

JULY 13

1 Chronicles 15:1-16:36

Both of these chapters are dedicated to David bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. For the returnees, this is an important point of history. David's kingdom wasn't complete without God's presence established near him. This was David's passion and Ezra was suggesting that it should be their passion.

Contrary to what should have happened and totally because of God's grace, Israel grew strong as a nation in exile. When they returned they brought with them the synagogue system. There was a school of training and textual study that developed during that time. I think the work of men like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (of the tribe of Judah) helped to keep the nation focused on their destiny and unity as a people. Still, why would you want to go back to Jerusalem? Anyone who had grown up near Babylon saw one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The Hanging Gardens were built by Nebuchadnezzar (Iraq) for his Persian (Iran) wife. Jerusalem had nothing to offer that even came close to the glory, wealth and comfort of the city of Babylon. Going back to Jerusalem was like going back to the ruins of a ghost town.

In this history then, you can see why Ezra is emphasizing the glory of Israel. They had the covenant of God. They had the king of promise, David, bringing the very mercy seat of God's presence into Jerusalem. The God of creation formed and spoke to this nation to further His plan of redemption in the world. Babylon and Persia couldn't touch that. That is why this history is important.

One additional small note: They should have included the last seven verses of chapter 16 in today's reading.

1 Chronicles 15

V. 1 David needed more than one house because he had more than one wife. This is another reason to only have one wife. The tent he put up would have been a second tabernacle. This mention of houses and the tent will have an effect on David in chapter 17.

Vs. 2-24 We've read this story before, but this information is entirely new. It not only shows David as a spiritual leader of the people, but he is the designer of their worship. David, the king of promise who wrote most of the songs of worship, also ordered the worship of Israel. Leaders must lead spiritually.

Vs. 11-15 God's humbling of David on David's first attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem had borne fruit. Notice that the lesson wasn't just obeying the instructions in the Bible, but also seeking God.

Vs. 16-24 This isn't just David commanding and leading the Levites; this organization is from David.

Vs. 25-28 This is David leading all the elders and leaders of Israel.

V. 29 We've read this before too, and in greater detail. Since Ezra makes no mention of the rivalry with Saul's lineage, this story is totally devoted as a warning against despising those who worship God with all they are. So then, those entering the new nation should worship with passion like David.

1 Chronicles 16

Vs. 1-3 The offerings David made here were for himself in accordance with what is written in Leviticus for the sin and freewill offerings for rulers and people. Afterward they had a barbecue.

Vs. 4-7 David made sure that the Levites and the priests fulfilled their parts and were organized.

As an historical note for the returning generation, it mentions in v. 7 that this was the day that David appointed Asaph and his brothers to accompany the worship in song. David, himself a musician and song writer, decreed from this point on that music would always be a part of Israel's worship. Asaph was the first worship leader. For these people, hundreds of years later, they would read this and go, "So that's where the Beatles, I mean, the sons of Asaph came from. The sons of Asaph were like a cultural phenomenon in the worship of Israel.

Vs. 8-36 And this is Asaph's first song.

V. 8 Note how global this song was. This is the first time you get the idea that Israel understood its role in the redemptive plan of God. It seems to me from what is seen in other psalms, that David probably wrote all or most of this song. Asaph and others may have added the melody, and they did the singing.

There are lots of things to see in this song. As a disciple, do you see the redemptive plan of God and how naturally it is woven into the praise of God? It is clear that all nations and people were to look at Israel and praise God.

Notice vs. 35-36. It could be that Ezra added these verses as a prayer to God for those still in exile. Or it could be that in all the years since Joshua, Israel had been scattered because of their enemies and because of their disobedience.

I guess our desire should be to want to see people brought out of slavery to Christ.

Romans 1:18-32

This is one of the most incredible portions of Scripture or world literature. It's the Genesis or beginning of how the world got wrecked by sin. No other religion explains the confusion and differences in worship in this lost world. No other religion or philosophy can account for the constant downward movement in the human heart and why every generation and culture fails to get better. The answer is sin, and it accounts for this mess, brilliantly.

Vs. 18-20 There is enough visual evidence of God to make every human being guilty before God. The invisible spiritual sickness of sin irresistibly pushes us to suppress this truth.

If you took a simple plastic spoon and tried to convince your neighbor that in 70 gazillion years that spoon just happened, he'd say you were nuts. Something as simple as that spoon needed an engineer, a designer, complex processes and machinery. But that same neighbor might say this world is all an "accident." God doesn't have understanding with that kind of logic. He just says it is sin and suppressing the truth. We know that this world and everything in it isn't an accident.

Vs. 21-23 The story of mankind since Genesis is not one of knowing God better, but knowing God less. Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel saw and heard God, probably the angel of the Lord. And still they disobeyed. But we were made to worship and have connection with God. The need is irresistible. If sin pushes us away from Him, we still need something to seek, to worship and to ask help from.

Vs. 24-25 This is the origin of our relational and sexual dysfunction. Being "one flesh" is the way we were made. We cannot deny it. We will always seek it. It is built in. There are some exceptions, but they are exceptions, not the norm. The unity in being one flesh is almost mystical beyond our thinking. In a proper way it is spiritual and needs to be linked to God for it to remain healthy. Well, we know the story here. This is the general, heterosexual side of sexual sin and dysfunction.

Vs. 26-27 This is the homosexual side of the dysfunction. It is all sin. I think the order here makes perfect sense. A man is to be the protector of the relationship and the nurturer of his wife. If a man doesn't see this and if the spiritual "one flesh" nature of the relationship is lost, sex becomes a function or obsession for a man. The difference in sexual expression between men

and women, the need and response, was designed and built in by God. Sin breeds stupidity and selfishness and perversion: men became dominated by their desire; women became frustrated by their need; both were unsatisfied emotionally and spiritually.

Regarding homosexuality, God created sexuality and calls this a perversion of what He created. God is God and we don't need to be ashamed of holding to what He says. And we don't need to soften His words for the sake of the feelings of those who enjoy any particular sin, even if we like these people and would like to see them come to Christ. Repentance is part of the gospel; and where there is no repentance, there is no forgiveness.

Homosexuality is sin like every other sin, yet, honestly, there is something about it that makes it seem different. Sexuality is a very deep and vulnerable part of who God made us. Things that tamper with "nature" are hard for us to treat as "normal." Also, there is something about homosexuality that seems to border on addiction. It doesn't seem easy for people who have given themselves to this, to just hit the "reset" button and go back to God's specs. Addictions, whether to drugs, alcohol, gambling, pornography or homosexuality, cut deep and often never completely disappear. It isn't an accident that homosexuality is mentioned in Romans 1:18ff. Paul and the Spirit are describing man redefining himself apart from his Creator. Sin destroys, but doesn't have to be fatal if you admit that it's sin and repent. The problem with redefinition is that you don't see things as sin. Unfortunately then, the Creator owns the world and reality. Once we redefine ourselves out of His world and His reality, then, well, there's only one place left to go.

Vs. 28-32 Note this list of qualities is just as bad as whatever came before. These things are what plague all human relationships and come from the sin in each of our hearts.

Notice that there is a general progression in this section today. First came the loss of God and truth, then the loss of marital oneness and intimacy, then loss of social unity and order.

Notice also that there are three instances where, *God gave them up*. Think about that progression and what connection there is between what they did, or didn't do, and what God gave them up to. God's severest punishment, though fitting and ironic, is to give us what we want. Sin affects everything, and Paul will eventually describe sin as a force: something spiritually sick within us.

Psalm 10:1-15

Wow, read this psalm and relate it to the passage in Romans, especially Romans 1:18. Notice what the thoughts or words of the unbeliever are and how they fit into the reading in Romans for today.

V. 1 So what was the trouble?

Vs. 2-11 As we have seen in God's dealing with the kings and people of Israel, God doesn't always judge immediately. It looks as if it is possible to spit in God's face and prosper. That is why the psalmist was suffering. He saw this happening and wondered why God didn't do something.

Vs. 12-15 The writer wanted to see God arise and judge the wicked and care for those who cried out to Him.

In the harvest, reading through the Bible year after year, we understand this as God's kindness and patience. He wants to see all men saved; and His kindness, forbearance and patience are meant to lead people to repentance. God will judge. At the same time, God has many things working that we could never understand. We can only trust His wisdom and goodness. In the meantime, we go forward following our Lord, reaching the lost and making disciples who make disciples.

Proverbs 19:6-7

The point of these verses is that all of this is built on words without reality and substance. Neither the rich man nor the poor man has an honest friend, when gifts and position are what really matter.