

A Reflection  
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## **A People Built by God**

2 Samuel 7:1-17

The Christmas story is filled with individuals who have plans, only to get word that God has other plans. Take Zechariah and Elizabeth. Though they may not have completely given up praying for children, they're also probably trying to be realistic about their bleak prospects for any offspring. But an angel shows up and changes all that. A baby boy is on the way. They're to name him John. He'll play a special part in the dawn of salvation.

Then there's Joseph, whose plans are shaken by the news that Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. And Mary herself, whose plans for marriage and what's ahead are upended by an angelic announcement that she will give birth to Israel's Savior. These are just some of the primary biblical examples of people who envision things turning out a certain way, only to have God intervene and turn things in a different direction, for greater purposes.

King David also fits into this pattern of those who yield their plans to God's plans. In today's text from 2 Samuel, David has a grand idea to build a fancy temple for God. God has delivered Israel through turbulent times, so why should the Lord be residing in a tent while David relaxes in a palace? David goes to the prophet Nathan and summarizes his vision for taking God's house to the next level. Nathan gives it his endorsement, and everything appears set to proceed.

But that night, God speaks to Nathan and tasks him with bringing David back down to earth. David has become so focused on his own agenda, and his ambitious plans, that he has lost sight of how God has always been present with his people in their journey, not tied down to one place. God doesn't mind taking up residence in a humble tent. His presence, and the accomplishment of his purposes, don't hinge on having a fancy dwelling. God will be God, working out his saving will, in ways that aren't necessarily impressive to human eyes.

In fact, rather than David building God a house, God says that he'll build David a house. Not a house with four walls. The Hebrew word for house can also mean "dynasty." In other words, God dwells through the family line of King David, which ultimately includes Jesus. So God keeps his promise by eventually becoming present in human flesh as Jesus the Messiah.

In this year when staying in our houses has become more important than ever before, remember that the Lord knows plenty about dwelling. Jesus is God's primary way of taking up residence among us, and we become the temple, in our life together. So rather than focusing on our plans, which have been greatly disrupted, what matters most is letting God move forward with his plan to build us into a dwelling place for his presence. And the good news is that he has still been doing that, including during these turbulent times. In ways we may not have anticipated, including technology, God has been taking us and assembling us into a house where he comes to live. Each of us can be one of the building blocks in God's great project of salvation. And together, we can tell the story of how God has kept his promises of an everlasting kingdom.