

# Bible Workshop


## Developing Bible study skills

### 4. The promise to David

Peter Forbes

**T**HIS STUDY is designed to highlight a number of different aspects of Bible study, as follows:

- that Bible study is not difficult or the preserve of the intellectual
- the need to give careful attention to the text
- the value of comparing Scripture with Scripture
- the value of following up quotations
- the value of recording and preserving information found.


 **You will need:**  
 Bible with marginal references  
 Concordance or computerised Bible

There are two accounts of the promise to David, 2 Samuel 7:12-17 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-15. Additionally, language from the promise is used in other parts of Scripture. This study will investigate:

- why there are two accounts of the promise
- why there are differences between the two
- the context of David's expectations
- the way in which the promise is quoted and expounded in other parts of Scripture.

It will also develop exhortation, based on the fact that the way in which the promise is used shows that we are spoken of in the promise.

When comparing parallel passages of Scripture, it is always valuable to place the two passages side by side. In this way the records can be quickly and easily compared. It would be a useful exercise at this point to compare carefully the two accounts (perhaps using two Bibles) in order to see the similarities, differences and omissions.

 **Compare carefully 2 Samuel 7:12-17 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-15, and note any differences and omissions**

#### Why the differences?

The first thing we should note is the differences between the two accounts; after all, they both claim to be the "vision" that Nathan spoke to David. Having noted that there are differences in two accounts that claim to record the same event, we should not immediately assume that the differences are random and meaningless. We must ask, Why are there differences?, and approach the question in a positive, systematic and enquiring way.


There are three significant areas of contrast between the two accounts:

- 1 2 Samuel 7 focuses on David's son—"out of thy bowels", "thy", "thine"—whereas 1 Chronicles 17 is not so time dependent, using "of thy sons", and has God using "Mine" and "My" to speak of the kingdom and throne, making it His rather than David's.
- 2 Whereas 2 Samuel 7:15 mentions Saul by name, 1 Chronicles 17:13 is less personal: "him that was before thee".
- 3 There is no mention at all in 1 Chronicles 17 of committing iniquity, as found in 2 Samuel 7:14.

The differences and omission follow a pattern, which confirms our initial assumption that the differences are not random. So we conclude that there is good reason for the differences, and ask, What is the reason?


#### Help from Psalm 89

Rather than speculate, we should look for Scripturally based reasons for the differences and omission. Can we find passages that expound or comment upon the promise recorded in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17?

 **Look at the marginal references to 2 Samuel 7:12-17 and note any passages that occur several times**

There are four references to Psalm 89 in 2 Samuel 7:12-17, and nine references to 2 Samuel 7 in Psalm 89. Although the marginal references are not part

of the inspired Scripture, they were devised by men who had a love and thorough knowledge of Scripture, who evidently thought that there is some link between the promise to David and Psalm 89. So maybe we would benefit from comparing the psalm with 2 Samuel 7:12-17 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-15.

 **Read 2 Samuel 7:12-17 and 1 Chronicles 17:11-15, and then read Psalm 89, looking for similarities between the two accounts of the promise and the psalm**

On reading the psalm we notice the different words used to speak of the ones who will be beneficiaries of the promise contained in the psalm:

he/his/him (vv. 20-29,33)

his seed/his children/they/their (vv. 29-32).

We should now be asking, Why this difference in the wording?

### Singular and plural

On reading the psalm again, we notice in particular that, whilst God says, "My mercy will I keep for *him* for evermore" (v. 28), it is the *children* of whom it is said, "If [they] forsake My law" (v. 30), and on whom God will "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes" (v. 32). The record then reverts to "him", saying, "My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him" (v. 33). So we see that the psalm makes a distinction between "him", who is blessed, and "children", who will be punished if they break the commandments.

Returning to the two accounts of the promise, we notice that it is the promise which focuses on the near term—"Saul, whom I put away before thee" (2 Sam. 7:15)—which speaks of committing iniquity (v. 14), whereas the record in 1 Chronicles 17 does not have this immediate focus. We ask, Can it be that the two accounts of the same promise focus on different people? The conclusion is that, whereas 2 Samuel 7 has Solomon as its immediate focus, 1 Chronicles 17 has Christ as its immediate focus. This would explain why 2 Samuel 7:14 speaks of committing iniquity and 1 Chronicles 17 does not.

So we might ask, What is Psalm 89:30 talking about when it says, "If his children forsake My law . . ."? It might be thought that the obvious answer is that it speaks of all David's sons who would reign upon his throne, starting with Solomon.

It is important, however, to think beyond the immediate fulfilment, especially as we have seen that 1 Chronicles 17 speaks primarily of Messiah. We might ask, Is there any indication in the New Testament that Messiah being the son of David is an important issue?


### The seed of David

A concordance search of the name 'David' in the New Testament reveals that he is an important figure in the presentation of the gospel. The New Testament opens, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham"; and that it is an important aspect of Paul's preaching is shown by the words, ". . . concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3).

That the promise to David is to be fulfilled in Christ is seen in the words, "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David" (Lk. 1:32). That the Gentiles are to be associated with David is seen in the way that James, in Acts 15:13-18, states that the words, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen" (Amos 9:11), are fulfilled in the call of the Gentiles.

The exhortation is that we are the "children" of Psalm 89:30. Even though we might fall short of the ideal, the promise is sure because "My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips" (vv. 33,34). Thus the promise is sure, despite the failings of the "children".

In this study we have seen how important it is to consider carefully the details of the text, to compare parallel accounts and to note the differences, and then ask why. We have seen that, by following up marginal references that highlight the way Scripture quotes itself, we can be sure of our exposition and gain exhortation from our findings.

 **Record your findings**

Once again, we should be aware that we will not remember the details that we have discovered unless we make notes. Putting 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 side by side enables significant contrasts to be highlighted. Marginal notes between Psalm 89 and 2 Samuel 7/1 Chronicles 17 will remind us of the links.