

**THE PROMISED SON ENTERS THE LORD'S TEMPLE**

Hear again the Word of the Lord to His Church on this first Sunday of the 12 days of Christmas:

*When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, I will cause to raise up your Seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish His Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>*

**Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ**

This fourth day of the Christmas season is when the old song tells of buying four calling birds for one's true love. It is also the day that was chosen long ago to remember the Holy Innocents. Those were the male children under two years of age that King Herod had slaughtered on account of his paranoia about the new-born King of the Jews. And, it is the Sunday when the Church remembers the prophecy and fulfillment of God's promise to King David to place one of his descendants on his throne to rule forever. It is this last set of readings that will guide our sermon for today. In particular, we will focus on God's Word in second Samuel. Hear again our text,

*When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, I will cause to raise up your Seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish His Kingdom.<sup>2</sup>*

That is the Promise to which the ancient Christian Church repeatedly appealed when she was establishing the truth that God fulfilled that Promise in Jesus and not in David's son Solomon. Repeatedly, from the eye-witness records of the conclusions drawn about Jesus by some in the crowds that heard Him, to the firm conviction of St. Paul - recorded in Acts as history, and in one of his letters to the Church at Corinth - the

Scriptures teach that those words of Promise were fulfilled by God in Jesus.<sup>3</sup> From the New Testament witnesses, other Fathers of the Church in the first Christian centuries, held to the teaching that God fulfilled His Promise in Jesus.<sup>4</sup> Do you follow their lead?

Hear again our text:

*When your days are fulfilled, and you lie down with your fathers, I will cause to raise up your Seed after you, which will come forth from your body, and I will establish His Kingdom.<sup>5</sup>*

The Promise begins with the timing of its fulfillment. God declares this Promise will take place after David has died – when his days are completed and he lies down in death’s sleep with his forefathers. God says to David that then He will raise up for David his Seed - that is a Child. This one will be from David’s body, that is a direct descendant. Further, this Seed would have a kingdom made firm by God Himself.

Lest we think this was completed in David’s son, Solomon, we need to remember one significant detail of the Promise. That is, that the coming Son of David would come after David’s death. Solomon was born while King David was alive, so from this part of the text, we know that he is not the one in whom the Promise is completed.

Why is this important for you?

If you were to believe that God’s Promise was completed in Solomon, then you may be led to see the Old Testament as teaching different dispensations of God’s

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<sup>1</sup> II Samuel 7:12.

<sup>2</sup> II Samuel 7:12.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John 7:42; Acts 13:23; II Corinthians 6:18.

<sup>4</sup> Justin, Tertullian, Lactantius all held this position.

<sup>5</sup> II Samuel 7:12.

grace in different times. You might be led into misbelief and to thinking that the God of the Old Testament is different than the God of the New Testament.

It is important that you hear, comprehend, and believe that the Word of God in the Old Testament is completed in Christ Jesus. That is so that you place your hope for forgiveness, life and salvation only in Him, and find Him only where He has promise to be. Today, in particular, these texts are driving you to grasp the reality that when the infant Jesus was taken into the Temple for the sacrifices following the Law's time of purification, that this Jesus is the Promised Son of David who is the Son of God. In this event, He who is the Real Presence of God entered the human built Temple for the first time in generations. That Temple itself would not last, nor would one stone be left remaining upon another in that building. And, you should know from these texts, that even if the Jews were someday to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem, the Lord's Presence will not dwell there! That is because God's promised dwelling place with His people, His true Temple, He Himself has built out of those who continue to live in Him. Hear again the Word of the Promise:

*He will build (a) House for My Name and I will establish the throne of His Kingdom forever.<sup>6</sup>*

The Son of the Promise, to be born after King David's death is to build a dwelling place for God's Name. That is, His Name is to be predominant in the place where the Son will work. Where is the Name of God housed in glory, honor and might? Where does God's Name work its power through forgiveness and resurrection?

The answer we must come to, if we remain faithful to the text, is that the Son of David has built a House for the Name of God in the Church. Here, with water and Word, the Name of God works death to sin and resurrection to new life. Here, in the Service of our Lord, the Name of God begins and ends, and permeates the whole. The House for God's Name is where He gathers His people around His Word and Sacraments. Where then is the throne that God established for David's Son, the eternal throne?

It is in your hearts and minds. There where the Word rules through Law and Gospel, God's only-begotten Son is enthroned. You have not placed Him foremost in your life. God enthrones Him in you through the same simple means declared earlier – Baptism, the Lord's Supper, Holy Absolution, the Preached Word. You who are bound by the loving Word of God into His Church, are the vessels, the living stones, upon which His Name is poured into and written upon.

The eternal throne of King David's greater Son is set among His people. It cannot be overthrown. Earthly temples, synagogues, churches and the like may fall, but His Holy Temple, the dwelling place of His Name, cannot be destroyed. (The readings are fitting, are they not, for us in a world that spins ever-increasingly into chaos, destruction and death. The past days' events in Gaza, with the deaths of hundreds, display, once again, to those who would be faithful to God's revealed promises that we

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<sup>6</sup> *II Samuel 7:13.*

are not to trust in earthly rulers and powers to bring eternal harmony and peace). Our text continues to speak of God's Promise toward David's everlasting Seed:

*I will be to Him, Father. And He will be to Me, Son. When He causes to commit iniquity, I will cause to chasten Him from rod of men, and from stripes of (the) sons of man.*<sup>7</sup>

For the Christians among us, the first part of that verse clearly states that the Promised Son of David is none other than Jesus. We know that David's great son, Solomon, was called Son of David. And, we also know that he was not named, Son of God. We also have heard, again in the past few weeks, that Jesus was named Son of David, and Son of God. Only Jesus meets the test of the text with regard to God being His Father, and Jesus being His only-begotten Son. (That is the Christmas message, after all). But what of the second part of the verse? Hear it again:

*When He causes to commit iniquity, I will cause to chasten Him from (the) rod of men, and from stripes of (the) sons of man.*<sup>8</sup>

When did Jesus cause to commit sin? He was, after all, as you have heard repeatedly and we believe, teach and confess, conceived and born without sin. So, does this part of the text then not apply to Jesus, the Son of God?

The answer is two-fold. In the first part, Jesus did not commit sin in Himself, for in Him was no sin found. However, for the second part, when Jesus became the sin bearer, all human sin was placed upon Him. In that sense, that Son of David/ Son of God, may be said to commit sin – for all your committed sins, and mine, and those of every human conceived, are upon Him.

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<sup>7</sup> II Samuel 7:14.

This Son of God's Promise Who bore the Name of the Divine in Himself from all eternity, bore the Name of fallen humanity also upon Himself. In taking on our sins, Jesus took the deserved punishment too. And in Him alone was this part of the Promise also fulfilled - *I will cause to chasten Him from (the) rod of men, and from stripes of (the) sons of man.* When did that chastening, that beating take place?

Yes, it took place on the day of the Son of David's trial. There, mocked and beaten with rods by the human guards as He was humiliated on account of your sins, Jesus, Son of God, bore in His flesh the punishment you deserve. Humble, bearing your sins, He was scourged with the stripes of the Roman lashes. Bits of bone and glass tore into His flesh on account of the sins committed by every human ever created.

That sounds so unfair. And, thank God it was. For no human, save this one Son of David, the Father's only Son, both human and divine, could take such treatment on behalf of others. The Promise is born forth for believers, for you, in the declaration, "by His stripes you are healed." He did not deserve what He received, you do! But, on account of the Father's love for the Son, the Son's love for the Father, and their sacrificial love for you, He bore all for you into death. And, in so doing, won for you life eternal!

Our Christmas text continues:

*And My steadfast love shall not depart from Him, that which I took from Saul, whom I caused to put away from before you.*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> II Samuel 7:14.

<sup>9</sup> II Samuel 7:15.

He Whom God would raise up to David, Who would bear the stripes for sin, would be One Whom the Father would not abandon to the grave. Here is the Promise of Christ's resurrection, the unending unconditional sacrificial love of God would be upon Him - and upon those who, in His House, bear His Name. The example of course, is the first king of the united Israelites, the one who departed from the Word of God, and fell in faithlessness and dishonor. That final end would not be the end of David's greater Son, the Son of the Father. And those who are in that Son's House, that is, the Father's House will dwell with them forever, as our text continues:

*Then your house will be made sure, and your kingdom forever. Before My Face your throne will be established forever.*<sup>10</sup>

There stands the Promise for this week. It is yours in Christ, for you are in His Holy House, named with His Name, and He who entered the Temple once long ago to fulfill the Law, dwells in this Temple of His Spirit forever.

May the remaining days this Christmas be blessed for you and yours!

**The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**

Sunday after the Nativity (*Lutheran Service Book* one-year series)

II Samuel 7:1-16; Galatians 4:1-7; Luke 2:22-40

December 28, 2008

*Pastor Michael H. Merhouse*

**SOLI DEO GLORIA**

*And therefore, you say to My servant David, thus says the YHWH Sabaoth, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be prince over people, over Israel."*<sup>11</sup>

**Notes:**

**Luther's Works**

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<sup>10</sup> *II Samuel* 7:16.

<sup>11</sup> *II Samuel* 7:8.

V. 35 Again God made this promise to David in II Samuel 7[:12-14] when he said, "I will raise up your son after you, who shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son," etc. This is the kingdom of Christ, of which the gospel speaks: an everlasting kingdom, a kingdom of life, salvation, and righteousness, where all those who believe enter in from out of the prison of sin and death.<sup>12</sup>

V. 45 The third passage is addressed to David, II Samuel 7[:12-14], "When your days are fulfilled, and you sleep with your fathers, I will raise up your seed after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom for ever. He shall 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." These words cannot have been spoken of Solomon, for Solomon was not a posthumous son of David raised up after his death. Neither did God after Solomon (who during David's lifetime was born and became king) ever designate anyone as His son, give him an everlasting kingdom, or have him build such a house. Consequently, the whole passage must refer to Christ. We will let this passage go for the present because it is too broad and requires so much in the way of exegesis; for one would have to show here that Christ accordingly had to be the son of a woman only in order to be called here God's child, who neither should nor could come out of an accursed act.<sup>13</sup>

V. 47 There is also a great discrepancy and a difference in words between II Samuel 7 and I Chronicles 24 [28] and 29. The former states that God will build David an eternal house, the latter that Solomon shall build a house in God's name. The former passage states without any condition or qualification that it shall stand forever and be hindered by no sin. The latter passage conditions its continuance on Solomon's and his descendants' continued piety. Since he did not remain pious, he not only lost the ten tribes of Israel but was also exterminated in the seventh generation. The former is a *promissio gratiae* ["a promise of grace"], the latter a *promissio legis* ["a promise of law"]. In the former passage David thanks God that his house will stand forever, in the latter he does not thank God that Solomon's temple will stand forever. In other words, the two passages refer to different times and to different things and houses. And although God does call Solomon his son in the latter also and says that he will be his father, this promise is dependent on the condition that Solomon will remain pious. Such a condition is not found in the former passage. It is not at all rare that God calls his saints, as well as the angels, his children. But the son mentioned in II Samuel 7 [:14] is a different and special son who will retain the kingdom unconditionally and be hindered by no sin.

Also the prophets and the psalms quote II Samuel 7, which speaks of David's seed after his death, whereas they pay no attention to I Chronicles 24 [28] and 29, which speak of Solomon. In Psalm 89 [:1-4] we read: "I will sing of thy steadfast love, O Lord, for ever; with my mouth I will proclaim thy faithfulness to all generations. For thy steadfast love was established for ever, thy faithfulness is firm as the heavens. Thou hast said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant: "I will establish your descendants for ever, and build your throne for all generations." ' ' These too are clear words. God vows and swears an oath to grant David his grace forever, and to build and preserve his house, seed, and throne eternally.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Luther, M. 1999, c1960. Vol. 35: *Luther's works, vol. 35 : Word and Sacrament I* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

<sup>13</sup>Luther, M. 1999, c1962. Vol. 45: *Luther's works, vol. 45 : The Christian in Society II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

<sup>14</sup>Luther, M. 1999, c1971. Vol. 47: *Luther's works, vol. 47 : The Christian in Society IV* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

However, the covenant made with David remained in effect. The books of the kings and of the prophets exultantly declare that God preserved a lamp or a light to the house of David which he would not permit to be extinguished. Thus we read in II Kings 8 [:19] and in II Chronicles 21 [:7]: “Yet the Lord would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant which he had made with David, since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever.” The same thought is expressed in II Samuel 7 [:12 f.].<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Luther, M. 1999, c1971. *Vol. 47: Luther's works, vol. 47 : The Christian in Society IV* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia

<sup>16</sup>Luther, M. 1999, c1971. *Vol. 47: Luther's works, vol. 47 : The Christian in Society IV* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works. Fortress Press: Philadelphia