

JULY 20

2 Chronicles 1-3

Leaving David, Ezra is now showing the people the grandeur of the temple. As you read over these three chapters, it is fairly easy to understand the purpose or main subject of each. Enjoy figuring this out.

Think about the purpose of God and Ezra in writing this. When the returnees came to Jerusalem, they began the work on the temple immediately; but due to persecution, they let off the work and lost interest. These chapters, beginning in 1 Chronicles and continued here, are to motivate the people to continue building and to treasure having God's presence among them. Eventually, Ezra will show them the point at which God will make a binding promise to dwell in Zion and in the temple that will continue through the Millennium. That would be an important reason for them to trust God, rebuild the temple and hold on to God's love for that place.

2 Chronicles 1

Vs. 1 This seems to be the introduction to what we are about to see. To Solomon's credit, he took up the torch of his father's passion for the temple and for God.

Vs. 2-6 The lavishness of offering 1000 burnt offerings on the original altar in the tent made in the wilderness must have reflected the sincerity and desperate desire in Solomon's heart to receive God's help.

Vs. 7-13 Solomon's request was humble, sincere and pretty short. The Lord on the other hand was willing to bless Solomon as a testimony to the nations.

Vs. 14-17 I think this is meant to show some of the greatness God allowed Solomon to have. Ironically, it also showed Solomon's ignorance of what God had said. A king was warned not to go to Egypt for horses. Along with this, you can imagine that Solomon probably had the best military force on that side of the world. He could have built an empire. But rather than that, his real purpose is seen in chapter 2.

2 Chronicles 2

Vs. 1-10 Solomon poured all of his energy into organizing everything to build the temple (and his palaces for his massive number of wives). Solomon's desire and energy would have become world news and a relief to all the surrounding nations. This man was amazingly wise, powerful and rich. He was a superstar and all he wanted to do was build a temple. It would have been news.

Vs. 11-12 Hiram was not necessarily a believer, because everyone believed in many gods, but he did publicly pronounce his amazement and testimony that God was blessing Israel and Solomon.

Vs. 13-16 So, Tyre as a nation was now working hard for Solomon and Israel. The wood was not only for the certain things in the temple, but for transporting the blocks and probably also for Solomon's houses. The temple was made of stone blocks, but the inside walls were wood panels overlaid with gold. Plus, there were lots of wood carvings, which, too, were overlaid with gold.

Vs. 17-18 Interestingly, Solomon used the people of Israel as overseers and the resident aliens as forced labor. I wonder if he paid well. One positive thought here is that this wasn't evil forced labor; it was giving people jobs. With all of his wealth, Solomon may have been an employer who paid well. Many people lived from hand to mouth back then, and having a good steady job would have been welcomed.

2 Chronicles 3

Vs. 1-2 Here is where you see that the place was Mount Moriah. This mount is only mentioned in one other place in the Bible in Genesis 22:2.

There is a diagram, "The Plan of Solomon's Temple," in the Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, on p. 500.

Vs. 3-7 This was the main building.

Vs. 8-14 This was the back part of the building, separated by the veil, and housing the ark of the covenant.

Vs. 15-17 These pillars seem to be Solomon's idea. Jachin means "He establishes," and Boaz means "in Him is strength."

Romans 6

Take your time reading this chapter and write down lots of questions. Make observations and be honest to admit that if sin is "dead," it sure seems pretty alive in us.

V. 1 When Paul asks these rhetorical questions, it is probably because he has heard similar questions raised before, most likely by opponents. If and when Paul does quote an opponent, he always answers the question immediately.

Vs. 2-4 Paul is saying that at conversion we are baptized by the Spirit into Christ's death, freeing us from the law, and the Spirit gives us a new spiritual life. Water baptism is a visual of this burial and rebirth. I think this is a new thought for the Romans. Paul is stating it in question form, but now he will explain what he means. Do you "feel" like you have died to sin? I sure don't. But it is true. You've just got to figure out what he and the Spirit mean. Paul is going to talk about something that took place in reality, and he really won't get to the conclusion of this thought until Romans 8.

Notice how often death with Christ and resurrection with Christ are mentioned in vs. 3-11.

Vs. 5-11 Notice that the "death" to sin's power has already taken place, and Paul points them to the hope of the resurrection, which, of course, is still future. The body of death and our old nature are both still present, but the power of sin's absolute control is broken and can be overcome with the Spirit. The body will just have to limp along, decaying as it goes. Now, God could have solved this problem immediately by taking us to heaven at conversion. The sin nature would be gone and the dying body translated into an eternal spiritual body. But then, who would be down here to work in the harvest telling others what Jesus did, rescuing the lost and making disciples. It is no accident that we are still here, especially when you think that the other alternative would have been quick and easy for God and for us. For now the power of sin is broken, and our hope is in the promised resurrection when all of this decay will be done away with. Admittedly too, there is something God wants to prove to the principalities and powers through us. So, the drama continues as God uses us to prove them wrong. And even Israel, as a nation, will rise up in God's grace and Christ's redemption and stick it to them as Israel reaches the world during the Tribulation, fulfilling their mission and destiny.

Vs. 12-14 The Spirit's presence in us, along with the new spiritual life, enables us to make the choice to follow God. That choice is important because we still feel the pull of the old nature.

V. 14 This is a key thought. The death to sin is actually death to the law, meaning that the effect of the law on sin, that allergic, rebellious reaction, should be gone because we are saved by faith, not by the law. Being saved by grace through faith means we are dead to the law. We face God's love, not law. We respond and follow by being overwhelmed by His love and grace and kindness in Christ. This is what the Spirit uses. Our obedience is not out of fear but out of gratitude. The sinful nature, though still alive, has been given the death sentence. Paul will explain this more in chapter 7.

Vs. 15-23 Read these verses, understanding that the sinful nature has been judged and neutralized. It can't react to the law, because we are not under the law. Within us now is a newly created nature that responds to the love and grace of God in Christ. This isn't the full story. We still struggle with sin, but we still have two chapters in Romans to understand what God has done for us in Christ. One interesting note, as you read, is to think of these closing words in 1 Corinthians 15, *The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Notice that it talks about becoming willing slaves. Becoming slaves of God and slaves of righteousness is still what we do in yielding ourselves to God. The reality is that now we can do that. The reality is also that this "slavery" is not optional. In this life, we will always be slaves to something. Now we have the choice and only a fool would resist the love that has proven itself by death, to gain our life and freedom.

Vs. 22-23 What a message for those who still don't know.

Psalm 16

The first verse seems to give an idea of where David was in his life when he wrote this. He was probably on the run from Saul. He was in the wilderness with people who were gathering to him. David had nothing to offer them. There was no pay, no insurance, and no benefits. They didn't even have TV or computers. David had plenty of nothing. Actually, that's not true. David had the Lord. David must have written this on a good day, during a good time on the run, where he understood that the closeness to the Lord was better than anything he had experienced before. This is what David learned in hardship. This is why David was a man after God's own heart. You can also sense some of what Paul says above, echoed in these words.

Vs. 1-3 David's life was reduced down to what he absolutely cherished and had to have, and that was the Lord. Actually, the thought of "slavery" is in this verse, since the word *Lord* means someone who has ownership or control over you. Does this sound like joy in being a slave of God? I think so.

V. 4 So here is the description of those who were still slaves of the other things, who didn't even know they were lost or were slaves.

Vs. 5-6 This sounds like David was yielded to God.

Vs. 7-8 David was following God and seeking His way. This could be like Paul saying that we need to be led by the Spirit and to yield our members to God's instructions.

Vs. 9-11 And in all of this, David learned that his true joy was in God. Being yielded to the Lord brought him deliverance and the kind of confidence and joy that only comes from learning to trust the Lord in very hard circumstances. This all kind of sounds like the way Paul ended Romans 6.

Proverbs 19:20-21

You've got to admit. These two verses are a perfect complement to Psalm 16 and Romans 6.

The first three lines are all relative and only make sense if the last line is important to us. What is *the purpose of the Lord*? As disciples that is what we live for. Many disciples have been smashed on the rocks of their plans and expectations. God's purpose might be a train wreck. It could be a desert. For Paul and Barnabas it was a heated argument and a parting of the ways. We tend to listen to advice that pleases us and define wisdom as what we are doing. We make our plans and cast our vision and hope that God will bless them. But what is God's purpose for us, for our time, for our work in the harvest? In submission to Him, following Christ in the harvest, making disciples who make disciples, the list of our expectations and ideas gets smaller, and our joy and contentment with Christ grows. Living life on earth becomes more about Him and less about us.

