

Nathan – The Prophet Who Delivered and Defended the Covenant

I. Nathan as the Go-Between

Primary Passages: 2 Samuel 7:1–17, 1 Chronicles 17:1–15, 22:6–10

- **Nathan introduced as the mediator between king and LORD**
 - Nathan first appears in direct conversation with David concerning David’s desire to build a house for the LORD (2 Sam 7:2).
 - David speaks to Nathan rather than directly to the LORD, immediately positioning Nathan as an intermediary figure between king and God.
 - Nathan responds with personal counsel: “Go, do all that is in thine heart” (2 Sam 7:3).
 - This response is often labeled a “mistake,” but the text does not explicitly condemn it; it simply distinguishes between Nathan’s initial statement and later revelation.
- **The word of the LORD comes to Nathan (2 Sam 7:4)**
 - The narrative deliberately routes revelation through Nathan rather than directly to David.
 - Nathan is commissioned to deliver not a rebuke, but a sweeping and expansive oracle that redefines David’s role in redemptive history.
- **Commendation regarding David’s Desire**
 - The LORD’s opening question, “**Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?**”, is interrogative rather than declarative (2 Sam 7:5).
 - Though often taken negatively, the question can reasonably be read positively:
 - * Nothing in the text suggests displeasure with David’s desire. There is no corrective word whatsoever (cf. 1 Sam 15:14).
 - * 1 Kings 8:18 explicitly affirms that David had the right idea.
 - * If 2 Sam 7:6 means the Temple is a bad idea, one must explain why Solomon is commanded to build it.
 - * This reading coheres with David’s commendation as a man after God’s own heart.
 - The LORD reframes the matter entirely in David’s favor (vv. 9–11). David will not build a house for God. God will build a house for David
- **Establishment of the Davidic covenant**
 - Nathan delivers a dynastic promise we now call the Davidic Covenant.
 - Key covenant elements (2 Sam 7:12–16):
 - * David’s seed will arise after him.
 - * His throne will be established.
 - * His kingdom will endure.
 - The covenant is unilateral, grounded in God’s initiative rather than Davidic obligation.
- **The promised son and future builder**
 - The oracle anticipates a son who will build the temple (2 Sam 7:12–13).
 - 1 Chronicles 22:9 clarifies and expands the promise:

* The son is named prior to birth.

* His reign is characterized by rest and peace.

* He is explicitly identified as the temple builder.

- Nathan stands as the original prophetic delivery point of the promise concretely identified in Solomon.

II. Nathan’s Prophetic Indictment

Primary Passage: 2 Samuel 12:1–15

- **Nathan sent with a specific commission (v. 1)**
- **Nathan gives a memorable and judicial parable**
 - Nathan presents a case involving injustice, not adultery (2 Sam 12:1–4).
 - David responds as king and judge before realizing the personal implication (2 Sam 12:5–6).
- **Nathan gives A direct prophetic accusation**
 - “Thou art the man” (2 Sam 12:7).
 - Nathan transitions from parable to oracle without softening the charge.
- **Nathan frames the rebuke in Covenant language**
 - Nathan recounts the LORD’s prior acts toward David (2 Sam 12:7–8).
 - The sin is defined as despising the commandment of the LORD (2 Sam 12:9).
 - Judgment is pronounced in terms of household consequence, not loss of throne (2 Sam 12:10–12).

III. Nathan as Preserver of the Promise

Primary Passage: 1 Kings 1:11–40

- **The crisis of succession**
 - Adonijah attempts to seize the throne without David’s authorization (1 Kigs 1:5–7, 25).
 - The covenant promise and prior revelation are in danger of being overridden by political momentum (1 Kigs 1:5, 18–20).
- **Nathan’s strategic intervention**
 - Nathan approaches Bathsheba, not the public assembly (1 Kigs 1:11).
 - He appeals to David’s prior oath (1 Kings 1:13).
 - The issue is fidelity to already-spoken words (1 Kigs 1:13, 17).
- **Convergence of revelation and action**
 - God’s word (2 Sam 7:12–16; 1 Chr 22:9).
 - David’s oath (1 Kings 1:17, 30).
 - Nathan’s orchestration of events (1 Kings 1:11–14, 24, 38).
- **Nathan’s final recorded role**
 - Nathan fades from the narrative after Solomon’s anointing (1 Kings 1:40).
 - His ministry closes having delivered the covenant, enforced its discipline, and secured its fulfillment (cf. 2 Sam 7; 2 Sam 12; 1 Kings 1).