

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**“The Story of God: Kingship,” 2 Samuel 7:8-16**  
**by Pastor Matt Johnson, 2/6/2022**

We’ve made it to the fifth installment in our series entitled,  
“The Story of God.” Up until this week things have been  
pretty well contained,  
because we spent three weeks in the book of Genesis,  
and then last week were in Exodus,  
the second book of the Bible,  
but now we’re making a big jump.  
Now we find ourselves in 2 Samuel of all places.  
How did we get here?

**Recap**

**God of creation: Eden as place and relationship**

**Human rebellion: Relationship broken, expelled from place**

**God of Abraham & Sarah: Restoration, promise of place**

**God who rescued Israel from Egypt: Deliverance, salvation**

As we move on from that,  
you should know that I’m including in this step of the Exodus,  
the two important events that happen  
along with being freed from Egypt.

**First**, after Israel is freed from Egypt,  
they make their way to Mt. Sinai  
where they receive the 10 Commandments.

**Second**, because they lack faith it ends up taking them an extra 40 years  
of wandering through the desert before they finally  
enter the promised land under the leadership of Joshua  
who takes over after Moses dies.

So that's all kind of included, in my mind,  
as an extension of the Exodus because God intended to save Israel  
*from Egypt and into the promised land*  
under the guidance of *Torah*,  
the teaching of God or the law of God.  
And it all takes place fairly succinctly, within a little over 40 years.

The *theological* point made when Israel finally enters the promised land  
is that Yahweh has been true to the covenant  
made with Abraham & Sarah.  
Israel is now a nation in their own right,  
with many people, and a land of their own.  
The question put to Israel and even to Joshua is,  
“Will you continue to worship Yahweh  
and be led by the Law of Yahweh  
now that the land promised to Abraham  
has been given to you?”

The answer to that question comes in this long period time  
known as the period of the Judges.

This period lasts well over 300 years,  
and during these three centuries  
there is a four step cycle of the people

- falling into sinful practices,
- God punishing them in some way,
- the people repenting,
- and finally God sending a ruler or “judge” to rescue them.

This cycle happens seven times during these 300 years because,  
as the final sentence in the book of Judges tells us,  
“Israel had no king, and everyone did as they saw fit.”

After a while the people clamor for a King so much  
that God makes a concession,  
and God anoints Saul to be the first King of Israel.  
But Saul turns out to be rotten,  
and God removes his blessing from him.

## Today

So that sets the stage for today.

All throughout history people have wrestled with this question of the relationship between God and their country.

This passage about David in the story of God is fundamentally about what God's relationship is with the King of Israel.

I think it can help us to be more cautious when considering God's role in the story of contemporary nations and societies.

2 Samuel chapter 7 is part of a message sent by God to the prophet Nathan who is to report the message to King David.

David initiated this conversation with God by saying to Nathan, "How can I live in this beautiful cedar house when God remains in a tent!"

The gist of it is that David who has just recently become King of Israel, wants to build a temple for Yahweh. Which sounds great, right?

But listen to how God replies to David in verse 5,

"Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?"

Now Hebrew narratives are very subtle.

They rarely jump out and tell you everything you want to know.

So it's important for us to get some background on what building a temple meant to people living in the year 1000 BC.

For ancient peoples, their god, their king, and their temple were very closely related.

Kings would often build elaborate temples in order to *obligate* a particular god to endorse their dynasty.

For example, here's an actual quote inscribed  
on a Babylonian temple to a god named Marduk.

**“O Marduk, my lord, look joyously at my pious work! By your noble command that will never be changed, may the work of my hand last forever. As the bricks of this temple are firm forever, establish the foundation of my throne for all time to come.”**

So the Babylonian king builds the temple in hopes  
that he can be assured blessing through the building.  
He's trying to manipulate his god through building a temple.

But Yahweh, the God of Israel is not like these other gods.

Yahweh will not be controlled. So the Lord says,  
“David, are you the one to build *my* house?”

And in the passage that follows Yahweh turns the tables.

First David's story is recounted.

**“I took you from tending the flock and appointed you  
as ruler over Israel.”**

God is saying, “I have been with you your whole life!”

Then instead of David building a house for God,

Yahweh says this in verse 11, **“The Lord declares to you that  
the Lord himself will establish a house...for you.”**

God says—you're not building my house, I will build your house!

“House” meaning the dynasty of David's lineage  
as the rulers of Israel.

So in this way, Yahweh is portrayed here as  
totally independent of Israel's Kings.

God says, “I will not be controlled by you.

You only get my blessing by having faith in the promise,  
just like Abraham did.”

But people were prone to forget this. Because David's son, Solomon,  
does build a temple for Yahweh,

and people looked at that building and said,

“Of course God's on our side.

Are you kidding me, this the temple of Yahweh!

God is on our team, big time.”

The prophet Jeremiah spoke out against this sense of assurance that God is with Israel just because of the temple.

Listen to Jeremiah chapter 7 verses 3 and 4:

**3This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says:**

**Reform your ways and your actions,  
and I will let you live in this place.**

**4Do not trust in deceptive words and say,  
“This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD,  
the temple of the LORD!”**

It really says it three times. The point all throughout the Old Testament is that Israel doesn't get God's favor because they are outwardly God's people.

They get God's favor when they accept God's promises by faith inwardly, and that inward faith leads them to reform their ways of living and their actions.

### **The Promise**

Getting back to 2 Samuel chapter 7, the highpoint comes in verse 16.

God says to David, **“Your house and your kingdom  
will endure forever before me;  
your throne will be established forever.”**

This line is the high-water mark in the history of Israel. Everything that comes after this is an addendum to this promise that God makes to David.

For the rest of Israel's history, the line of David is central to how they think politically and central to how they think theologically.

This is why we have so many promises about a new King, a new Anointed One that will come along that will be like David. God's Messiah, his Anointed One who will save Israel from their sins will be one in the line of David.

It turns out that *politically* David's line of kingship becomes a disaster and falls into utter ruin (which we will look at next week).

Spiritually, this promise to David is ultimately fulfilled through Jesus. But for the people at the time of 2 Samuel, they assume that it will be nothing but success and prosperity from here forward.

So to summarize all that, in this chapter, God does two things at once:

To begin with, God asserts independence from Israel—

“David, you don't build my house, I build your house.

I don't depend on you, you depend on me.”

But at the same time, God's character is revealed as gracious, loving, and enduring.

There's a careful balance established here.

That's the language the story of God uses to articulate the relationship between the nation of Israel and the God of Israel.

### **How does that help us in telling the story of our nation?**

To begin with, we need to take seriously the idea that throne of David was ultimately given to Jesus of Nazareth,

who announced that the Kingdom of God was at hand,

and through Israel salvation had come

to both Jew and Gentiles alike.

This means that while God's promise to the Jewish people endures, God no longer has specific alliance with nations.

Israel the nation state that was established in 1948...

is distinct from Israel the spiritual people of God.

Many Christians don't make that very important distinction, and it can cause a lot of problems.

The second thing is that since *Jesus* is the King of God's Kingdom, we should be careful not to assume that God is automatically for or automatically against any particular nation.

No nation has ever controlled God because of their heritage, not even Israel.

If we assume that God is the champion of our nation's purposes in the world,  
we run the risk of being like those in Israel who called out,  
"This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,  
the temple of the Lord!"

This passage calls us to an awareness that God  
cannot be manipulated to support our causes,  
whether it's our football team or our countries.  
Even if your quarterback is a Christian,  
and even if the founding fathers were Christians.  
We don't build God's house, God builds our house.

Actually, God invites us to dinner, [*gesture at communion table*]  
along with people from many countries around the world,  
at the table of Jesus, the Son of David.

Through this table, God draws near to any people and any nation  
who have faith in the promises of God  
and who are led by faith into acts of peace  
and justice in the world.