



1717 BIBLE STUDIES

"Your Word Is Truth" (John 17:17)

OVERVIEW

Study: History of Israel (2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Chronicles)

Theme: A King's House

Overview: Israel reached her zenith during the reigns of Kings David and Solomon. The only reign to surpass them would be the coming of the true Son of David, Jesus Christ. This month, students will learn of the house (kingdom) of David being established, threatened, rescued, and secured.

HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

INTRODUCTION

Author

The books of Samuel do not name their author. Jewish tradition credits Samuel with the early chapters and the prophets Nathan and Gad with the rest, since “the records of Samuel the seer, the records of Nathan the prophet and the records of Gad the seer” told the events of David’s reign (1 Chronicles 29:29). Chronicles is also anonymous; Jewish tradition attributes it to Ezra the priest and scribe, and its author is often simply called “the Chronicler.”

Audience

Second Samuel was written for the people of Israel to record how God established David’s throne and kept his promises even when David failed. Chronicles retells the same history for the Jews who returned from exile in Babylon, reminding them that God’s covenant with David’s house still stood and that God’s presence was to be found in his temple in Jerusalem.

Date

David reigned about 1010–970 BC, and Solomon completed the temple around 959 BC. Second Samuel was likely written after Israel divided into two kingdoms; Chronicles was written after the exile, around 450–400 BC.

Setting

The lessons in this study take place in Jerusalem, the city of David. With Saul dead and his enemies subdued, David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and longed to build a house for God. The study moves from God’s covenant with David, through David’s sin with

Bathsheba and its consequences, to David’s final songs and the dedication of Solomon’s temple.

Theme

God builds the king’s house. David wanted to build a house for God, but God promised instead to build a house for David—a dynasty whose throne would “be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). That house was shaken by sin but rescued by God’s mercy, and it was secured when God’s glory filled Solomon’s temple. God’s promise to David is fulfilled in Jesus, the Son of David, who reigns forever (Luke 1:31-33).

Why Study 2 Samuel & Chronicles?

The story of David’s house reminds us that God keeps his promises. This study calls believers to praise God for Jesus, the Son of David; to offer a broken and contrite heart to the Lord; to make their own houses right with God; and to sing that the Lord is good and his love endures forever.

STUDY CONTENT

WEEK 1: 2 Samuel 7:8-26

WEEK 2: 2 Samuel 12:1-14

WEEK 3: 2 Samuel 22:17-25; 23:1-5

WEEK 4: 2 Chronicles 5:1-14; 7:11-16

WEEK ONE

LESSON AIM: **Praise God for Jesus, son of David.**

STUDY: History of Israel (2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Chronicles)

THEME: A King's House

LESSON TEXT: 2 Samuel 7:8-26

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Chronicles 17; Luke 1:31-32

HOUSE OF DAVID ESTABLISHED

BY MARK SCOTT

House is a word of many nuances. In our lesson text alone, it can mean home, lineage, people, temple, kingdom, place, children, ancestors, offspring, nation, and throne. David's house was ready to be established. King Saul was dead (2 Samuel 1), and David had put down his enemies (chapters 2, 5). David solidified his leaders (chapters 3–4) and brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (chapter 6). Now the time had come for David to consider building something more permanent for God to dwell in rather than just a tent (though God liked the mobility of the tabernacle—2 Samuel 7:6).

Nathan to David: A House Delayed

2 Samuel 7:8-17

Whether or not Nathan spoke presumptuously about David building a temple cannot be determined (2 Samuel 7:3). But God informed Nathan that the temple contract would not be awarded to David. That did not mean, however, that God would not establish his plan to save the world through David—in fact, it was quite the opposite. Nathan reminded this special *servant* (used six times in this text) of five major actions of the *Lord Almighty* (Lord of the army or hosts) on David's behalf. God took him from tending the flock (1 Samuel 16:11-12). God appointed David a *ruler* (prince or governor). God was with David. God cut off David's enemies and gave him rest from them. Finally, God chose to make his name great.

In addition to what God did for David, it was apparent what God would do for Israel. He would provide a place for Israel and *plant* them so they could have a home. God would see to it that no one would *disturb* (shake up) them and that their enemies could not defeat them.

David desired to build a house for God, but that task would fall to Solomon. When David died (*rest with your ancestors*) God would raise up David's *offspring* (seed) to build a house for his Name. The Jerusalem temple was just one part of God establishing his kingdom. The temple would not last forever (2 Chronicles 36:17-21; Matthew 24:1-35), but what God was establishing through David's family would be eternal. Kings, such as Solomon, may disobey (and will be punished with floggings), but God's *love* (*chesed*, i.e., his loyal love) would not be removed like King Saul was. God's covenantal love will stay in place forever, and his kingdom and throne will stay in place forever (Luke 1:31-33).

David to God: A Promise Kept

2 Samuel 7:18-26

If David was disappointed with not being able to build the temple, it cannot be discerned from this passage. He seemed humbled and overwhelmed God would have any regard for him and his descendants. David went and sat before the *Sovereign Lord* (a title that appears seven times in this text). He found it hard to conceive God would bring a shepherd boy this far. He acknowledged he was a mere human. David's self-perception was one of humiliation, but his view of God was one of exaltation. David was granted his request about God's temple being built, and that was sufficient for him. He reckoned with the fact that God would act for the sake of his own word and according to his own will.

David gave full vent to his doxology. He spoke of God's greatness and exclusivity (*no one like you and no God but you*). Then he spoke of what God had done to Israel. God had redeemed Israel from Egyptian bondage. In doing so, God had made a name for himself. Part of redeeming Israel involved *great and awesome wonders* (Exodus 7–14). But these miracles were also in play in the conquest narrated in the book of Joshua. God drove out nations and their gods so he could establish his people in the land of promise. In these great redemptive acts the Lord became their God.

God does not have amnesia. He does not need people (even kings) to remind him of his promises. But in a spirit of reverence, David requested God keep the promise to build the temple and establish the kingdom. David's true motives show up by being more concerned about God's name than his own reputation. If God established the house, then it would become clear the Lord Almighty was (and is) God over Israel, and the promise to Abraham was alive and well (Genesis 12:1-3).

Real estate agents stress the importance of location. That held true in locating the temple in Jerusalem, but only as a place for the Lord's name to sound forth through all the earth.

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EVERY STAGE OF THE JOURNEY

BY DAVID FAUST

Numbers 33:1 says, “Here are the stages in the journey of the Israelites when they came out of Egypt.” The chapter goes on to list all of the places the Israelites camped before they moved on. At first glance, a Scripture passage like this seems boring and insignificant. Why should we care if the Israelites camped at Mithkah for a while and then moved to Hashmonah (v. 29)?

I’m glad this chapter is in the Bible, though, because it reminds us that in God’s eyes, every stage of the journey matters. The Lord knows every school you have attended, every job you have had, every place you have lived, every problem you have faced. He understands the stresses you face whether you are a young adult starting your career or a senior adult grieving the death of a beloved spouse.

Every stage of your spiritual journey matters, too, whether you are a new Christian getting started in your faith or you have been walking with the Lord for decades. The Father knows where you are camped right now. He will be with you when you go through seasons of testing and when you come to the end of your earthly journey.

God Knows Your Campsite

David’s life went through many different seasons, and the Lord was his shepherd through every stage:

- a young boy, caring for the sheep on his father’s farm,
- a heralded warrior who conquered Goliath,
- a fugitive running from King Saul,
- a poet and songwriter who composed inspired psalms,
- a popular, prosperous leader who commanded armies and ruled a nation,
- a brokenhearted sinner appalled by his own failures, and, eventually,
- an old man reflecting on his life and preparing to die.

Because David was a man after God’s own heart, he kept turning back to God during every stage of his

journey.

At the pinnacle of his success, David wanted to build a house for God, but instead God promised to build a different kind of house for him. The Lord told David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Samuel 7:16). God fulfilled this promise through the dynasty of kings that descended from David. Prosperous seasons when wise kings ruled were interspersed with stormy times of social turmoil and unrest, but through every stage of the journey, God’s plan continued to unfold until in the fullness of time the Messiah was born—Jesus, the Son of David.

Remember Where You Are Headed

Have we become so embroiled in our current problems that we forget where we are going? During the Israelites’ journey through the wilderness, they camped for a while at inconsequential places like Mithkah and Hashmonah, but the Lord was moving them toward a land of milk and honey. David dreamed about building a centerpiece of worship for the Hebrews, but God had something far bigger in mind—a plan to bless people of all nations.

In the journey of life, God knows where you are camped and what your next campsite will be. The “tents” of our earthly bodies eventually will be replaced by “an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands” (2 Corinthians 5:1). As the song “Amazing Grace” reminds us, God’s grace has “brought us safe thus far, and grace will lead us home.”

Personal Challenge:

On a piece of paper or in your spiritual journal, list every place you have lived, every school you have attended, and every job you have had over the course of your life. How do you see God’s hand at work in the various stages of your journey?

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. In what ways did you make God's name known to people in your circles of influence last week?
2. What was the biggest challenge you faced over the past week?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Samuel 7:8-26** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to retell the story in their own words in a minute or less.

3. What words or phrases from this passage caught your attention? (And what is significant about those words or phrases?)
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - This passage is sometimes referred to as the Davidic covenant. What promises are made to David?
 - The word *house* is used to refer to David's palace, God's temple, and David's dynasty, which was fulfilled in Christ Jesus. What do you learn from studying this word in context of how it is used?
 - Look through the passage again and discuss how the promises affected or affect (a) David himself, (b) Israel's history up to today, and (c) the church.
 - What character attributes of David do you see in this passage?
5. What do you learn about God from his instructions through Nathan to David (vv. 8-16) and through David's prayer (vv. 18-26)?
6. What do you learn about human beings?
7. Sometimes, like David, we make our plans for how we will serve God, but God's plans, purposes, and timing may be different (see Proverbs 16:2-4; 19:21). What does this passage teach you about obedience?
8. God calls David "my servant" and David refers to himself several times in his prayer to God as "your servant." What is one way you will act as God's servant this week?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What challenge do you anticipate facing this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **2 Samuel 12:1-14** as we continue studying "A King's House." You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK TWO

LESSON AIM: **Offer a broken and
contrite heart to the
Lord.**

STUDY: History of Israel (2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Chronicles)

THEME: A King's House

LESSON TEXT: 2 Samuel 12:1-14

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 2 Samuel 11; Psalm 51

HOUSE OF DAVID SHAKEN

BY MARK SCOTT

Just when the house of David had reached its zenith, the situation was about to implode. In the spring, when kings go back to battle, David stayed home (2 Samuel 11:1). David would have been safer in a foxhole than on his balcony. The narrative begins, “David saw a woman bathing.” The narrative ends, “But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord” (2 Samuel 11:2, 27). The narrator has told us how we are to feel about the story.

In the aftermath of David’s double sin, several lessons become apparent: We should care enough for others to confront them, parables can invade secret defenses, we can be blind to our own sins, “Aha” moments can be important, sin always carries consequences, and God can always forgive.

The Parable*2 Samuel 12:1-4*

The Old Testament does not contain as many parables as the Gospels, but it does have some (e.g., Judges 9:7-15; 1 Kings 20:35-42; 2 Kings 14:9-10; Ezekiel 16:1-54; 17:2-24; 19:2-9; 19:10-14; 23:1-49; 24:3-14). But no Old Testament parable is so pointed and clear as this one by the prophet Nathan (his name means “giver,” and did he ever “give” one to the king). If someone, even a prophet, confronts the king, it is better to come through a side window than walk through the front door. So, Nathan sneaks up beside David with a parable.

Nathan compared a rich man with a *poor* man (truly needy; impoverished). The Hebrews loved contrasts, so this kind of story would gain the ear immediately. The riches of the rich man were obvious—a very large number of sheep and cattle. The poverty of the poor man was underlined by his fivefold care for his one ewe lamb (bought, raised, grew, shared food and drink, and slept in the poor man’s arms). The lamb was like a family member.

When the traveler came, the rich man stole the poor man’s lamb and offered that for his banquet. The listener’s sense of justice was immediately aroused. Everyone hearing this story wanted to cry out, “Unfair.”

The Verdict*2 Samuel 12:5-9*

David was about to slit his own throat. He *burned with anger* (to snort with one’s nostrils) and pronounced the death penalty as well as the accustomed recompense (Exodus 22:1). Nathan pointed his prophetic finger at David and said, “You are the man!” Months of cover-up

come crashing down, and David ended up in a heap in the Jerusalem oval office.

Nathan continued the verdict. First, they looked at history. Nathan reminded David that God had *anointed* (the verb for “Messiah”) him and *delivered* (rescued) him from Saul. God had also given David Saul’s house and the land of Israel and Judah. God had planned to give David even more, but that gift had been compromised.

Second, Nathan had David look inward. David’s actions indicated he had *despised* the word of the Lord. (In v. 14, the word used is *contempt*.) David had murdered Uriah by letting the Ammonites do his dirty work. There is nothing in the text that would indicate Uriah and Bathsheba were not happy together. In fact, she mourned his loss (2 Samuel 11:26-27). In addition, Uriah was not even a true Israelite. He was a Hittite (descended from Heth, the second son of Canaan), but he was a loyal soldier to David. He was more righteous in his drunkenness than David was in his deception (2 Samuel 11:10-13). The verdict was in.

The Result*2 Samuel 12:10-14*

Someone said, “Forgiveness is always possible with the Lord, but stupid is forever.” David’s double sin would have a twofold result. First, war would continue to mark David’s life. The sword would not depart from his house. David remained a man of bloodshed (a reason given later for why he would not be allowed to build the temple).

In addition to that, *calamity* (evil) would come out of his household. God repays in kind (Galatians 6:7). Since David’s sin was sexual, judgment would come in a sexual way. Part of this was manifest in Amnon’s sin with Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-22), and then Nathan predicted more sexual sin within Absalom’s rebellion (2 Samuel 16:20-22). David’s dirty laundry would be hung out for all to see.

The best part of our text is David’s confession, “I have sinned against the Lord.” Nathan assured David of God’s forgiveness, but the son born from this union would die. Psalm 51 is the drama of a changed heart. A contrite heart can gain the ear of God, who can cleanse a diseased heart.

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DO YOU HAVE A CONTRITE HEART?

BY DAVID FAUST

A veteran church leader I hold in high regard recently confided that he has been reflecting on Psalm 51 throughout the last year. At first, I felt concerned. After all, Psalm 51 contains David's heartfelt confession after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. My friend, who has been married nearly 50 years, assured me he has not been unfaithful to his wife. In his journey with the Lord, he finds himself drawn to Psalm 51 because it exposes his weaknesses and pushes him to new places of vulnerability and spiritual growth.

This great chapter contains gems like "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10) and "Restore to me the joy of your salvation" (v. 12). David reminded himself (and us) that the Lord does not despise "a broken and contrite heart" (v. 17).

What It Means to Be Contrite

There is a form of art that uses pieces of broken glass to make vases and other beautiful objects. That's what the Lord does when we bring him the broken pieces of our lives.

David's heart was broken and "contrite"—sorry, repentant, and regretful. You are contrite if you feel deep remorse and a sincere desire for redemption and forgiveness. The Hebrew *dakah* comes from a root word that meant "to crush," "shatter," or "bring very low" (as in Psalm 38:6). *The Message* version paraphrases Psalm 51:17 by saying, "I learned God-worship when my pride was shattered."

We have nothing to lose by coming clean with God. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3). To appreciate the light of his love, we need to recognize the darkness in our hearts.

How to Be More Contrite

When you think of successful people, many qualities come to mind: discipline and hard work, communication

skills, wise and magnetic leadership, business acumen, integrity of character, people skills, a winsome personality. Psalm 51 adds another quality to the list: a contrite heart. I haven't graduated yet from the school of contrition, but here are three lessons I am learning.

Get real with God. Don't try to impress him with elaborate prayers and feverish religious deeds. Don't minimize, rationalize, and explain away your sin, or try to excuse your flaws by comparing yourself to others. The real God wants to hear from the real you.

Embrace—don't resist—painful truth. David wrote Psalm 51 after the prophet Nathan confronted him with the harsh facts of his sin. Be grateful if you have faithful friends who help you confront reality by speaking the truth in love. "Better is open rebuke than hidden love" (Proverbs 27:5).

Focus on your faith more than on your failures. David's moral failures damaged his leadership and brought tragic consequences to his family, but he was not beyond the reach of redemption. After asking God to give him a pure heart and renewed joy, David declared, "Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you" (Psalm 51:13). His life—even the broken pieces—served as a positive testimony to others. We admire David's successes, but even more, let's appreciate how God made something beautiful out of David's life in spite of his glaring failures.

Personal Challenge:

Write your own prayer of confession to God, using Psalm 51 to guide your thoughts.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How did you live as God's servant over the past week?
2. What was the biggest challenge you faced last week?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Samuel 12:1-14** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask two other people, playing the parts of Nathan and David, to act out the story as best as they can.

3. What did you notice about the Bible story in addition to or different from the way our actors portrayed it?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - What prompted Nathan to go to David?
 - In what ways was King David like the rich man in Nathan's parable?
 - How was Uriah the Hittite like the poor man?
 - What emotions did David display throughout this story?
 - How did God, through Nathan, describe David's sin?
 - What consequences, both short-term and long-term, would David face?
 - What words would you use to characterize David's response?
5. What do you learn about God from this passage?
 - What do you learn about his justice and his grace?
6. What do you learn about people?
7. What does this passage teach you about the importance of obeying God?
8. In Psalm 51, which David wrote in response to the events in this story, he said, "Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you." Consider a lesson you have learned the hard way. How can you teach others about God's grace by sharing your story?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What new challenge do you anticipate facing this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **2 Samuel 22:17-25; 23:1-5**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK THREE

LESSON AIM: **Make your house right
with God.**

STUDY: History of Israel (2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Chronicles)

THEME: A King's House

LESSON TEXT: 2 Samuel 22:17-25; 23:1-5

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 2 Samuel 22:26-51; 2 Corinthians 5:21

SONG OF THE KING

BY MARK SCOTT

We move from sin (last week's lesson) to song (this week's lesson). While forgiveness is always possible when God is in the equation, the consequences of sin often linger. Second Samuel 13–21 traces some ugly consequences of David's sin. David's house and reign were filled with immorality, rebellion, death, grief, and war (particularly with the Gibeonites and Philistines).

David was an old king by now. His soldiers urged him not to go to battle lest "the lamp of Israel . . . be extinguished" (2 Samuel 21:17). Earlier, when he stayed home from battle, he sinned (2 Samuel 11:1-2). This time he turned to song. The songs from which our texts are drawn for this lesson are reflective of deliverance and righteousness, as David poetically revisited his life.

Song of Deliverance

2 Samuel 22:17-25

Some of the lyrics of this song were composed earlier in David's life. But as he reviewed his life, he remembered God's faithfulness during his reign. David sang about who God was (rock, fortress, refuge, shield, and horn—2 Samuel 22:2-3) and what power he had displayed (bowed the heavens and came down—22:5-16). Then he began to sing about God's rescue (vv. 17-20) and rewards (vv. 21-25).

David spoke about God's "rescue" twice, but he used two different words to do so. The first means "to save or pluck out." The second means "to loose or deliver." God *reached down* (a reminder of his transcendence) and took hold of David on more than one occasion. David used the metaphor of being in *deep waters* to symbolize God's rescue. Powerful *enemies* and *foes* proved too much for David's human strength. These enemies even *confronted* (came out to meet) David when he was in *disaster* (bending down in calamity). But the Lord was David's *support* and brought him to a *spacious place* (broad or wide place; a symbol of freedom and deliverance in contrast to hiding). The only reason for this rescue was that God *delighted* (took pleasure) in David.

David not only sang about God's rescue, but also about how God would reward David. David was far from perfect, but he had moments of great faithfulness. He attempted to live in righteousness. He tried to live with clean hands. He worked at keeping the laws of God, strived not to turn from God, desired to be *blameless* (innocent) before God, and kept himself from sin as

much as possible. David was conscious that God's mercy met him at the point of his efforts.

Song of Righteousness

2 Samuel 23:1-5

The rest of David's song in chapter 22 continued to celebrate who God was and what he had done. In chapter 23, the last stanza of the song is labeled, *the last words of David*. In terms of his last words of "poetry" that may well be true. The record of David's death is only chapters away. The hero of Israel's songs ("sweet psalmist of Israel," *English Standard Version*) sang his final song. The song was about God's righteousness (the third great quality of God following his love and holiness).

The word *righteousness* occurs only once in this section (while occurring twice in the previous section), but it appears in the middle (v. 3). David said some things leading up to this and some things leading away from this (the technical word for this is *chiasm*). The text leads to this idea/point, so it is the central idea. It means a sense of justice and things being made right by God. It contains wrath and mercy.

God gave David (who is identified three ways: *son of Jesse*, *man exalted by the Most High*, and *the man anointed by the God of Jacob*) this lyric (inspired utterance) about righteousness. God spoke to David so that he could speak through David to the people of Israel.

This message concerned one who rules over people in righteousness. When kings rule in the fear of God it is like sunshine and rain. The sun makes it bright, and the rain brings grass from the earth. David confessed that had his house not been right with God (i.e., a state of righteousness) three things would not have been accomplished: the *everlasting covenant* that God had made with him would have been compromised, salvation from God would not have been brought to *fruition* (to bear or spring up or cause to prosper), and David's desires would not have been *granted* (helped). Our houses too should sing songs of deliverance and righteousness.

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IS YOUR HOUSE RIGHT WITH GOD?

BY DAVID FAUST

As King David prepared to die, he made sure his house was right with God. He was confident his salvation would come to fruition because he shared with the Lord “an everlasting covenant, arranged and secured in every part” (2 Samuel 23:5).

Even royals are mortals. David’s son Solomon, who succeeded him on the throne, suggested we can learn more by visiting a funeral than by attending a dinner party. He mused, “It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart” (Ecclesiastes 7:2).

When you think about your own death, what makes you afraid? What gives you hope? Is your house right with God?

The Shadow of Death

Morticians aren’t the only ones who have a front-row seat in the theater of death. So do others, like doctors, nurses, hospice workers, EMTs, police officers, firefighters, and ministers.

I have led funerals for 100-year-olds and for 1-day-old babies. I have led memorial services in large churches attended by hundreds, and graveside services where a couple of observers stood alone in a cemetery. I’ve heard mourners say with admiration, “He lived a long, full life,” and I’ve seen lives tragically cut short while loved ones shake their heads and wonder, “Why did God allow this to happen?” I have seen individuals take their final breaths with terror in their eyes, and I have seen others approach death like relaxed travelers getting ready for a long-awaited journey home.

Death is a persistent intruder. It casts a dark shadow. It disrupts our plans and demands our attention. Whether it arrives gradually or suddenly, we can’t just shrug it off. At times, it looks like death has the final word. But if you read the Gospels, you’ll see that God has other ideas.

The Sunlight of Hope

Christ has the final word. Faith in him alters the way we view death. In Christ we “do not grieve like the rest of

mankind, who have no hope” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Yes, Jesus’ followers cry at funerals, but you can see peace in their eyes along with the tears.

Satan uses the fear of death to captivate and intimidate, but Christ liberates us to walk in the sunlight of hope. After enduring a painful and humiliating death, Christ emerged victorious three days later. He insisted, “I am the resurrection and the life,” and he promised those who believe in him that they will go on living after they die (John 11:25). For believers, the deathbed is our launching pad to glory!

Looking to the past, in baptism we already died and rose again (Romans 6:1-4; Colossians 2:12). In the present, we know that “to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). In the future, we will pack up the tents of our mortal bodies and trade them for mansions prepared by the Lord (John 14:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:1-10). Meanwhile, we can give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, knowing that because he lives, our “labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The question, *How will we die?* leads to another question: *How should we live?* King David knew the answer: “Make sure your house is right with God.”

Personal Challenge:

Have you planned your own funeral? Write down ideas to guide those who will conduct your memorial service someday. List your favorite songs and Scripture passages, and include any key lessons you have learned in life that you want to pass along to others. You may want to suggest the name of a minister you would like to preside or others you want to participate in the service. When people attend your funeral, what will you want them to hear about the Lord? After writing down your thoughts, discuss your funeral plans with a few trusted family members or friends.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Over the last week, how did you teach someone else about God's grace by sharing your story?
2. What big challenge did you face last week?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Samuel 22:17-25; 23:1-5** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask two other people to summarize David's song—the first person will summarize 2 Samuel 22:17-25 and the second 23:1-5—in their own words.

3. What do you discover about walking with God from these passages?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - A cursory reading of these passages might give you the impression David was bragging about himself or claiming self-righteousness, but neither is the case. David was praising God for helping him live blamelessly as a leader even through many challenges. In what ways did God help David live and lead?
 - What evidence of David's humility do you see?
 - What evidence of his loyalty to God do you see?
 - How else do these passages describe King David?
 - How do these passages describe God's nature?
 - The verses in chapter 23 are described as David's "last words." What would his son Solomon, who would soon become king, learn about leadership by reading these words?
 - What do you learn from these passages about righteousness, that is, being right with God?
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
6. What do you learn about people?
7. What do you learn about living a life of obedience to God?
8. What will you do so the Spirit of the Lord can and will speak through you as he spoke through David?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What new challenge or opportunity do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **2 Chronicles 5:1-14; 7:11-16**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study.

WEEK FOUR

LESSON AIM: **Sing, for he is good; his love endures forever.**

STUDY: History of Israel (2 Samuel; 1 & 2 Chronicles)

THEME: A King's House

LESSON TEXT: 2 Chronicles 5:1-14; 7:11-16

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 Kings 8

THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

BY MARK SCOTT

One thing that may well have distinguished Hebrew faith from other world religions of its time was that it was a celebratory faith. The major festivals of faith were essentially parties. Passover celebrated freedom from Egypt. Pentecost celebrated the giving of the Law and the beginnings of harvest. Tabernacles celebrated God's provisions in the wilderness.

Births, circumcisions, weddings, and even funerals were celebrated. And so were other big events in the Old Testament. One such event was the finishing of the tabernacle. When it was ready for use, God's glory inhabited it in a special way (Exodus 40:34-38). Some 450 years later, when Solomon's temple was completed, it was another occasion to celebrate.

Celebrating the Presence of God

2 Chronicles 5:1-14

The temple of Solomon was one of the grandest sites in the ancient world. It could easily have given the "seven great wonders of the ancient world" a run for their money. The temple took seven years to complete and was finished around 959 BC. It was filled with gold, silver, and bronze. King David had *dedicated* (made holy) many of the things in advance (1 Chronicles 22:14; 29:1-9). They were stored away for just the right time.

Solomon made it happen. He enlisted the elders, the heads of the tribes, and the chiefs of the families to bring the ark of the Lord's covenant (box or chest) from the old city of David up to the newly completed temple. This was all to be done during the seventh month. This was a party month—not only celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles but also the Day of Atonement. Good timing.

Even though the ark would not be carried a great distance (the old city of David sits just south of the temple area), they were going to transport it correctly this time (cf. 2 Samuel 6:1-11). The Levites were to bear it up along with the sacred furnishings. They would function both as the movers and the butchers. So many sacrifices were made that people lost count of them—though they tried to keep a record (2 Chronicles 7:4-6).

The ark was placed in the *Holy of Holies* (inner sanctuary or Most Holy Place). The priests placed the mercy seat (wings of the cherubim) on top of the ark (sending the message that mercy triumphs over judgment). The poles for carrying it extended so far that they could be seen in the Holy Place (the room just outside the Holy of Holies).

The Ten Commandments were placed inside the ark. The writer of Hebrews speaks as if the jar of manna and Aaron's rod were also inside of it, but the Old Testament never exactly said that (Hebrews 9:4; cf. Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:10).

The decibel level of this celebration must have been deafening. Consecrated priests within their Davidic divisions, the musicians among the Levites (three are mentioned by name along with their sons and relatives), and a 120-priest brass band offered up praise to God. They sang that familiar song from Psalm 136 (God is good and his "loyal love" endures forever).

Reminiscent of when the tabernacle was finished, the cloud of God and the glory of the Lord filled the temple. In fact, it so filled this new house of worship there was room for no one else. The word *ark* occurs nine times in this chapter. It symbolized God's presence, which is something to celebrate.

Celebrating the Name of God

2 Chronicles 7:11-16

The ark and all the temple furnishings were magnificent. This moment certainly was a high-water mark in Israelite history. Solomon blessed the people (2 Chronicles 6:1-11) and dedicated the temple with prayer (6:12-42). God affirmed it all by allowing fire to fall from heaven (7:1-3). The people sacrificed animals and consecrated themselves to the Lord (7:4-10). But more important was that the Name of God was attached to this sacred space. If God's name was there that meant his person, power, and glory also were there. He said his name would be there forever. In fact, even his eyes, ears, and heart would be there (vv. 15-16)—no small thing.

The Lord appeared to Solomon in the night and reminded him of the covenant and the conditions of keeping the law. The absence of rain, the presence of locusts (see Joel), and plagues would remind the people of their unfaithfulness. But if they would *humble* (bring low or subject) themselves, pray, and seek his face and turn from their *wicked* (evil) ways, then God would hear, forgive, and heal. Celebrating the name of God in the place of God will remind one of the goodness and love of God.

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WHY BOTHER?

BY DAVID FAUST

It takes a lot of time and money to keep churches, missions, and other faith-based nonprofits operating. Think of all the boards, budgets, and buildings. Paid staff. In-person and online worship services. Sermons, newsletters, blogs, and podcasts. Conferences, retreats, training sessions, and business meetings. Is it worth the effort? Is this really what the Lord's work is all about?

I love the church, but I crave a higher purpose than just keeping the machinery going. "Business as usual" doesn't light my fire. When the church's quirks get on my nerves and weariness drains my enthusiasm, three motivators remind me why serving the Lord is worth the effort.

Three Reasons to Keep Believing and Serving

Logic demands it. I still have a thousand questions about my faith, but I can't escape the reasonable evidence that undergirds it. Science and nature, morality and justice, history and archaeology, fulfilled prophecy, and the positive example of faithful believers reinforce my confidence in God and the Bible. My faith isn't grounded in imperfect people and religious organizations. I have placed my past, present, and eternal future into the hands of a deceased and reanimated Jewish carpenter. I believe Jesus of Nazareth came back to life three days after dying on the cross, so logic compels me to follow him. Jesus' resurrection filled his first-century followers with contagious, uncontrollable hope that overflowed spontaneously onto others. The Holy Spirit gave them an unstoppable sense of purpose. They kept believing, serving, and preaching in spite of hardship and persecution. Simon Peter had weaknesses of his own and at times he felt frustrated with other disciples, but he rightly said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

Love requires it. I have seen God's love at work. Not always. And not often enough. But I have seen the church at its best. And it's a beautiful thing when followers of Christ care for the lonely, feed the hungry, heal the sick, nurture impoverished children, restore shattered marriages, and teach God's Word with passion and relevance. Who wouldn't want to be part of that? From conception to the cemetery, God's love moves us to care for our neighbors next door and for strangers far away who need to be reconciled with their Creator. "Christ's love compels us" (2 Corinthians 5:14) to share the gospel of peace.

The Lord deserves it. Solomon's workers spent seven long years building the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6:38). This project cost an enormous amount of planning and money. Was their hard work worth it? Years later the Babylonians destroyed the temple and carried the Jews into exile. Were Solomon's efforts wasted? No. Worshipers rightly celebrated the completion of the temple.

[They] joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the Lord was filled with the cloud . . . for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God (2 Chronicles 5:13-14).

The people weren't always good, but God was (and is). Kings like Solomon weren't always wise and loving, but God was (and is). The temple took years to build and eventually it was torn down, but for a time it was filled with the glory of God, who deserves all praise.

Today, the church is God's dwelling place. Yes, there are imperfections in this temple. Lots of things would be better undone (or done differently). There are things the church needs to streamline, simplify, or simply stop doing. But in the meantime, do we see God's glory dwelling in our midst like a bright cloud? Are we willing to keep believing and serving because our minds, hearts, and souls are convinced of the logic behind our faith, the love that drives our service, and the worthiness of God that inspires our worship?

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

Personal Challenge:

What motivates you to keep serving the Lord? What keeps you going in spite of frustration and disappointment? On a piece of paper or in your personal journal, write down your own list of the reasons you refuse to quit following Jesus.

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QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How did the Spirit of the Lord speak through you to someone last week?
2. What new challenge or opportunity did you experience last week?

Ask two people to read aloud **2 Chronicles 5:1-14; 7:11-16** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to retell the story from these passages in a minute or less.

3. Imagine you witnessed the events described in 2 Chronicles 5. Describe the sights and sounds of the day.
 - What stood out to you from the verses in 2 Chronicles 7?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - Who were involved in the events of chapter 5?
 - How would you describe the demeanor of the people as the ark was carried into and placed in the temple?
 - How did God respond to Solomon's temple-dedication prayer?
 - How would God get the attention of his people when they were unfaithful to him?
 - Who specifically was God speaking about in 7:14? (Look at the verse in the context of which it was written.)
 - What promises did God make in regard to the temple?
5. What do you learn about God from these passages?
 - What do you learn about how God responds to our humble and sincere prayers?
6. What do you learn about how you should respond when you are unfaithful to God?
7. What do these passages teach you about obeying God?
8. What do you learn from the elders and priests about how to serve God?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What new challenge or opportunity do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: This week's lesson brings this unit of study to a conclusion. Look for additional "1717: Your Word Is Truth" studies, for use with your Sunday School classes, small groups, or personal studies, at ChristianStandard.com.