

2 CHRONICLES

1. The man started so well

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In our American logic, 1 and 2 Chronicles seem redundant. Because we already studied 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings and there couldn't be anything more to say about the irrelevant Jewish genealogies and history to Americans, right?

Yes, the majority of the Jewish genealogies have nothing to do with us. But 1 and 2 Chronicles have a different point of view than the other Books. They are not just duplication or condensed version. The other Books tell the history of Israel from a political perspective, while Chronicles speak from a religious one. It is a spiritual commentary of the kingdom of Judah.

A. THE AUTHOR AND THE TIMELINE

Many biblical scholars believe that this Book and 1 Chronicles were written by Ezra. As we learned, 1 and 2 Chronicles were one Book. Ezra, as a scribe certainly had access to official government historical documents and these Books have a strong stylistic resemblance to the Book of Ezra. Again, many scholars calculate that the Book was written 450-400 B.C.

B. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

To encourage obedience and warn against disobedience.

This Book provides a clear lesson to those who were about to start over in Israel after they returned from the exile in Babylon.

It speaks from God's view and taught the Israelites and still teach us that we should remember what makes us right with God and from this Book we also should remember what brings us down. You know what they say about hindsight. It is always 20/20. But the people with better hindsight learn from other people's mistakes. We should learn from these Israel people's sins so that we don't bring disgrace to our Lord because of our disobedience.

C. THE STRUCTURE

The Book of 2 chronicles can be divided into two sections. Chapters 1-9 tell the story of a king; chapters 10-36 tell the story of a nation.

Chapter 1-9 the "Golden Age" of Israel's history was used to restore their pride in the past and to bring hope for their future. They were living in the age of peace, power, prosperity, and prestige because they worshiped the Lord and the Lord blessed them.

Chapter 10-36 contain a highly selective account of the kings of Judah after Solomon's death and the division of the kingdom. Though there were 8 good kings after Solomon, the hearts of the Jewish people were no longer with the Lord like the heart of the Americans now.

In 2 Chronicles the northern kingdom Israel was rarely mentioned, because she gave herself completely to idolatry and had nothing to do with their God Jehovah.

In the Book of 1 Chronicles we saw a movement from nothingness to greatness; but in the Second Book we see a movement from greatness back to nothingness.

How sad that the chosen people of God moving from obscurity to the zenith of their history – only to wind up in defeat and captivity! The worst part of all these is that they wanted to worship their pagan neighbors' gods which they defeated with the power of their Jehovah God.

D. ASK! WHAT SHALL I GIVE YOU?

2 Chronicles 1:7-12 On that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask! What shall I give you?" 8 And Solomon said to God: " You have shown great mercy to David my father, and have made me king in his place. 9 Now, O Lord God, let Your promise to David my father be established, for You have made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude. 10 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?" 11 And God said to Solomon: "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life --but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king -- 12 wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor , such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like."

If I am understanding the Bible correctly, there is no one who had the same blank check from the Lord like Solomon, not even David.

Some Bible critiques will nitpick that this portion of the Scripture is different than 1 Kings 3:

1 Kings 3:5 At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask! What shall I give you?"

1 Kings 3:9 Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

We find two discrepancies – 'dream' instead of 'vision'; 'understanding' instead of 'wisdom and knowledge'. Just about the same meanings. Many scholars believe that 1 and 2 Kings were written by Jeremiah. Two different authors with two different vocabularies. It is more convincing than two guys with the exact same sentence.

The 'wisdom' Solomon requested is not intelligence or IQ, rather the ability to hear from God. The word that is translated "understanding" from 1 Kings 3:9 is the Hebrew word for "listening." Solomon was asking for a heart of wisdom – a heart that listens to his God.

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

The wisdom we talk about here is "Sound Judgement about the practical things of daily life, in all aspect of Christian living." God is the source of wisdom as of power , and wisdom is given to men through the fear of the Lord.

Psalm 111:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.

Job 28:28 And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, And to depart from evil is understanding.'

The wisdom God gives is not necessarily information on how to get out of trouble but rather insight on how to learn from one's difficulties. It is not more information

about how to avoid times of testing but instead a new perspective on trials. The wisdom of God begins with a genuine reverence for the Almighty and a steadfast confidence that God controls all circumstances, guiding them to His good purposes.

Let me ask you this question. If God offers you the same blank check, what would you ask for? I thought about it carefully. It took less than 1 minute to come up with the answer that I would not change for anything in the world.

It is not having the biggest church in the world, or being able to memorize the entire Bible which I'd love to do, or being the best communicator. My answer is "being just like Christ". I am not being spiritual on you. Look what happened to Solomon who was the wisest man in the human history and he miserably failed because he disobeyed the Lord. But if I become more and more like Christ, I'd sin less and less like myself and please the Father in heaven more and more.

Do I know the risk of being like Christ? Yes. I may never have a big church that people measure the spiritual success of a pastor. I may not be liked by others which is nothing new, because I speak the truth. And some might even hate me and try to kill me. But that would be my request to the Lord if He offers me the same blank check.

Under king Solomon's administration, Israel had its most riches in its history, but the spiritual peak of Israel didn't belong to the time of Solomon, rather David. Though he brought the disgrace to the Lord through his adultery and murder, his heart was still tuned to the Lord and obeyed Him throughout his life.

However, king Solomon was riding the coat tail of his father David's spiritual and physical success. He didn't build the kingdom from scratch like his father, rather it was handed to him on the silver platter. At the beginning, he had the right start which does not guarantee the right ending. This takes us to the next portion of the Scriptures.

E. THE BEGINNING OF THE DOWNFALL

2 Chronicles 1:14-17 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. 15 Also the king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedars as abundant as the sycamores which are in the lowland. 16 And Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king's merchants bought them in Keveh at the current price. 17 They also acquired and imported from Egypt a chariot for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred and fifty; thus, through their agents, they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria.

You may say, "It sounds like Solomon was really good at making money with horse import and export. What's wrong with that?" The dark side of this practice came from his heart that discarded the commandment of the Lord. That was the beginning of his downfall:

Deuteronomy 17:16-17 But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the Lord has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' 17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself.

Solomon did everything that God told the kings of Israel they should not do.

1) He allied himself with unbelievers and married the princesses of many pagan nations

2) He tolerated the idolatry of his many pagan wives and the Israelites which was an abomination in the eyes of the holy God. Furthermore, he himself worshiped those idols in the latter years.

3) He accumulated riches for himself as a king .

With all the intelligence he had, he didn't think about a simple principle from the Lord:

Luke 12:48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Perhaps Solomon excused himself by saying, "I'm merely importing horses from Egypt so that we can sell them to other countries and make money . I am not doing it for myself. I'm not breaking God's command." Many examples of gross disobedience begin as clever rationalizations.

I want you to follow the sequence of the erosion in Solomon 's logic:

1) In disobedience he multiplied horses for the service of his kingdom and he obtains them from the Egyptians. – 1 Kings 4:26, 10:28-29

2) Because of these connections with Egypt he married Pharaoh 's daughter. – 1 Kings 3:1

3) Because he started by marrying an Egyptian, he didn't see a problem marrying many other foreign pagan women. – 1 Kings 11:1-4

4) Because of the presence of the foreign wives he built temples to their gods for their use. – 1 Kings 11:7-8

5) Because of the presence of these temples he began to worship these other gods himself. – 1 Kings 11:4-5

Some of you may have heard about Bob Coy, former Calvary Chapel Ft. Lauderdale senior pastor and his downfall recently. In March this year, Bob Coy resigned from his position due to a "moral failing" which involved multiple adulteries and pornography.

As his church grew bigger and bigger, the people around him put him on a pedestal and he became unaccountable to anyone. In their mind, he is the senior pastor of the 20,000 congregation church and he must be holy beyond reproach. In other words, to them he could do no wrong . And Coy started to take this in and started to believe that he was an exception from the Word of God. That was his rationalization.

I mentioned this to my friend after I heard the news about Bob Coy . There have been a lot of talks about Christian accountability. It started with the Promise Keeper movement. I agree with the accountability with other Christian men and I practice this with my pastoral friends. I am also keenly aware of the limitation of accountability . One can only be accountable as much as he wants to be. Unless the Lord reveals it which He does in His time if a disobedient one continues in one's sin, the accountability becomes nothing more than a facade and even a security blanket for the offender .

F. APPLICATIONS

- 1) An arrogant attitude of defiance against God leads to personal misery .
- 2) Our sins never start from the full blown status. It starts small and seemingly insignificant. And it is well-fertilized with rationalization.
- 3) Accountability is not real unless you are completely honest with the person to whom you are accountable.