

GSM – 22nd June 2014 –

2 Samuel 7

7 years ago to this day I left Egypt – which marked the end of a journey which had lasted for Louise and I for 22 years.

This chapter also records the end of a journey - 450 years have passed since the Ark and its tent were prepared and erected at the foot of Mt Sinai in Egypt – and it has finally arrived in Jerusalem.

How many times do you think it had been erected and stowed away during this painfully slow journey.

This is a journey, according to Google Maps, of 308 miles and today ‘apparently’ takes 6 hours 44 mins to make – with the addition of the border crossing – which can 2 hours!

If they took the direct route – this equates to the approximate speed of 5 inches per hour – the ark would therefore be eating the dust of any passing caterpillar!

The People of Israel have travelled on a mammoth 850 year journey (since moving down to Egypt) and they have had many ups and downs and countless battles fighting against numerous enemies.

Finally the King of God’s choice has arrived, peace and rest have broken out and the ark and tent are ready to enter Jerusalem. So David wants to prepare a building for them – wants to honour God by preparing a permanent house, or temple, for the ark and furniture of the tent.

So first of all we have to consider – what is the meaning of the ark and tent?

The concept of tent and temple – both are called a tabernacle – which is called ‘mishkan’ and means a residence, dwelling or home. We learn from this that God’s home is in the midst of his people – it is a sign revealing God’s desire to live in relationship with his people – that he is not only a God who is utterly different from us – distant, mighty, mysterious, unfathomable, holy – but he is also a God who is near at hand, present, approachable, understandable. We learn this from the first pages of scripture where he is walking in the cool of the day in the garden with Adam and Eve and we discover that actually all through scripture God walks with his people, meets with them, even eats with them, leads them, interacts with them. This did not start with the incarnation of Jesus 2000 years ago – but this is the reality experienced by believers through all ages.

So where does God live? – can he be found anywhere - or are there special places where his presence rests? What about ‘holy places’ Cathedrals, places of pilgrimage – Mt Sinai and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are two such places revered by Christians. However I did not experience any special sense of God by merely being in these places.

The truth is that God can be found anywhere – usually the condition is a seeking heart – I will be found when you seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:11).

23 years ago I attended revival meetings that were breaking out all over Cairo in different homes every day – his presence was heavy in any place they prepared a meeting – this went on for more than one year continuously.

But still we can ask the question - are there special places where God lives – or where his presence can be felt? Is GSM here in BG a special place that holds God’s presence. Not sure – the scriptures do indicate that the Lord dwells in the midst of the praises of his people – so where he is lifted up in a real way and on a regular, basis we should perhaps expect his presence to be tangible.

Another way of looking at this is the kinds of prayers or hopes, dreams and expectations that are offered to God in a place. 1500 years ago 4 miles away from my house a missionary

Celtic community was established which was the first mission station in our region – today the local Golf club is named after it! The area then became Christian and the church was established all over, 1400 years later and 5 miles in another direction God poured out his spirit from a small school room in Loughor which kicked off possibly the most powerful outpouring of His spirit this nation has ever known. Prayers were poured out to God for Wales and the nations – missionaries were sent all over the world. Seventy years later, and only 2 miles away from Monk's island, a man began to pray a 5 years prayer – Lord give me your work to do? World Horizons was born out of this – in the intervening 35 years 1000's of missionaries have been sent out of this place to unreached parts of the world.

Have you ever felt that perhaps we are a part of a much bigger plan than we realise – that actually – we are the answer to prayers that others have prayed? Or from another perspective – what prayers are we praying here and now that will reach down through future generations and others will fulfil? What prayers and dreams are we stretching out that frame a bigger tent in both time and space – that reach beyond our simple and limited lives and yet create space for many others and other generations to inhabit and dwell in?

Let us move on to the response of God to David's desire to build a house for him.

He responds and says to David – I will build a house for you!

Read v11b – 16

“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 for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. our house and your kingdom shall endure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.”

The Lord is painting a picture, in one breath, for David - which contains different layers of meaning.

First of all he is talking in the immediate future – he is talking about **Solomon** – a son who is yet to be born from David – when he does wrong he will be punished – yet God will not take away his love from Solomon.

Secondly he is talking about another King who will build a Kingdom which will last for ever – this cannot be Solomon – whose Kingdom did eventually fail. Also God declares that this King will be **his Son** and he will be **his Father!**

Let us recap a little here:

The Lord was angry with the people of Israel - because hidden inside their desire to have a human king and human kingdom in order to be like other nations – there was a rejection of the Lord to be their King and his Kingdom to be their Kingdom. The Lord however gave them their desire and at the same time made it a sign pointing towards the nature of God's eternal King and Kingdom.

First of all in the comparison between King Saul and King David – we find that God does not choose as man chooses – Saul was mostly concerned about what men thought – David was a man after God's heart.

Man chooses someone who looks good on the outside – one who ends up being a people pleaser. God chooses someone who is a right on the inside – one whose desire is to please the **audience of one.**

In the time of Jesus – they were still looking for the kind of King and saviour who would deliver them from the Romans – that was why they did not immediately recognise Jesus the carpenter as King - just as in David's day they did not recognise David the shepherd as God's chosen king.

Nothing has changed today – people are still looking in the wrong direction – for the wrong kind of king or leader! And like with Saul - usually God gives them the kind of leader that they desire.

Also man's kingdom is not the kind of kingdom that God has in mind. We have had 2000 years of proof that when human power and spiritual power get mixed up we do not end up with the kind of Kingdom that God desires.

But the kingdom he was talking about was not of this world – it is a kingdom which is declared all across the planet by people living out, in community, the costly life of Jesus wherever they are.

We can describe this as an upside down Kingdom

Where:

- **the last will be first – the first will be last**
- **to live is Christ, to die is gain**
- **turn the other cheek**
- **love your enemies**
- **pray for those who persecute you**
- **blessed are the:**
 - poor**
 - hungry**
 - depressed**
 - thirsty**
 - humble**

The last thing to mention here is that these verses are truly astonishing in that – in the reign of King David through the prophecy of Nathan – we have the first spoken revelation of God being **a Father and a Son**.

We have already been given a picture of this through the life and prophetic acts of Abraham and Isaac on Mt Moriah – but this is the first time that we have the words Father and Son mentioned.

David echoes this again in Psalm 2:

**I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.
You are my Son, today I have become your father.
Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance
The ends of the earth your possession.
You will rule them with an iron sceptre
You will dash them to pieces like pottery
Therefore you kings be wise, be warned you rulers of the earth.
Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.
Kiss the Son – lest he be angry for his wrath can flare up in a moment
Blessed are all who take refuge in Him.**

The relationship and love of the Father for the Son and Son for the Father is an embrace which we are invited to enjoy – for the Father so loved the world that he sent his only Son – we are not merely given an escape from the consequences of our rebellion – we are invited join in and become a part of this divine family as Peter says in 2 Peter

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

Conclusion

David had overcome all his enemies, and was established as king in Jerusalem, peace had finally arrived and he was in a period of rest. He was dreaming of building a house for God, however the Lord had something much larger in mind – the revelation of THE KING and the extent and eternal duration of his Kingdom.

Prayer of Sir Francis Drake –

*Disturb us, Lord, when we are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true because we have dreamed too little,
When we arrived safely because we sailed too close to the shore.*

*Disturb us Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst for the waters of life;
We have ceased to dream of eternity and, in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision of the new Heaven to dim.*

*Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly to venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.
We ask you to push back the horizons of our hopes; And to push into the future in strength,
courage, hope and love.*