

introduction

1 chronicles 1.1

This morning we are going to embark on a new series in the book of 2 Chronicles. We're going to take it chapter by chapter, so it won't be short, but it won't be too long either. When we start a new series I usually like to take the first study to do an introduction or preview to where we're headed so that we can be thinking week to week about the overarching devotional ideas that we're looking for.

2 Chronicles is a very interesting book because, on one hand, a lot of the stories we're more or less familiar with. We're certainly familiar with a lot of the characters. First and Second Chronicles, which are just one long book in the Jewish Bible, overlap with First and Second Samuel and First and Second Kings. A lot of it is a retelling of historical events. But, what's great about this book is that it isn't a rerun. It isn't just recycled. As you read the stories you see that the writer, believed to be Ezra, had a great focus and a great purpose in mind. And that's what we want to discover.

I'm titling the series *The Great Reformation*. And hopefully the devotional ideas we pull out each week will illustrate the fact that 2nd Chronicles is a very religious book. And I mean that in a good way. I mean it in the Biblical way. Obviously that's a very loaded word. There's a viral video on Youtube right now called *Why I Hate Religion But Love Jesus* that has almost 14 million views. We understand that 'religion' isn't what we're about. It wasn't what Jesus was about, in the sense of rituals and rites and works to make one deserving of salvation.

But there is a proper religion in the Bible.

James 1.27 - Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

So, of course, we agree with those who would point out, like the apostles, that self-imposed religion is useless and in contradiction to the work of Christ. But religion in the pure sense, the Biblical sense, that's not a bad thing.

Little rabbit trail there, but I say that because what we'll find is that 2nd Chronicles is a very religious book. And, even though it is a history book, the whole thing is skewed toward worship and righteousness and *revival*. As you page through it and even just look at the passage headings, you see themes that aren't really centered around politics as you might expect from an imperial history book, but instead the themes are about the House of the Lord. The word of the Lord. Themes of the Lord.

In fact, even though 2 Chronicles covers about 450 years of Jewish history, the first 9 chapters the first *quarter* of the book, are all about the Temple getting planned and constructed and furnished and dedicated under Solomon. And then, as it brings us the rest of that 450 years of history, after the nation of Israel divided and split into two, the story is always centered around periods of revival in Judah. As the nation was being physically re-formed, we discover different men being highlighted in the text who brought about spiritual reformation. Or, more plainly,

repentance into the kingdom of Judah and then started building up a Godly kingdom again. We see men who sat on the throne and turned their hearts toward God and guided the kingdom back to the place of worship, back to the place of righteousness and revivals happened again and again. That's the focus of this narrative.

And what's great is that even though the scope of this book is really big: 450 years, the succession of kings and the Davidic Dynasty and the building of Solomon's Temple and wars and all of that, the real key to the book is individual men. It's simply a book about what kind of men were ruling in Judah and how they changed history. It's a book about how a few guys reformed their lives and their nation depending on their interaction with God.

The first verse of the book says a lot. Let me read it to you.

1 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.

That's what this book is about. That verse in the New Living Translation I think makes our theme stand out a bit more clearly. It says:

1 Chronicles 1.1 - Solomon son of David took firm control of his kingdom, for the Lord his God was with him and made him very powerful.

That's the setup for everything we're going to see. Men interacting with the Lord and the impact it had on their kingdom.

I'm hoping that this series will help us see what kind of men we are. What kind of life we're forming or re-forming right now. We're men who've been given some sort of little kingdom from the Lord. In the New Testament we more often see terms like our mission field. Our lot in life. That area of responsibility and opportunity that God has given to us. And the question for us is: Have I taken firm control of what God has given me to do?

I don't want us to start thinking that we're kings. The King of kings showed us that we're to be servants of all, taking the lowest position. But, with these men in 2nd Chronicles as our example, the question will be: What kind of life am I forming? Am I like Solomon, constructing for the Lord? Am I like Ahaz who closed down the Temple? Am I like Hezekiah who re-opened and repaired God's house? Am I allowing God to do His great reformation in my heart?

Those are the kinds of themes we see highlighted in these chapters and those are the kinds of questions we're going to apply to our own lives as we get to them each week.

The word 'Chronicles' has a very historical feel to me. Makes me think of volumes of encyclopedias on a shelf somewhere. But the original Hebrew name for these books actually comes out as: *The words concerning the days*. That's it. And then it starts this long record of God's house and the people's hearts. The book starts with the building of God's house and the last chapter ends with a decree to build it again after it had been destroyed. And all along the way the House of the Lord is mentioned almost 150 times as it is built and furnished and opened and closed and opened again and repaired and revived. The House of the Lord is really the central character of this book.

And when we remember that Paul said in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 3.16 - Do you not know that YOU are the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in you?

So, putting two and two together, seeing all the stuff about the House of the Lord, seeing these different men given as an example, we should come to 2nd Chronicles and think, "Wow! This is a handbook for revival! This shows me how to center life around Christ."

That's why this book has so much potential. Because no matter what was going on, it all comes back to how these different men interacted with God.

A lot goes on in these chapters. There are invasions and wars and stresses and problems. At one point, the single largest enemy force ever recorded in Scriptures comes against Judah. In chapter 14 the Ethiopians come against God's people with an army of *1 MILLION* soldiers. But it all comes back to God's word, personal revival, and God re-forming a nation to follow Him. That's the focus.

I am the Temple of the Lord. And I've been given freedom to administrate some little kingdom. Some mission field. Some little coin that the Master has entrusted to me as a responsibility and an opportunity. And *THIS* book shows me how to be constructing, be reviving, so that God's power can have firm control over my life and His great reformation can continue in my heart.

That's where we're headed. For next week, read chapter 1 where we see our first king and how the Lord interacted with him.