

A MAJOR LEAGUE COMEBACK

This is the year of comebacks in professional baseball. Several players are back in the Major Leagues after overcoming major league setbacks.

The best comeback of this spring is the of Braves' slugger, Andres Galarraga.

This time last year he was battling cancer, hoping just to stay alive – playing baseball again seemed a stretch. How inspirational though, to see him now, leading the league in homers, and batting close to 300. Big Cat is back!

This was the challenge for the southern kingdom of Judah.

2 Kings closes with the sacking of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians. The Jews were hauled off to Babylon where God sentenced them to 70 years of hard labor. Jews who'd flirted with idols were forced to live in an idolatrous land.

Their period of exile was designed to cultivate a hatred for idolatry, and renew a longing in their hearts for God. God was preparing the Jews for a new start...

That new start became a reality when the Babylonians fell to the Persians in 536 BC. King Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return home, and rebuild their temple... *the comeback was on.*

But this comeback was tough... the

city was in rubble. The land barren. Jews who returned had to start over...

One of the exiles who returned to Jerusalem was a priest named Ezra.

Ezra encouraged his fellow Jews by chronicling their history. He highlighted how God had worked in the past - and His plan wasn't complete. Ezra got the Jews excited about their future by reminding them of their glorious past.

You'll notice immediately Chronicles repeats much of the material in 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings – but with a different slant.

For the most part 1 and 2 Chronicles ignores Israel to the north, and spotlights exclusively on Judah in the south. 1 and 2 Kings flip-flopped back and forth between the two neighbors, but Chronicles deals with Judah, and the kings of the Davidic dynasty.

1 and 2 Chronicles were penned to encourage a comeback!

Guys, we do well to chronicle the wonderful ways God intervenes in our lives. So often we forget God's work – especially the little daily miracles. We're wise to keep a chronicle – we'd call it a journal – to remind ourselves of God's faithfulness.

EZRA'S OMISSIONS

1 Chronicles 3:5 mentions the four sons of David born to him by his wife, Bathshua, or "*Bathsheba*".

It's interesting - you'll find nothing in Chronicles about David's adultery with Bathsheba. Not the death of the son they sired, or the moral decline it caused within David's family. Amnon's rape of Tamar, the rebellion of Absalom, and David's forced exodus from Jerusalem, even the coup attempt by Adonijah – are conspicuously missing from Ezra's account of Judah's history. The stains on David's record are left off by Ezra.

You might accuse Ezra of a cover-up, but remember his purpose. Ezra writes to encourage a defeated people.

The Jews didn't need to be reminded of their failure – they'd spent 70 years in exile as punishment. They were well aware of their failure. Ezra's audience needed a pick-me-up! They needed to focus on the positive.

This is true of any person who's truly repen-

tant. Some pastors think it's their duty to constantly remind people of how sorry they are. Hey, we know how sorry and sinful we are. We need encouragement. We need to get our eyes off our failures, and focus on what Jesus has done for us. We need to see ourselves in Christ.

It's exciting to me that the heir to David's throne, Solomon – God's chosen successor – was also Bathsheba's boy. It was God's way of redeeming David's sinful slide. Yes, God hated the sin, and it was costly to David. The son conceived on that adulterous night died shortly after his birth. But the glorious thing about God's forgiveness is that it lets us pick up at the point of repentance, and start over.

This is what Ezra wants to say to the post-exiled Jews. If you can start over after *Bathsheba*, you can start over after *Babylon*. *In fact, you can start over after anything!* Our God is *the God of another chance.*

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ

1 Chronicles 4:9-10 mentions the prayer of Jabez.

The name "Jabez" means "he causes pain", and Jabez did all he could to live down that name. His prayer reflects his desire to be a blessing to people, and not a pain in the neck...

Verse 10 tells us the content of his prayer, "Oh, that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!"

And Ezra adds, "So God granted him what he requested."

What a powerful prayer for us to emulate... Lord, bless me a bunch. Don't be afraid to ask. Expand my borders, or my influence for Jesus. Fill me with spiritual power. Make my life smack of the supernatural. And protect me from evil. Especially, the evil within me.

IDENTITY IS IMPORTANT

In the melting pot of America, the first 9 chapters are a bunch of boring begots! Genealogical records may be fun to pursue as a past-time, but in our country it's not a big deal. Not so with the Jews; genealogies were very significant.

First of all, it was their link to the land. Joshua divided the land among families. A person's tribal identity was their title deed to where they could settle.

Second, in the case of the Levites, occupation was determined by pedigree. Only members of the tribe of Levi could serve as priests in the temple.

And third, the right to rule was determined by genealogy. The ultimate ruler of all the world, *Messiah*, was promised to be David's descendant. The genealogy in 1 Chronicles is important in tracing back the lineage of our Lord Jesus.

When a believer is born again, we gain a spiritual genealogy. We are directly linked to the Savior. We can prove that we're God's kid by pointing to Jesus.

Of course, it's important to be aware and sure of your identity. Before a person can decide *what to do* it's helpful to decide *who they are*. The sequence is always the same - *identity shapes attitude - attitude shapes action*. Proverbs 23:7 is true, "For as (a man) thinks in his heart, so is he."

How you see yourself will determine how you live your life. If you see yourself in Christ - as a saved and sealed child of God - you'll seek to live like one. But if you see yourself in limbo, or apart from God, you'll wander away from Him.

I've got an interesting picture. It's a cat looking at itself in a mirror - but the image reflected back off the mirror is that of a lion. The caption reads, "What matters most is how you see yourself." That picture is not *lying!* It's true.

The symbol of the tribe of Judah was a lion. The battle-scarred, defeated and deflated Jews who had returned to the land might feel like a kitty cat, but in God's eyes they were a lion. Ezra begins with an ancestral genealogy intended to remind these dejected people that lion-hearted blood still flows through their veins.

Our own personal comebacks get derailed when we feel a little kittenish - when fear causes us to shrink from the challenges. But if we're truly in Christ it's time to let the real cat outta the bag! *Hey, the Lion of the tribe of Judah lives in you.* Our "Big Cat" is not Andres, but Jesus. The key to victory is to see yourself in Christ!

Devotion Box - Worship in Three Words

1 Chronicles 15:16 tells us the singers and musicians joined together to raise the voice "with resounding joy."

This is biblical worship in 3 words, "a *resounding joy*". True praise is the echo of the joy God puts in our hearts. God fills us with His joy, then praise is the *re-sounding* of that joy to God.

Devotion Box - The Joy of Giving

In 1 Chronicles 29:1-9 the people follow David's example, and give financially to the building of the temple. Verse 9 sums it up, "Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly, because with a loyal heart they had offered willingly to the LORD; and King David also rejoiced greatly."

Acts 20:35 recalls a quote from our Lord. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Giving always unleashes blessing. When you give freely to God - He gives freely to you. And it's a fact, no one has ever out given God.

On this occasion, what made their giving so joyous, was it was done willingly. There was no pressure. When people are forced to give they lose the joy of giving. It becomes a chore rather than an opportunity.

Giving should always be voluntary. It should come from our heart. It should be an expression of our love and loyalty for God - not an obligation.

It reminds me of 2 Corinthians 9:7, "for God loves a cheerful giver."

Devotion Box - A Promise to Seekers

In 1 Chronicles 28:9 the Lord says, "If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever."

Guys, if you seek the Lord, He will be found. It's a promise!

If you've ever played hide-and-seek with a two-year-old, you know it's not uncommon for him to "hide" in full view, right in the middle of the room. It's because a two-year-old enjoys being found a lot more than staying hidden.

This is God's attitude. He desires for every heart to find Him. That's why He promises to reveal Himself to anyone who makes an honest effort to seek Him.

HOW TO MEASURE LOVE

The one story that stands out is in 1 Chronicles 11, verses 15-19.

One day David is talking about old times. He recalls how sweet the water tasted from the well in his hometown of Bethlehem. Without thinking, he wishes he could get a drink.

At the time Bethlehem is under Philistine control, but David's men go behind enemy lines. They risk their necks to bring David the water. David is overwhelmed at their act of affection. He doesn't deserve such devotion.

He pours out the water as a sacrifice, and says in verse 19, "Far be it from me, O my God, that I should do this! Shall I drink the blood of these men who have put their lives in jeopardy? For at the risk of their lives they brought it." Therefore he would not drink it." Such extravagant love should be reserved for God alone.

Real love is lavish. It looks reckless, and wasteful, and uncouth by everyone but the person in love. But when you really love someone you're willing to take risks, and expend resources to express your love.

Love is not afraid to lose.

Remember when Mary broke the vial of expensive perfume, and anointed Jesus' feet. It was the pragmatic Judas who questioned her wisdom. *It could've been sold, and given to the poor.* But Judas didn't understand the logic of love. To Mary nothing was more important than showing Jesus how much He meant to her.

How about you? Do you understand the logic of love? When was the last time you took a risk, or was accused of waste, to let the Lord know you love Him?

The intensity of a love is measured by its extravagance. A love that never takes risks - never exhausts effort - never spends time - is a love that's grown cold.

Devotion Box - Lord of the Breakthroughs

In chapter 14, David's army goes in action.

The Philistines conduct a raid into Israeli territory. David asks the Lord how he should respond. In verse 10, "the LORD said to him, 'Go up, for I will deliver them into your hand.'" David obeyed, and won a great victory. In verse 11, David calls the site of victory, "Baal Perazim", or "Lord of the breakthrough".

What a wonderful name for God, "Lord of the breakthrough".

Perhaps, for years you've beaten your head against the same wall. You've tried a million ways to get out of the handcuffs that hold you. What you need is a breakthrough! Well, I know where you can turn...

Jesus specializes in breakthroughs!

MARCHING TO THE MULBERRYS

In 1 Chronicles 14, the Philistines launch a raid into Israeli territory. God tells David to go up against the enemy, and Israel wins the battle.

The Philistines then launch an identical raid with similar circumstances. Most of us would just assume God would win the victory with a similar strategy. But David doesn't take anything for granted.

He prays again, and this time God tells him in verse 14, "You shall not go up after them; circle around them, and come upon them in front of the mulberry trees. And it shall be, when you hear a sound of marching in the tops of the mulberry trees, then you shall go out to battle, for God has gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines." Just because God works one way in the past doesn't mean He'll work that way in the future. Don't assume... we need to seek!

David follows God's direction, and wins again. He waits for the wind to rustle the tops of the mulberry trees. We too need to wait for the rustling wind - we need to be lead by the wind of God's Spirit. Pre-programmed solutions are not God's method. God wants us to learn His will as we abide in fellowship with Him.

ATTENTION GATEKEEPERS

In 1 Chronicles 9:17-27, Ezra discusses the ministry of the city's gatekeepers. Ushers and greeters are the modern-day version of the gatekeepers.

If you're an usher or greeter, you play a vital role. You pave the way - prime the pump - for people when they enter our church to worship. Their first impression comes from you. Gatekeepers were also trouble-shooters. They anticipated needs and dealt with any distractions that might interfere with the flow of worshippers moving in and out of the temple. This is also the function of our ushers and greeters...

Notice several points about the gatekeepers...

First, it was a *needed position*. Thousands of worshippers came to the temple daily. During the feasts, the numbers swelled to tens of thousands. And there were numerous gates. People came from different angles. There was a lot to oversee.

Second, it was a *coordinated position*. Verse 17 tells us they had a chief named "Shallum". He was head usher. Verse 23 says their tasks were carried out "by assignment". They had a schedule. They were organized for ministry.

Third, it was an *important position*. Verses 22 and 26 calls the role a "trusted office". Gatekeepers provided people with a first impression when they went up to worship. They represented God. The job was a sacred trust.

Fourth, it was an *honored position*. Verse 19 tells us the gatekeepers were part of a heritage. They followed in their father's footsteps. Being a gatekeeper was like going to the same college as your dad and granddad - you were part of a legacy.

Fifth, it's a *responsible position*. Verse 26 says, "they had charge". Gatekeepers were given authority. Certain decisions were up to them. Verse 27 tells us "they lodged all around the house of God because they had the responsibility". They felt so responsible for their function they lived nearby so they could be available.

Sixth, it was a *spiritual position*. Verse 20 mentions Phineas, the first leader of this order, and here's what's said of him: "the LORD was with him." Guys, to be a good gatekeeper you need to be empowered by the Lord. You need his joy, wisdom, patience, and love. Usher and greeters need the Spirit of God.

If you have questions on tonight's study, email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - May 21, 2000

5/24 Wed—Café Calvary: Bible Study by Pastor James; special music by Mike

5/28 Sun—Spring Wing Fling 5:30 PM

6/2 Fri—Three Last Words Benefit Concert for Calvary Chapel Christian School 8 PM

6/1, 8, 15 Thurs—Thrilling Thursdays

6/5 Mon -6/9 Tues —Preschool VBS -"Shipwreck at Cross Cove"

6/19 Mon -6/23 Fri—Junior High Retreat at St. Simon's Island

7/22 Sat- 7/29 Sat - Senior High Mission Trip at Saltillo, Mexico

Next Bible Scan - June 4 - 2 Chronicles 1-36

DAVIDIC COVENANT

In chapter 17 God strikes a deal with David. This is one of the most important chapters in all the Bible because it establishes who will rule God's kingdom.

David wants to build God a temple, a house - but instead God promises to build David a house - a dynasty. David is promised an heir who will sit on the throne of God's kingdom forever. God declares in verse 14, "I will establish him in My house and in My kingdom forever; and his throne shall be established forever."

This is why the New Testament writers, Matthew and Luke, go to great pains to trace the genealogy of Jesus back to David. Jesus was this promised ruler.

Understand, anyone who claims to be "Savior", or "Messiah", and cannot trace his lineage back to David is an imposter. Shortly after Jesus ascended to heaven the temple in Jerusalem was burned, and the genealogies of the Jews destroyed. God allowed their destruction because they were no longer needed. Messiah had already come. Jesus proved his Davidic ancestry.

"Who am I, O LORD God? And what is my house, that You have brought me this far?" - 1 Chronicles 17:16

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

Devotion Box - The Motive Of Your Music

In chapters 23-26, David continues his preparations for the construction of the temple by organizing the temple workers.

Twenty-four thousand Levites were set apart to minister within the temple. 1 Chronicles 23:4-5 tell us that of those 24,000 "six thousand were officers and judges, four thousand were gatekeepers, and four thousand praised the LORD with musical instruments, "which I made," said David, "for giving praise."

Notice, David was an inventor of musical instruments, but he constructed instruments for two purposes... First to *magnify*, and second to

prophesy. 1 Chronicles 23:5 tells us David made instruments for "for giving praise" to God. 1 Chronicles 25:1 says that David appointed men to "prophesy with harps, stringed instruments, and cymbals."

David's instruments were to be used to either *praise* or *proclaim* the Lord.

Guys, if you're a musician let me ask you, *what's the purpose of your instrument?* Are you using it to jam with your friends, or show off your skill, or earn a record contract and become famous, or entertain yourself or others... The instrument you to play has a higher purpose. It's been made to glorify God.

SPIRIT-LED PLANNING

I love what David tells Solomon in verses 11-12, "Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers, its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD..."

There are churches who've substituted organization for the power of the Holy Spirit - it's tragic! But don't go to the other extreme. I get frustrated with believers who consider all planning and organization a fleshly activity. They believe in just letting the Holy Spirit lead... but in verse 12, David got his plans from the Spirit.

I believe in Spirit-led organization and Spirit-led planning! A plan helps the church maximize its resources, and direct its energies. Yes, we need to be led by the Holy Spirit, but we also need to plan and organize - and I don't think the two are mutually exclusive. We need to seek the Lord for our plans and structures.