

Building God's House

Bible Background • 1 CHRONICLES 17:1–15; 21:18–30 | Printed Text • 1 CHRONICLES 17:1,
3–4, 11–14; 21:18, 21–27 | Devotional Reading • PSALM 138

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: CONTRAST the “house” David wanted to build for God with the “house” that God promised to David, REFLECT on how God’s plans for us are greater and more satisfying than our plans for ourselves, and SEEK God’s wisdom in planning for the future.

In Focus

A major nonprofit corporation wanted to give back to the community and make a real difference for the city. For the first four months, things went very well, but at midyear, the project was losing ground. The project supervisor, Margaret, was pushing people to work harder, and while she wanted to be the first team to make the goal, her approach wasn’t working. New ideas were definitely needed.

Within three months, the management moved Margaret, and a new manager, Barbara, came on board. Barbara’s style was just different enough that team members felt more included in the vision. Team meetings took on new life as people began to see this as an achievable goal for the team and not just the leader.

After reaching new goals and receiving recognition from the national office, the vice president of the division hosted a luncheon to recognize each team member. The vice president said, “When Margaret felt that she had taken it as far as she could, she asked that we consider Barbara, and we did. It takes a true leader to accept when it is time to pass the work to the person who can take it to the next level. Margaret laid a good foundation, and because of that, Barbara and the team were able to succeed.”

When in your life has God said for you “to pass the torch” for the greater glory of God’s mission?

Keep in Mind

“And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever” (1 Chronicles 17:11–12, KJV).

Words You Should Know

A. Servant (v. 4) ‘ebed (Heb.) — Slave, a devoted follower

B. Forever (v. 12) ‘olam (Heb.) — Without end; an indefinite, long period

Say It Correctly

Araunah. uh-RAW-nuh.

Ornan. or-NON.

KJV

1 Chronicles 17:1 Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains.³ And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:

11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

12 He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee:

14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

21:18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people.

23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.

24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.

25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering.

27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

NLT

1 Chronicles 17:1 When David was settled in his palace, he summoned Nathan the prophet. "Look," David said, "I am living in a beautiful cedar palace, but the Ark of the LORD's Covenant is out there under a tent!"³ But that same night God said to Nathan,

4 "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD has declared: You are not the one to build a house for me to live in.

11 For when you die and join your ancestors, I will raise up one of your descendants, one of your sons, and I will make his kingdom strong.

12 He is the one who will build a house—a temple—for me. And I will secure his throne forever.

13 I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my favor from him as I took it from the one who ruled before you.

14 I will confirm him as king over my house and my kingdom for all time, and his throne will be secure forever.'"

21:18 Then the angel of the LORD told Gad to instruct David to go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

21 When Araunah saw David approaching, he left his threshing floor and bowed before David with his face to the ground.

22 David said to Araunah, "Let me buy this threshing floor from you at its full price. Then I will build an altar to the Lord there, so that he will stop the plague."

23 "Take it, my lord the king, and use it as you wish," Araunah said to David. "I will give the oxen for the burnt offerings, and the threshing boards for wood to build a fire on the altar, and the wheat for the grain offering. I will give it all to you."

24 But King David replied to Araunah, “No, I insist on buying it for the full price. I will not take what is yours and give it to the LORD. I will not present burnt offerings that have cost me nothing!”

25 So David gave Araunah 600 pieces of gold in payment for the threshing floor.

26 David built an altar there to the LORD and sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. And when David prayed, the LORD answered him by sending fire from heaven to burn up the offering on the altar.

27 Then the LORD spoke to the angel, who put the sword back into its sheath.

The People, Places, and Times

Nathan. A prophet in the royal court of David and for some of Solomon’s reign, Nathan was a personal adviser to David and spoke for God. His name means “gift.” Nathan was not afraid to speak the truth. He was divinely appointed to keep David accountable. Throughout David’s life, Nathan was able to help David see his own sins.

Threshing floor. A smooth, hard plot of land used to beat grain in order to separate the wheat from the chaff.

Background

For much of Israel’s history, it was nomadic. Established as a nation enslaved within a nation, the Lord delivered them, only for them to end up wandering in the wilderness for forty years as a result of disobedience and lack of faith. Israel then spent centuries engaged in cycles of idolatry, enslavement, repentance, and deliverance. These deeds are recorded in the book of Judges and began before Saul was chosen to be the first king. Saul is known for having led the nation through battles with its neighboring enemies, and David spent the beginning of his own reign battling many surrounding enemies. Now, after years of wandering and fighting, 2 Samuel 7 indicates that God gave them rest in their own land. With his mind rested and able to dream about the future, David made a plan to build a grand temple for God.

After a time of relative peace, however, 2 Samuel 24:1 indicates that Israel angered the Lord, who then “incites” David to take a census. The parallel account in 1 Chronicles 21:1 states that Satan rose up against Israel. While this may seem contradictory, we know that God does not lead us to sin. He does, however, on occasion allow Satan to have access to tempt people (cf. Job 1).

David’s sin was not in taking the census but the pride behind his decision. God built the nation of Israel, defeated their enemies, and established David’s kingship, and in arrogance, David wanted an account of the kingdom “he” built. Despite warnings from Joab, captain of Israel’s army, that a census would bring the Lord’s judgment, David proceeded. Nine months and twenty days later, the census was completed, and David regretted his decision. God, in His displeasure, sent the prophet Gad to give David three options to choose as a discipline: three years of famine, three months of enemies’ attacks, or three days of a plague. David chose the plague. God sent the prophet Gad again with further instructions of how to end the plague: consecrate the spot that would eventually be built up into the Temple.

At-A-Glance

1. David’s Intentions (1 Chronicles 17:1, 3–4)
2. God’s Promises (vv. 11–14)
3. David’s Sacrifice (1 Chronicles 21:18, 21–27)

In Depth

1. David’s Intentions (1 Chronicles 17:1, 3–4) With Israel finally at peace, David is securely established as her king. David built houses for himself. He dedicated himself to freeing the people of God from their enemies and to leading them back to worship Yahweh, the one true God. The Ark of Covenant, the sign of God’s presence, which was neglected during Saul’s reign, is now in Jerusalem but only in a tent (1 Chronicles 15:1).

As he surveys his home, he is convicted that he should not reside in a more permanent and stately home than the Lord's Ark of the Covenant. So, with the prophet Nathan's blessing, David purposes in his heart to build a more suitable home for the Ark. However, David's intentions were premature. God comes to Nathan that night, sending him back to David to remind him that He did not ask for a "house of cedar," and in fact, God has been the one doing the building. God turned a shepherd into a king with a great name and lasting legacy, and He turned a people into a nation, loved and protected by the one true God.

Recall a time when you changed course based upon the wise, godly counsel of another, and it proved to be an unexpected blessing?

2. God's Promises (vv. 11–14) Throughout the Old Testament we see the significance placed in birthrights and lineage. People are identified by the households, tribes, and clans of their fathers or grandfathers. Legacy matters. God promises that long after David is gone, his name and legacy will live on. God also speaks of a coming son who will not only build a temple for the Lord, but will become king with his throne established by the Lord forever. God promises that their relationship will be one of steadfast love—and God will never withdraw from him as he did when Saul disobeyed. While this promise has its initial fulfillment in David's son, Solomon, it also points toward a greater King to come from the line of David—Jesus.

What is God prompting you to leave behind as a godly legacy?

3. David's Sacrifice (1 Chronicles 21:18, 21–27) Following David's sin in taking a census, God punishes him by sending a plague that kills 70,000 men of Israel before God stops the angel by Ornan (NLT: Araunah) the Jebusite's threshing floor (vv. 14–15). David sees the angel with his sword stretched out over Jerusalem and repents. His repentance leads him to sacrifice. Both Ornan (who also saw the angel, v. 20) and David recognize God's mercy. David seeks to build an altar for burnt offerings and peace offerings, symbolizing his and Israel's complete surrender to God, and desire to reconcile in order to repair the breach caused by their sin. In gratitude, Ornan offers all that was required for the sacrifice—the land, oxen, grain, and wood. David, however, recognizing that his disobedience led to these consequences, determines that a true sacrifice would require his investment. God's answer is fire from heaven, indicating that God is pleased.

How seriously do you take repentance? Is there currently something for which you need to repent? Do so.

Search the Scriptures

1. Who does God say will build His house? (17:12)
2. What promise did God make for David's offspring? (17:13–14)
3. What requirement did David make of Ornan? Why? (21:22)

Discuss the Meaning

1. How does this passage speak to the significance of lineage in ancient Israel? How does that apply today?
2. What does this passage reveal about God's character and His promises?
3. What do you believe the threshing floor symbolizes? (21:22)

Liberating Lesson

In today's society, people seem to struggle accepting responsibility for their actions. We are naturally self-preservers, seeking to shift blame. As a result, society as a whole suffers. David took individual responsibility for his role in the destruction of the plague. His example of repentance, investment, and action is one for us all. Significant and overwhelming problems exist in our neighborhoods, communities, and families. But David shows us that one person taking responsibility and obediently following the Lord can have a life-altering impact on the masses.

Expression of our gratitude to God should be seen in our relationship with nature. It is our responsibility to care for the natural resources around us in order to enhance their worship of God. When we pollute and waste the

environment by chopping trees and pouring waste into the sea, it destroys them, thereby depriving God the praise they bring Him.

Application for Activation

Although we are Christians, we can have a tendency to take God’s grace and mercy for granted. Because of Christ’s sacrifice, repentance can seem too easy and get pushed aside. However, verbally and decisively “turning away” from our sin has the same effect as we see here—it pleases God, repairs a breach in our relationship, serving as an act of worship.

Consider any breaches that exist in your relationships. Are there people you need to forgive? Pray that God will give you strength to do so. Are there ways that you have sinned against others that have impacted them—in minor or major ways? Accept responsibility for your actions. Seek forgiveness and see what actions can be taken to restore the relationship.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Chronicles 17:1, 3–4, 11–14; 21:18, 21–27 David devoted his monarchy to the restoration of public worship. He instituted liturgical worship and praise with the introduction of the musicianship of the Levites. The entrance of the Ark into the national capital of Jerusalem moved the people into a realm of prominence among the other nations in ways that Israel never before experienced. All of this was centered on their worship and praise of Jehovah, the one true God. Our text today moves beyond David’s restoration of worship as a national practice and introduces the idea that David had come to a point in his life where he felt uncomfortable living in secure surroundings that were, in his opinion, grander than where the Ark was kept.

17:1 Now it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains.

3 And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, 4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:

David’s home may have been built with timber from a species of cedar, *Cedrus libani*, an evergreen that grows to a huge size and is known for its durability. Cedar wood will be used in Solomon’s palace as well and in the Temple. The use of cedar in the building became synonymous with affluence (Song of Solomon 8:9, Jeremiah 22:14). David’s statement to Nathan implies that the idea of the Lord’s dwelling being insufficient has either been bothering him or is a revelation that now takes hold and causes him concern. David has done for the Lord what he thinks is good. In fact, the return of the Ark and the new priority of worship were very good. Now, however, less concerned with external enemies, David realizes that he can do better and wants to fully honor the dwelling place of the Ark of the Covenant.

Part of David's concern is probably that the entire Tabernacle and its furnishings are not in Jerusalem. The Levites continue to worship God in Jerusalem before the Ark, but the priests are also presenting the offerings and sacrifices of the people before the brazen altar in Gibeon (see 1 Chronicles 16: 37–43). Theologians and biblical scholars alike are at a loss regarding why David did not return the Tabernacle and all of its furnishings to Jerusalem at the same time he returned the Ark. Perhaps the focus is on restoring the prominence of the Ark by showing those who took it that the nation is now unified under God. Whatever the reason, only the Ark itself resides in Jerusalem, and now David expresses his concern for unified worship in a more appropriate place.

Nathan is David's chief advisor, and on this occasion, David shares his innermost thoughts with Nathan regarding the place of the Ark. Nathan is a prophet about whom little is known except for his role as advisor to David and later to Solomon and his mother, Bathsheba. Nathan is not afraid to speak the truth to David and always spoke to the king with sound counsel based on his own faithfulness to God (2 Samuel 12:1–14). Prior to this lesson text, Nathan sought God before giving David advice, and David obviously respected Nathan as a confidant and friend. Nathan's original response is to tell David to move forward with his plans (v. 2).

Apparently, to both Nathan and David it seems that David's heart is in the right place. But when the Lord visits Nathan that night, the prophet is told to go back to David and tell him not to build the house because God is not in the plan. This does not imply that God is not with David; God refers to David as his "servant" (Heb. 'ebed, EH-bed). But God does make clear that He does not want David to establish a permanent dwelling place for the Ark and the furnishings of the Tabernacle.

11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. 12 He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever. 13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee: 14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

David's son, Solomon, will build a house for the Ark and the throne of Solomon will be established "forever" (Heb. 'olam, oh-LAHM). This Hebrew phrase means without ending and for an indefinite period. Although David is denied the privilege of building a house for the Ark, God let him know that the Ark will continue to be a focal point of worship for the Israelites. Solomon will be the one to build the house for the Ark. God promises that unlike Saul, from whom God took the kingdom, Solomon will always have God's mercy. These are powerful words that Nathan delivers to David.

In addition, these verses indicate that ultimately, through David's lineage, Christ will come, who will rule forever. As Christians, it should bring us great joy to know that we can and do live in covenant with God. Moreover, we can find great comfort in knowing that God delivers on His promises—nothing can occur that will void God's Word.

21:18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite.

21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshingfloor, and bowed himself to David with his face to the ground.

David sins against the Lord by taking a census when he should not have, even when his general Joab warns him not to do it (1 Chronicles 21:1–6). As a result of the prophet Gad, a seer, tells David the Lord will give him an option of punishment. David prays for God's mercy, and God's judgment is limited to a threeday plague (21:7–15). The angel of the Lord is on its way to destroy Jerusalem because of David's disobedience, but David intercedes for his city, taking responsibility for his action and pleading for God's mercy on Jerusalem (21:16–17). The angel responds, speaking to Gad the seer, that David is to build an altar to the Lord in the threshing floor owned by Ornan. Ornan, whose name is also spelled Araunah (NLT), is a Jebusite. He sees the angel and hides, bowed to the ground (21:19–20).

There is an interesting parallel here in that David bows himself to the angel and Ornan bows himself to both the angel and to David. The man reverences the anointed ones of God, both angelic and earthly. He is terrified that the angel of the Lord came to destroy him. He responds to the situation with humility, waiting for instruction for how he should respond to God's messenger and the king. Ornan is also of note because he is a Jebusite. He is a foreigner, not an Israelite or even a follower of God (cf. 2 Samuel 24:23). Jerusalem had been a Jebusite city before David conquered it, which makes it surprising that a Jebusite still lives here instead of being cleansed from the land (as God commanded with all Canaanites). Nevertheless, God chooses a foreigner's threshing floor as the place for His altar.

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people. 23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all. 24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost. 25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

David can take the field from Ornan by force or try to exercise his power and authority as king to receive it for free. Ornan certainly wants the plague to stop and is willing to give up what he has to protect himself and his family. This man certainly recognizes that his own life and the lives of others are more important than property. He goes a step further by offering everything that he has to provide for his family to the Lord. Ornan recognizes the power and severity of God and the king and willingly submits all he has to their service. But David acts in honesty and responsibility, placing the blame for the Lord's judgment back on himself. He will not let an innocent man pay the cost for his sin.

This is definitely a lesson for believers in positions of authority. When we are leaders— whether in our homes, organizations, congregations, or communities—we must take responsibility for our wrong actions and face the consequences rather than making those we lead pay for our poor decisions. David is also using the opportunity to buy the land at full price. He is willing to pay the full amount for what he needed from Ornan because of the use of the land for the Lord was worth it.

David's words in verse 24 are piercing for us as believers. He will not try to give a sacrifice to God that did not cost him anything. Indeed if he takes the offerings from Ornan for nothing, they will not be sacrifices for David at all. According to some scholars, the amount of gold David paid was worth around two hundred thousand dollars. God is worthy of the offerings that cost us something; that reminds us that the things we offer are far less important than the God we offer things to. It is God who gives us the ability to offer in the first place. David shows a truly repentant heart by showing God is worthy of his costly sacrifice.

26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering. 27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

David is faithful by obeying the Lord's instructions. He builds an altar at Ornan's field and sacrifices offerings to God there. David prays, and the Lord answers by fire, which foreshadows the way God will respond to Solomon's offering at the dedication of the Temple near this very spot (2 Chronicles 7:1). The Lord is pleased with David's offering and shows mercy by having the angel stop the plague and the potential destruction of Jerusalem.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

David Cannot Build the Temple
(1 Chronicles 22:6–13)

TUESDAY

Solomon to Build the Temple
(1 Chronicles 28:2–10)

WEDNESDAY

Ornan's Land Is Site of Temple
(1 Chronicles 21:28–22:1)

THURSDAY

God Needs No House
(2 Samuel 7:1–11)

FRIDAY

God's Makes a House for David
(1 Chronicles 17:7–10)

SATURDAY

The Lord Regards the Lowly
(Psalm 138)

SUNDAY

Two Houses Firmly Settled
(1 Chronicles 17:1, 3–4, 11–14; 21:18, 21–27)