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Eastminster Worship Services

Sunday, April 11, 2010

Never the Same: When the Word Changes You

Attaboy, David!

2 Samuel 7:1-17

Rev. Dr. Steven M. Marsh, Senior Pastor

Only God can do what God can do. 2 Samuel 7:1-17 occupies the theological center of the entire Samuel corpus. This is one of the most crucial texts in the Old Testament for evangelical faith. The Ark of the Covenant had been the symbol of the presence of God. But now, the promise of a temple will be the new symbol. A temple would give God a permanent residence. Whereas the Ark of the Covenant articulates God's freedom and mobility, the temple removes the danger and possibility that God might depart.

God made a covenant with David, just like he did with Noah and Abraham. God's covenants exert all his omnipotence and omniscience to do good to his people. The most practical truths any Christian can know are God is all-powerful and all-wise. Heartfelt confidence that the sovereign God is working everything together for your good out of sheer grace affects every area of your life.

God's covenants are his self-written job descriptions. In God's covenants with Noah, Abraham and now David we see the biblical proof that God does not withhold any good thing from those who walk uprightly. When God makes a covenant he reveals his own job description and signs it. In almost every case he comes to the covenant partner, lays his job description out and says, "This is how I will work for you, if you cleave to me and trust me to keep my word."

The reason I say this is the condition in almost every case is that there is at least one covenant which has no condition at all, the one with Noah. The job description God writes for himself is never again to wipe out the world by a flood but, to preserve the course of nature until the very end. The reason we know this covenant has no condition attached to it is that God made it with the animals as well as man: "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you."¹ You can't require faith from a frog. But in every other covenant which God makes he presents his job description and tells his covenant partner that he only works for those who trust him.

I will answer three questions today. First, what is God's covenant with David? Second, how is the covenant fulfilled? And third, how does the covenant with David apply to our lives today?

First, what is God's covenant with David? God promises that David's house and his kingdom will endure forever. Verse 16 states, "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever." When God promises to do something forever, all of eternity is being shaped.

Second, how is the covenant be fulfilled? God fulfills the conditions. The kingdom of David would be established and secured by a descendant. But Solomon is depicted as a sinner. The kingdom can never be secure in the hands of a sinner. 1 Kings 11 tells us that Solomon did not keep the Law. He also married foreign wives. God promises to tear the kingdom from him, but not all of it. The promise to establish David's kingdom cannot happen as long as the descendants of David are rebellious and disobedient.

The conditionality of this covenant is repeated again and again in Kings and Chronicles. In 1 Kings 2, David tells Solomon that if his sons take heed to their ways, to walk before God in faithfulness with all their heart and with all their soul, they will not fail on the throne of Israel. Then in 1 Chronicles 28, God restates that no king on the throne will fail if the sons of Solomon take heed of their walk with God.

Yet, Israel learned over the centuries that disobedience in her king always brought the nation to ruin. But the godly among them knew one thing for sure: God had promised that the throne of David would be established forever.² The people of God came to see that a son of David must be coming who would fulfill the conditions of the covenant, sit on David's throne and rule forever. A succession of imperfect kings could never fulfill the promise. If God were true to his word; if he stuck by his job description in 2 Samuel 7, then he would raise up a righteous, obedient son of David to take the throne.³

This is just what Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel promised God would do. Ezekiel looks to the future salvation of God's people by stating that God will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned and cleanse them making them his people. Jeremiah stresses that the coming king will fulfill the condition of righteousness. But it was Isaiah who saw the glory of the Son of David more clearly than anyone and virtually identified him as God. Isaiah 9:6-7 reads, "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Of the

¹Genesis 9:12

²2 Samuel 7:4

increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore.”

So the surety of the covenant with David lies ultimately in the fact that God himself will come as king and sit upon the throne. When a covenant is conditional and yet is also certain, you can be sure God himself will intervene to fulfill the conditions. The promise to David that his descendant would rule forever is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is referred to as the Son of David in Romans 1:3; as the Lord of David in Matthew 22:45; Jesus now reigns as king in heaven according to 1 Corinthians 15:25.

But the question we must raise is how does the covenant made with David apply to us? Isn't the fulfillment of the promise made to David only for the Jews, not Gentiles? The answer of the Old Testament and New Testament is a resounding NO! The reign of Jesus as Davidic king has a direct relevance for us today.

You recall that at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 the issue was whether Gentiles had to be circumcised in order to be saved. The apostles saw themselves as heirs of the Old Testament promise to Israel: the Messiah, the Son of David, had come; he had died for Israel's sin and had been raised from the dead; he ruled in heaven and was coming again to judge and reign on earth. The question at the Jerusalem Council was: could Gentiles benefit from all this without becoming Jews through circumcision? At the Council Peter told how the Gentiles had received the Spirit just like the Jews had. Paul and Barnabas told of their success among the Gentiles. Then James dealt the final blow to Jewish exclusivism with a reference to the Davidic covenant as cited in Amos 9:11-12 and its relation to Gentiles.

This means that when God said to David in 2 Samuel 7:16, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever,” he had in view a house and a kingdom much greater than Israel. The reason the Davidic covenant is relevant for 21st century American Gentiles is because God's job description which he revealed to David included not just the responsibility to establish a righteous ruler in Israel forever, but also to put that ruler over the church and then over all the world. Isaiah said that the perfect King's government and peace will have no end and it will be worldwide. Furthermore, Revelation 11:15 states that the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ will reign forever. When God has completed all the responsibilities in his job description, the house of David will be planet earth. And the subjects of the king will not just be Jews but people from every tongue and

³See Psalm 89:29-37

tribe and nation.⁴

The mission of the church today is to submit ourselves to the Son of David who right now rules invisibly from heaven until he puts every enemy under his feet. And our mission is to announce the good news to people in every neighborhood and every nation that they can be happy subjects of Christ's kingdom forever if they transfer their allegiance from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of Christ. To put it another way, personal holiness means learning the attitudes and customs of a new kingdom; the kingdom of Christ. And personal evangelism means telling people that the rightful king of the world against whom they have rebelled is willing to grant amnesty to all who return and live under his rule. And until Jesus Christ comes for his own, the worldwide mission of the church is to extend the promise of complete, free and universal amnesty to people from every nation.

I close with an invitation for you to make God's covenant with David a covenant with you. It's not just my invitation. It's God's. The point of this invitation is that the very sovereignty, wisdom and love of God, which assured David of an eternal kingdom, can also assure you of God's eternal kindness as a part of that kingdom. The very mercy and faithfulness that guaranteed David an eternal kingdom can guarantee you all the joy, righteousness and peace of that kingdom. God is saying to you this morning: if you will come to him empty-handed and hungry, willing to receive what he gives, then he will write for himself a job description and bind himself with an oath to treat you forever with the same mercy and faithfulness that he has demonstrated in his covenant with David.

Listen to the plea of the Lord Jesus himself in the last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22:16: "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning star . . . whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." Come to the Son of David, come to the King of kings, and he will sign with his own blood your personal copy of the job description he has written for himself; to be God to you. And he will give it to you as an eternal covenant, never to turn away from doing you good. Only God can do what God can do. Let us pray!

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⁴Revelation 7:9

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