



**Sunday School Lesson Summary for March 9, 2008
Released on March 5, 2008**

"God's Covenant with David"

Printed Text: 1 Chronicles 17:1-4, 6-15

Background Scripture: 1 Chronicles 17

Devotional Reading: Psalm 78:67-72

1 Chronicles 17:1-4, 6-15

1 Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in a house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the Lord remaineth under curtains.

2 Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee.

3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,
4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in.

.....
6 Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me a house of cedars?

7 Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, even from following the sheep, that thou shouldst be ruler over my people Israel:

8 And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that are in the earth.

9 Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning.

10 And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee, that the Lord will build thee a house.

11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

12 He shall build me a house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee.

14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

15 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each student will be able to:

1. List the features of God's covenant with David.
2. Compare and contrast God's covenant with David and with God's covenant with Christians.
3. Suggest one specific way to demonstrate that he or she is living under the covenant promised to David and fulfilled in Christ.

Introduction - Covenant Making

When I was growing up, I had a second cousin who was like a brother to me since I had no brother and only one sister. We were the same age and played together as often as we could. When we were in about the third grade, we made a covenant with one another. We even pricked our fingers to "exchange" our blood in this special relationship. (We had seen Indians do this in the movies.)

What was our covenant? To never get married! We announced this covenant to all family members and to as many others as we could. This, of course, was in our prepuberty days, and girls were our natural enemies. We held each other accountable to the covenant for a number of years. But eventually we broke the covenant. Charles married after he had graduated from high school, and I married at the end of my graduate studies. No one was surprised that we broke our covenant.

Western culture has a problem with the term covenant. We know what a contract is, but the word covenant has fallen into disuse for the most part. Also, the concept of living under a covenant relationship (such as marriage) is antiquated and unthinkable to many because of secular cultural influences. It is no wonder that even many Christians in Western democracies have a difficult time understanding the concept of covenant as the Bible presents that idea. But try we must.

Background Scripture

According to 2 Samuel 5 and 6, David ultimately became king over a united Israel. This happened approximately 1000 b.c. After conquering the Jebusites and their city of Jerusalem, David made that city the capital of the newly united kingdom. Then he defeated the Philistines (2 Samuel 5:17-25). Afterward, he brought the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem and placed it on Mount Zion under a tent (last week's lesson). This move made Jerusalem both the political and religious capital of the kingdom.

The author of Chronicles, writing much later than the author who writes the parallel account in 2 Samuel, used a combination of psalms to illustrate David's attitude of thanksgiving: compare Psalm 105:1-15 with 1 Chronicles 16:7-22; Psalm 96 with 1 Chronicles 16:23-33; and Psalm 106:1, 47, 48 with 1 Chronicles 16:34-36. It is at this point in the Chronicles account that God made His eternal promise to David—today's text.

What David Notices (1 Chronicles 17:1,2)

1. What desire arose in David, and what comparison came to mind that encouraged him to act upon it? (v. 1)

Some time had elapsed since David had brought up the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem. A very pleasant picture is here presented to our imagination. We see the King of Israel sitting in his house, "the Lord having given him rest round about from all his enemies" (2 Sam. 7:1), with a happy and grateful sense of prosperity and security, not wrapping himself in the dangerous robe of complacent self-congratulation, but rather clothed with humility and thankfulness. As he surveys the

stateliness and elegance of his palace, he thinks of God's goodness to him in placing "his feet in a large room" (Ps. 31:8), and his thought naturally passed to the place where the ark rested—the ark with which the presence of Jehovah was so closely connected (Exod. 25:22).

David felt that there was an impropriety in himself as he compared his house, to the housing of the Ark of God (1 Chron. 17:1). David's house is made out of cedar, in which only the wealthiest people would build their houses. The Ark of God, however, resided in a tent. In David's mind, there was something wrong with this picture. David no doubt was probably thinking that God should only have the best possible dwelling place.

How God Reacts (1 Chronicles 17:3, 4, 6-8)

2. What two messages did Nathan give David with regard to his desire, and why were they different? (vs. 3,4)

Nathan's original response was to tell David to go ahead and build God's house. Since Nathan was God's prophet, he also wanted to ensure that God had the best. Nathan did what he thought God wanted, and gave approval for David to start building God's house (v. 2). We should note that Nathan did not consult God when he spoke on God's behalf.

We may be inclined to think of the great men of old, such as the Old Testament prophets, as superspiritual. They are indeed very holy, yet they can still make mistakes. What we see here is that Nathan's line of thinking is the same as David's. *Nathan* also equates his own thoughts with the will of God. As a result, Nathan replies *do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee*.

It turned out that God had other plans. That very *night*, before anything can be done to advance David's desired building project, *the word of God comes to Nathan* in a vision (see v. 15). God gives specific words to Nathan to relate to *David*. What God has to say is rather lengthy, as we shall see.

The first sentence of God's communication is quite pointed: *Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in*. The unmistakable effect of this declarative statement is the negation of David's desire.

Nathan had to tell David that what he said previously was wrong, and he had to tell David not to build God's house. Nathan gave David the go-ahead to build God a temple; then God corrected Nathan's rash remark. Yet Nathan was given the opportunity to pass the correct instructions to David. We don't have it within our power to be perfect with every word and act. Fortunately for us, God works with and through imperfect people. Think about Moses, who spoke rashly when he should have known better (Numbers 20:10-12; Psalm 106:33). The apostle Peter also spoke rashly at times (example: Luke 9:33), yet God still could use him as a powerful witness.

Learning to be "swift to hear, slow to speak" (James 1:19) will put the brakes on much of our rash talk. Taking to heart Proverbs 13:3; 21:23 will help. When we do speak rashly, it is vital that we accept God's correction. That correction may come directly from God's Word or from a spiritually mature acquaintance (see Proverbs 12:1).

3. What did God say about requiring that a temple be built for Him? (v. 6)

God explains to Nathan that ever since the wilderness period, He had never required a temple to be built for Him. Here, God is emphasizing an important point. God just wanted to be around His people. Stop and think about that for a moment. Is it not encouraging to us to know that God enjoys being in the presence of His own people? He does not require elaborate preparation from us before we can enjoy His

presence, nor He ours. As with family members, what is often most important is just being together, no matter why.

4. What did God say about what He had done to change the direction of David's life? (vs. 7, 8)

God, through Nathan, reminds *David* of his humble beginnings. David, the youngest of eight brothers, had been a shepherd boy in Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:1–12). He had not been allowed even to fight alongside his brothers in battle (1 Samuel 17:14, 15, 28). By divine providence David killed Goliath, the Philistine hero. This was an important milestone in David's road to kingship. David's days as a shepherd with a sling and staff had prepared him for killing the Philistine giant. Those same shepherd days also prepared him to be king over God's people.

God reminded him that He had been with him wherever he had gone. As if that were not enough, God had also seen to it that David's enemies were rendered powers and destroyed. That still was not all God had done for him. He had also given David such a far-reaching reputation that he was considered to be one of the greatest men in the world.

Perhaps God was pointing out that His timing is always perfect. He had changed David's direction in life at just the right time, and He would have a temple built for Himself when the time was right. David was not to proceed with the matter.

What God Promises (1 Chronicles 17:9–14)

5. What did God say about Israel's peace (v. 9)?

God is now bringing to fullness His promise of Genesis 15:13–21 to Abraham: that *Israel* is to find a peaceful *place* in her own land. The word *ordain* suggests "to put, place, or set." (The *King James Version* uses *appoint* for the same Hebrew word in the parallel passage of 2 Samuel 7:10.) All *the children of wickedness* (Israel's *enemies*) will be subdued, just as God has subdued and will continue to subdue all of David's personal enemies.

The time of the judges (about 1380 to 1050 BC) had seen great oppression of God's people because of unfaithfulness. In God's ideal plan, this shall be no more!

6. Instead of having David build a house for God, what did God say He would do for David? (vs. 10,11)

David wanted to build a house for God; now God sent word through Nathan that He would build a house for David instead. The meaning of this is that God would establish a royal dynasty coming from David. David would die as all men do, but following his death God would put one of his sons ("thy seed") on the throne of Israel. We know God was referring to Solomon, though He did not name him here since he was not even born yet.

His son's kingdom and throne would be established forever. A descendant of David and Solomon would always occupy the throne of Israel.

7. When did God indicate a temple should be built for Him? (v. 12)

Verses 11 and 12 tell us that God's temple would be built after the death of David. It was David's son who would build a house, or temple, for God. We know that David accepted this information from God willingly, because 1 Chronicles 22 describes him as elaborately preparing materials for Solomon to use in this project. After giving Solomon a charge to build the temple, David commanded the leaders of Israel to help him.

"Both Nathan and David showed genuine humility. Nathan had to modify his instructions to David after he too quickly spoke for God, and David responded with grace when he learned he would not build the temple. Humility keeps leaders on

track and enables them to see beyond themselves" Maxwell, ed., The Maxwell Leadership Bible, Nelson). This is exactly what David was doing in preparing the way of Solomon to accomplish what he himself he had hoped for.

8. How would Solomon's relationship with God differ from Saul's? (v. 13)

Verse 13 states that God will not take His mercy away from Solomon as He did from Saul. God had just said that David's son, Solomon, would become ruler over a kingdom that would last forever. He emphasized that He would maintain a personal relationship with him.

The phrase *I will be his father, and he shall be my son* is adoption terminology (compare 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:7; 2 Corinthians 6:18). God, as the ruling Father, has adopted this person as a son to be ruler with His approval.

The word *mercy* should be understood to signify "covenant love" or "covenant loyalty." God will not take away His covenant love or covenant loyalty from David or his descendants as He took it away from Saul (the first king).

9. How do you react to the fact that God wants you to be a covenant partner with Him in the new covenant?

Covenants, commitments, contracts—today it seems that there are as many of these as there are people looking for loopholes in them. This theme is the staple of fictionalized courtroom drama and the lives of real-life sports superstars.

How thankful we can be to know that God takes His covenants seriously (Hebrews 6:13–20)! He neither has nor seeks loopholes. We also may be thankful that God's covenant with us is not a parity covenant. This means that the new covenant does not require as much from us as it does from Him (see Matthew 26:28).

Our part is to accept His gracious offer (Acts 2:38; Ephesians 2:8–10; etc.). Although Jesus alone paid the cost for our salvation, our choosing to accept His covenant offer means we must reject living our own self-led ways. In that respect, it is costly on our end (Matthew 16:24, 25). But the cost is worth it (Mark 10:29–31).

10. What was going to be unique about the kingdom under Solomon? What in the New Testament describes the fulfillment of the promise God gave to David? (vs. 14,15)

Note that the author of Chronicles emphasizes God's part in this covenant promise by saying *mine house* and *my kingdom* rather than "thine house" and "thy kingdom," as we see in 2 Samuel 7:16. It is a dynasty, a kingdom, a throne that will be established forever at the initiative of God (compare also Psalm 89:3, 4, 20–37). Ultimately God does fulfill this promise as He does with all His promises (see Luke 1:32, 33).

Nathan is faithful in delivering *this vision* to *David* word for word. While these are joyful *words* to deliver, *Nathan* will later have to be the bearer of bad news for *David* (2 Samuel 12:1–12). *Nathan* will live long enough to be the prophet to anoint *David's son Solomon* as king (1 Kings 1:34).

Conclusion - Keeping Covenant with God

Help your students realize that determining God's will for their lives must first be guided by His holy Word. They should also seek instruction from the Holy Spirit. Advice from genuine Christians can also assist, but even that has to be weighed carefully before being accepted. Even *Nathan* the prophet had to be corrected by God in his opinion. Once God's will is made plain, it is then the responsibility of believers to follow it.

Just as God is a covenant-keeping God for His people, we need to be a covenant-keeping people for God. Those who accept Christ and follow the biblical plan of

salvation enter into God's new covenant. We need to renew our commitment to that covenant daily. Every step we make, every word we speak, every breath we take is to be made in light of our covenant with God. May we keep covenant with God!

Prayer

O Lord God of covenants, may we keep Your new covenant in Christ as You have kept all covenants with us in the past. May we live up to the great name Christian that You have given to us. In Christ's great name, amen.

Thought to Remember

Keeping covenant with God should be our first priority.

Anticipating Next Week's Lesson

As David faced the end of his remarkable life, he gave good advice to Israel and to his son Solomon. Pay close attention to 1 Chronicles 28:9, which shows the importance of having a "perfect heart" toward God, even though every action is not always perfect. Remember that David collected materials for the time the temple would be built.

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The Pulpit Commentary, Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Hrsg.), Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc.

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