

## Discuss – questions to help understanding

1. Where do you or other people you know get your sense of significance from?

*Read 2 Samuel 7*

2. Why did David want to build a permanent house for the ark of the covenant (verses 1-2)? What does this say about David's view of God?
3. What does God remind David of about the history of Israel and what does He promise to the people at this point in their story (verses 4-11)?
4. Just as God had cared for Israel and brought the nation from obscurity to significance, so He had done for David. Why might David's history as a shepherd have been a good starting helpful for his role as God's king?
5. David cannot build a house for God (that task will belong to his son), but God promises to build a different kind of 'house' for David – a dynasty of kings. What promises does God make concerning David's descendants and what kind of relationship does He say He will have with them (verses 11-16)?
6. What kind of relationship with God does David's prayer reveal (verses 18-29)? How does this prayer serve as an example of the right attitudes to have towards God?
7. According to David's prayer what made him and Israel significant?

## Apply – questions to help personal application

- Do you struggle with the idea of God commanding the Israelites to take the land of Canaan and drive out its people? Does God have the right to make a decision like this?
- The period of the judges demonstrates the pattern of Israel crying out to God in times of trouble but forgetting Him when times were easier. Does that reflect your attitude to God in any way?
- The choosing of David reminds us of God's knowledge of people's hearts. What does God see in your heart? Does His choosing of David and promises to him give you any encouragement about God's view of you?
- David, despite his great achievements, saw himself as a sinful man in need of God's forgiveness and a weak sheep in need of a Shepherd. Is that how you see yourself? If not, why not? If so, how should you respond?
- What lessons can you learn from Solomon, a gifted man who served God well but then was distracted away by his own desires and the influence of women he loved or lusted after?

### ***Was it because of his ancestry or qualities that God chose David?***

David was the son of a man called Jesse, who was a descendant of Judah, making him a suitable fulfilment of the prophecy within Jacob's blessing of Judah that the sceptre would not depart from his family (Genesis 49:10). The choice of David as king does, however, exemplify the same pattern seen in Abraham's family (Part 4) of God subverting expectations. David was the youngest of eight brothers and his father saw him as relatively insignificant (1 Samuel 16). His ancestors also included some unorthodox people, especially three women who are worthy of note: Tamar, who was neglected by her father-in-law Judah after her husband died and had to pretend to be a prostitute to force him to give her a son (Genesis 38); Rahab, the Canaanite woman who sheltered the spies sent by Joshua to her city of Jericho (Joshua 2); and Ruth from Moab who stayed true to her mother-in-law Naomi after her husband died (Ruth). David grew to be a man of exceptional qualities as a military leader, a composer of songs of praise and a ruler, but when God chose him it was a demonstration of His grace and power as well as of His knowledge of the hearts of people (1 Samuel 16:7).

### ***How can a good God use bad people?***

The historical accounts in the Old Testament should be read with caution. They contain many examples of imperfect people (after all there were no other kind of people) used by God to accomplish His purposes. We should only take them as examples to follow if the text tells us God approved of them or if their actions align with His Law. God is sovereign – He rules over everything – and He can use flawed and even evil people to accomplish His eternal purposes. This was true in Abraham's family, in the judges and kings of Israel, and in the surrounding nations who often opposed Israel. This does not mean God approves of these people – He will judge all people fairly according to His standards – but that He is always in control through every situation.

### ***Why is Jerusalem such a famous and contentious place today?***

Jerusalem has special significance in the Bible. David made it his capital and Solomon built the Temple there. It was close to the city that Abraham had offered his son Isaac to God (Genesis 22). The psalms refer to it by the name Zion as God's city, from which His glory shines, for example Psalm 48:1-2: "the city of our God, which sits on his holy mountain [...] is high and magnificent; the whole earth rejoices to see it! Mount Zion, the holy mountain, is the city of the great King!" The fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in 586 BC were a provoked great mourning for the Israelites (see Lamentations) and indicated the final collapse of a kingdom that had long been in terminal decline. The glory of God, that had been in the Temple, departed from the city with the people's rejection of God's covenant (Ezekiel 11:22-25). The prophets expressed their love for the city (e.g., Isaiah 62) and spoke of the Messiah coming to Jerusalem riding on a Donkey to reign on David's throne (Zechariah 9:9) and of the restoration of the city (e.g., Isaiah 44:21-28; Zechariah 2).

Many of the significant events in Jesus' ministry occurred around Jerusalem, especially His confrontations with the religious leaders and the events of Holy Week (Part 15). It was also in Jerusalem that the Church was born as the apostles received the baptism in the Holy Spirit and from there they began to spread the message about Jesus (Part 18). The writer to Hebrews describes the people of God as "Mount Zion [...] the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (12:22) and Revelation 21 describes John's vision of the bride of the Lamb appearing like a city. In this 'new Jerusalem' the people of God from Old and New Testaments are united as one (verse 12 says the gates bear the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, while the foundations bear the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb according to verse 14). There is no Temple in the new Jerusalem because God and the Lamb inhabit the whole city (v22).

Jerusalem has been a very significant place throughout history and continues to be in the headlines often today. The main reason for this is that it is a significant place for three of the great religions of the world. Jews revere it as a holy place, especially the Wailing Wall, which is the main remaining wall of the Temple (the western wall of the enclosure it was located in). Christians have many significant sites in it associated with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Muslims also revere it as their third most holy site because they believe Muhammad had a special revelation from God there. There are, of course, political complications to this as both the modern state of Israel and the Palestinian authorities claim the city as their capital.