

An Eternal Kingdom

Key Verse: *“Thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”*
—II Samuel 7:16

Selected Scripture:
II Samuel 7:4-16

DAVID'S FIRST SIX YEARS

as king of Israel were spent resisting the nation's enemies and enlarging its borders in harmony with divine instruction. Having accomplished much of this work, David built a new palace in Jerusalem. However, his reverential character caused David to notice an inconsistency. He had built his new palace while the Ark of God, the symbol of God's presence, still remained

housed in the Tabernacle. Desiring to give some outward expression of his gratitude, David conceived a plan to construct a house for the Lord where the symbol of his presence might permanently reside.

David properly consulted with the Prophet Nathan, who rejoiced in this manifestation of the king's loyalty to God, and endorsed his plan. That same night, however, the Lord gave Nathan a message for the king which forbade him from going forward with this project. This was not because God did not appreciate David's desire to honor him, but rather to let David know it was not yet time for a permanent structure to be built. The Lord showed David that the work of establishing Israel in the land of promise must first be completed by taking full possession and destroying all of their enemies. This work would take the entire reign of King David. The Lord assured him, however, that in due time a permanent

temple would be built, and that his son should erect it.

Upon closer examination, we find that our Key Verse has a twofold application. David's son, Solomon, did indeed build the Temple his father had envisioned, but his reign eventually came to an end, along with its glory, and the Temple was eventually destroyed. The everlasting house and kingdom refers not to Solomon's reign, but to that of the "root and . . . offspring of David," our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rev. 22:16) The "temple" in that eternal kingdom will be Jesus and his church, which is being "constructed" throughout the Gospel Age, and which is prefigured in David's reign. Despite being a man after God's own heart, David could not envision the details of God's plan for establishing the coming eternal kingdom and the preparation of the living stones for the spiritual temple.

We find important lessons in this incident. The Lord's people must not conclude that because their plans and projects are reverential and designed to be for the glory of God, they have automatic divine approval. The words of the Prophet Isaiah should always be our guide in serving God: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:9) If, after prayerful consideration and proper consultation with other spiritual Israelites, we do not find the Lord's approval in our plans to serve him in some matter, let us quietly acquiesce to his will and cooperate fully according to his superior ways. In so doing we will demonstrate our complete trust in following divine guidance in all of our affairs.

Another lesson found in this account refers to the construction of elegant church buildings where God might be worshipped. While many seek to emulate David's desire to build a grand temple, the Apostles and the Early Church found no such divine instruction, and they met in simple accommodations. May our desire to praise God not be found in fancy places of worship, but in the heart-felt desire to bring glory to his name. ■