

JULY 11

1 Chronicles 11:1-12:18

When you read this history, you should see it as Ezra trying to underscore important events for a generation of Israelites who have never lived in the land promised to Abraham. Israel was exiled for 70 years and it was still years before most of the people returned. I'm going to be "supposing" and suggesting, as if I know why Ezra included the information he did. That is a part of Bible study, observing what is there and trying to understand why the Spirit included it and what He wants us to learn from it. There is first the context of the original audience to whom this was written, but there is also an application and purpose designed for us.

1 Chronicles 11

Vs. 1-3 This seems to be a high point. All of the tribes of Israel went to David after the defeat and death of Saul (actually it took seven years and it was after the death of Ish-bosheth). Notice that there is nothing mentioned of the conflict between Saul and David. That isn't the point here. The point is that a beaten Israel was rising in unity against its enemies, but it is rising by grasping on to the hope that God had given them. They finally acknowledged and embraced God's will and appointment of David. I'm amazed to see that the elders of Israel had all of this information about God's anointing of David 25 years earlier by Samuel. David still had to run from Saul for ten years and be the king of Judah for seven years during a civil war.

Vs. 4-9 This then is the second important high point, the taking of the city of David, the city of God. For the returned exiles it would be important to see how Zion was established as the promised location of God's dwelling place on earth. All of this is revolving around David and God's promise to him.

Vs. 10-47 Finally, the blessing of God on a people is seen in unity, loyalty and courage: People embracing God's destiny for their lives. Here, that destiny is seen in the men that God led to David, men who knew David was to be the next leader of Israel, but who came to him when it wasn't safe or popular to do so. This must have been an encouragement to David, now and then, to have people coming to him from all of the tribes of Israel.

There are some challenges here, if you compare the list of these names to those in Samuel. Ezra is writing years later, using manuscripts that are years old. Not only that, but the Hebrew language, pronunciation and spellings have changed. Imagine what your native language looked like 500 years ago. Most English readers would be severely challenged if they had to read Old English from the 1300s. That was Ezra's challenge.

These men would have been folk heroes and the stuff of camp-out stories and bed-time stories. Then, of course, you had all of David's own adventures.

Vs. 10-14 These are David's three mighty men. Only two of the three are mentioned here. In 2 Samuel 23:8-12 you'll find Shammah listed there. In 2 Samuel it says 800 men, whereas here it says 300. Apparently it would have been easy for a person making a copy to confuse an 8 and a 3 in Hebrew too. I'd go with the 800. This would put Jashobeam just a little bit under Samson.

Vs. 15-19 Mentioned again is the famous raid these three men made out of love for David. Although the object is always what they did, David's response is equally famous.

Vs. 20-21 We've seen Abishai before. He was the *chief of the thirty*.

Vs. 22-25 Benaiah receives more honor here, I think, because he was a more honorable man than Joab and his brother. We've seen his character when Solomon became king. His loyalty was proven.

Vs. 26-47 If you're interested, there is a chart of "David's Mighty Men" on pp. 478-479 of the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT. What is interesting to me is that the situation with Bathsheba and Uriah is never mentioned in this history. For that matter, Absalom's rebellion is left out too. That wasn't Ezra's purpose in this history. Yet, both of those situations were connected. In the chart mentioned above, while Uriah is mentioned, Eliam the son of Ahithophel is not. I don't think it means anything, but it is interesting.

1 Chronicles 12:1-18

Notice here when these men came to David and who they were.

Vs. 1-7 Why would Benjaminites coming to David at Ziklag be noteworthy? You can figure that out. And these guys were like the artillery on legs. This showed that even while Saul was still king, there were members of his own tribe who acknowledged that God had chosen David.

Vs. 8-15 This group of men from Gad, from the north and the east side of the Jordan, came to David when he was still in Israel, in the mountains of Judah, living in caves. Read what it says about these guys. They were willing to live in hardship and in danger to be loyal to God's anointed king. What an amazing blessing. What should that have said to the people coming to rejoin Israel in hardship, leaving behind the comforts of Babylon and Persia? What should all of this say to us as disciples of Jesus in the harvest? How good are we at living in hardship to be loyal to the Son of David? How skilled are our hands for the harvest?

Vs. 16-18 And then there were still others from the tribe of Benjamin who came to live with David in hardship, in caves, in danger, running from Saul, their own countryman and tribesman.

V. 17 You can imagine why David had to give them this warning.

V. 18 Then we have the words of their leader, inspired by the Spirit. They were of Benjamin, yet loyal to God and His promise. And David made them all leaders of his troops. It must have been a good day for David to see God confirm him like this in the middle of his suffering and waiting.

What a fantastic testimony to a new generation of people leaving the comfort of Babylon and their houses and businesses, to return to the land promised to Abraham and the city of God. Did I mention Jerusalem was all in ruins? Do you see what Ezra and the Spirit are doing? We too have been called to join Christ in the harvest, in the middle of His promise of redemption to the world. The work is now and it is hard. The party is later.

Acts 28

It is kind of interesting that a few years ago at this time, my daughter and her family were on Malta. They took care about collecting driftwood, but somebody ran into their car. Paul didn't have to worry about cars.

Vs. 1-6 This is the only instance recorded in Acts where someone is bitten by a snake, and Mark 16:18 comes true, ...*they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them.* So, even in the book of Acts, this wasn't the norm.

It is interesting to think of the stuff that the Lord had old Julius the centurion put in his report. This would make very interesting reading in Rome. Maybe he retired and wrote a book. Hopefully he came to Christ. And even here, God wasn't done.

Vs. 7-10 Suddenly Paul was back in the thick of things, healing, preaching and teaching. So what was the difference? It was the will of God. God was doing this now, to get fruit in that field and to get the report ready for Nero to read in Rome.

V. 10 I like Luke's note here that they liked Paul so much, that as he left, the islanders brought Paul Snickers © bars and Coke.

Vs. 11-15 Apparently after three months on Malta, this was a fairly quick trip to Rome.

V. 15 Notice that Paul was not above discouragement or emotional exhaustion. In saying Paul was encouraged by seeing them, the "them" is referring to the brothers who came from Rome, not the Three Taverns.

V. 16 Paul is now in Rome, but under house arrest again, probably in a nice rented house. It is not until 2 Timothy that Paul was in a dank, dark, smelly Roman dungeon, awaiting death by this same Nero.

Vs. 17-28 Same old Paul. First he went to the Jews. You can be sure that some of the Jews believed. We also know from the letter to the Romans, that there were already thriving churches there and many believing Jews.

Vs. 30-31 This is where Acts ends. Paul had been under house arrest for two years in Caesarea, and now he was under house arrest for two full years in Rome. The Lord gave him enormous freedom, as he had in Caesarea, to preach and teach. During this time Paul wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians. At the end of Philippians, he sent the believers in Philippi a special greeting from all the believers who belonged to Caesar's household. He was bearing fruit in jail. Paul still hadn't had his trial before Nero. At this point Nero was a respected and sane ruler. Luke ends Acts here and sends the manuscript to Theophilus. God's plan for Paul was to be imprisoned and become a person of note to the Roman community. Where Paul was jailed, he was also a great resource to the church, who could gather to Paul freely. Then there were the contingents of Roman guards who always had to watch Paul in pairs for eight-hour shifts. This went on for two years in Caesarea and for two years in Rome. What a distressing assignment, being locked in a room, sometimes even chained together with Paul. But Paul bore fruit for Christ even there, and now there were believers all over Nero's palace. That's what Howard Hendricks called a "chain reaction."

Both 1 and 2 Timothy occur after Acts. In 1 Timothy, Paul and Timothy are flying around fighting fires and doing damage control in churches. It may be that the persecutions under Nero had begun. It was certain that the internal problems of which Paul had warned the Ephesian elders (Acts 20) were beginning to become more of a challenge and churches were splitting. Apparently something happened at Ephesus that tore apart its leadership, and one of Timothy's assignments was to rebuild the church and its leadership. Paul was running off to Macedonia (probably to Corinth and Philippi) to take care of business in the churches there. In 2 Timothy, Paul had been pursued and caught. Apparently Alexander the coppersmith had something to do

with him being arrested. All of the people who traveled with Paul deserted him except Luke. It must have happened with a lot of violence and surprise. Paul was in a Roman dungeon. He had given testimony before Nero and the other Roman officials, and Paul judged that his time to be "graduated" had come. In Paul asking Timothy to come to Rome, he was asking him to come into harm's way. We never hear anything of Timothy after this, unless Hebrews wasn't written by Paul and was written later. (Hebrews 13:23)

Tradition indicates that this time of Nero's persecution not only claimed Paul's life but also Peter's. This would have been about 67 A.D. Nero died in 68 A.D. Two years later the Romans would destroy Jerusalem, fulfilling Jesus' judgment of the generation that witnessed His words and works and yet rejected Him as their Messiah. Ironically, the next time Israel will see Jesus, they will accept Him; but Jerusalem will again be on the verge of destruction. This morning I read Jesus saying, *For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'* (Matt 23:39) They will call, and then He will come. Until then, we have a harvest to follow Him into, reaching the lost and making disciples who make disciples.

Psalm 9:1-12

It's interesting to think that these songs were sung in worship. I could imagine David writing this after the group from Benjamin came to him in the wilderness, and through the Spirit pledged their loyalty and affirmed God's blessing on David.

Vs. 1-2 In spite of his troubles and waiting on the Lord, David proved that it was still possible to praise Him.

Vs. 3-6 There were times when David had a glimpse of God working His righteousness and justice. As God had cleared the way for Israel in the past, He would do it in the future.

Vs. 7-8 It is interesting that David saw more than Israel. He knew that the Lord would judge all nations and all men.

Vs. 9-10 We just read that the soldiers of Benjamin came to David in the stronghold. But for David, the Lord was his *stronghold*, physically and emotionally. How can you estimate the value of learning to trust in the Lord and have confidence in His love?

Vs. 11-12 The other great theme of David is publicly praising God in the congregation and among the nations. It is interesting that the words in v. 12 express both judgment and compassion.

Proverbs 19:1-3

V. 1 This verse probably belonged better to the proverbs from yesterday. Integrity is worth it, even if what you have to "pay" to gain it is poorness.

Vs. 2-3 As disciples, following Christ is a very simple matter. We complicate it by our Christian culture and many nice, but unnecessary, things. All we need is joy in our salvation, lost people to share with, and a desire to follow Christ in His harvest. Everything else is nice, but unnecessary.

So we serve Christ with stuff, with visions and great ideas, yet we lack maturity, balance and proper leading. We make haste and we slip and do dumb stuff and blame everyone else.

V. 3 And who gets the brunt of our rage for going too fast, without knowledge? We rant at God or get bitter and give up. Imagine Moses thinking he would free the people when he was 40. He was right and he knew God would use him to free the people, but he did it his way, too fast, without knowledge of God. It took 40 years of serving sheep in the wilderness for God to get him ready. You notice that when God spoke to Moses at the burning bush, Moses was still a little mad at God. It's His mission. We are His servants, so we need to learn of Him and go at His pace, with the knowledge of Him.