

WAITING FOR THE KING

2 Chronicles 36

I. REVIEW

- A. The books of Chronicles are an important part of the OT canon. Within these books we find a remarkably rich theological telling of Israel's history with a particular focus on the Davidic royal dynasty and the centrality of the Temple in the life of Israel's worship.
- B. These books provide a necessary perspective on Israel's story (and therefore our story as the people of God) and are a needed supplement to Biblical theology. To rightly understand these books, it is important to understand the situation and purpose for which they were written.
- C. The opening verses of 1 Chronicles 9 give several pieces of information that situate the writing of the Chronicles as after the *Babylonian exile* when the people of Israel were *returning to the land*. This situation is reinforced by the way that the book ends with the proclamation of King Cyrus (Persian king) for the people to return to the land and rebuild the temple.
- D. The primary purpose of the author of Chronicles has been an attempt to remind the people of God that their distinction is in rightly ordered worship to the Lord. Throughout the books, this has been represented by the house built for God's name in Jerusalem (the Temple).
- E. The end of the book leaves the reader with a sense of expectation, waiting, and wondering as to how God will fulfill his purposes among his people.

II. THE DESCENT INTO EXILE

- A. The majority of 2 Chronicles 36 deals with the rapid descent of Judah into exile at the hands of the Babylonians.
- B. God had promised his people specific sanctions that would attend the covenant he made with them in the giving of the law. These included blessings that would come from covenant fidelity and curses that would come from covenant disobedience. The sins of Manasseh had drawn Judah away from the worship of the Lord to such an extent that their judgment was certain.

⁴⁵All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you till you are destroyed, because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that he commanded you. ⁴⁶They shall be a sign and a wonder against you and your offspring forever. ⁴⁷Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, because of the abundance of all things, ⁴⁸therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness, and lacking everything. And he will put a yoke of iron on your neck until he has destroyed you. ⁴⁹The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the end of the earth, swooping down like the eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, ⁵⁰a hard-faced nation who shall not respect the old or show mercy to the young. (Deut 28.45-50)

²⁶Still the Lord did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. ²⁷And the Lord said, "I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there." (2 Kings 23.26-27)

- C. From the time of Josiah's death until the time of the captivity, the kings of Judah are nothing more than puppet kings that serve the various wishes of foreign rulers. This happens first under the Egyptians (2 Chr 36.3-4) and then under Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians (2 Chr 36.5-16).

- D. The descent of Judah's kings culminates in the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple, and the vessels and treasures of God's house that were set aside for him.
- E. The writer of Chronicles wants his readers to be aware that there is, in fact, no theological dilemma in this historical reality. Although the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple may look as though the Lord was unable to accomplish his purposes through his people, these things actually demonstrated the *fulfillment of God's word* through his prophets.

²⁰He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years. (2 Chr 36.20-21)

- F. The author of Chronicles is referencing two Biblical realities to demonstrate God's fidelity to his own words.
 1. *The prophecy of Jeremiah:* God had spoken through Jeremiah (also Ezekiel) that the Babylonians would come and destroy Jerusalem and the Temple as punishment for the sins of Judah. Jeremiah had prophesied that the exile would last for seventy years.

¹¹This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹²Then after seventy years are completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the Lord, making the land and everlasting waste. (Jer 25.11-12)

2. An imposed Sabbath rest on the land: God had promised that if his people did not give the land itself the required Sabbath rest every seven years (covenant disobedience) he would impose a Sabbath rest upon the land by taking his people from the land in discipline.

²⁷But if in spite of this you will not listen to me, but walk contrary to me, ²⁸then I will walk contrary to you in fury, and I myself will discipline you sevenfold for your sins... ³³I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you, and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste. ³⁴Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbath as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths. ³⁵As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest that it did not have on your Sabbaths when you were dwelling in it. (Lev 26.27-28, 33-34)

- G. Even in reading these difficult words we are to be filled with faith that God will be faithful to his word and filled with the fear of the Lord that our response to him matters.

III. THE HOPE OF RETURN

- A. The books of Chronicles end with the fulfillment of God's word to his prophets to tear down the Babylonians and bring his people back from exile.

³⁰That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. ³¹And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old. (Dan 5.30-31)

- B. We are to be further strengthened with faith in seeing that God had promised to anoint King Cyrus to fulfill his purposes nearly 200 years before this came to pass.

¹Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed (Isa 45.1)

- C. These books end with a tenor of hope-filled expectation. God is fulfilling his word. He has ordered kingdoms to accomplish his purposes, and has orchestrated trans-national political endeavors in order to send his people back to rebuild his house and pursue him once again.

- D. This leaves Chronicles with a sense of expectation but also with a sense of a dynamic question: will we seek the face of the Lord and step into his purposes?

IV. WAITING FOR THE KING

- A. Although there is a sense of hope-filled expectation at the end of Chronicles, there is also a tinge of promises yet fulfilled. The people of God were being sent back to build his house once again, to seek his face, and to call upon his name. Yet, they were doing so under the initiative of a pagan king as vassals in his kingdom.
- B. God had promised to David a king who would sit over his people forever.

¹¹When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹²I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, ¹⁴but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever. (1 Chr 17.11-14)

²⁴My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted. ²⁵I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers. ²⁶He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.' ²⁷And I will make him the firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. ²⁸My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. ²⁹I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens... ³⁵Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. ³⁶His offspring shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me. (Ps 89.24-29, 35-36)

- C. This leaves Chronicles with a highly anticipatory ending. God is fulfilling his purposes, yet the people were waiting for a king.
- D. This sense of anticipation and expectation would continue throughout four centuries of Israel's history. They would see the temple rebuilt (through the prophetic ministry of Haggai and Zechariah) and they would rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (under Nehemiah), but they would not have a king upon the throne to order and establish God's kingdom and lead God's people into life with him.
- E. Yet, this period would be marked by a growing sense that the exile was not ultimately over. Although God's people (or, some from among them) came back to Israel to reestablish the land — many did not return, and those who did were not "free".
- F. God had promised to Daniel that the real exile would not be over after only seventy years.

²in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, perceived in the books the number of years that, according to the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet, must pass before the end of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. ³Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayers and pleas for mercy with fasting and sackcloth and ashes... ²⁰while I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my plea before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God, ²¹while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel... ²²made me understand, speaking with me... ²⁴"Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place." (Dan 9.2-3, 20-24)

V. BEHOLD, YOUR KING COMES TO YOU

- A. Throughout our time in Chronicles, we have emphasized the reality that the Chronicler believes that the people of God are designed to flourish when they: (1) live under God's *rightly appointed king*; (2) order their lives around *the true worship of God* at the temple; and (3) live in a posture of seeking the Lord through *obedience to his commandments*.
- B. Although these books inhabit a remarkably important place in the OT, they leave us waiting for the true king of Israel who will lead God's family in worship and obedience in order that God's kingdom would be established throughout the world.
- C. In the pages of the New Testament, the writers regularly seek to demonstrate that Jesus fulfills all that the OT had looked for and established.

D. Jesus is the *true Son of David*

1. Jesus is declared to be the son of David who will sit on his throne forever.

¹The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David (Matt 1.1)

³²He will be great and be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end. (Luke 1.32-33)

2. Jesus declares the time of fulfillment as God's kingdom is being established in this world.

¹⁴Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1.14-15)

3. Yet, the manner in which Jesus inaugurated the kingdom reign of God in the world was not through military force or pomp, but through humility, sacrifice, and offering his own life as a ransom for many. This was the means through which he would deal with the true exile of sin and death.

⁴This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, ⁵"Say to the daughter of Zion, 'Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'" (Matt 21.4-5)

⁶³the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matt 26.63-64)

E. Jesus is the *true king who leads his people to worship* the Living God.

1. Jesus gathers a new humanity and opens a way for us to come into the presence of God through his flesh.

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great high priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (Heb 10.19-22)

2. Jesus builds his people into the new Temple, to be God's dwelling place in the world.

¹⁶you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph 2.19-22)

3. Jesus ushers in a new age of worship where God's people can now worship him rightly.

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. (John 4.23)

F. Jesus is the *true king who leads his people in obedience* to God's ways.

1. Jesus obeys the Father fully so that those who are joined to him in faith can be declared righteous.

³For God has done what the law... could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us (Rom 8.3-4)

2. Jesus empowers his people to obey from the heart.

¹⁷thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart... ¹⁸and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness (Rom 6.17-18)