

## INTRODUCTION TO 2 CHRONICLES

If you're in the midst of a remodeling project you probably wouldn't think you'd need a priest. An architect maybe - or a contractor, or a framer, or a millworker, or an electrician, or a plumber, or even an engineer... but a pastor? Naaah!

Yet that's exactly what Judah needed. The Jews had returned from 70 years in Babylonian exile to rebuild their nation, and the work was tough. They desperately needed some pastoral encouragement. That's why God sent them Ezra the priest.

Ezra was a pastor with a pen! He wrote a encouraging chronicle of their history.

Samuel and Kings are straightforward history, whereas Chronicles is a commentary on that history. It's written from a certain slant. Rather than labor over the nation's numerous mistakes, Ezra focuses on what they do right - and when he records their sin he makes it clear it could've easily been avoided.

One commentator explains it as follows: Kings is the history of Israel from *man's viewpoint*, while Chronicles is the history of Israel from *God's viewpoint*.

If so, that explanation reveals a glorious truth... *God is always looking on the bright side*. Man's version of history is a hopeless death march, but history from God's perspective is "*His Story*". God's

plan culminates in a fabulous future.

It's revealing to me that a quarter of 2 Chronicles deals with the reign of Solomon. The entire book covers 400 years of history from 971 - 586 BC - but 25% of the book is preoccupied with 10% of the time period. Solomon's kingdom was the pinnacle of Judah's prominence. It was the golden age.

Ezra's purpose is to *inspire* the exiles with a reminder of the glory they once enjoyed, in hopes that they'll *aspire* to that same glory again.

Look at how Ezra opens 2 Chronicles (1:1): "Now Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God was with him and exalted him exceedingly."

Notice, Solomon's success wasn't the result of natural advantages, or physical circumstances. The key to success was far simpler - *God was with him and exalted him exceedingly*. Ezra believes if God did it before, He can do it again.

The key to real success is God's presence and His promotion! 2 Chronicles teaches us what Abraham Lincoln once said, "Without God's assistance I cannot succeed; with His assistance I cannot fail."

## KILLING'EM SOFTLY WITH HIS SONG

In 2 Chronicles 20 Jehoshaphat wins a victory over the army from the South, and in the process learns a few lessons about victory in the Christian life.

The Lord tells Judah in verse 17, "You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you."

Here's four keys to victory - *position, patience, perspective, praise*.

We need to understand our position in Christ. We need to wait on the Lord to reveal His means for victory. We need to view the outcome of our trial through eyes of faith. We need to go forward into the fray armed with the power of praise.

It must've shocked his generals the next day when Jehoshaphat configured his troops. He put singers and worship leaders in front of the archers, infantry, and swordsmen. The alignment also shocked the enemy. We're told confusion reigned in their ranks, and they ended up killing each other.

The old song, "*Killing Me Softly With His Song*", was apropos for this battle. It was a strange battle cry, "Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever." Yet the sounds of praise drove the demons and the enemy they controlled crazy. Praise can have the same effect on the spiritual enemies we face.

## REACHING GOD

Jehoshaphat was also a godly king. 2 Chronicles 17:6 tells us, "his heart took delight in the ways of the LORD; moreover he removed the high places..."

It was a common belief in antiquity that the gods lived on mountain tops. In Greece for example, the Greek pantheon of gods lived on Mount Olympus. The higher the elevation, the closer you were to your god. This is why the pagans built their altars on mounds of dirt.

Of course, Solomon's temple was also built on a mountain - Mount Moriah. It was to this mountain in Jerusalem the Jews were to come and worship.

Remember, God centralized worship to keep it pure. This is why the pagan altars, or *high places*, were outlawed. In the Old Testament, God could not be reached from just any mountain, or high place, but from the Temple Mount. This is why Jehoshaphat is commended for tearing down the illegal high places.

All this makes Jesus' words to the woman at the well so revolutionary... In John 4:20 the Samaritan woman asks Jesus on which mountain should God be worshipped - the mountain in Samaria or Jerusalem? Jesus replies, "the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father... but true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth..."

On the cross Jesus bridged the gap between God and man. If you're in Christ, God is no longer way out there, or way up there - He lives in your heart. You no longer need *elevation* to worship God - when you have the *salvation* of Jesus.

## WHAT YOU REALLY NEED

Josephus says Solomon was 14 when he became king, and he had big shoes to fill. His dad was David. Would he be able to live up to expectations? Solomon turns to God.

He goes to the Tabernacle at Gibeon, and offers a thousand burnt offerings. Which reminds me of the wife who treated her husband like a god! *She offered him burnt offerings every night for dinner!*

Verse 7 tells us how God responds, "On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask! What shall I give you?" It was a blank check! Solomon can have anything he wants! What if God said to you, "Make a wish, it'll be granted..."

Here's another way to look at it - what one thing would solve all your problems? Well, if I won the lotto! I hope you don't believe that! It would create as many problems as it would solve. Well, if I had my own business, or got married, or was better looking... Hey, I'm pretty good looking, but I still have a few problems...

God gives Solomon His Visa card - it has an unlimited limit - and He allows him one purchase... Verse 10 tells us what he buys: "Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?" Here's the solution to all your problems... *wisdom!*

Whether you're king of a nation, or king of your castle - you need wisdom to apply God's Word - to walk in His ways and will. Rather than more stuff, we need wisdom to enjoy what we have, make right choices, and succeed in relationships.

Solomon filled in his check wisely, and God gives him wisdom *plus* everything else he could've asked for... riches, honor, victory, long life.

Until our priority in life is set, the blessings can get in the way. When a heart is fixated on material stuff - the stuff becomes a distraction to spiritual growth.

The blessings become more important than the Blessor. Jesus says in Matthew 6:33, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Pursue God, and He'll see to it you have what you need.

## Devotion Box - Looking on the Bright Side

In the latter portion of 2 Chronicles 9, Ezra discusses Solomon's *treasure, throne, and trading*. But notice, he never mentions the *trap* that ruined Solomon. Solomon multiplied foreign wives, who lured him into idolatry.

Remember though, Ezra's purpose. He's encouraging the Jews. Why remind them of their mistakes, when they've just served 70 years in exile as a result? Ezra is reviving hope, not heaping guilt.

We as pastors need to follow Ezra's example. I know pastors who think it's their duty to constantly remind people of their sin. If you're repentant you don't need a reminder of the past - you need hope and encouragement for the future.

Ezra deliberately excludes Solomon's idolatry from his Chronicles, and by doing so makes a vital point to forgiven idolators. What God forgives He forgets... He wants us to start over. Yes, sin has its consequences, but our past doesn't have to cripple our future. *With God's help, there is a bright side! By faith you can see it!*

## Devotion Box - Where is your Trust ?

Throughout 2 Chronicles, and the history of Judah, the message is the same. As one author put it: "Whether Abijah of Judah is fighting Israel, or Asa is battling the Ethiopians, or Jehoshaphat is struggling with the Moabites, or Hezekiah is wrestling the Assyrians, the point is always the same: only God can bring victory. The success of Judah is invariably related to her trust in God."

As we read story after story, remember the theme is the same... trust God, and prevail... trust in your own strength, and no matter how strong you are, you'll fail.

In the challenge you're facing- are you trusting the Lord, or have you put your trust in your own strength?

## BABYLON BOUND

605 BC...

Babylonian Prince Nebuchadnezzar leaves Judah's King Jehoiakim in power, but takes back members of his royal court (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego). He also plunders the temple treasure.

597 BC...

King Nebuchadnezzar takes Judah's Jehoiachin to Babylon, along with Ezekiel the priest. Zedekiah is appointed king over Judah.

586 BC...

Babylon sacks Jerusalem, and burns the temple. All but a few Jews are deported to Babylon, where they remain until 536 BC.

## KINGS OF JUDAH

Solomon	971-931	40 years
Rehoboam	931-913	17 years
Abijam	913-911	3 years
*Asa	911-870	41 years
*Jehoshaphat	873-848	25 years
Jehoram	853-841	8 years
Ahaziah	841	1 year
+Athaliah	841-835	6 years
*Joash	835-796	40 years
*Amaziah	796-767	29 years
-*Azariah	792-740	52 years
*Jotham	750-732	18 years
Ahaz	735-716	19 years
*Hezekiah	716-687	29 years
Manasseh	697-643	55 years
Amon	643-641	2 years
*Josiah	641-609	31 years
Johoahaz	609	3 months
Jehoiakim	609-598	11 years
Jehoiachin	598-597	3 months
Zedekiah	597-586	11 years

+ mother of Ahaziah  
 - also known as Uzziah  
 \* good king

## Devotion Box - Serving Shishak

In 2 Chronicles 12, God spared Jerusalem from destruction, but He allowed Shishak to oppress Judah. He wanted to prove to her that it's a lot easier to serve the Lord, than serve Shishak.

The Lord loves us and wants what's best. Sin and Shishak are cruel taskmasters. Sometimes we forget, everybody serves somebody... ultimately, it's either the devil or the Lord!

Ezra recalls God's motive here, because it was the exact motive that sent the Jews to Babylon for 70 years. It's also the motive behind tough times in our lives. We're prone to forget the joy of serving God, until we're forced to serve someone else for a while.

Are your troubles in reality a wake-up call from God?

## THE EYES OF THE LORD

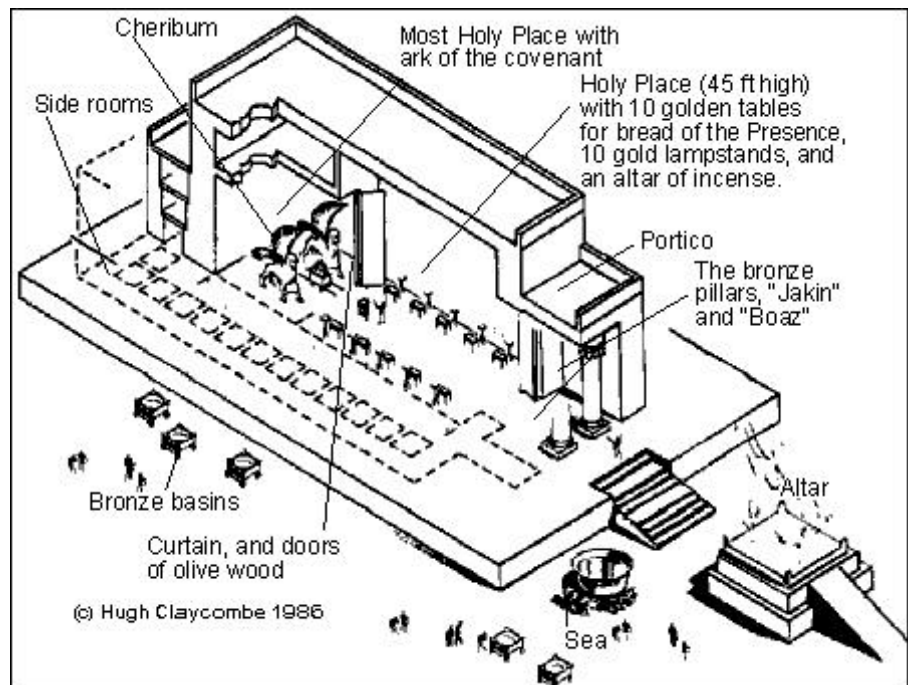
Asa's life teaches us a lesson. Faith has to stay current. Asa trusted God for victory over the Ethiopians, but when Israel attacks, he turns to Syria for help.

In 2 Chronicles 16:9, the prophet rebukes Asa, "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

God is an opportunist. He's especially on the lookout for the underdog scenario where He can turn the tables, and showcase His power. But God won't work on behalf of a person who'll claim the credit for himself - or manipulate the outcome for his own benefit. He looks for the person who's heart is loyal to Him!

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." They'll see Him at work in their lives.

## SOLOMON'S TEMPLE



# Bible Scan - 2 Chronicles 1-36

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study, email Pastor Sandy - [sandyadams@calvarychapel.org](mailto:sandyadams@calvarychapel.org)

Calvary Chapel Announcements - June 4, 2000

**6/8, 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 11 - Ezra 1-10

## Devotion Box - What About Your Investment ?

"LORD, it is nothing for you to help, whether with many or with those who have no power; help us, O LORD our God, for we rest on you..." - 2 Chronicles 14:11

## Bible Scan Memory Verse

In chapter 25, Joash's son Amaziah takes his father's place.

In anticipation of a war with Edom, Amaziah hires 100,000 mercenaries from the northern tribe of Ephraim. A prophet warns him not to put his trust in Israel, but in the Lord. But Amaziah has a problem, "*What about the money I've paid them?*"

Here's a hindrance to obedience we often face. *What about our investment?*

*"I've got 20 years with this company, I can't just pick up and move even if God tells me." "I know he's an unbeliever, and it's wrong to date him, but we've been going out for 3 years, how can I just give it up." I've got an "A" in the course. If I take a stand now, the teacher might get upset, and it jeopardize my grade."*

Hey, listen to what the prophet says to Amaziah in verse 9: "The LORD is able to give you much more than this." Yes, there's often a cost to obey God. You might lose your investment, but God is faithful to reimburse your losses.

Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 19:29, "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."

In other words, it's impossible to really *sacrifice* for God. He'll return your investment, plus some.

## Devotion Box - The Opportunity To Give

2 Chronicles 24:10 tells us, "Then all the leaders and all the people rejoiced, brought their contributions, and put them into the chest until all had given." Everyone wanted to give to God. No one wanted to be left out.

Years ago an impoverished woman from Paris put 27 francs in a collection plate for the church's missionaries. The pastor knew the woman was blind, so he told her, "Madame, you cannot afford to give this money." She insisted she could.

After being pressed by the pastor she finally explained, "I asked a friend how much she spent each year for oil to light the lamps in her house so her family could see at night. She told me 27 francs. Since I'm blind and don't need a lamp, I figure this is money I can give to spread the light of God into a dark world."

How's that for a noble attitude? She saw giving to God as an *opportunity* rather than an *obligation*. This is the attitude that helped Joash refurbish the temple. Everyone pitched in... How about you? Are you pitching in to do your part?

## WHILE HE WAS STILL YOUNG

I love 2 Chronicles 34:3, "For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David..."

Notice that phrase, "*while he was still young*". King Josiah's 8<sup>th</sup> year would make him 16 years old. At a time when a lot of young males are bucking authority, and sowing wild oats – Josiah decided to really seek the Lord.

It reminds me of the evangelist who came home after a crusade. His wife asked how it went. He answered, "We had 2½ lives saved." She remarked, "That's great - 2 adults and 1 child." But he corrected her, "No, 2 children and 1 adult. The kids have a whole lifetime to live for God. The adult has wasted half his life."

Young people, why throw away your best years? Why waste half your short time here on earth with empty, selfish, temporal pursuits?

*While you're still young*, serve the Lord. Invest your whole life in pursuit of God. Not only will you have longer to chalk up eternal rewards, but you'll also save yourself some unnecessary scars.

Be a Josiah, and start serving the Lord *while you're still young!*