

SESSION #21

1 & 2 CHRONICLES

If you read through these two books you'll be struck by this: there's a lot of repetition here. These two books overlap 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings and they seem to tell the same things all over again. So why does God waste so many pages of the Bible to tell us the same material again? Ah, but it's not quite the same stuff. There's a different purpose here and there are some differences in the content. The writer of the Chronicles makes some selective omissions and some additions in comparison with the books of the Kings.

Ezra is probably the man who puts this record together called 1 & 2 Chronicles. And he writes some of the history that went on from 2 Samuel through the times of the kings but not from a political point of view; from God's point of view. And that is a whole different perspective than what is seen in the books of the kings.

There is a political and prophetic (in terms of judgment) perspective.

Here's one of the key things that indicates how real this difference of viewpoint is: you can read 1 & 2 Chronicles through, every single verse, but you will not find even one reference to the major turning point back in 2 Samuel, which was what? David's sin with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel chapter 11. That very significant sin is not even mentioned once in the Chronicles! Why?

Because those books were written from God's perspective and David had repented of his sin (Psalm 51). And what does the Bible say God does with our sin when we repent of it? He "*casts it into the deepest sea to be remembered by Him no more.*" (Micah 7:19 and Jeremiah 31:34) He doesn't remember David's sin! He literally doesn't remember it. And when He asks Ezra to write a record of the times of the kings, God has completely forgotten about that because it's a forgiven sin. It's an astonishing thing in the books of Chronicles. But only astonishing if you don't recognize how wonderful God's grace and forgiveness is.

Ezra compiled these books after the Jews had completed the Exile and returned back to their land again. That's why, in the books of the Jewish Scriptures, this is the last book, a combined book right at the end of their Bible.

Chronicles gives to the Jews the true spiritual foundations of their theocracy as the covenant people of God. Therefore, it includes principles that they will need to know if they're going to rebuild their nation under God in obedience to Him.

Judah is almost exclusively in focus in the record here. Israel isn't mentioned very much. The city of Jerusalem and the temple site is focussed on especially because this is God's view of what's going on and that's where the focus is for God: the temple, the priesthood, the worship.

The book of 1 Chronicles highlights the house of Jehovah, referring in a triple sense to the nation of God, David and his house, and then the literal house of God, the temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem.

2 Chronicles gives us the splendor-to-disaster scenario, but especially in a spiritual sense now, not in the political arena we saw in Kings.

Now we see a contrast in focus between the throne, seen in the books of Kings, and the temple seen here in the books of Chronicles. The books of Kings gave us a political, prophetic perspective. Chronicles shows us a Godly, priestly perspective on events.

Both Israel and Judah are seen in the books of the Kings but in the books of Chronicles it's mostly Judah because that's where the temple was, that's where God's city of Jerusalem was.

The focus in Chronicles has to do with redemption; in the Kings it was on morality. Kings exposes the guilt of the nation, it shows the sins of the kings, it describes them in considerable detail to show how they were going wrong and thus worthy of judgment. But Chronicles doesn't give those stories at all. Instead, these books are going to encourage the people to loyalty and to following God again, a God who forgives sin.

The building of the temple in Solomon's 40 year reign is the big highlight, especially of 2 Chronicles. And so, because God is focussing on His house where the worship of God

takes place, the building of that house gets a lot of prominence. But then of course so does the decline and the destruction of that temple get prominence. And as the temple declines in importance as far as the people are concerned, and then as it is destroyed in chapter 36, it is described here in very poignant details because God is describing the burning down of His own house where He lived.

The temple then is a symbol of unity for the nation. It's a reminder of how high is God's calling of them: He will live among them again there at the temple. The temple, when it is reconstructed, will be another visible sign that God is back, God is with His people, living among them. And then it becomes a focal point for the people as they rebuild their nation after the Exile. A focal point for national life and for religious renewal.

And so when Ezra and the early people who came back from Babylon come to Jerusalem and come to Israel to rebuild the nation, their very first priority under Zerubbabel is to do what? What are they going to build first? They're going to build the temple before anything else because they finally realize that's what's important. *God has to live with us; we have to be with God.* That's number 1. And during the 70 years of exile they learned the reality and the importance of that. So Ezra re-emphasizes this truth as he pulls their history together in these two books of the Chronicles.

He wants to help them by teaching them something of their past, what lessons to learn and to avoid. He wants them to know that God is still going to be with them in the present as they have turned back to Him again. And then he wants them to have some hope for the future as well. And all of that is encapsulated in the chapters of 2 Chronicles.

Both books of Chronicles help the Jews to see things from God's point of view. And they emphasize this vital lesson which we've seen over and over again but which Ezra really highlights: *the nation's response to God is the decisive factor in its history and its destiny.* How a nation responds to God. That is the number one critical factor in whether the nation goes up or goes down. That's at the macro level, if you will.

At the micro level, the same principle is true. The critical factor in your life and my life as to whether our lifeline goes up or whether it goes down is precisely the same thing

we've seen over and over again in these books: *our response to God*. So what's it going to be? What is our response to God today? We've looked at a lot of history and stories from the OT. But out of all those stories and lessons God wants us to carry in our hearts the reality that the number one thing in life is obeying Him, walking with Him. So what's it going to be? Are you going to respond to Him and say "*Yes, I will*", like David, regardless of what your past includes? Or are we going to be stubborn and just press on making our own lives, planning our own lives, working out our own strategies even as Christians? That's a recipe for disaster just as it was for God's people thousands of years ago.

We're going to deal with the remaining three books of history later in the course. So in Session 22 we will move into the books of poetry and wisdom, beginning with a brief overview.
