

A Song at the “Center of the World” (1 Chr 6.31-32)

Building a House for God’s Name: Studies in 1 & 2 Chronicles

I. REVIEW: BUILDING A HOUSE FOR GOD’S NAME

- A. As the Lord has been at work in our church over the last season, he has been calling us into a season of “*building the house*”. This is in line with the vision of what God has put in front of us to become and build a praying church that pursues his presence and his purposes for Kansas City.
- B. One of the ways we are seeking to strengthen and establish what God has put before us is by preaching through the books of Chronicles. The books of Chronicles were written to those returning from the Babylonian exile with the charge to rebuild the house of the Lord (cf. 1 Chr 9.1-2).
- C. The message of these books is that the people of God are designed to live under the rule of the right Davidic King and in accordance with the rightly ordered worship of the Lord. This vision of living under the blessings of God’s kingdom is meant to orient people’s hearts toward a wholehearted pursuit of God.

II. DAVID’S REVELATION OF WORSHIP

³¹These are the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the Lord after the ark rested there.

³²They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting until Solomon built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem, and they performed their service according to their order. (1 Chr 6.31-32)

- A. 1 Chronicles 6 gives us an important window into one of the primary aims of the Chronicles. Many scholars note that the genealogies are organized to highlight the importance of the tribe of Levi (both in the space given to this genealogy and its place at the center of the structure). These two verses are an extended narrative section within this genealogy that is intended to give us a theme of great importance that will be followed throughout Chronicles.
- B. These verses highlight the central place of the Levites who were commissioned to minister to the Lord through song. This was the order established by David to be at the center of God’s people.
- C. One of the most unique aspects of the life of David is his revelation of worship in the place of God’s economy and kingdom. David possessed a unique understanding of how God had ordered his creation and sought to bring the whole of his life and assignment into agreement with this order.
- D. David was *himself* an extravagant worshiper of the Lord. This was expressed both in his skillful pursuit of music and his writing of psalmody to encapsulate this revelation.
- E. David was also committed to *instructing others* in worship to the Lord and *ordering* the kingdom of Israel around worship of Yahweh.
- F. This is primarily expressed in David’s vow to bring the ark of the covenant back to Israel, to build a house for the Lord, and to establish the orders of Levitical worship at the *center* of his governmental strategy.

¹Remember, O LORD, in David’s favor, all the hardships he endured, ²how he swore to the LORD and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob, ³“I will not enter my house or get into my bed, ⁴I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, ⁵until I find a place for the LORD, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob.” (Ps 132.1-5)

- G. David vowed to live with an extravagant devotion to seek the Lord with all of his resources. This vow included *spending time in God’s house* (Ps 27.4), *fasting* (Ps 69.7-12), and *giving with extravagance* toward this end (1 Chr 22.14).

⁴One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple. (Ps 27.4)

⁷For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. ⁸I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons. ⁹For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me. ¹⁰When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach. ¹¹When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them. ¹²I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me. (Ps 69.7-12)

¹⁴With great pains I have provided for the house of the Lord 100,000 talents of gold, a million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for these is so much of it; timber and stone, too, I have provided. To these you must add. (1 Chr 22.14)

- H. After David became king, the first thing he did was capture Jerusalem (1 Chr 11.4-9). Immediately after this, he set himself to set up a tabernacle for worship at the heart of his government (1 Chr 13.1-4). He brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem and established a house for perpetual worship (1 Chr 15-16).
- I. David set Levites before the ark in order to worship God. This order included 4,000 full-time musicians, 288 singers, and 4,000 gatekeepers. In other words, at the center of David's expression of government were nearly 9,000 people who were employed to facilitate perpetual worship before the Lord.

⁷The number of them along with their brothers, who were trained in singing to the Lord, all who were skillful, was 288 (1 Chr 25.7)

⁴Twenty-four thousand of these," David said, "shall have charge of the work in the house of the Lord, 6,000 shall be officers and judges, ⁵4,000 gatekeepers, and 4,000 shall offer praise to the Lord with the instruments that I have made for praise." (1 Chr 23.4-5)

³³Now these, the singers... were in the chambers of the temple free from other service (1 Chr 9.33)

- J. David built the tabernacle this way in accordance with the pattern of the heavenly temple that was revealed to him by the Lord.

¹¹Then David gave Solomon his son the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat; ¹²and the plan of all that he had in mind for the courts of the house of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers... ¹³for the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, and all the work of the service in the house of the LORD; for all the vessels for the service in the house of the LORD... ¹⁸"All this he made clear to me in writing from the hand of the LORD, all the work to be done according to the plan." (1 Chr 28.11-19)

- K. David commanded his sons to continue this establishment in obedience to the commandment given by God through his prophets.

²⁵And he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gd the king's seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets (2 Chr 29.25)

III. GOD'S ZEAL TO BE WORSHIPED

- A. David understood something foundational about God — namely, that God is zealous to be worshiped and has designed his kingdom to be established on the worship of his people (Ps 22.3)
- B. The Chronicler describes the desire of God to find a heart that is ordered toward him in worship.

⁹For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him (2 Chr 16.9)

- C. Jesus declares that the Father is *seeking* worshipers who will worship him in spirit and in truth.

²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

D. Throughout eternity, God will receive perpetual worship.

¹¹Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created. (Rev 4.11)

¹²Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing! (Rev 5.12)

E. God has ordered his kingdom around agreement with him by his people in the place of worship and prayer.

¹⁸Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him... ¹⁹He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. As soon as he hears it, he answers you (Isa 30.18-19)

¹³Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14.13-14)

IV. RENEWAL PATTERNS IN CHRONICLES

A. In accordance with David's command for the kings of Israel to order the kingdom around worship and ministry to the Lord in song, the seasons of revival throughout the books of Chronicles are always tied to the reinstitution of Levitical worship at the heart of the Temple ministry.

B. Each time the nation would forsake rightly ordered worship at the center of their national life, they would descend into darkness, disobedience, and destruction. Renewing the order of worship would bring about a season of reprieve, blessing, and renewal from the hand of the Lord.

¹⁴if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land (2 Chr 7.14)

C. The prophets gave the people of God a paradigm for seeking the Lord and seeing renewal.

¹²"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; ¹³and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. ¹⁴Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him (Joel 2.12-14)

¹Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. ²After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. ³Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth. (Hos 6.1-3)

D. Peter gave similar outline of renewal in the New Testament.

¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3.19-20)

E. Jehoshaphat's reform included reestablishing singers and musicians to lead the people in seeking the Lord.

²¹And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire... ²⁶They came to Jerusalem with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the Lord... ³⁰So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around. (2 Chr 20.21-28)

F. Under Hezekiah, the priestly orders were reinstated, and God blessed the people.

²⁵And he stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David... for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets (2 Chr 29.25)

²⁰Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God.

²¹And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered. (2 Chr 31.20-21)

G. Josiah's revival organized the Levites according to David's commandment.

³And he said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the Lord, "Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon the son of David, king of Israel, built... Now serve the Lord your God and his people Israel. ⁴Prepare yourselves... as prescribed in the writing of David king of Israel... ¹⁵The singers, the sons of Asaph, were in their place according to the command of David (2 Chr 35.3-4, 15)

H. The renewals under Zerubbabel and Nehemiah both instituted Levitical worship at the center of Israel's life.

¹⁰When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, the priest in their vestments came forward with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the Lord, according to the directions of David king of Israel (Ezra 3.10)

²⁴And the chiefs of the Levites... [stood] to praise and give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, watch by watch (Neh 12.24)

V. A CALL TO RETURN

- A. We are currently walking through one of the most seismic and dramatic transitional periods in human history. At every level of our society (both in the West and globally) we are experiencing cultural, societal, political, economic, and relational unrest and uncertainty.
- B. At the same time, the church is undergoing one of the fastest and most comprehensive transitions seen in history as people are leaving the church *en masse*. Over the next decade, the church will likely only see an increase to the difficulties that we face, and the unique pressures that we are walking into.
- C. However, we see in the Scriptures a pattern to seek and pursue the face of God as the means through which we might experience renewal.
- D. Renewal → Growth → Season of decline → Disillusionment/discontent → Crisis → Contending remnant
- E. God is inviting us to pursue a "new wineskin" together as a spiritual family. All over the earth he is stirring the hearts of his people to seek him, to pursue rightly ordered worship at the heart of our lives together.

⁷He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches... (Rev 2.7)

- F. God promised that he would again raise up David's tabernacle. In the New Testament, James understands that the Lord is fulfilling this promise through the expansion of the church (Acts 15.12-17). This demonstrates that the people of God are the dwelling place (tabernacle) of God that are to perpetually seek him through worship and prayer in order that his kingdom might be expanded in the world.

¹¹In that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old (Amos 9.11)

- G. This is a call for us to order our lives (both individually and corporately) around seeking the first things of the kingdom first. In seasons of hopelessness, the pattern for the people of God is to order our pursuits around putting worship and prayer at the center of our life together as the people of God. Corporately, this will include commitments in our instruction, our resources, our programming, etc.
- H. There is an invitation to press in to the Lord (regardless of the cost) with a *spirit of repentance* (turning away from the world to the Lord) and a *spirit of pursuit* (seeking the Lord while he may be found). The promise of the Scripture is that God delights in mercy and steadfast love.