

JULY 24

2 Chronicles 11-13

Ezra is writing this not just to record history, but to encourage, humble, strengthen and warn the new generation of Israelites returning to the land. There are important lessons here for these people. And of course, these things are also *written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.* So we'll look for those lessons.

2 Chronicles 11

What lessons do you think Ezra wanted to get across in this chapter? And what do you think the Lord is saying to us/you in terms of discipleship?

Vs. 1-4 Rehoboam listened this time.

Vs. 5-12 In a way, all of this fortress building was unnecessary. He could have asked the Lord if this was necessary and the Lord would have told him. What was beginning to happen was people were reverting back to the old motto, *Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*

Vs. 13-17 The natural reaction of the godly was to migrate toward Jerusalem and Judah. Jeroboam was so ungodly that this became the first test of those people who truly loved the Lord. At first I'm sure they kept going to Jerusalem to the feasts, but as time went on and the idolatry spread, people probably gave up their land inheritances and went to live in Judah. By and large, the people who migrated south were the people who could trace their tribal lineages under Ezra.

V. 17 seems to have an eeriness about it. What happened after *three years*?

Vs. 18-23 As a result of the people coming to Judah, Rehoboam was strengthened and blessed and actually became a decent king, for three years.

V. 21 I read this and think, "He wasn't like his dad. He showed some restraint."

2 Chronicles 12

This is a chapter of contrast. What would Ezra's point be here?

Vs. 1-4 Note these words. We'll find Ezra making similar comments on almost all of the kings. Notice that when Rehoboam was strong and established, he abandoned the Lord. Note how many Egyptians came against Judah and Jerusalem. Back in 2 Chronicles 11:1, it says that Rehoboam had gathered 180,000 men just from Benjamin. But now, because of Rehoboam's ungodliness, the blessing of God was gone and they were weak.

Vs. 5-8 *They humbled themselves*, but still, God punished them severely. I'm sure Ezra wanted to make the people see the connection between obedience and blessing, and disobedience and punishment. At the time Ezra was writing this, that was exactly what was happening to the first wave of those who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem. They had begun to rebuild the temple, but gave up because of persecution. Then they took care of their own lives and forgot the Lord, and it still wasn't the life they wanted. Read the first chapter of Haggai. God sent the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to motivate the people to obey. Meanwhile Ezra was writing this history. When Ezra finally arrived in Jerusalem, the temple was completed, but the lives of some of the people were in shambles. This now is a history lesson on why a nation gets a case of the "shambles."

Vs. 9-12 All that Solomon had gathered was taken. This is what happens if a people abandon the Lord, but in love, God didn't abandon the people.

Vs. 13-16 Rehoboam reigned a good long time and didn't love the Lord at all. Times were good, so why bother?

V. 14 What is it that God seeks? This would be one of those lessons for Ezra's generation, and for each of us.

2 Chronicles 13

Now if you want to get a taste for how Ezra is trying to make a point about the importance of following the Lord and of God's promise to David, you need to read 1 Kings 15:1-7. Those seven vague verses is all the space Abijah gets there. It is enough to say that he really wasn't a godly king, but putting that account together with this one, we can see that Ezra is showing God's faithfulness to the line of David, while showing that God punishes disobedience.

Vs. 1-20 Abijah began godly, and his short reign was a terrible judgment of God on Jeroboam. Look at v. 17. Can you imagine a battle in which Israel, the northern kingdom, would lose 500,000 men, in one battle? A half a million men. The lesson was that not following the Lord bites, and God will honor His promise to David.

A covenant of salt apparently meant that the covenant was enduring.

Read these verses (4-12) and look at the words the Lord puts in Abijah's mouth.

Vs. 21-22 So, when did Abijah go bad? I read an article once that said we are at our weakest after a victory. That happened to David; and once Solomon had no more "mission," the life of the wisest man on earth went to heck.

God has given us a mission to keep us strong, but our strength is seen in humbly following Christ as people who have been brought from death to life because of the sacrifice of our Savior. As we've seen in Romans, if not for the grace of God and the help of the Spirit, sin would ravage us too.

Romans 8:22-39

Vs. 23-25 All of creation is suffering, waiting for the close of the age, which has to do with our redemption. Do we really groan inwardly? We only do that if we understand the weight we are still under because of sin, and the deliverance that is coming our way, thanks to Christ and the love of God. We are closest to living in this realization when we are working in the harvest, seeking to reach the lost, who are under the wrath of God because of sin. It is in the harvest that we are seeking to make disciples who will go beyond us, making disciples, who make disciples.

V. 24 How does the *hope* of the resurrection save us? Again, living in a good-time society where everything is pretty easy doesn't help us here. The resurrection is our *hope*. Look back to those early verses of chapter 6. If we don't sense the weight of sin still in us, and if we don't bear this weight as we follow Christ in the harvest, then we will never emotionally experience the hope and joy of sharing His resurrection. The resurrection will only be this nice thing we're told of that seems somehow unnecessary. Just beam me up, Scotty! The proper perspective is expressed by Paul in Philippians 3:7-15.

Vs. 26-27 *Likewise* seems to mean, "just as He helped us there, the Spirit also helps us here." So, in what other way has the Spirit been helping us? Go back to the beginning of this chapter. There is at least one thing mentioned that the Spirit does for us and there is at least one other that is implied. You might find a bunch.

The implication here is that the Spirit is interceding for us on a spiritual level. He isn't just adding something to our words that we're leaving out. He's completely communicating to the Father on His own level, possibly in opposition to our lives or our prayers. He really knows what we need.

V. 28 So, why is this verse here, in this spot? You see that the Holy Spirit is praying for us and then you've got this verse. The way this verse gets used on the street is that God will eventually work everything together, including a bowling ball on the head from a twenty-story building, to

make you happy. Try to put this verse together with v. 36. That doesn't sound happy. The RSV states v. 28 like this, *We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.* I like the tone of this reading better and it fits better to v. 36. It would seem that in God's love and eternal purpose, He uses us for the purpose of His plan. It might hurt, but we trust His wisdom and love knowing that He is using us for good. And, at the same time He is working in us. We don't have to know how or why He uses us, or to what purpose in His plan. We only need to know Him and His love and trust Him. The fact that we even know Him and are saved is part of that purpose and working we don't understand. The final verses of Romans say, *to the only wise God be glory for evermore through Christ Jesus.* We trust ourselves to a wise, loving, sovereign God.

Vs. 29-30 I think the order is important here. I don't think foreknowledge means merit or works or takes away from the teaching of the depravity of man.

Vs. 31-39 This is Paul finishing this section of Romans with a flourish. These are some of the greatest verses in the NT and worth memorizing.

V. 32 If you only memorize one verse, do this one.

V. 33 Our justification is not based on our "doing," but on Christ's doing. So who can bring a charge against us or condemn us even when we sin, saying we are not worthy of salvation, since we didn't justify ourselves? Satan has been disarmed in terms of accusing us before God. God already justified us by the sacrifice of Christ and through our faith in Him. If Satan or anyone else has a problem, they need to take it up with God.

For us as disciples, these verses give us the assurance that we can give all we are for Christ. We are saved and safe and loved, but we are saved and safe and loved to work as hard as Paul did in the harvest, inspired by the great love and gospel of Christ. And even if God calls us to His presence by the violence of some act of a madman, we know it was allowed by God for the good working of His plan in the harvest. And for us, it would introduce us to the presence of Christ. That's not bad.

Psalm 18:37-50

This is David's conclusion of his "master" psalm, written after 17 years of running, hiding, fighting and hearing every possible threat and lie against him. God worked His purpose and worked all things for good for David and for His covenant people.

Vs. 37-42 In this very brutal, poetic section, David isn't boasting, but rather stating that he was able to do all of this because of God's help in answer to his prayers.

Vs. 43-45 This is how God elevated David after all those long years of David crying out and enduring hardship. Compare this to what Isaiah 55 says about what God did for David.

Vs. 46-48 And this is David giving God all the praise and the glory for everything.

V. 49 When Paul speaks of the Gentiles being saved and giving glory to God for their salvation, Paul quotes this verse in Romans 15:9, *and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."* Note that the word for "Gentiles" and "nations" is the same word in Greek.

V. 50 Notice that David mentions God's *steadfast love*. This is something David would have arranged to have sung in all of Israel's worship because it was really what David had learned from all he went through. I don't know what this song would have sounded like, but it would have probably been pretty uplifting.

Proverbs 19:27-29

Amen, amen and amen!

