intentions to be loyal and to honor the terms of the treaty agreement between the parties. The biblical text shows a clear example of this usage in 1 Kings 5:15. There are rare instances in Mesopotamian literature where an individual is admonished to love a deity, but in general the gods of the ancient Near East did not seek love from their worshipers, nor did gods enter into covenant relationships with them.²³

²³ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 2 Sa 7:1–15.