

Group Study Outline

2 Samuel 7:1-17

Theme Sentence

Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promises to king David.

Launching Question

What sort of promises do we make? How good are we at keeping them?
2 Samuel 7 is all about God making promises that he will keep.

Questions

(based on The Good Book Guide: [David- God's true king](#) pp 15-17)

READ 2 Samuel 7:1-17

Describe David's situation at the start of this chapter.

What is the unspoken meaning behind what David says in v2?

How do the following verses prove that Nathan's reply in v3 is wrong?

What does this teach us about human rulers?

What do we learn about God in v5-7? what should we remember when we're keen to 'do something for God'?

What does God promise to David personally (8-9, 11b)?

What does God promise about David's descendant (12-16)?

What does God promise to his people (10)?

Pause to marvel at the cast-iron security of this promise: death does not annul it (12-13), sin cannot destroy it (14-15), time will not exhaust it (16). You can smash Jerusalem and cart exiles to Babylon, but you can't break God's 'forever'!

We're going to think more about how God kept these promises:

What is the temple that would be built (2, 5-7)?

(see 1 Kings 8:17-19 and John 2:19-21)

Who would be the son whose kingdom would last forever (13)?

(see Mark 1:11 and Revelation 5:13)

How and why would the son be punished (14)?

(see 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13)

How and why would God's everlasting love be shown to the son (15)?

(see John 10:17 and Romans 1:4)?

How would God's promise to his people (in 10-11a) be fulfilled?

(see Revelation 21:1-4, 22-27)

Both these questions are not straightforward ...!

Now that we've seen the promises of 2 Sam 7, and that Jesus fulfils all those promises, how should that affect how we read all the stories of 2 Kings?
If all 2 Kings is pointing us to the true King Jesus, why are there so many stories?!

Thinking it through

Do we really believe that God has this kind of all-time plan that covers all history (eg, that everything from Henry VIII to the Iraq war are part of his purpose)?

Given this fact, what does it mean to say that we 'trust' him?

Pray together, thanking God for fulfilling each of his promises to David in Jesus.

Introduction to 2 Kings



The bigger picture

Our approach to 2 Kings is to fit this 350-year history into the much bigger, whole **Bible story of God's salvation plan**. So the key to the books of 1 and 2 Kings are these two 'bookends':

- the promises God makes in 2 Samuel 7:4-17;
- Jesus, the King-for-ever, who fulfils those promises of 2 Samuel 7.

We read the stories of 2 Kings recognising that every king in Israel's history is not this promised king. Even the best of them fails (if only at the point when he dies, so that the 'for ever' promise remains unfulfilled).

Since the king represents the nation, his behaviour is a microcosm of the whole, a thermometer to take the spiritual temperature of Israel. And we discover that Israel is in decline, and exile is inevitable at the end.

So where is this promised king? For the writer of 2 Kings (one of the 'former prophets') and for all the prophets (including the writing prophets, the 'later prophets'), he is still to come. For us, he has come, and his name is Jesus.

[NS]

Theme Sentence

Jesus is the fulfilment of God's promises to king David.

Application

Our 'Biblical theology' approach to 2 Kings means that, when it comes to application, we're not really looking to the kings or the prophets for examples of how we should or shouldn't behave. There may be times when they do the right or wrong thing, but this is not being told to us so that we copy them, or not. As in every bit of the Bible, we want to marvel at what God has done/is doing in fulfilling his promises rather than thinking: 'there are good kings and bad kings, and I must try to be like a good king'. Better questions are: what is God doing? why is he doing it? how do we respond?

- all history (in other words, everything that ever happens, ever) is within God's purposes. He will always achieve what he says he will, and nothing takes him by surprise or throws him off course.
- even human failures and sin (including things we might want which aren't necessarily wrong in themselves, but which we want out of wrong motives) don't interrupt what God plans to do in this world.
- Jesus is wonderful ... the centre-piece of God's all-time, everywhere plan for the world. He is the King who will reign for ever and ever and ever.

Introduction to studying 2 Kings

1 and 2 Kings is about the **steady decline** of the nation of Israel, from the high point of the monarchy (under David and Solomon), through division into two independent kingdoms, to exile. Together, they cover the period of about 450 years when God's people were not just a nation, but also a monarchy.

There was **nothing wrong with the idea of Israel having a king**. God had anticipated it right back in Deuteronomy 17:14-29. What was wrong is that, in demanding a king (1 Sam 8:1-9), Israel contradicted two crucial things:

- in wanting to be 'like the other nations' (1 Samuel 8:5), **they denied their calling to be a 'holy nation'** (Exodus 19:3-6), different from the people around them;
- in their desire for a human leader, **they denied the Lord's kingship**, 'rejecting me as king' (1 Sam 8:7).

These two denials did not make kingship wrong in itself. 1 and 2 Samuel present a clear contrast to help us understand what ideal kingship could be like ... Saul represents the folly of Israel's request, while David represents God's choice and pattern. A really good place to see the comparison is in the confrontation with Goliath: Saul (and all Israel) cowers in a tent, while David acts with confidence in the God of the covenant, Israel's warrior who fought for her, and in whom she only had to trust to secure victory.

To understand God's perspective on the idea of Israel having a king, we must turn to **2 Samuel 7:4-17**. Here we see that all **God's promises to Israel are now focussed onto the king** as their representative: he is the 'son', where previously the nation was called God's son (compare Exodus 4:22 with 2 Sam 7:14). God underlines the covenant promises he made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 (in 2 Sam 7:9-11), and then promises a future king who is far greater even than David (in 2 Sam 7:11-16). The pinnacle of these remarkable promises is that **David's line will rule God's people forever**. It becomes clear that the future of the covenant depends on this future king. God will fulfil his promises through this great son of David, who is also a son of God.

It is in Solomon's reign that **this glorious Israelite kingdom peaks** (eg 1 Kings 4:20ff). The reader should be thinking: maybe this is the greater-than-David king whose kingdom will last forever. But no sooner is it 'established' (1 Kings 2:46) than Solomon makes a foolish (and disobedient) marriage alliance with Egypt (3:1), which sets the pattern for his downfall (11:1-2). Solomon dies by the end of this chapter: the 'forever' promise isn't even near being fulfilled!

But the reason why Solomon dies should also be traced back to the other significant promise that God makes to David in **2 Samuel 12:10-12**. Since David 'despised' the Lord by taking Bathsheba to be his wife, 'the sword shall never depart from your house' (presumably referring to the same 'house' that God promised he would 'make' David in 2 Sam 7:11). And all of 2 Kings shows the outworking of that promise as the sword divides that house, again and again: a flood of calamity flows from the bedroom of David and Bathsheba, and the royal family is racked by family feuds, rivalry and murderous ambition like the sleaziest of TV soaps!

So we read 2 Kings shaking our heads in disbelief as we ask again and again: is this the great king through whom God will establish the eternal house? No. It is yet another pathetic imitation.

The way that the writer chiefly assesses each king is according to **how well he acknowledged the Lord's kingship** (and encouraged Israel to do the same). This is measured by a simple litmus test from Deuteronomy 12: how well did he maintain the purity and centrality of Jerusalem and its worship?

The 'high places', or rival places of worship, are so significant for exactly this reason: permitting any other place of worship (however well intentioned the motive for this may be) is a denial of following what the Lord had proscribed (- even it's worship of him, it's not done in the way that he has said it should be). If this is the test, then every northern king fails it, and, of the twenty southern kings, only two (Josiah and Hezekiah) get a clear vote of approval, with another six getting a 'so-so' vote.

The king represents the nation, so his behaviour is a microcosm of the whole: he is like a thermometer to take the spiritual temperature of Israel. So, 1 and 2 Kings is about **the steady decline of the nation of Israel**, from the high point of the monarchy (under David and Solomon), through division into two independent kingdoms. The books end with such deterioration in both nations that they are in exile (and now the northern kingdom simply slips from view), with the southern king released from exile but ironically enjoying the Babylonian's favour, feeding on defiled food in a pagan's palace. You could say that Israel has become so 'like the other nations' that she is indistinguishable!

Alongside the kings, there is another character: the prophet. As 'covenant enforcement officer', it is his job to bring God's word of direction, encouragement or rebuke. In the theocracy (or 'God-ruled kingdom') that Israel is supposed to be, God exercises his rule by this word, calling king and nation back to the covenant by his prophet. Frequently, we're told that it all happened 'just as the Lord had said'. **The prophet is 'above' the king** (as is symbolised every time that the king is anointed by the prophet).

In the dark days at the end of the OT period, a main function of **the prophet is to keep alive the hope of 2 Sam 7**, that the Israelites will one day live under a just king. It's not just the speaking prophets in 2 Kings, but the writing prophets too (eg Amos, Isaiah, etc) who **point forward to The King** who was always in God's mind in 2 Sam 7, and who we now know is named Jesus.

If we do not **look forward to the arrival of Jesus** on the stage of world history, we miss the point of the book. It is no accident that the NT opens with:

- a family tree that connects Jesus to God's promises (to Abraham and to David) and the failure of the nation exiled to Babylon (Matt 1:1-17).
- wise men asking Israel's king 'where is the true king?' (Matt 2:2) for that is the question we've been asking all through 1 and 2 Kings!
- someone whose birth we're repeatedly told is in explicit 'fulfilment' of God's promise of a king through the prophets (Matt 1:23; 2:6; 2:15; 2:17; 2:23; 3:3 etc).
- someone being taunted by the devil for being the Son of God (4:3, 6).

In other words, Matthew is saying: **here is The King** you've been waiting for.