

"WALK THRU THE BIBLE: II CHRONICLES."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: II Chronicles 1:1; 3:1; 7:14, 19-20; 36:14-17, 19-23

Introduction to II Chronicles.

When we talk about the Bible we use an incarnational analogy. Just as Jesus is fully divine and fully human, so the Bible is fully divine and fully human. It is divine in that it is the Word of God. Like God it doesn't lie, it is without error, it is eternal, trustworthy and true.

It is human as God didn't set aside human personality in giving us His revelation. It was not dictated from heaven. It is the product of particular persons at particular moments in history, people influenced by their life and times, by their cultures and backgrounds and upbringing.

But the chronicler is not just a journalist, a recorder of facts. This is more like a painting than a photograph. There are no uninterpreted facts, he is a teacher and theologian, writing to influence, to minister to the needs of his people.

The message of II Chronicles is an unvarnished, brutally honest account of what happened and why, and yet in the midst of the honesty there is still hope. Even when all hope seems completely lost, God's covenant-keeping mercy triumphs over His covenant-demanding judgment (Stan Guthrie).

This is why Chronicles focuses on the southern kingdom of Judah. For the northern kingdom all hope is gone, their wicked apostasy has been judged permanently, there is no more grace for them.

Just to quickly recap where we are, like Samuel and Kings, Chronicles was one book.

I Chronicles mirrors the history of II Samuel which is about David.

II Chronicles mirrors the history of I and II Kings which is about Solomon and the kings. It covers 400 years of Israel's history.

II Chronicles 1-9, Solomon

II Chronicles 10-36, all the rest of the kings.

400 years, from the building the temple to the destruction of the temple.

Both Chronicles were written for Jews who were returning to the Promised Land from their 70-year exile in Babylon. These post-exilic Jews needed a reminder of who their God was, what He was like and how He worked. In the mind of the Chronicler the history of Judah from David to the last king provided the best lessons to show the people God and His dealings with His people.

We see good kings who make catastrophic decisions, mediocre kings who are redeemed with a wise response, terrible kings who repent and find forgiveness. These are real people, who have moments of greatness and weakness, and who need to learn the importance of humility, wisdom, obedience, and prayer.

There are *four lessons* the Chronicler wants to drive home as the people of God begin their drive back home to Judah and the Promised Land.

God's glory and greatness.

People's sin

God's judgement

The resolution

God's glory and greatness.

This first lesson is what they never taught us in history class. Human history is never just about humans, it is about God, the creator of humans and God the Lord of history. God is on every page of history, every day, every year, every event.

The first word of II Chronicles is the word Solomon. But what we learn about him is that God was with him and it was God who made him exceedingly great. God appeared to him, God gave him great wisdom and great wealth, honor and power.

God appointed Solomon to build Him a temple. The first seven chapters are devoted to the building, furnishing, blessing and dedicating of the temple. Why so much attention for a building?

Listen to what Solomon said about it:

II Chronicles 2:5-6 The house that I am to build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods. 6 But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him?

II Chronicles 6:33 ... in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that this house that I have built is called by your name.

It was a truly glorious building, magnificent in every way. Fire came down from heaven and the glory of God filled it, the shekinah glory of God.

II Chronicles 7:3 When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the Lord on the temple, they bowed down with their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshiped and gave thanks to the Lord, saying, “For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.”

Imagine living in a place where the glory of the Lord is so visible, so tangible, so palpable. Solomon prayed that all would know how great and good God is, that all the earth would know Him and worship Him

In the rest of II Chronicles, chapters 10-36 about all the rest of the kings, the Chronicler show the post-exilic Jews how great and good God is by how He exercises His sovereignty over all the kings. God raises up kings and God puts them down according to His will and pleasure. God is God, God is great and God is good in all His ways.

In chapter 18 God raised Ahab up and when Ahab was wicked God sent a prophet to tell him he would die in battle. Ahab decided to disguise himself as a regular soldier in battle so no one would know he was king.

II Chronicles 18:33 But a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate.

God is not fooled, God is sovereign, God knows all things. The battle is never ours but belongs to God. God is not limited. Even pagan kings and armies are under His complete control. Sovereignty is the very definition of who God is. God is great and God is good.

II Chronicles 36:22 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, *that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia*, so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom and also put it in writing

The peoples sin

The Chronicler paints a grim picture of the sins of God's people and their leaders. In response to God's greatness and goodness they commit terrible idolatry and adultery. And this in the face of countless warnings from so many prophetic messengers of God.

Solomon's failure is so much the worse because of God's great blessings and riches to him.

His life became self-centered rather than God-centered. He stopped submitting to the Word of God. The temple became only an outward form, not the expression of his inward life. It became an object of ritual rather than the place of real worship. In the years that followed, what had become true of Solomon became true of the whole nation of Israel (Thomas L. Constable).

The rest of II Chronicles is an illustration of having the form of godliness without the power (II Timothy 3:5).

Their worship became a matter of formal observance, a hollow symbol of ritualism, going through the motions, without any real vital relationship with God.

This same thing fills the church today. So many people faithfully attend church but they don't really worship, and they live the rest of their lives as practical atheists, as if there is no God, giving Him little or no attention. Ritualism, formalism, empty hypocrisy, playing church. James calls this useless faith. It is lifeless and impotent.

The great Polish pianist Ignacy Jan Paderewski is reported to have said, "If I fail to practice one day, I notice it. If I fail to practice two days, the critics notice it. If I fail to practice three days, everybody notices it." There is wisdom in that for us Christians if we aren't growing in our faith and cultivating a daily, heartfelt relationship with God. Thank God for the trials and challenges He brings into our lives to draw us to Himself.

II Chronicles 12:14 Rehoboam did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the Lord.

As a final illustration of the sins of Judah, the Chronicler lists the terrible sins of King Manasseh:

II Chronicles 33:1-9 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. 2 And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had broken down, and he erected altars to the Baals, and made Asheroth, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. 4 And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, “In Jerusalem shall my name be forever.” 5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. 6 And he burned his sons as an offering in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, and used fortune-telling and omens and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with necromancers. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. 7 And the carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God... 9 Manasseh led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem astray, to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the people of Israel.

God’s judgement on his people

II Chronicles 12:5 Thus says the Lord, ‘You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you.

II Chronicles 15:2 If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

II Chronicles 7:14 has long been a favorite chapter and verse for Christians. But the context is sobering. It is part of God’s words to Solomon after he dedicated the temple. It is two long “if ... then” statements.

Remember the Jews are reading this after the fact, after the exile. They are hearing the covenant promises of God and the covenant warnings. This book is clear, God is not indifferent to our sins, He punishes sin.

In II Chronicles His judgment often comes in the form of war as God raises up pagan nations to punish evil. And II Chronicles 36 ends with God raising up a

mighty nation to judge His own people. The exile is a picture of final judgment, the temple is destroyed, Jerusalem is burned, the walls broken down.

In the OT there is a much closer connection between sin and judgment. In the NT we see judgment more deferred to the final judgment. But not always.

Remember the Corinthians at the Lord's table, and Ananias and Sapphira lying to the Apostles.

Resolution.

II Chronicles 36 is a shocking end. The story isn't over.

Whereas II Kings 25 ends dismally with the deportation of Judah to Babylon, II Chronicles 36:22–23 concludes hopefully with the Jews' release from Persia and return to Jerusalem.

The Chronicler retold the story of their collective past in order to rekindle hope for the future.

With God there is forgiveness and healing and hope and blessing. That story about the worst sins of the worst king Manasseh. He repents.

II Chronicles 33:12-13 And when he was in distress, he entreated the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. 13 He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty and heard his plea and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.

God is the God of hope. He sovereignly moved the heart of pagan King Cyrus, and brought good news to a people who didn't deserve it.

Jesus.

And that is where we see Jesus, in His mercy He frees us from our sin, our idolatry, from our exile into sin.

Manasseh's story proves there is hope for repentance and restoration from exile even for the most sinful

II Chronicles highlights the *temple* and the *kings*. Jesus is both.

As with all references to kings and temples in the Old Testament, we see in them a reflection of the true King of Kings—Jesus Christ—and of the temple of the Holy Spirit—His people.

Messiah, of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end.

Jesus is our Davidic king. Our king is perfect in His obedience, He is faithful and righteous. Our security in our relationship with God depends on Him, He has delivered and saved us, He has satisfied all the righteous covenant demands of the Father. He rules and reigns forever.

Jesus refers to this theme of the destruction and rebuilding of the temple in [John 2:18–22](#), where he says, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” referring to his own body. Jesus’ body is the fulfillment of the Old Testament temple.

We who belong to Jesus are that temple, made not by hands but by the will of God (John 1:12-13). The Spirit who lives within us will never depart from us and will deliver us safely into the hands of God one day (Ephesians 1:13; 4:30). No earthly temple contains that promise.

Implications and application.

The book of **II Chronicles** offers numerous spiritual lessons and applications that can be relevant for believers today. By examining the themes of faithfulness, repentance, leadership, worship, and God's mercy, we can draw out principles for spiritual growth and a closer walk with God.

Prayer:

Toward the end of the book, the Chronicler tells us, “The people of Judah came together to seek help from the Lord; indeed, they came from every town in Judah to seek him.”

II Chronicles 20:12 We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.

The Power of Prayer and Seeking God

The author of Chronicles reminds his readers that the temple is the place of prayer, and he encourages them to repent and pray for God's healing of their land (see 2 Chron. 7:14).

The Importance of Repentance and Humility

We may not have sacrificed our sons and daughters in the fire, but your sins sacrificed God's son on the cross.

Coming to the Lord's Table next week:

“And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord” (2 Chron. 30:21; cf. 1 Chron. 16:1-42; 23:5; 25:1-31; 2 Chron. 5:12-13; 7:6; 23:13,18; 29:25-30; 34:12).

It is important that the Temple be cleansed because the Temple is where our cleansing is to occur. The joy of the Lord is our strength. The Lord inhabits the praises of His people. The music in our mouths, also in our hearts.