

This week we are looking further into the importance of understanding what God was doing when making a covenant with His people. Heather had some further insights into this as we turn our attention to the covenant with King David.

1. Covenants.

- God's covenants run like a golden thread throughout the Old Testament. A covenant is a solemn, binding agreement and the ancient Hebrews used them in many life-situations, solemnising them with ritual acts.
- **Divine covenants were different.** They were not contracts with mutual obligations. Instead they were given freely by God as a faithful pledge, an unbreakable commitment to bless & preserve a person, family or nation.
- A perfect, all-loving, all-knowing and holy God wants to reach out to His stubborn, selfish and wayward people in patient mercy to try and turn them back to living fruitful and loving lives.

2. Recap.

- 4,000 BC God covenants with **Adam**, promising him he will flourish and be in relationship with God as long as he is obedient. Adam disobeys, so the relationship between God and man is distorted by human waywardness
- 2,500 BC God sends a flood to rid the world of wickedness and covenants with **Noah**, promising never again to flood the whole earth but to wait in patient mercy for mankind's repentance and the restoring of relationship.
- 2,000 BC God covenants with **Abraham**, promising him a Name, a land and descendants from many nations.
- 1,500 BC Moses reiterated God's covenant with **Israel**, promising them land and a life of fruitfulness as long as they obeyed His law in the certain knowledge that they would fail, but would be restored when repentant

3. 1,000 BC God Covenants with King David. Read 2 Samuel 7: 1 – 17.

- For years before our reading David had been engaged in bloody battles with neighbouring tribes and a brutal civil war between the Northern and Southern tribes of Israel. Finally David prevailed, he became King of all Israel, the capital was established at Jerusalem and the Ark of the Covenant installed there.
- **vv. 1-9a.** David settles into his palace and has a good idea for a new project: build a temple for God! The prophet Nathan agreed but God challenged him in a vision: the time is not right for building God a temple and David is not the man to build it. God has elevated David from shepherd to king for other reasons.
- **Then comes the Davidic Covenant:**
 - **v. 9b.** God promises to make David's Name great, 'like the names of the greatest men of the earth'.
 - **vv. 10-11a.** God promises to provide a homeland for Israel: a place where they will not be disturbed
 - **vv. 11b-16.** David was eager to build a temple for God – God's reply is to promise a dynasty for David. He will be succeeded by a son who will build a temple and the 'House of David' will last for ever.

4. What happened next?

- David's son, Solomon, succeeds him to the throne and builds a great temple for God in Jerusalem. In spite of his gift of wisdom, Solomon allows the worship of other deities and the kingdom splits in two when he dies. Eventually the precious Promised Land is conquered, Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed and the wilful, wayward people sent into exile. Where is the forever kingdom? The covenant seems broken. **Ezekiel 37:11.**
- All through these years God in His ever-patient mercy sent prophets to warn people, to bring them back to repentance and to foretell of the birth of a new David, a new King who would be born in Bethlehem.
- **Isaiah 9: 6-7.** The revival of the Davidic monarchy, an everlasting dynasty, became known as the messianic hope for Jews waiting for restoration of their nation. Christians believe the covenant was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus, a descendent of David, in Bethlehem and with His subsequent crucifixion and resurrection.

Lessons for us.

- Learn to seek God's will and listen to Him carefully before leaping into action. Both David and Nathan thought it a great idea to build God a temple. God had other ideas. Do we decide what we should do and then seek God's blessing on our plans?
- What God wants us to do may not be high profile, but it may be crucial for building His kingdom. David didn't build the temple but he did all the planning and preparation, the collecting of wood and stone and precious metals. At St Paul's we benefit from the legacy of previous people who have worked to build up our church.
- In David, God chose someone seemingly unlikely to achieve great things. He was a shepherd boy who became King of Israel, a great warrior and a wonderful musician. He was also deeply flawed and messed things up very badly at times. Our backgrounds may be humble, we may mess up badly, but trusting in God and His patient mercy we can use our God-given talents for His kingdom, just as David did.