

# WISDOM AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

## 2 Chronicles 1.1-17

### I. REVIEW AND OVERVIEW

- A. Over the past season as a church, we have been preaching through the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles. We have done this as we have sought to understand, strengthen, and establish the purposes that God has put before us in this season in calling us to *build his house*.
- B. These books were written to the Jewish exiles who had returned from the Babylonian captivity and were charged with repairing the house of the Lord that had been destroyed (1 Chr 9.1-2). These books are designed to inspire a people looking at the “ruins” to take up their place and work in partnership with God’s purposes.
- C. Throughout 1 Chronicles we saw King David’s desire to build a dwelling place for the Lord. David possessed a unique revelation of the need for a place where God could rest among his people. This vision consumed his life and leadership, dictating much of how he ordered his life and leadership.

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

- D. However, God did not allow David to build the temple. Rather, he made a covenant with David, promising to give him a name and a kingdom that would last forever (1 Chr 17.7-14). The remainder of 1 Chronicles was concerned with David *making preparations* for Solomon to become the king and build the Temple. This included extensive preparations to prepare the *resources* (ch. 22), the organization and administration necessary to *facilitate the worship in the temple* (chs. 23-27), the *exhortation to the people and Solomon* to respond to the Lord with a whole heart (ch. 28), and *the response of the people* (ch. 29).
- E. As we turn to 2 Chronicles, we can note the two primary themes contained within the book:
  - 1. *The building of the Temple* (chs. 1-7): These chapters outline the purpose of Solomon to fulfill the charge of his father David by completing the Temple. In these chapters Solomon and the people are presented in a favorable light as an ideal moment in Israel’s history when God’s people responded to God’s ways and sought his face by establishing rightly ordered worship at the center of their national life.
  - 2. *The outworking of patterns of disobedience and renewal* (chs. 8-36): The author of the Chronicles tells the story of the line of David (the kings of Judah) with a specific view toward their obedience or disobedience to establishing worship at the center of Israel’s national life. For this portion, conformity the pattern established by David (worship and prayer in the house of God) is the basis of a king’s success or failure among God’s people.

<sup>25</sup>And he [Hezekiah] stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord... according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king’s seer and of Nathan the prophet, for the commandment was from the Lord through his prophets (2 Chr 29.25)

### II. SOLOMON SEEKS THE LORD (2 CHR 1.1-6)

- A. The chapter begins with a summary statement transitioning the narrative from the kingdom of David to the kingdom of his son, Solomon.

<sup>1</sup>Solomon the son of David established himself in his kingdom, and the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great (1 Chr 1.1)

- B. Immediately we are brought into Solomon, like his father David had at times (cf. 1 Chr 23.2; 28.1), gathering the leaders of Israel to lead and direct them. The first thing that Solomon does in gathering Israel is to call them to a posture of responding to the Lord by seeking him at Gibeon.
- C. David had charged Solomon to set his face to seek the Lord and promised that the Lord would in fact be found by him in the seeking. It is in obedience to this charge that Solomon sets out to establish his kingdom by first seeking the face of the Lord.

<sup>9</sup>And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever. (1 Chr 28.9)

- D. There are four things that we can see from these verses about the nature of Solomons pursuit of the Lord:

- 1. *The first pursuit:* the structure of the narrative gives weight to the reality of Solomons' first pursuit in responding to the Lord. Rather than immediately set out to accomplish the task of building the house, Solomon seeks the Lord. This is rooted in an understanding that it is ultimately the Lord who will bring success to the labors of his people — and unless he builds the house the laborers work in vain.

<sup>1</sup>Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain (Ps 127.1)

<sup>38</sup>But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (Matt 6.33)

- 2. *A clear pursuit:* one of the striking realities of the narrative is the clarity with which Solomon turns to seek the Lord. There is a concrete way that Solomon sets out to seek the Lord. In other words, seeking the Lord is not a vague, wishful pursuit — but is a concrete use of the means that he has ordained to seek him. With the old covenant this was at the altar of sacrifice in the tent of meeting. However, in the new covenant, the place of seeking the Lord is by coming to Christ Jesus in faith and approaching God's throne in boldness through him in our time of need.

<sup>3</sup>Solomon... went to the high place that was at Gibeon, for the tent of meeting of God... was there... <sup>5</sup>Moreover, the bronze altar... was there before the tabernacle of the Lord. And Solomon and the assembly sought it out. (2 Chr 1.2-5)

<sup>14</sup>Since then we have we have a great high priest who has past through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup>For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup>Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Heb 4.14-16)

- 3. *An extravagant pursuit:* Solomon does not come to the tent of meeting to seek the Lord "empty handed". The extravagance of his offering is highlighted by the Chronicler. Earlier, David had demonstrated that he would not offer to the Lord that which cost him nothing. These offerings are not the sacrifices offered for forgiveness, but are the response of the heart of faith, seeking to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

<sup>24</sup>I will not take for the Lord what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing. (1 Chr 21.24)

<sup>1</sup>I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (Rom 12.1)

- 4. *An assembled pursuit:* In this narrative we see that Solomon does not seek the Lord alone. He leverages his place of leadership and authority to call others (those under his care) to respond in kind to seeking the face of the Lord as the first pursuit of their lives.

<sup>3</sup>And Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon (2 Chr 1.3)

### III. SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE (2 CHR 1.7-13)

- A. In response to Solomon's pursuit of the Lord, God visits him in the night and speaks to him. God's response is to ask Solomon what he shall receive at the hand of the Lord.

<sup>7</sup>In that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." (2 Chr 1.7)

- B. Solomon begins his prayer by calling to mind the steadfast love of God and his promises to David. Solomon reminds both the Lord and himself of God's own nature and makes his petition on the basis of God's own promises to his people.

<sup>8</sup>And Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and have made me king in his place. <sup>9</sup>O Lord God, let your word to David my father be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth." (2 Chr 1.8-9)

- C. Solomon then requests to receive *wisdom* and *knowledge* from the Lord in order that he might appropriately lead God's people. He asks for these things in order that he might "go out and come in before the people." This phrase is shorthand for walking in a posture of leadership that is unaffected by the opinions and pressures of the people but is rather rooted in the fear of the Lord.

<sup>10</sup>Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people (2 Chr 1.10)

- D. *Wisdom*: This is the ability to apply God's truth and God's ways in specific situations and circumstances. To grow in wisdom is related to possessing an understanding of God's way of evaluating the world in order that we might orient our lives (time, resources, efforts, activities, etc.) around what he defines as important, valuable, and successful (lasting).

- E. The Scriptures relate growing in wisdom to possessing the fear of the Lord.

<sup>7</sup>The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (Prov 1.7)

- F. The fear of the Lord is more than just an experience. It is a set of beliefs that shape our ways of seeing and understanding God and our lives that affect how we live.

1. *God is the sovereign creator*: The fear of the Lord begins with the belief that God is real, and that as the creator of all things he is the Lord over everything.
2. *God's evaluation is ultimate*: We must see that because the Lord is the creator of all that his evaluation alone is what matters. He is the only one with ultimate authority to define what is "good" and "not good" in this world — no matter how much mankind seeks to establish our own evaluations and order.
3. *God sees and cares about our lives*: God's evaluation of our lives is the only evaluation that matters. God's eyes behold the hearts of each person and our lives matter to him.
4. *God will evaluate our lives according to his glorious standards*: Each person will one day stand in the presence of God to receive an evaluation for their lives based on his perfect and righteous standard.

- G. *Knowledge*: Throughout the Scripture, the prayer for knowledge is often shorthand for growing in the knowledge of God. This is primarily about living in relationship with the Living God as the source of all knowledge. The glorious reality of eternal life is the possibility of knowing God.

<sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17.3)

#### IV. PURSUING WISDOM AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

- A. As we find ourselves at a crossroads in human history — one that will not be endured simply by new strategies, methods, ideas, or programming — we need to be consumed with *knowing God* and seeking to apply his *wisdom* in every area of our lives.
- B. The prophet Daniel prophesied that in times of extreme trial, it would be the people who *know God* who are able to stand firm and take action (walk in a manner according to God's wisdom).

<sup>32</sup>He shall seduce with flattery those who violate the covenant, but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action. (Dan 11:32)

- C. Jesus spoke of days when lawlessness would increase in such a manner that the love of many would grow cold. It is in these times that the Lord calls his disciples to be wise and faithful in this world.

<sup>12</sup>And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. <sup>13</sup>But the one who endures to the end will be saved... <sup>45</sup>Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? (Matt 24:12-13, 45)

- D. The mercy of God is free forgiveness apart from our works. Our lives are marked by his unmerited favor and abundant mercy. He lavishes the power of his kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Wisdom, however, does require us to seek his face in order to apply his grace in our lives.
- E. At the judgment seat, there will be Christians who suffer loss because they failed to pursue walking before the Lord with a heart of wisdom. These will experience the glorious and infinite mercy of God's saving power in Christ but will experience real loss of potential blessing by building with materials that do not matter in eternity.

<sup>2</sup>Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — <sup>13</sup>each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup>If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup>If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:12-15)

- F. Paul prays regularly that believers would grow in the knowledge of God and in the ability to conform their lives according to his will.

<sup>9</sup>It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with all knowledge and discernment, <sup>10</sup>so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup>filled with the fruits of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil 1:9-11)

<sup>9</sup>pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <sup>10</sup>so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col 1:9-10)

- G. James exhorts believers to ask God for wisdom without fear of shame.

<sup>5</sup>If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given (Jas 1:5)

- H. Solomon describes the pathway to growing in the knowledge of God and the fear of the Lord (wisdom).

<sup>1</sup>My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, <sup>2</sup>making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup>yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, <sup>4</sup>if you see it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, <sup>5</sup>then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. (Prov 2:1-5)