

Sunday, September 2, 2018—2 Chronicles 7-9

Some who read the Bible believe the God of the Old Testament is one of law and anger and the God of the New Testament is one of love and grace. To say God expresses anger in the Old is true, but He does the same in the New. What one should not overlook are the constant expressions of God's people about His love and faithfulness in the Old. When the people dedicated the Temple, the place where God was to dwell, they praised Him saying, "For he is good; for his faithful love endures forever" (7:3).

After the festival, the people went home with happy hearts (7:10). Knowing God under the first covenant was not a relationship with a heartless tyrant but a marvelous walk with a good shepherd. He had to discipline His nation because they disobeyed so often and heinously, but He never acted without love and compassion. He had high expectations, so the world would know Him and His righteousness. Being completely righteous, He could not overlook unrighteousness and its devastation.

Even outsiders saw the great love God had for His people. When the queen of Sheba came to visit Solomon and see whether the great reports she heard were true, she was stunned at how lavishly God had given wisdom and blessing to Solomon and the people. "Because your God loved Israel enough to establish them forever, he has set you over them as king to carry out justice and righteousness" (9:8).

The returning exiles needed to remember God's love as they faced great challenges. Pray for personal reminders of His great love and His desire to work righteousness in those who love Him.

Saturday, September 1, 2018—2 Chronicles 4-6

Solomon dedicated the Temple to be a place where God dwelled and where the people of God came to pray or a place toward which they would direct their prayers. He asked that God would hear the prayers of His people so they would not simply go through the motions but know that God was real and powerful, "so that they may fear you and walk in your ways all the days they live on the land you gave our ancestors" (6:31).

The Temple was to be a place where they sought forgiveness and a place where they prayed for deliverance and victory. God had promised His people He would dwell among them and contend for them, and this place was the fulfillment of those promises and the preparation for the future.

The furniture of the place was covered in bronze when that piece saw lots of daily activity and covered in gold when it was separated from the routine. The Temple pointed toward the Father and the Son. As an alloy, a mixture of two metals, bronze pointed toward Jesus, the God-Man. The furniture which operated in sacrifice was covered in bronze. God the Father is the one true God, and He alone is pure and holy. Gold covered the Ark of the Covenant where He sat and the furnishings leading to Him.

Thank God for Jesus, who is the Way to Him, and for the gift of prayer which allows us to listen to, speak to, worship, and enjoy Him.

Friday, August 31, 2018—2 Chronicles 1-3

The world of business is continually changing while remaining the same. The need people have for products is constant, yet the way business produce, promote, and distribute those products continually changes. Mom-and-Pop stores gave way to big-box retailers. Brick-and-mortar shopping malls are declining while online sales escalate. Good plans and products are only part of the process. Implementation is irreplaceable.

Solomon came before Yahweh as he took the reins as king. He knew all his father had put in place—peace and prosperity. God had prescribed the religious, familial, economic, and military strategies, but the people had the responsibility of implementing it. God told Solomon to ask for anything he wanted, and Solomon knew his great need. “Now grant me wisdom and knowledge so that I may lead these people, for who can judge this great people of yours?” (1:10). Solomon wanted to lead wisely.

Solomon knew the Temple would not house God. Nothing could do that, yet this would be a place where people would be able to approach Him in prayer, offering up incense (2:4). He wanted the very best craftsman, so he consulted the king of Tyre, who offered up Hiram-abi. Then, Solomon took a census, not to demonstrate his might (as his father mistakenly did) but to divide the men of the country equally in working on the construction project. From the beginning, he demonstrated great wisdom on the purpose and the planning of the building.

Give God thanks for allowing you to come to Him in prayer. Pray for a life filled with His wisdom.

Thursday, August 30, 2018—1 Chronicles 27-29

In 2018, California residents considered putting on the ballot an initiative that would divide the state into three separate states. Texans with some regularity discuss the merits of leaving the Union or dividing the state into four. The propositions remain theories as reality sets in. The task of building a nation is far harder than imagined.

In order for the exiles to flourish, they needed to do everything their ancestors had done but remain thoroughly committed to holiness. King David appointed military leaders (27:1-22). He had people in charge of resource management and environmental conservation and care, including those who would oversee the livestock so necessary for personal consumption as well as religious activity. In addition, the king needed wise counsel (27:32-33), and “Hushai the Archite was the king’s friend” (27:33b). Never underestimate the humanity of the greatest of leaders. Everyone needs someone who treats them as a friend.

David officially recognized Solomon as the new king and charged him with building the Temple. David had set aside the proper resources and assigned sufficient laborers. Solomon’s greatest task, however, was faithful obedience. David told Solomon to know Him and serve Him. “If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will reject you forever” (28:9). David encouraged him to be strong and do the work, and David led the people to worship (29:10-22).

Give thanks for the place where God has placed you to live. Thank Him for the friends who walk with you. Pray for a life of obedient worship.

Wednesday, August 29, 2018—1 Chronicles 24-26

King David organized his people, so they might worship Yahweh as He prescribed. That meant assigning people responsible for sacrifice, singing, speaking, and stewardship. Those resettling Israel were going to need a similar structure in order to be obedient and fruitful. Modern followers of Christ have these same elements in their worship as well.

The Levites were responsible for administering the sacrificial system as well as the daily activity inside the Tabernacle and the Temple. Nothing was more important than acknowledging the presence of God and maintaining a healthy relationship with Him. Sacrifices recognized sin as well as abundance. Today, Christians are able to worship because Jesus was the sacrifice and is the source of life and abundance.

David appointed other Levites to lead in singing and to speak the truth when the people assembled. Modern pastor-teachers are able to proclaim the same truth about who God is and what He means to His people through the lens of the gospel of Jesus. He fulfilled all God required for holiness, and His people enjoy life to its fullest because of Him.

The gatekeepers were the stewards—ensuring the holiness of the environment around the gathering place as well as helping manage the offerings the people brought. Christians likewise are not simply to gather in a place for celebrating Jesus, singing, and sitting under the truth. They are to use their tithes and offerings, their gifts and talents, and their time for gospel proclamation, works of mercy, and Kingdom building.

Worship with gratefulness of Jesus and His call to serve.

Tuesday, August 28, 2018—1 Chronicles 20-23

One of the shortest chapters in Chronicles begins as 2 Samuel 11 began, “In the spring when kings march out to war . . .” and notes that King David remained in Jerusalem. The Samuel account goes on to tell of the sin with Bathsheba that David committed as a result of being at home rather than where kings are supposed to be. Instead of mentioning the grave error, the Chronicler recounts the numerous times David and his troops fought against their enemies. Those rebuilding the nation would avoid sin and heartache by being engaged every day with their calling.

In the next chapter, Chronicles deals specifically with David’s sin of pride (the same issue which led to his adultery). David wanted to know how many troops he had, and his military leader Joab tried to convince him that was not necessary. David insisted, and God brought judgment on the entire nation because of David’s pride. In humility, David cried out to God and paid full price for the spot of land where the angel stopped his plague.

That place he purchased from Ornan the Jebusite would become the site of the Temple, and David began to make provision for it. He could not build the house himself because he was a man of war, but his son Solomon would have that privilege and duty. He prayed for Solomon’s wisdom and courage in building the Temple and leading the people, and he organized the Levites to serve the people and honor Yahweh.

Ask God to slay your pride daily for His honor and your blessing.

Monday, August 27, 2018—1 Chronicles 17-19

The Old Testament record, especially 2 Samuel, tells a variety of stories about David. Some of them are troubling as they detail his sin and shortcomings. The record of 1 Chronicles tends to be more positive, highlighting the exemplary facets of his life and reign. One thing David did well was interact with the LORD of Armies through prayer.

David recognized the irony of his living in a spacious, permanent palace while the Ark of the Covenant resided in a tent. He wanted to correct this and build a permanent Temple. Nathan advised him to move forward because God was with him (17:2). Nathan exhibited the mistake many others make. He affirmed something because it sounded right before he prayed about the matter. God corrected Nathan, and Nathan told David not to move forward because David’s son would complete the task.

Further setting an example, David responded in worship rather than disappointment. He recounted the character and power of God and recognized the great gift of being His chosen instrument and His family’s continued role in God’s kingdom. Prayer becomes an enriching experience when it includes worship of the One who listens.

Prayer and worship were going to be foundational activities for the people rebuilding Israel. They would also need to defend the country as David had done. He surrounded himself with good people (18:14-17) and used wisdom in conflict (19:8-18) to establish, maintain, and defend peace.

Thank God for choosing you to know Him and walk with Jesus. Pray for partners in life and ministry who will promote growth and peace.