

“I will build you a house.” Before I became king of Israel, I was at war with Saul, the king who had come before me. The Creator had told Saul the kingdom was no longer his, but Saul refused to back down. I had been anointed to be his replacement as king and so Saul wanted to destroy me—David—the competitor to his throne. But when Saul died in battle and I officially became king, I expected things to go better. They did not. Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth wanted the throne and the kingdom for himself. The northern tribes of Israel followed Ish-Bosheth and the tribe of Judah followed me. **Civil war** ensued. Abner, the commander of Saul’s armies, and Joab, the commander of my armies, decided that the civil war could be settled by having 12 men from each side fight it out. But in that duel of 12 versus 12, all 24 men simultaneously stabbed and killed each other. There were **no winners**, everyone **died**. Abner, the commander of Saul’s armies, saw the futility of all our fighting and said, **“Must the sword devour us forever? Don’t you realize this will only end in pain?”** But the civil war raged on.

Then Ish-Bosheth falsely accused his commander Abner of adultery and that pushed Abner over the edge. Abner sent me a message and said he would work to **end** the civil war and bring the northern tribes of Israel under my rule. That sounded great, but I had a **demand**. I wanted Michal, Saul’s daughter who had been my wife but was now married to **another man**, to return and be my seventh wife. So Abner ripped Michal away from her husband, who was begging and screaming for her not to be taken, and brought her back to me. We thought Abner joining us would bring peace, but my commander Joab secretly **hated** Abner. Abner had previously killed Joab’s brother in battle. So Joab took Abner aside and stabbed him in the stomach and **killed** him. I was furious and cursed Joab and his family. Then a couple of the Israelites thought I wanted the opposing king, Saul’s son Ish-Bosheth, to be killed. So they betrayed him, cut off his head, and brought it to me. I was furious again. I ordered those murderers to have their hands and feet chopped off and then to be **crucified** for all to see. My display of anger and grief over Abner’s and Ish-Bosheth’s deaths won over the people of the northern tribes of Israel and they began to follow me.

We finally had some **peace** among the tribes of Israel. We worked together and conquered the city of **Jerusalem** which belonged to the Jebusites. I made Jerusalem the capital city of my **kingdom** and built myself a giant **house** and **palace**. My power and wealth were growing and I took many more **concubines** for myself. Then we defeated the Philistines in battle and I took their **idols** for myself. But I wanted the Creator’s presence in Jerusalem with me. I wanted his power to back me up and **validate** this kingdom and house I was building. So I started to move the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. But one of the men helping with the move touched the Ark and dropped dead. I was angry at the Creator and afraid. I did not want this dangerous Ark of the Covenant bringing death into my city and **ruining** what I was building. So I left the Ark with Obed. But then Obed’s family was blessed by the Ark’s presence and I became jealous. I wanted that **blessing** for myself. So I brought the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem. I humbled and humiliated myself as it was brought into Jerusalem. I stripped off my royal clothes and danced around like a fool. My wife Michal was embarrassed by me and began to hate me. I said to her, **“I will become even more humiliated than this.”**

Realizing that I had been acting arrogantly and not humbly, I went to the prophet Nathan and said, **“I am living in a palace and the Lord is living in a tent.”** I told him that I wanted to build a house and temple for the Creator in Jerusalem. The Creator responded, **“Can you build me a house? Have I ever lived in a house? Have I ever asked for a house? No. I will build you a house. I will raise up your offspring and give him a kingdom that lasts forever.”** The Creator was not interested in me building him a house or a kingdom like I had been trying to do. The Creator was trying to build me and my family into a beautiful house, but I was too distracted by what I was trying to build. The Creator also said to me, **“You cannot build a house for me because you have shed blood on the earth.”** My violent ways made it impossible for me to build anything truly godly in life. The crowds often spoke about me, saying, **“Saul killed thousands, but David has killed tens of thousands.”** The house and kingdom I was building was a sham. It was a house of cards built on violence and bloodshed. It was inevitable, the house and kingdom I was building was going to come **crashing down**, one day it would be nothing but dust.

But I was easily distracted and quickly **forgot** the lessons I was learning. One day I saw another man’s beautiful wife bathing on her rooftop. I **wanted** her and so I **took** her for myself. This Bathsheba became pregnant and so I sent her husband to the frontlines of the battlefields to die. Then I took Bathsheba as my eighth wife. The prophet Nathan came to me and told me the story of a rich man who had countless sheep but in his greed stole the only sheep of a poor man for himself. I was furious on behalf of that poor man and said, **“That rich man deserves to die!”** Then the prophet Nathan said to me, **“You are that man.”** Oh how blind and deaf I was. Everything I was doing as I tried to build this house and kingdom for myself was just like the greedy and selfish rich man in the story. I was suddenly crushed under the self-awareness of how terrible a person I truly was. Then the Creator said to me, **“The sword will never depart from your house. What you did in secret to another man will be done openly to you.”** And as always, the Creator was right. My own son Absalom then led a rebellion against me, throwing my kingdom and house into a second **civil war**. Everything was falling apart around me and I had to flee my own kingdom and city to save myself from my own son. While I was on the run a man named Shimei began throwing stones at me and shouting, **“You have destroyed yourself through your violent ways!”** My men wanted to kill Shimei, but I said, **“Leave him alone. Let him curse me. The Lord has told him to do so.”** And I was cursed. The civil war against my own son Absalom ended up with him **dead**. And then another man from the tribe of Benjamin named Sheba led another rebellion that led to a third **civil war** and more bloodshed. And toward the end of my life, a great **plague** came upon all my people because of my own disobedience and unfaithfulness. And as I saw my people dying all around me because of my own selfishness I said to the Creator, **“I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. Strike me and my family instead!”**

“I will build you a house.” The Creator did answer David’s prayer and strike David’s family. The Creator sent his Son Jesus, born from the line of David into our faithless world. And Jesus, the **“son of David,”** was struck by his own people. Where David wielded the **sword**, Jesus turned the other **cheek**. Where David **killed** tens of thousands, Jesus **loved** tens of thousands. Where David **stole** the wives and women of whomever he wanted, Jesus took **one wife**—his Church community—and stayed completely loyal to her. Where David **crucified** his enemies, Jesus was himself struck and **crucified**. It is through Jesus that the Creator has fulfilled his promise to David: **“I will build you a house.”** Through Jesus’s self-sacrificial love, the Creator has built the house and kingdom of the **Church**. Through Jesus, you and I have been made into **living stones** within this house that the Creator is building. **“I will build you a house.”** David thought he was doing the Creator’s work. But David was blind. David hated injustice but failed to see that he was the one committing injustice with what he was building. The prophet had to declare to David, **“You are that man.”** And the prophet says the same to us today, **“You are that man.”** You are called to repent today and stop building a house and kingdom for yourself. Instead, let the Creator **“build you into a house,”** let him place you as a living stone into his kingdom of the Church. The problem isn’t those around you. **“You are that man.”** But the Creator has made a promise through Jesus to never give up on you. He will tear down the house and kingdom you are building and then will say to you again, **“I will build you a house.” Amen.**