

The **HEIR** to the Throne

2 Samuel 7:11b-13

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This week, a set of famous photos was released to the public. They may not have been of much interest to you, but many "across the pond" took special note. The photos were the engagement pictures of Prince Harry and his fiancée Meghan Markle.

Queen Elizabeth II - Charles, Prince of Wales - Prince William, Duke of Cambridge - Prince George, the son of the Duke of Cambridge - his sister, Princess Charlotte - and finally, Prince Harry of Wales. The line of succession for the British Crown, the order in which members of the royal family would come to the throne when the reigning king or queen dies.

The Israeli crown also had its line of succession. As the book of 2 Samuel begins, David is publicly anointed king of Israel. By the time we get to chapter 7, he's sitting on top of the world, king over all of Israel. Jerusalem is now the capital and is renamed "the City of David". David is, as it says at the beginning of the chapter, "settled in his house/palace", the

ancient equivalent of the White House, the physical location of national power.

And as David sits comfortably in his palace, his thoughts turn to another dwelling ... the tabernacle, the place of God's dwelling amongst his people. God's *mailing address* on earth. God dwelt with them in the Ark of the Covenant, in the holy of holies, in the tabernacle, a tent. God's living in a tent, while David's living in a palace. Something seemed wrong about that picture? And David's going to do something to correct this terrible wrong.

After the king was settled in his palace and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent." Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the Lord is with you." But that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying:

"Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my

dwelling. Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"

With only hours remaining to finish your Christmas shopping, you might still be wondering, "What do I get for the person who has everything?" Like David, you might want to do something for God, to serve Him, to please Him. And that's a good thing. But how easy it is to fall into the thinking that the Christian faith is mostly about us doing stuff for God. Working hard and doing our best for Him, especially now, in this season of giving.

But with God, the real gift giving question is not "What do you give the One who has everything?", but "What does the One who has everything, give to you?"

"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. And I will provide a place for my people

Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.

"The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Kings are always in danger of what? Being thrown *off* their throne. Their days are always numbered, either through an overthrow or through death. They won't reign forever! They're concerned about what's going to happen to their kingdom. Who's going to ascend to the throne next? And what will happen to their heir?

God reminds David that it was He who took him out of the pasture, from following the sheep, and made him ruler of all Israel. God has been with David, wherever he

went. And it was God who gave David's enemies into his hands. "God", David said, "I want to do something for you. Give you a gift." God says, "I've got something far better. A gift for you." An *heir*, who will rule, *forever!*

But David's throne, his royal lineage, didn't last forever. Not even close. Like every other empire that rises, and then falls, so too did Israel eventually fall to the Babylonians. And never again did a king with David's blood in his veins rule the Promised Land.

(author unknown)

But didn't God promise, "*I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*"?

God promises that one of David's sons will reign in David's place and will build a house for God. Who eventually built the first temple in Jerusalem? David's son Solomon. God's promise *begins* with Solomon, but goes far beyond him and his imperfection.

What does God say after Solomon turns from Him, and marries foreign women, and worships their gods? "*The Lord said to Solomon,*

'Since this has been your mind and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.'

(1 Kings 11)

Israel learned over the centuries following David and Solomon 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. It became clear that a succession of imperfect kings could never fulfill the promise. Not a chance. If God were to be true to his word, if He stuck by his Promise, he would have to raise up a righteous, obedient son of David to take the throne (see Psalm 89:29-37). (author unknown)

The prophet Jeremiah said,
"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his

days Judah will be saved and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness!'"

(Jeremiah 23, 33)

And as Isaiah said, "For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given ... Of the 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."

David wants to give back to God. But more than that, God wants to give to him. Our giving is always outdone by God's giving. *God is love.* And to love, is to what? To give.

The Bible is a written record of God's giving. A record of God's giving promises and keeping promises. And it's a record of man's promise breaking ... from the Israelites, to David and Solomon, to the disciple Peter, to you and me.

God so loved ... that He gave. He gave a promise - to Adam and Eve, to Abraham and his descendants, to King David, to Zechariah (father to John the Baptist), to Joseph in a dream, to young Mary, to old Simeon, to you.

Mary was greatly troubled at his words, and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." ... therefore the child to be born will be called holy - the Son of God. (Lk 1)

As the Apostle Paul preached in Acts 13, " ... After removing Saul, [God] made David their king. ... From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised."

The Heir to the throne doesn't enter with the usually fanfare, pomp, and majesty, but in the still of a Judean night. Not dressed in royal finery, but wrapped in swaddling clothes. He grows, not to lead armies in battle, but to preach, and heal, and serve, and especially, to die for your sins. A cursed cross becomes his throne. The charge of "criminal" *his* title, instead of yours. A borrowed tomb, His royal burial chamber.

(author unknown)

It's the season for giving. With God, the real question isn't, "What do you give the One who has everything?", but "What does the One who has everything, give to you?" *"See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down! Did e'er such love and sorrow meet? Or thorns compose so rich a crown?"*

(from When I Survey the Wondrous Cross)