

## The House of David



2 Samuel 7:1 "Now when ~~the~~ king (David) was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, the king said to the prophet Nathan, 'See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent.'"

After David became the King of Hebron, and then defeated the Jebusites and captured their fortress city of Jerusalem and made it his own new capital, we are told that "King Hiram of Tyre (in Lebanon) sent messengers to David, along with cedar trees and carpenters and masons who built David a house" (2 Sam. 5.11). That is the house of cedar referenced in today's reading, that served

as David's Royal Palace. The King of Tyre was apparently trying to become an ally of David, rather than an adversary, as David united the tribes of Israel and subsequently conquered the Philistines, the Amalekites, the Moabites, the Edomites, the Ammonites, and even threatened the tribes across the Euphrates, but David never moved northwards towards Lebanon.

Now it seems in today's reading David is embarrassed that he lives in a house made with the famous cedars of Lebanon while the Ark of the Covenant of God abides in a tent, the Ark, that great religious tabernacle, purportedly containing the actual stone tablets of the Ten Commandments from Moses, and long cherished as a sacred object for the Jewish people, carried by the Israelites all during the years of Exodus in the Sinai and then into the Promised Land through the time of the Conquest, that Ark of the Covenant, now housed only in a flimsy portable tent, while David resided in a grand house of cedar. So, David, we are told, decided to build a Royal Temple to honor and thank his God for his success and victories. And the prophet Nathan seems to agree with David at first saying to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

But that night, the prophet Nathan, upon reflection, heard the voice of the Lord God saying, tell King David, did I ask you to build a temple for me? Does God need a house at all? The answer to David in today's reading was, no, God wasn't asking for a house

of cedar. That was David's idea, not God's. Stones piled on stones mattered little to God, I suspect. God is not interested in great Temples, however much we humans much like them, however much we may be inspired by them, may take pride in them, as we often do with our own church edifices.

So, God turned David's idea around on him. For God instead promised the people of Israel a house. God tells David that instead he will create a 'house of David', meaning that he will establish a perpetual throne for his descendants, who will rule Israel in the days ahead! God will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own country, and be disturbed no more; and God will give them rest from all their enemies. God wanted David himself to be that house, a throne "established forever."

For Good King David did indeed extend the new nation's boundaries the farthest ever known, even to this day, from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea. He brought peace and prosperity to the people in such a way that this wandering tribe of Arameans had never known, where leaders of other great nations came to visit and see this thing that God had done, like the Queen of Sheba, so great was the wealth and riches of this now peaceful land. But alas in the end, God's dream fared poorly within the house of David.

The Second Book of Samuel tells the story of King David, and its climax isn't victory in battle, or wisdom as a ruler, or peace in the land. Its climax isn't David building a great temple for their God either. Its climax is the sordid affairs of the house of David, of David and his sons, much of which is never heard on Sunday mornings. Next week you will hear the familiar story of how Good King David was walking about on the roof of the king's house, when he saw a woman bathing and the woman was very beautiful. So, David sent messengers to get her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. But then she returned to her house, where the woman conceived; and so she sent and told David, "I am pregnant." So, David sent for her husband, Uriah, the Hittite, to be sent home from the battlefield with the Ammonites. And David asked him how the battle was going, then sent him home to lie with his wife, but he wouldn't go, and slept on David's porch with the servants. The second night David got Uriah drunk, but again he won't go home while his fellow soldiers are camping in open fields. So, David sent Uriah back to the front with a letter for General Joab: "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, so that he may be struck down and die."

In two weeks' time, you will hear that when the wife of Uriah learned that her husband was dead, she made lamentation for him. When the mourning time was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife, and bore him a son, who died a few

days after birth. For the thing that David had done displeased the Lord, and the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to David, who said: Thus says the Lord: I will raise up trouble against you (David) from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of all. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord."

You will not hear the story of David's eldest son, Ammon, the heir to the throne, who was infatuated with his half-sister, Tamar, and so he pretended to be ill, and asked his father to send Tamar to wait upon him, where against her protestations, he raped Tamar. When King David heard of this, he was very angry, but he did nothing to harm his son Ammon, for he loved him.

Meanwhile Absalom, the second in line to the throne, the brother of Tamar, plotted his revenge for the rape, and had Absalom murdered at his own table by his own servants two years later. And David mourned for his son day after day, while Absalom fled and went to live at his grandfather's house in another country. After three years, David's began to lose his abhorrence of Absalom, who was allowed to return to Jerusalem. There, Absalom, the now heir to the throne, organized a great rebellion against his father King David, who was forced to flee with his family for their very lives, to flee from the fortified capital of

the royal city of Jerusalem before the overwhelming might of these rebel forces. David's rule was obviously not as popular as we often imagine it to be. And in fleeing, David left behind 10 of his concubines to tend the Royal Palace. And since in the ancient world virility was a sign of power, Absalom took those 10 concubines of David and laid with them on the royal palace roof for all to see, much as Nathan predicted, as a sign of his virility and thus his place as the new King over Israel. But David's army fought back against Absalom's rebellion and Absalom was killed when his famous long, flowing hair got caught in a tree in the midst of battle, so that David's general Joab's men slew him. In three weeks' time, you will hear of David mourning over the loss of his son Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son, mourning over the defeat of the rebel who chased him out of town, and forgetting to go out and thank his own troops who restored David to the throne..

You will also not hear that when David became old and bedridden, his servants covered him with blankets, and still he could not get warm. So, his servants said, 'Let us get a young virgin for the king, and let her lie in his bosom, so that my lord the king may be warm.' So, we are told, the palace servants searched throughout all the territory of Israel for a beautiful girl, a sort of American Idol competition, or perhaps better yet, Who's Got Talent, and they found Abishag the Shunammite, and

brought her to the king. The girl was very beautiful, and she became the king's attendant and 'served' him, but yet even so, the king could not get warm. He had lost his virility, and without it, a king was considered powerless.

Therefore, David's third son, Adonijah, now heir to the throne, exalted himself, saying "I will be king in his place." Adonijah, we are told, was handsome and he gathered an army, and he got Joab, David's old general, and Abiathar, David's old priest, to announce their support for his royal claims. Adonijah claimed to be the new King of Israel, and the Scriptures tell us that good King David never said a word against what Adonijah had done.

But Nathan the prophet, perhaps fearing for his own life, plotted with Bathsheba to take away the crown from Adonijah. The prophet Nathan said to Bathsheba, 'let me give you some advice, so that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. Go in at once to King David, and say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your servant, saying: Your son Solomon shall succeed me as king, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then is Adonijah king?' Then while you are still there speaking with the king,' Nathan said, 'I will come in after you and confirm your words.' I will come in and say to the King, yes, yes you did say that. I heard it. So, Bathsheba did as Nathan suggested. Bathsheba and Solomon, fearing for their lives as Adonijah became King,

convinced David that he had indeed previously promised Solomon the throne, even though David never had, but David was old, and forgetful, and Bathsheba and Solomon and Nathan took political advantage of that, such that Solomon was then declared the rightful heir to the throne by King David himself and he inherited the mantle of his father, not Adonijah. And Solomon will then be the one to build a great Temple to the God of Israel, that David once longed to build, but alas, you will hear more about that, in 4 weeks' time. Amen.