

Final Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we offer You everything that has happened this day; the good which has inspired us, and the more difficult things that have challenged us. Work through everything with which we are involved to bring about peace and harmony in our lives; not peace and harmony with the world, but peace and harmony with You, our Lord and Saviour: AMEN

Prayer

When You created the World, Heavenly Father, You fashioned the laws which hold the Universe together and moulded the life of humanity in Your image. Make us conscious of our dependency both on You and also on the created world in which we live, so that we might be good stewards of all creation as we were meant to be. Through Jesus Christ, AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Cross

The sign of the Cross is recognised almost universally, though it is not always respected. Pray today in repentance for what humanity did in crucifying our Lord on the Cross.

On-going prayers

- Pray today for those who report the news by TV or by newspaper
- Pray about the world economic downturn and its driving powers
- Give thanks for the joy of a good night's sleep

Meditation

Speak to us in words of prophecy, Lord God

And may we discern the truth of Your Word

Speak to us in words of challenge and vision

And may we be willing to be tested to our limits

Speak to us in words of love and comfort

And may we be empowered by them for action

Speak to us in words of wisdom and revelation

And may we be fed by them, day and night

Speak to us in words of faith and sound teaching

And may we accept the Bible's truth and honesty

Speak to us in words used by the Lord to bless the crowds

And may we use them again to bless our troubled world

Speak to us in words which change all things for good

And may we grasp them now, not let them go ... for ever.

Bible Study - 2 Samuel 7:8-17

⁸ Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord of hosts says to you: I took you from looking after sheep in the pasture lands, to be a ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you went, and have destroyed all your enemies in front of you, and I will make you famous, like the great people of the world. ¹⁰ And I will prepare a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may have their own home and no longer be disturbed. They will not be oppressed by evildoers as before, ¹¹ when I appointed judges over my people Israel, and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord reveals to you that the He will make you into a dynasty. ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your children after you, your own offspring, and I will set up his kingdom. ¹³ He shall build a

house for my name, and I will set up the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴I will be his father, and he shall be my son. So if he does wrong, I will correct him with a stick as a parent does, with blows inflicted by people. ¹⁵However, I will not take my promised, steadfast love from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed before you. ¹⁶Your dynasty and kingdom will continue forever before me, and your throne will be secure forever.

¹⁷ Nathan reported all these words and the whole vision to David.

Review

This passage of scripture is one of the key texts of the whole Old Testament, and Nathan's prophecy deserves much greater attention from God's people even today.

David had done his work of bringing God's people together, and he then turned to the idea of making a permanent 'house' or 'temple' in which the Ark could reside as the centrepiece and highlight of the new Kingdom of Israel. At that time, this was the sole extent of David's vision (7:1-7); but God had quite different ideas. He was working at an eternal plan of salvation for the whole world, for all people and for all time. He did not expect David to understand it all, but through Nathan's prophecy, He revealed sufficient to keep him on track with this greater plan. The Temple would be built one day, but David was to be the builder of a different kind of 'house', which was not a building or a Temple.

A 'House' Throughout the whole of our passage today, there is a play on the word 'house'. Firstly, we talk of a house as a building to live in, but the word can mean a small house or a large palace, and it can also mean a place of worship, for example, 'a house of prayer', or, 'the Lord's house'. Lastly, 'house' can mean 'dynasty' as in the expression 'the house of Windsor', which means the historic lineage of the current British monarch.

David, aware of living in a good quality house himself (7:1f.), wanted to build a house for God, in other words, a Temple. God, however, wanted to make David himself into a different type of house; in other words, a dynasty. This dynasty would be everlasting and have a central place in God's plan of salvation. As we read the prophecy of Nathan, it is easy to spot the way this play on the word 'house' develops, but in verse 13 this is not as clear as elsewhere, and because this is at the centre of God's revelation we must look at this verse more closely.

A spiritual dynasty From verse 8 onwards, God spoke through Nathan directly to David confirming His personal call, but also indicating in verse 9 that something bigger than the kingdom of Israel was in His mind, saying, 'I will make you famous, like the great people of the world' (7:9). From verse 10 onwards, God spoke about setting up the nation of Israel and securing peace, but notice how the words of the prophecy use the future tense. This means that God had much more in mind for David. It was a promise yet to be fulfilled, and the Lord's Word to David was that he was more important than merely being the founder of a nation. His task was not to build a Temple but to secure a spiritual heritage through his leadership; 'Moreover, the Lord reveals to you that He will make you into a dynasty' (7:11). God has other plans which David has not yet perceived.

An eternal Kingdom From verse 12 to 14, the prophecy is very hard to interpret from a purely literary point of view, and almost everyone who has written about it has a different opinion of the text. These extraordinary words of God appear to say one thing, and then on re-reading, say something else. Look at verses 12 and 13, and you may think that this refers to David's son Solomon and his building of the Temple a generation later (which did happen). However, the second half of the verse appears to say that God is setting up Solomon's kingdom, through David! In order to understand this, we must now accept that the vision is speaking about eternal, not earthly things; and God is talking about an eternal Kingdom to be built on David and his 'offspring'. It arises from him physically, but is part of

God's greater plan for the salvation of humanity. This begins with the establishment of David and his lineage as rulers of Israel (and the later building of the Temple by his son) but spiritually, it goes far beyond this. The more we read, the more we will find they 'fit' with what we know about Jesus, the 'son of David', whose Kingdom is established for ever (7:13), who suffered unjustly for the sins and wrongdoings of humanity (7:14).

Interpreting the vision At the time of David, these enigmatic words may have appeared mysterious, yet they indicated to some that David's son would build a Temple that was supposed to last forever. Later in Israel's history, after the Babylonians had sacked the Temple, people thought that they spoke about a spiritual 'house of David' and a Messiah; and then at the time of Christ, the disciples read these words and realised that they were fulfilled in Jesus. This prophecy is mysterious and powerful. If you read books which attempt to examine this text in detail (a standard commentary), you will read forthright and conflicting views about the whole passage. However, the time scale for this prophecy is eternity, because it is about God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Since the fall of humanity, God had worked through individuals to bring about His plan of salvation. He worked through Noah, Abraham and his offspring, through Moses and now David and his offspring, and at each stage a little more of the future of God's plan was revealed. The conclusion of our study today is that in this vision of Nathan, God revealed His plan to send Jesus into the World to establish His Kingdom forever. This Kingdom would be based upon the dynasty of David, and whatever happened to his descendants, God was in control of this dynasty. It is fair to say that Nathan is a very important Old Testament prophet!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Discuss in your group how you react to the central verses of this text, verses 12-14. What do they say to you?
2. Why would God not wish to reveal all His plan for the salvation of the world to Nathan? Would this have been helpful?
3. Discuss in your group how much you know of what actually happened to David's 'dynasty' after his death, beyond the time of Solomon, and ending with Jesus.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

Mostly, God reveals things to us piece by piece, rather than all at once. The history of the great Christians of the past two thousand years shows that God has been able to use those who have listened to Him and acted upon what He has revealed, knowing that there is always more. I have to add that great difficulties arise when people believe that they have heard a revelation from the Lord and then act as if this word is everything they need to know, and are not readily disposed towards God's further revelations.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- Write down a time-scale 'map' or 'diary' of the occasions when God has revealed to you some of the important things which have driven your life forward day by day and set out the path you have walked. Where might the Lord be leading you next?
- Discuss with a friend what you believe the Lord is saying to His people today, and pray with them about how the revelation of God is being received by His people today.